

An Unsettled Plantation: Nova Scotia's New Englanders and the Creation of a British
Colony, 1759-1776

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
July 2012

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
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Dated: July 24, 2012

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DATE: July 24, 2012

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TITLE: An Unsettled Plantation: Nova Scotia's New Englanders and the Creation
of a British Colony, 1759-1776

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL: Department of History

DEGREE: MA CONVOCATION: October YEAR: 2012

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To Mom, Dad, and Scott, for all things big and small.

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Abstract

The New England Planters were the largest wave of Protestant migration into Nova Scotia prior to the American Revolution. Sponsored by the British government, they represent an attempt to make Nova Scotia a securely British colony in the wake of the Seven Years' War and the Acadian deportation. Examining the experiences of several families, this thesis argues that the Planters, despite taking up lands in Nova Scotia, remained unsettled. The migration was staggered over a number of years, and Planters maintained close ties with New England. However, the Planters were unable to recreate New England culture completely. Increasing numbers of settlers from the British Isles and revolutionary suspicion marked out Planter Nova Scotia as a separate space, despite the close ties that individual Planters maintained with their homelands. The Revolution forced Planters to choose, but until then many existed between the worlds of Nova Scotia and New England.

List of Abbreviations Used

<i>DCB</i>	Dictionary of Canadian Biography
NSA	Nova Scotia Archives
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Diary of John Seecombe	John Seecombe, "Appendix B: The Diary of Rev. John Seecombe," in <i>Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia for the Year 1959</i> (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1960), 18-45.
Diary of Mercy Seecombe	Mercy Seecombe, "Memoranda of Leading Events by a Member of the Seecombe Family, Harvard and Chester N.S. 1753-1770 by Miss Seecombe Daughter of Rev. John Seecombe," 2, MG1 vol.797c, NSA.
Diary of Nehemiah Porter	Nehemiah Porter, "Journal from N. England to Capeforsoe in Nova Scotia," 2, MG1 vol.770a, NSA.
Diary of Jonathan Scott	Jonathan Scott, <i>The Journal of the Reverend Jonathan Scott, With Genealogical Notes on the Scott, Marbury, Thwing, Ring and Bass Families</i> , ed. H.E. Scott Jr. (Massachusetts: New England Genealogical Society, 1980).
Diary of Simeon Perkins	Simeon Perkins, <i>The Diary of Simeon Perkins, Vol.1.</i> , ed. H Innis (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1948).

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I must acknowledge my debt to Dalhousie University in general and the Department of History specifically, which has proved a wonderful intellectual home for both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Dr. Jerry Bannister was instrumental to both and has proved the ideal adviser. I could not ask for any better. I would also like to thank Dr. John E. Crowley and Dr. Julian Gwyn for agreeing to act as readers for this thesis, which was greatly improved by their comments, and Dr. Justin Roberts, who chaired my defense. I would also like to thank Val and Tina in the office and my fellow Master's students, particularly Kilroy Abney and Nathan VanderMeulen. Outside the University, the staff of both the Nova Scotia Archives and the Historical Society of Philadelphia proved indispensable and always personable.

I would like to thank my parents, who have always supported me, my dreams, and my goals. I will never be able to thank either of you enough. Finally, I would like to thank Scott. You have informed this thesis in many ways. Your absence got me thinking about the connections between Nova Scotia and the mid-Atlantic colonies, a line of thought and inquiry that eventually led to Chapter Four. Your presence got me through the last month of writing, re-writing and restructuring happy, well-fed and well-rested. I cannot wait for the rest of it.

Chapter One

Introduction

While imperial dictates and military conquests create the framework for empire, it is people who ultimately enact it. Although Great Britain planted a flag on Acadia in 1710, changed its name to Nova Scotia and redrew the map, it was perhaps over seventy years until the dominant power in the province was British.¹ That transformation required an often bloody process of negotiation, warfare, deportation and, ultimately, importation of thousands of Protestant settlers. However, the men, women and children who give flesh to ideology and make empires actual rather than simply lines on maps do not necessarily do so in the service of ideologues and mapmakers. When the New England Planters arrived in 1759-1761, the largest wave of Protestant settlers to Nova Scotia before the Revolution, it was unclear what kind of a colony they would create. Would it be like the New England communities they had left behind? Would they fail altogether? Or, would they create something new?

This thesis relates an episode in the longer narrative of the transformation of French Acadia into British Nova Scotia. Unlike the better known migrations of the deported Acadians and the exiled Loyalists which bookend their arrival in the province, the New England Planters were not forced by military might or ideological conflict into or out of Nova Scotia. However, The same forces that drove out the Acadians and brought in the Loyalists shaped the conditions and timing of their arrival. When most of

¹ On this point, see John G. Reid, “*Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena? Planter Nova Scotia (1760-1782) and Competing Strategies of Pacification,*” in *Essays on Northeastern Nova Scotia: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 171-190.

them arrived, the dust of victory in Louisbourg and Quebec had yet to clear. Britain was still locked in battle with the French. While Nova Scotia's future as a British colony seemed more secure since the founding of Halifax and the violent exile of the Acadians, it was far from a given.

The opening of Nova Scotia to Protestant, English-speaking colonial settlement was linked intimately with the Seven Years' War. The expulsion of the Acadians in the wake of the Battle of Fort Beausejour, one of the earliest conflicts in what was to become a global war between the French and the British, began Acadia's transformation into Nova Scotia in earnest by opening up the province's best lands through forcibly removing their inhabitants. The drive to curtail the French presence in the region culminated in the siege and capture of Louisbourg in 1758, which led directly to the fall of all of French North America and prompted Charles Lawrence to issue the first of two settlement proclamations. The war, however, did not end until 1763, and Nova Scotia continued to be an active theatre of war well into the early Planter period. Acadians continued to be rounded up and deported, Massachusetts provincials continued to enter the province, and French war parties—real and imagined—continued to menace the fringes of the province practically until 1764, a full four years after most of the Planters had arrived in 1760-1761. The settlers arriving in those early years were escorted by ships of war, and acted in some cases as sources of war-related gossip and news reprinted

in colonial papers.² Furthermore, many of the settlers were former soldiers who had been stationed in Nova Scotia over the previous years.³

Christopher Hodson claims that for both the French and British, the years immediately following that Seven Years' War were a period of "creativity in which the fashioning of more just, efficient, and muscular empires seemed not just possible but inevitable."⁴ The government-sponsored recruitment and settling of the Planters was part of this drive, and was intended to hasten Nova Scotia's development into a productive and loyal colony. The British government expended unprecedented amounts of royal money subsidizing the settlement of the "infant colony" during the final years of the war, and their arrival was presented as an extension of recent British military efforts. For instance, a December 1759 address to Governor Charles Lawrence, the Nova Scotia Assembly thanked him for,

² See for example 27 April 1760, *The Boston Evening-Post*, 3 and 26 May 1760, *The Boston Evening-Post*, 2 for examples of convoys of settlers going to Nova Scotia under armed escort. See "Extract of Another Letter from the Same Place [Annapolis Royal]," 21 September 1759, *New-Hampshire Gazette*, 1 for an example of prospective settlers acting as impromptu war correspondents.

³ For example, Jonathan Scott's brother David, who arrived in Nova Scotia in 1773, was a veteran of the 1758 Louisbourg campaign. Gwen Guiou Trask and F. Stuart Trask, "The Reverend Jonathan Scott: Planter, Preacher, Patriarch," in *Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia 1759-1800* ed. M. Conrad (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995). See also "We hear from Nova-Scotia..." 7 January 1760, *The Boston Post-Boy*, 1.

⁴ Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

the wise and prudent steps taken to engage such great numbers of substantial and reputable Protestant families from the neighbouring colonies...rightly improving the favourable opportunity which the success of His Majesty's Arms has afforded.⁵

The Assembly noted that this new wave of English-speaking colonial settlement would “speedily...render this a rich and flourishing colony.”⁶ Speaking on a similar theme, the Nova Scotia Council predicted that these “useful planters” would “advance the Province into that esteem and honor, that naturally results from the prudent regulations of a numerous and industrious people.”⁷

However, the Nova Scotia scheme would also benefit New Englanders. Colonial papers printed the settlement proclamation and news of settlers bound for Nova Scotia. Speeches made by the newly formed Nova Scotia legislature ran as front-page news. Nova Scotia was often described in these years as a place of almost miraculous fecundity. For example, the *New-Hampshire Gazette* ran an anecdote on the birth of triplet calves in Falmouth on its front page, concluding that “this province is no less remarkable for its fecundity in the production of vegetables, than it is surprisingly prolifick in the increase of useful animals.”⁸ Generous subsidies, in the form of free land and transport, meant that

⁵ Reprinted as “Address of His Majesty's most Dutiful and Loyal subjects the Representatives of this Province,” 14 January 1760, *The Boston Post-Boy*, 1. The entire front page of this issue is dedicated to various speeches from the Nova Scotia legislature. Throughout this thesis, when quoting from primary sources I have retained the original spelling but standardized capitalization and added punctuation where necessary for better sense. Common abbreviations have been expanded.

⁶ “Address of His Majesty's most Dutiful and Loyal subjects the Representatives of this Province,” *The Boston Post-Boy*.

⁷ “To His Excellency Charles Lawrence, Esq...The Humble Address of His Majesty's Council of the said Province,” 14 January 1760, *The Boston Post-Boy*, 1.

⁸ “Halifax, in Nova-Scotia, March 11,” 30 March 1762, *The New-Hampshire Gazette*, 1.

it was especially appealing to the poor and young in New England, populations that were especially vulnerable.⁹ For this moment, imperial and colonial interest were one: Nova Scotia would provide a better life for land-hungry New Englanders, while at the same time securing and extending the new conquests of the British Empire.

The rhetoric surrounding the opening of Nova Scotia in the wake of the British successes of 1758 and 1759 is representative of the shared sense of colonial and imperial purpose that emerged during those years. Fred Anderson argues that the period just before and after the fall of Louisbourg and Quebec represented a high water mark of colonial/imperial relations, when the policies—and liberal spending—of William Pitt and a wave of military achievements made by the joint efforts of provincials and regulars produced a sense of shared mission and reinforced the important role the colonists had to play in the larger world of the empire.¹⁰ The development of Nova Scotia, which required both imperial arms and money and colonial bodies and energies, was a concrete expression of this shared sense of mission. The decay of the relationship between Great Britain and the colonies in the following years would, in turn, affect how both the colonists and the British understood Nova Scotia.

The decay was rapid: the fall of Quebec and the outbreak of Revolution were separated by hardly sixteen years, and New Englanders led the initial charge to Revolution. Nova Scotia's New Englanders, however, mostly stayed loyal. By the time of

⁹ Robert McLaughlin, "New England Planters Prior to Migration: The Case of Chatham, Massachusetts" in *Planter Links: Community and Culture in Colonial Nova Scotia* ed. M. Conrad and B. Moody (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2001), 17.

¹⁰ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Random House, 2000), 410-412.

the outbreak of the Revolution, were Planters still New Englanders? Or had they become something new: Nova Scotians? This paper argues that they were neither. Rather than a dichotomy between “old” New England identities and “new” Nova Scotian ones, the Planters adopted hybrid identities and allegiances that were not consistent internally or across time. Simeon Perkins, town magistrate and head of the militia, still considered the New England privateers plundering his ships as his “countrymen”; Nehemiah Porter planned to make Nova Scotia his home, then changed his mind; his son, on the other hand, planned to return to New England as soon as he could in 1773, but stayed in Nova Scotia his whole life.¹¹ Planter Nova Scotia, rather than heralding a new age of colonial British stability in tenuously-held, newly-conquered space, carried on the uncertain legacies of Nova Scotia’s recent past. Culturally, physically and ideologically, the Planters were unsettled settlers.

In the past, Nova Scotia’s colonial history has often been dismissed. Perhaps because of its relatively late settlement by English-speaking whites, but more likely due to its loyalty during the American Revolution, it has been routinely ignored by American historians, often relegated to a few lines, a footnote, or mashed in with New England in

¹¹ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 16 October 1776; Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 17 August 1767; Nehemiah Porter Jr. to Allan Baker, 29 March 1773, 13, MG1 vol.770A, NSA.

broad surveys or ignored all together.¹² This diminished status was also reflected in early historical writings on the province by scholars such as John Brebner and George Rawlyk. Each found the need to explain Nova Scotia as a marginal place. For Brebner, it was unclear if Planter-era Nova Scotia was even “sufficiently important to justify the necessary expenditure of time.”¹³

Brebner did ultimately consider his time well spent, and his extremely influential volume *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotias* was published in 1937. Following from his earlier study *New England's Outpost*, *Neutral Yankees* argues that Nova Scotia's rugged and difficult geography transformed the “Yankees” into neutrals, like the deported Acadian settlers whose land they now occupied. Isolated in scattered backcountry settlements, dominated by corrupt Halifax officials, and unable and unwilling to coordinate a rebel force, they met the outbreak of the Revolutionary war with pleas for neutral status. As a result, Brebner claimed, the province lost its historical advantages

¹² For example, Jack Greene's highly influential *Pursuits of Happiness*, which examines social development in the various regions of early America, categorizes post-1713 Nova Scotia as part of New England. More recently, Stephen Hornsby's *British Atlantic, American Frontier*, which provides a similar overview of different colonial regions in the early modern British Atlantic and divides it into regions of “British Atlantic” and “American Frontier” based on differing modes of economic exploitation, geography and relationships with London, variously categorizes Nova Scotia as part of the agricultural frontier, part of New England's staple fishery and part of the British Atlantic system. Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 52; Stephen J Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British North America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), 80, fig 6.15, 224.

¹³ John Bartlet Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), vii.

with New England, and became oriented across the Atlantic toward Great Britain. In the process, the province's New Englanders became good British subjects.

George Rawlyk and Gordon Stewart's *A People Highly Favoured of God*, published in 1972, follows much of Brebner's analysis in its discussion of pre-Revolutionary Planter religious life. It presents backcountry Nova Scotia as a swath of isolated New Englanders cut off from developments to the south. Following historians such as Bernard Bailyn, Rawlyk and Stewart argue the other mainland colonies created a new, revolutionary worldview during the late 1760s and early 1770s, and that the experiences of those years led directly to the revolutionary crisis. Isolated Nova Scotia, however, missed out on these developments, instead experiencing the 1760s as a "missing decade." Nova Scotians "failed to transcend their traditionality" and experienced the Revolution as a debilitating collective identity crisis.¹⁴ Rawlyk and Stewart disagree with Brebner about the New Englander's essential neutrality. Instead, Planter loyalism post-1775 was the result of a new identity as Nova Scotians, born from a "collective identity crisis" precipitated by the outbreak of Revolution and fostered by the religious revival led by Henry Alline. Alline's preaching led to a flipping of the relationship between Nova Scotia and New England: rather than an underprivileged offshoot which relied on New England for religious and cultural guidance, the Nova Scotian identity produced by Alline saw Nova Scotia as a "promised land" of religious purity that New England needed to follow to escape from its sinful ways. The British Nova Scotian identity allowed by this formulation brought together the previously

¹⁴ Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972), 4.

isolated Planter settlements, and even included some settlers of non-New England origin such as the Yorkshire Methodists settled at Chignecto.

The foundation of the Planter Studies Centre at Acadia University in Wolfville in the 1980s led to an increased amount of scholarly attention on the settlers. The centre has organized a series of conferences culminating in five volumes of conference proceedings that form the bulk of Planter historiography.¹⁵ The Planter volumes were initially concerned with establishing the Planters as a subject worthy of historical study, bemoaning the “obscurity into which [the Planters] have fallen into.”¹⁶ Much of the initial work of in these volumes concerned Henry Alline and the New Light movement, the agricultural regions of the Annapolis Valley, and the Planters in isolation, rather than in contact with other groups both within and without Nova Scotia. Planter studies have evolved over the last three decades, including more work on settlers of non-New England origin, interactions between different settler groups and Planter settlements outside the

¹⁵ Margaret Conrad, ed., *They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1988); Margaret Conrad, ed., *Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1991); Margaret Conrad, ed., *Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995); Margaret Conrad and Barry Moody, eds., *Planter Links: Community and Culture in Colonial Nova Scotia* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2001); T. Stephen Henderson and Wendy Robicheau, eds., *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2012).

¹⁶ Margaret Conrad, “Introduction,” in *They Planted Well*, 9

Annapolis Valley/Saint John River Valley area.¹⁷ Jerry Bannister, referring to Brebner's claims about colonial Nova Scotia's insignificance and marginality, states that "the ghost of John Bartlett Brebner has been exorcised from Planter studies."¹⁸ While Planter Nova Scotia has been firmly as an established fruitful area of historical inquiry, both Brebner and Rawlyk's emphasis on Nova Scotia's isolation persists. Much of the work on the Planters focuses on them as a people apart, who, in the words of the first volume of essays, "Planted Well" in Nova Scotia.

The religious, legal and economic history of the Planter era and colonial Nova Scotia more generally has also been well studied. Rawlyk and Stewart's initial work on Henry Alline led to a range of studies covering varieties of Planter religious expression and focusing especially on Alline and the New Light revival.¹⁹ Julian Gwyn examines the harsh economic realities of life in Nova Scotia, arguing that immigrants to eighteenth-century Nova Scotia met with little financial success and lagged behind other areas in terms of development. Even beyond the question of the success or failure of the Planter

¹⁷ In the most recent volume, see Julian Gwyn, "Shaped by the Sea but Impoverished by the Soil: Chester Township to 1830," 99-121; Alexandra Montgomery, "'To Boston in Order for Chester': The Seccombe Family Diaries and Planter Mobility, 1761-1783," 123-149; Keith Mercer, "Planters and Press Gangs: A Social History of Naval Impressment in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1759-1815," 205-242; Kenneth Paulsen, "New Light or No Light: The Religious Experience in Lunenburg, 1753-1790," 243-256; all in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*.

¹⁸ Jerry Bannister, "Planter Studies & Atlantic Scholarship: The New History of 18th-Century Nova Scotia," in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 29.

¹⁹ For some of the literature on Alline in addition to *A People Highly Favoured of God*, much of it clustered around the two hundredth anniversary of his death, see for example George Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984); J.M. Bumstead, *Henry Alline, 1748-1784* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1984). as well as the edited edition of his diary and the diary of his follower, John Payzant.

migration, Gwyn finds that “few in Nova Scotia of any generation prospered or were able to hold on to the fruits of their successes and avoid the temptation to emigrate.”²⁰ The province’s legal history has also been explored in a variety of microstudies, as well as in a larger volume edited by Philip Girard, Jim Phillips and Barry Cahill commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court.²¹

Mitigating tendencies towards “apartness,” the region’s complexities have also been fruitfully examined from continental and comparative perspectives in recent years. The volume *New England and the Maritime Provinces*, edited by Stephen Hornsby and John Reid, examines the greater Northeast in a variety of trans-border and comparative studies.²² Elizabeth Mancke’s *Fault Lines of Empire* in particular addresses Planter Nova Scotia comparatively, contrasting the political development of Liverpool, Nova Scotia and Machias, Maine from the period of settlement to the early nineteenth century.²³ The region has also benefitted from the growth of Atlantic history. Three books have emerged in the last two years treating Loyalist and Acadian experiences in the Atlantic world:

²⁰ Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens' University Press, 1998), 3. See also *Ibid.*, “Shaped By the Soil: Planters Successful Farmers?,” in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 81-89., and *Ibid.*, “Shaped by the Sea but Impoverished by the Soil: Chester Township to 1830,” in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 99-121.

²¹ Philip Girard, Jim Phillips and Barry Cahill, *The Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, 1754-2004* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). See also Barry Cahill, “The Treason of the Merchants: Dissent and Repression in Halifax in the Era of the American Revolution,” *Acadiensis* XXVI, 1 (Autumn 1996).

²² Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds., *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

²³ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca.1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles*, Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan's *Loyal Atlantic* and Christopher Hodson's *Acadian Diaspora*.²⁴ While none of these take Nova Scotia explicitly as the subject, they suggest ways in which using the Atlantic World as a framework can enrich our understanding of the region. The title of the most recent Planter volume, *The Nova Scotian Planters in the Atlantic World*, also reflects interest in viewing the region as a key node in a complex and expanding eighteenth-century British Atlantic.

The transition from Acadia to Nova Scotia did not occur in a day. Work on eighteenth-century Nova Scotia prior to the Planter period has emphasized that British dominance in the region was far from a given, as British, French, and aboriginal claims both clashed and coexisted. John Reid, Maurice Basque, Elizabeth Mancke, Barry Moody, Geoffrey Plank and William Wicken's volume *The 'Conquest' of Acadia* and Geoffrey Plank's *An Unsettled Conquest* argue that making Nova Scotia British territory did not end with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713; it involved a long process of negotiation, violence, and identity restructuring between and within the groups that comprised the British authorities, Acadians, native peoples, and, later, Protestant settlers.²⁵ The theme of a negotiated empire is also reflected in many of the essays in John Reid's *Essays on*

²⁴ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011); Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, eds, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*.

²⁵ John G. Reid, Maurice Basque et al., *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial and Aboriginal Constructions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

Northeastern North America, which argues for the ambiguity of British control and the continued dominance of aboriginal populations throughout the northeast through to the arrival the Loyalists in 1783.²⁶ Naomi Griffiths examines how an independent-minded and politically savvy Acadian identity emerged in these years, born of their experience as border people in this contested space.²⁷ Similarly, Jeffers Lennox explores how cartographic knowledge and map-making emerged as a key site in the battle over who controlled Nova Scotia, arguing that geographic knowledge was used to assert power in the face of limited military and political power on the ground.²⁸ “Eighteenth-century Nova Scotia/Acadia,” Lennox argues, “was neither British nor French, but rather a political and cultural battleground founded on negotiations over geography.”²⁹

The beginning of the end of this liminal l’Acadie, it has been argued, came with the buildup that presaged the Seven Years’ War, which hardened the confused borders between British and French territory and, in its most brutal incarnation, resulted in the forcible deportation of over 10,000 Acadians. John Faragher argues that the deportation was in fact an early episode of ethnic cleansing, orchestrated largely by Anglo-Americans, and intended to clear Nova Scotia for the arrival of loyal Protestants: the

²⁶ John G. Reid with contributions by Emerson W. Baker, *Essays on Northeastern North America: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

²⁷ Naomi Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 184.

²⁸ Jeffers Lennox, “Nova Scotia Lost and Found: The Acadian Boundary Negotiation and Imperial Envisioning, 1750-1755,” *Acadiensis* XL, 2 (Summer/Autumn 2011): 4. See also *Ibid.*, “L’Acadie Trouvée”: Mapping, Geographic Knowledge, and Imagining Northeastern North America, 1710-1763” (PhD diss, Dalhousie University, 2010).

²⁹ Lennox, “L’Acadie Trouvée,” ix.

Planters.³⁰ This thesis contends that the Planter's arrival did not significantly alter the colony's uncertain status. John Reid argues that the Planters came in insufficient numbers to effect change and were overshadowed by the dominant relationship in the province between aboriginal and imperial forces.³¹ This thesis builds on that argument, suggesting that even from the perspective of the Planters themselves, their presence in the Nova Scotia was unsettled.

This thesis attempts to fit the personal stories of those who were involved in the Planter migration into these sweeping imperial arguments. It argues that Planters remained intimately connected with New England right up until the outbreak of the Revolution, took a many of years to “plant,” and regularly returned. However, despite their desires to the contrary, they were unable to reproduce New England culture in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia was not New England, and as the 1760s and 1770s wore on, the older colonies grew suspicious of its close connection with the empire they increasingly distrusted. Many Planters left, and further colonial efforts to include Nova Scotia in the webs of the thirteen colonies met with failure.

Methodology

In this study I have chosen to focus on specific families and persons rather than towns or regions. Alison Games suggests that biography of persons who moved regularly

³⁰ John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), xix.

³¹ Reid, “Pax Britannica or Pax Indignea,” 187-188.

can provide a correction to the limiting nature of geographically bounded studies.³² It can also reveal the messiness of the actual process of migration, a process which, for the Planters, was not a single discrete event but rather a series of smaller ones as individual family members moved to—and often, from—Nova Scotia, staggered over the course of months and even years. Not all who arrived stayed; families that arrived together left separately; and even when the bulk of a family group had arrived and settled on a plot of land in a township, individuals often returned to New England for extended periods to wrap up loose ends, acquire goods and visit with friends and family left behind. Focusing on individuals and families helps to illuminate Nova Scotia’s connections, rather than its “apartness.” I have also been influenced by historians such as Laurel Ulrich and Daniel Vickers, who have used diaries and personal papers to examine themes of culture and to emphasize the importance of everyday life.³³

This approach has been chosen in an attempt to escape the inherent boundedness of town studies. This approach can produce results stunning in their detail and depth, and can create a strong framework for comparison. Elizabeth Mancke, for example, uses a comparative town study approach to examine developments in Nova Scotia and Maine in *Fault Lines of Empire*. However, this frame can serve to exclude or minimize the

³² Alison Games, “Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63,4 (October 2006): 677-678.

³³ See for example Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Random House, 1990); Daniel Vickers, “An Honest Tar: Ashley Bowen of Marblehead,” *The New England Quarterly*. 69,4 (Dec. 1996): 531-553; Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series. 47, 1 (Jan. 1990): 3-29.

experiences of families and individuals who experienced Nova Scotia and the Planter migration as a transitional step, those that stayed within Nova Scotia but passed between townships or those who were, like fishermen, only temporary visitors to begin with. As Alison Games has argued, migration was a normal experience for perhaps the majority of colonists during the eighteenth century and a key part of their life cycles. Furthermore, she argues, “migration did not necessarily separate but rather could thicken attachments in a new way, creating vectors of familiarity and communication.”³⁴ By framing my research by families, rather than places, these vectors, and the fluidity of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic World more broadly come into focus (see fig 2.1).

My research approach has been influenced by the growth of Atlantic world history. Atlantic history, which takes the whole of the Atlantic Ocean and the regions bordering on it as its frame, has grown massively over the past twenty years.³⁵ It emphasizes the movement of ideas, peoples and goods throughout the Atlantic rim, and the fluidity and hybridity created by the meeting of cultures within it. Following David Armitage’s theorization of the different ways of approaching Atlantic history, this project

³⁴ Alison Games, "Migration," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* ed. D. Armitage and M. Braddick (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 45.

³⁵ See for example David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, D. Armitage and M. Braddick, eds. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 11, where Armitage famously declares that “we are all Atlanticists now.” It should, however, be noted that the Atlantic framework has been the subject of recent hot debate, with arguments that it is simultaneously too broad and too restrictive. For example, I recently attended a seminar at Harvard that called for a *planetary* framework. Nevertheless, the push for transnational frameworks that emphasize connections between places is a strong current in writing on Early American history. For some of the arguments about Atlantic History specifically, see Alison Games, Philip J. Stern, Paul W. Mapp and Peter A. Coclanis, “Forum: Beyond the Atlantic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63,4 (October 2006): 675-742.

is a “cis-Atlantic” study, which attempts to place a “regional history within an Atlantic context.”³⁶ I have attempted to emphasize the influences on Nova Scotia both from Britain and from the other colonies, and have placed particular emphasis on the connections maintained by Planters with other parts of the Atlantic world, most notably their old homes in New England.

To that end, the families of John and Mercy Seccombe of Chester, Nehemiah Porter of Cape Forchu, Jonathan Scott of Chebogue and Simeon Perkins of Liverpool form the core of the research for the following two chapters. The final chapter is a case study following the attempts to found a township on the north shore of the Minas Basin called the Philadelphia Township. It focuses especially on the experience of Nathan Sheppard, the Nova Scotia Lands Company agent. These close studies have been supplemented by an examination of colonial newspapers and governmental documents, as well as of the personal papers of other families who lived in and visited Planter Nova Scotia.

The four families who form the core of the research for this project—the Seccombes, the Perkinses, the Porters and the Scotts—were chosen based on the depth of the documents they left behind. The Seccombes and Porters in particular have rich archival fonds located at the Nova Scotia Archives, which contain family letters, account books and other miscellaneous records. They also left diaries. Nehemiah Porter kept a short diary that covered his stays in Nova Scotia from 1767-1769, although the bulk of the material is for 1767. John Seccombe left a diary of his first five months in the province in 1761. His daughter, Mercy Seccombe, left a diary that, while inconsistent,

³⁶ Armitage, “Three Concepts,” 15.

covers the years 1753-1770—perhaps the oldest written by a woman in the colonies which would become Canada. Scott and Perkins were chosen on the strengths of their diaries alone. Scott's is particularly rich and contains a level of introspection absent from the Porter, Seccombe and Perkins diaries. It contains a narrative description of his early life and arrival in Nova Scotia, becoming a daily record just prior to his ordination in 1772. Perkins' diary, on the other hand, is helpful in its consistency and length. Although there are some holes in the early part of the document, which begins in 1766, it is more complete and more regular than any of the other diaries consulted. Perkins wrote in his diary until his death in 1812. For the purposes of this project, it has been consulted up to and including the year 1777.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into three substantive chapters. Each one covers a different aspect of Planter arrival and culture. Chapter Two covers the migration itself; Chapter Three describes what they did when they got there; and Chapter Four examines the changing role of Nova Scotia during the years immediately before the Revolution.

Chapter Two discusses the process of migration, arguing that, while envisioned by many as an important part of the process of making Nova Scotia a truly British colony and enabled by success at war and the mass deportation of the Acadians, it was driven by family dynamics and New England traditions. The result was that the New England Planters prior to the American Revolution tended to maintain, rather than sever, those older relationships. As a result, many Planters did not experience the migration as a single event. Instead, individual family members arrived and left the colony at different

times, and many passed frequently back and forth between their old homes in New England and their new ones in Nova Scotia. However, Nova Scotia's status as contested imperial, colonial and aboriginal space meant that the Planter migration unfolded differently than contemporaneous New England migrations into New Hampshire and Maine.

Chapter Three examines the effect of this difference on the attempt to recreate a part of New England culture in Nova Scotia, the Congregationalist Church. It argues that despite the efforts of many Planters, Congregationalism along New England lines was never reproduced in Nova Scotia. Most Congregationalist ministers who arrived in the colony from New England left before the outbreak of the Revolution and the revival of Henry Alline, and those that stayed faced congregations more than willing to seek religious instruction from Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist ministers, not to mention a variety of wandering itinerants not clearly aligned with any denomination. As a result, while individuals maintained relationships with New England, the colony as a whole lacked the cultural ties to Massachusetts and Connecticut that would have been the result of a strong Congregational Church.

Chapter Four examines in detail the attempt by people from the Delaware Valley and New England to found a new township on the north shore of the Minas Basin in the late 1760s. As part of the empire-wide drive to reduce costs in the wake of the Seven Years' War, the Nova Scotia government and British Parliament stopped subsidizing migration to Nova Scotia after 1762. Community formation and land distribution would, from this point on, be done through private means. Philadelphia Township was founded during a period more notable for rampant land speculation, increased colonial hostility

towards Nova Scotia, an increase in Planter re-migration to New England and the arrival of thousands of British settlers from Yorkshire and Scotland than attempts to found new townships filled with families from the older colonies. Indeed, Philadelphia Township was a failure. However, it provides an excellent case study through which to examine how relationships between Nova Scotia and the other colonies had changed since the arrival of the Planters, as well as the difficulties shared by all who sought to make a profit in the province during these years.

Finally, it concludes with a short passage on Planter reaction to the coming of the Revolution. The Revolution, and particularly the ban on communication with New England, fundamentally altered the daily lives of Planters and forced many to finally choose between Nova Scotia and New England. It also argues that Nova Scotia's loyalty was not an aberration of the Planter's New England roots. Instead, it was simply a different expression of them that suited the world that Nova Scotia was and New England was not.

The Planter settlers were unsettled in at least three ways: in their movement between the physical worlds of Nova Scotia and New England, even after their first migration; in their inability to recreate certain cultural institutions; and, increasingly, in the exclusion of Nova Scotia from the colonial world they had left behind, caused by a lack of economic viability and growing ideological differences.

Chapter Two

A Piecemeal Planting: New England Comes to Nova Scotia

Despite Nova Scotia's importance in the greater imperial scheme, the forces that drew most Planters across the Gulf of Maine were more personal and immediate. Although many would have understood the wartime importance of making Nova Scotia British, especially those who had fought there against the French just a few years previously, they were rooted in the colonial world of New England. Ties of family, not empire, were the immediate links that gave their lives and actions meaning. In colonial New England, family was the basic unit of both economic and social life, and the need to provide for children—especially sons—in the densely settled and increasingly land-poor older colonies had been the driver of New England expansion since the arrival of the first English settlers in the seventeenth century.¹

Over the previous 150 years New England had spread itself from a base of just a few towns into a cultural region encompassing the colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and the areas that would later be known as Maine and Vermont through a process referred to by David Jaffee as “serial town settlement” and Virginia DeJohn Anderson as “the Great Reshuffling.”² This process was family and region based, as a number of families from the same settled area chose to

¹ Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 92-93, 100; David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 9-12.

² Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett*, 1; Anderson, *New England's Generation*, 92.

strike out together and replicate the basic structures of the towns they had left on new land. These newer settled regions drew on their links with older areas, bringing new regions into the fold of New England rather than attempting to form new societies. This process had occurred since the first generation of migrants arrived in New England in the 1630s, and was built into the system of town settlement that drew clear lines between proprietors of towns and their heirs and latecomers.³ Both Jaffee and Anderson argue that this system of town-based expansion was one that was conservative, and reinforced, not threatened, the stable communal culture that made New England distinct among the British colonies.⁴ Indeed, Jaffee identifies the experience of founding new towns as a central aspect of New England self-image and culture. He argues that apart from the imperatives of land scarcity and the economic appeal of land speculation, New England's "economic, religious, and cultural values required a continual experience of settling in the wilderness."⁵

Planter settlers to Nova Scotia drew on this tradition, and New England expansion into Nova Scotia shares many superficial similarities with contemporaneous New England expansion into Maine, New Hampshire, Western Massachusetts and the Pennsylvania backcountry. Planters moved to Nova Scotia to provide opportunity for themselves and their families, moved as family and regional groups rather than as individuals, expected to replicate the New England communities they had left behind and maintained close ties with Massachusetts and Connecticut. Contrary to Rawlyk and

³ Anderson, *New England's Generation*, 98-99.

⁴ Anderson, *New England's Generation*, 100; Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett*, 3-4.

⁵ Jaffee, *Wachusett*, 18.

Stewart's "missing decade" theory, the 1760s were precisely the period during which the Planters were most connected to their New England homes.⁶ Planters relied on family connections with New England to survive, and Planter families often took several years to fully "plant" in Nova Scotia, bringing other family members slowly and taking extended trips back to New England before fully committing to the province. Although these links may have weakened over time as Planter families formed new ties that rooted them more firmly in the province, they were only seriously disturbed by the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, which officially disallowed contact between Nova Scotia and the colonies in revolt and unleashed New England-operated privateers into Nova Scotian waters.

This chapter explores the process of Planter migration from New England to Nova Scotia, arguing that it was a piecemeal process marked by uncertainty and fragmented both within family groups and across time. Many in the first generation of Planters occupied a liminal space between their old homes in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island and Nova Scotia, which occupied a very different cultural and governmental context. To examine this, the chapter will first discuss the context of eighteenth-century New England expansion. It will then discuss how the Planter migration was different from other contemporaneous expansions, paying particular attention to Planter interactions with native peoples and the Acadians and the role of British and provincial authorities in attracting and settling them. It will then discuss patterns in the Planter migration as they related to families and ties of communication with New England. Planters maintained links through transference of family members—

⁶ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 3-4.

often children—between regions, through extended, but ultimately temporary, trips by heads of households and by regular letter writing. All three of these strategies made use of the thick cluster of shipping, particularly the fishery, which plied waters between Nova Scotia and New England and allowed for a circumvention of official channels that ran through Halifax.

The Eighteenth-Century Expansion of New England: Contexts

The pattern of New England expansion and town foundings was established in the seventeenth century soon after the arrival of the first puritan settlers.⁷ It accelerated after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and began spilling beyond the core areas of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.⁸ The end of Queen Anne's War in that year had brought peace with France and an end to the French and Native raids on the borderlands that had limited expansion. However, this expansion created more pressure and provoked violent altercations between New Englanders and the native peoples whose land they sought to control.⁹ The direction of this migration early in the century was towards the near interior in Connecticut and New Hampshire, then swinging further north and west into Maine, Nova Scotia, Vermont, and New York as the century progressed.¹⁰

⁷ Anderson, *New England's Generation*, 99.

⁸ Jaffee, *Wachusett*, 87; Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 133-136.

⁹ Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 136.

¹⁰ John W. Adams and Alice Bee Kasakoff, "Migration and the Family in Colonial New England: The View from Genealogies," *Journal of Family History* 9,1 (1984): 27.

The percentage of the New England population who moved, rather than stayed, is difficult to determine. From the 1960 to the 1990s, early New England history was dominated by town studies principally concerned with the question of the erosion or persistence of Puritan communalist culture through the demographic shifts of the eighteenth century.¹¹ Although often staggeringly rich and invaluable for their contributions to an understanding of New England culture and cultural values, these studies, by taking a small and geographically stable unit as their object of study, can, in the words of Alison Games, “privilege stability” and obscure the extent to which migration was central to the experience of not just New England, but all of the British American colonies.¹² In contrast, Games argues that for men and women throughout the British Atlantic, migration—and re-migration—both across the Atlantic and within colonies was “an entirely normal activity” and “a regular part of the life cycle.”¹³ Certainly a very large number of New Englanders were involved in these migrations—perhaps over 30,000 people left Connecticut between 1760 and 1774 alone.¹⁴ John Adams and Alice Kasakoff, working from genealogies of New England families from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, estimate that only 20% of male New

¹¹ See for example Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970); Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts 1690-1750* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984).

¹² Games, “Migration,” 46.

¹³ Games, “Migration,” 31.

¹⁴ Bushman, *Puritan to Yankee*, 257.

Englanders stayed in the towns in which they were born.¹⁵ Although the sample chosen for this study is heavily biased towards movers, an examination of later generations reinforces the idea of frequent moves. Looking for example at the six children of Jonathan Scott's first marriage, all of whom were born in Yarmouth and were in their late teens or twenties at the time of their father's removal to Maine, only one of them remained in Yarmouth. Of those who left with their father, only one remained in the Minot area long-term.¹⁶

What was the effect of these migrations on the cultural landscape of New England? In general, the reshufflings and expansions of the first half of the eighteenth century seem to have strengthened and expanded the New England cultural area. For example, although New Hampshire and Maine were seized as the territory of New England colonies in the mid seventeenth century, Joseph Conforti argues that only the migrations of settlers from Massachusetts and Connecticut after the Treaty of Utrecht confirmed them as culturally part of New England.¹⁷ For a time, New England seemed poised to do the same thing to newly-British Nova Scotia. Massachusetts especially had, from the late seventeenth century, played a crucial role in bringing Nova Scotia under

¹⁵ Adams and Kasakoff, "Migration and the Family," 27-28.

¹⁶ Scott's eldest two children, John and Lydia, both stayed in Yarmouth when the rest of the family left in 1794; however, Lydia joined her father in Minot after her husband drowned in 1799, where she remarried and remained until her death. Information on Scott's children comes from Henry E. Scott Jr., ed, *The Journal of the Reverend Jonathan Scott, With Genealogical Notes on the Scott, Marbury, Thwing, Ring and Bass Families* (Massachusetts: New England Genealogical Society, 1980), 129-136.

¹⁷ Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 135-136.

British control.¹⁸ Particularly before the founding of Halifax in 1749 Massachusetts had also been heavily involved with Nova Scotian politics.¹⁹ New England fishermen had been sailing the waters of the province since at least the late seventeenth century.²⁰ The expulsion of the Acadians in 1755, the defeat of the French at Louisbourg and Quebec in 1758-1759 and the opening of Nova Scotia to settlement in 1759 could have been the beginning of Nova Scotia as a New England province. But it was never any such thing. The reason lies in the fact that although it gained the nickname of “the infant colony,” Nova Scotia in 1760 had a history of European colonization stretching back to 1604 and fifty years of British military government at Annapolis Royal and Halifax.²¹ Nova Scotia’s long history meant that while many New Englanders would settle in the province, it would experience its own type of development.

¹⁸ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 10; Geoffrey Plank, “New England and the Conquest,” in *The ‘Conquest’ of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial and Aboriginal Constructions* ed. Reid et al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 67-68.

¹⁹ Plank, “New England and the Conquest,” 68.

²⁰ Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Life in Essex County, Massachusetts 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 148; Plank, “New England and the Conquest,” 69.

²¹ For a few of many possible examples of Planter-era Nova Scotia described as being in a state of infancy, see Robert Monckton to the Earl of Holderness, 13 October 1757, Correspondence Between the Governors and the Secretary of State, 55, vol.40, RG1, Nova Scotia Archives (NSA); Montagu Wilmot to the Lords of Trade, 10 December 1763, Dispatches of Governor of Nova Scotia to Board of Trade and Plantations, 3, vol.39, RG1, NSA; John Seccombe, *A Sermon Preached at Halifax, July 3d, 1770, At the Ordination of the Rev. Bruin Romcas Comingoe* (Halifax: 1770), dedication.

Nova Scotia: The “Infant Colony”?

Nova Scotia was unlike other areas of New England expansion in its relationship to the British Empire and governmental structure. While Maine, for example, was jurisdictionally part of Massachusetts and received settlers that were not sponsored by any government, Nova Scotia’s settlement by Protestants was an official policy of the British Parliament. Parliamentary grants assisted in the foundation of Halifax in 1749, the recruitment of the Foreign Protestants in the 1750s and subsidized the travel of the Planters in the 1760s.²² This level of official involvement in the peopling and structure of one of its overseas colonies was nearly unheard of prior to the founding of Halifax in 1749.²³ Elizabeth Mancke has examined how strict control over how Nova Scotia was to develop led to, for example, township structures far different from those in New England and a legal system far more closely tied to London than any of the other colonies.²⁴ Mancke argues that the history of British involvement in Nova Scotia, which reflected interest in creating a more tightly controlled empire, meant that “before the first New

²² J.M. Bumsted, “1763-1783: Resettlement and Rebellion,” in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation, A History* ed. P. Bruckner and J. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 158.

²³ Georgia, founded in 1732, shares a similar early history and comes from the same emerging impulse toward a more controlled empire. Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, 41. For an interesting example of the same in the late-seventeenth century Mediterranean and the British attempts to colonize Tangier, see Linda Colley, *Capitves* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 23-37.

²⁴ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 5; *Ibid.*, “Colonial and Imperial Contexts,” in *The Supreme Court of Nova Scotia*, 46.

England settler surveyed a lot or set a foundation stone for a house,” Nova Scotia had been set on a divergent political path from Maine.²⁵

British interest in creating a new kind of empire was not the only history that affected Planter settlement. The Acadian peninsula and mainland was one of the earliest sites of European-Aboriginal contact. As a result, it had patterns of contact that were different from those of both the continental backcountry and the densely settled coast.²⁶ It had experienced early European settlement as well: the French established Port Royal in 1604, and the ancestors of the Acadians arrived in the 1630s, contemporaneous with the Puritan settlers to the south.²⁷ These three relationships—imperial, aboriginal and Acadian—meant that far from an “infant” colony or blank slate of settlement, Nova Scotia had a long history that would prevent New Englanders from recreating the societies they had left behind.

Aboriginal Connections

A defining feature of the expanding line of Euro-American settlement during the eighteenth century—and, indeed, of Euro-American expansion in North America generally—was large-scale violence between settlers and the aboriginal people whose

²⁵ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 6.

²⁶ European fishermen were a regular presence in North Atlantic waters by the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and when Jacques Cartier arrived in the Bay of Chaleur in 1534 he met Mi'kmaq already familiar with the fur trade. Ralph Pastore, “The Sixteenth Century: Aboriginal Peoples and European Contact,” in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 22-33. For the differences in European-Aboriginal power dynamics in the greater northeast into the eighteenth century, see John G. Reid and Emerson W. Baker, “Amerindian Power in the Early Modern Northeast,” in *Essays on Northeastern North America*, 134-135.

²⁷ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 54.

land they encroached on. These tensions escalated especially after the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. Imperial authorities had an interest in preserving peace with native peoples, and therefore in limiting Euro-American settlement, an attitude reflected in the Proclamation of 1763 that restricted colonial settlement east of the Appalachians.²⁸

Colonial populations, however, were eager to exploit the quiet of peace, regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants of the backcountry lands or the desires of provincial and imperial officials. Many colonists were also becoming increasingly and violently intolerant of natives and racial lines between "Indian" and "white" began to harden.²⁹

Despite official censure, settlers poured into the backcountry lands. The result was predictable. A series of violent native uprisings including the Cherokee War of 1760-61 and Pontiac's War, beginning in 1763, erupted between aboriginal, colonial and imperial forces as native groups reacted to expanded white settlement and unfavourable post-war terms.³⁰

The result was not only tension between colonial and aboriginal groups, but between colonial and imperial. Daniel Richter argues that imperial efforts to restrict white settlement in the name of maintaining peace with aboriginal populations "assumed a central place among the grievances that alienated most Euro-Americans from the British crown."³¹ Despite their adoption of native symbols, including with the Boston tea

²⁸ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 566.

²⁹ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 523-527; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 190.

³⁰ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 457-471, 535-546.

³¹ Richter, *Facing East*, 216.

party, the American Revolution contained vicious anti-native streaks borne of these frontier struggles.³² Indeed, Richter identifies the success of the Revolution and the establishment of the American Republic as the beginning of the end of “Indian country.”³³

The Planters, meanwhile, largely escaped this tension. Nova Scotia had had its share of violent conflict between Europeans and native peoples. Although the French Acadians and Mi’kmaq had enjoyed a particularly close relationship, the British conquest in 1710 led to war with the Mi’kmaq that did not end until 1726.³⁴ Violence escalated again after the founding of Halifax in 1749. The 1750s saw a series of violent conflicts in the province between the British and Mi’kmaq that included Mi’kmaq raids on Dartmouth, Lunenburg and other settlements, Edward Cornwallis’s scalping ordinance and several battles that left many British and native dead.³⁵ Altercations between natives and British soldiers and settlers were well reported in the colonies.³⁶ Henry Alline, for example, recalled his childhood terror of “the Indians in that country” on learning his

³² Richter, *Facing East*, 217-223.

³³ Richter, *Facing East*, 189-191.

³⁴ Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 2, 73-79. On the 1726 treaty, see William Wicken, *Mi’kmaq Treaties on Trial: History, Land, and Donald Marshall Junior* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 61-104.

³⁵ John Roy Campbell, *A History of the County of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia* (Saint John, NB: J & A MacMillan, 1876), 33. Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 122-139. The journal of John Payzant, later a New Light preacher under Henry Alline, contains a short account of the capture of himself, his mother and siblings during a Mi’kmaq raid on their home near Lunenburg: John Payzant, *The Journal of John Payzant* ed. B. Cuthbertson (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1981), 15-16. STILL NEED CITES FOR DARTMOUTH,

³⁶ See for example, “Extract of a Letter from Halifax, Aug 19,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 4 September 1758; “Whitehall, October 14,” *The Boston News-Letter*, 11 January 1759; “Halifax in Nova Scotia, Aug 18,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 10 September 1759.

family was moving to Nova Scotia in 1760.³⁷ However, a round of treaties in 1760-1761 coincided with the arrival of the Planters and ensured that the aboriginal inhabitants of the area would at least tolerate the newcomers.³⁸ Furthermore, as John Reid argues, the numbers of European settlement in the Atlantic region did not reach a demographic tipping point until the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783. Before then, the Mi'kmaq retained enough territory and bargaining power to ensure that the Planters did not constitute a serious threat to their lives and livelihood. Indeed, Reid argues, rather than the Planters or even the government at Halifax, the Mi'kmaq remained the dominant force in the region throughout the Planter period.³⁹ As a result, the Planters did not experience the same relationships that, elsewhere in America, led to violence and contributed to revolution.

This is not to say that Planter relationships with the Mi'kmaq and Wulstukwiuk were good. The New England Planters would have shared the same violently anti-native cultural bias as other New Englanders, and they eyed their native neighbours with suspicion and fear.⁴⁰ Native groups, for their part, had little interest in encouraging the Planters, and fears were high that the two groups would clash. In 1764 Governor Montagu Wilmot blamed the difficulties faced in settling the province over the previous three years in part on "Indian caprice and cruelty," and argued feverishly to the Board of Trade in favour of providing Mi'kmaq and Wulstukwiuk tribes within Nova Scotia with provisions, clothing and priests, as a refusal "wou'd not fail of producing an enmity

³⁷ Henry Alline, *The Life and Journal of the Rev. Mr. Henry Alline* eds. J. Beverley and B. Moody (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1982), 33.

³⁸ On the 1760-1761 treaties, see Wicken, *Treaties on Trial*, 189-209.

³⁹ Reid, "Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena," 171-190.

⁴⁰ Plank, "New England and the Conquest," 70, 84.

which might hereafter, if not very soon, become fatal to the New Settlements in this Country.”⁴¹ In 1767 Simeon Perkins reported that two Liverpool men had encountered several native persons at Port Roseway, who “abused them and threatened to kill them.”⁴² Fear of capture, a common experience during the Seven Years’ War and previous conflicts, also remained high.⁴³ In 1767 Mary Doble, a fourteen-year-old from Yarmouth, wrote in a letter to her father that a Mrs. Shuard, missing for some time, had turned up amongst some natives at Casco Bay, “dressed in a scarlet blanket, trimmed with gold.”⁴⁴ Mrs. Shuard was being used as an interpreter, and Doble related to her father how her attempt to escape with the fishermen who found her had been foiled.⁴⁵

The colonial papers continued to report rumours of aboriginal-settler conflict.

After a number of aboriginal people gathered near Fort Cumberland in 1765, the *Boston*

⁴¹ Montagu Wilmot to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 25 February 1765, 6, RG1 vol.39, NSA; Montagu Wilmot to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 24 June 1764, 9, RG1 vol.39, NSA. Wilmot also argues along these lines in his letters of 10 December 1763 and 17 September 1764.

⁴² Diary of Simeon Perkins, 13 September 1767.

⁴³ There are a number captivity narratives originating in Nova Scotia from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century in addition to the Payzant account cited above. See for example John Gyles, *Memoirs of odd adventures, strange deliverances, &c. in the captivity of John Gyles, Esq., commander of the garrison on St. George's River* (Boston: 1736); William Pote, *The journal of Captain William Pote, Jr., during his captivity in the French and Indian War from May, 1745, to August, 1747* (New York: 1896); Anthony Casteel, “Anthony Casteel’s Journal” in *Collection de documents inédits sur le Canada et l'Amérique* vol.2 (Quebec: L.J. Demers & Frère, 1889), 111-126; John Witherspoon, “Journal of John Witherspoon” *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society* 2 (1879-1880): 31-62. For a late account of native capture, see “Halifax in Nova Scotia, Aug 18,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 10 September 1759.

⁴⁴ “Whereas my daughter Mary Doble...,” *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 8 October 1767.

⁴⁵ This explanation, which involved one John Kerby taking money from the woman, calling her a “bitch” and leaving without her, resulted in a public apology by James Doble and renunciation of his daughter’s letter in the pages of the *Nova Scotia Gazette*.

Evening-Post reported that “they have [so] alarmed the inhabitants by their assembling in such a manner, that [the inhabitants] left their homes and go under cover of the garrison.”⁴⁶ Two years before, Provincial Secretary Richard Bulkley was forced to take out an advertisement in the Boston papers to counter an earlier report that “a number of St. John’s Indians...fired on [Fort Anne] and killed several people thereabout.” Reflecting anxiety about the Planter settlers, the report went on to say that this event would more than likely “break up all the new settlements in this province.”⁴⁷

In general, however violent conflict between Planters and natives was more rumour than fact, and Planter records on interaction with aboriginal people are more notable for their absence. Planter settlements were mostly left alone, and when conflict did arise it was quickly smoothed over. The scant evidence seems to point to concerted attempts of both parties to maintain peace. For example, the 1772 accidental shooting death of Andrew Martin’s teenage daughter in Liverpool by a Mi’kmaq hunting party seems to have led only to a comment in Simeon Perkins’ diary.⁴⁸ In some cases Planters and Native people seem to have been willing to negotiate across culture lines. For example, Bartholomew Nocoot, a native man who was assaulted by Jahiel DeWolf in Horton in 1763, went to the Horton township courts to deal with the problem.⁴⁹ In a reverse of this situation, John Campbell, writing in 1876, recorded a tradition regarding a

⁴⁶ “Extract of a Letter from Fort Cumberland, in Nova-Scotia, August 26, 1765,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 9 September 1765.

⁴⁷ Richard Bulkley, “The following is inserted by the desire of the governor of Nova Scotia,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 3 October 1763.

⁴⁸ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 8 April 1772.

⁴⁹ “Charge of assault by Batholomew Nocoot, a Mi’kmaq, against Jehieh/Jahiel Dewolf, Horton,” 1 August 1763, 68, MG1 vol.181, NSA.

1772 altercation in which a Mi'kmaw man burned down a Yarmouth store. The man was dealt with by a trial held by his tribe, and sentenced to death, saved at the last moment by the ritual intervention of the two English men whose store he had burned.⁵⁰ In both cases, resorting to the aggressor's own legal understanding—the Horton township courts in 1763 and a tribal understanding of justice in 1772—prevented escalation of violence or retribution. Native people could also prove crucial bringers of food and information: John Seccombe records several instances of Mi'kmaq women coming to Chester and providing much needed provisions, and Simeon Perkins received news and game from native interlocutors many times.⁵¹

When the Connecticut settlers of the Susquehannah Company arrived in the Pennsylvania backcountry in 1762, they met with immediate conflict with local Delaware tribes that culminated in the destruction of native buildings and crops and the death of ten settlers, with perhaps twenty or thirty more driven into captivity.⁵² In contrast, the Connecticut settlers who arrived in the Annapolis Valley in 1760 channeled conflict with the Mi'kmaq through the legal system and both groups managed to more or less ignore each other. The long history of European and Native contact in Nova Scotia, the treaty process of 1760-1 and the relatively sparse nature of Planter settlement all meant that Planters did not experience the violence of frontier conflict and related struggles with imperial authorities that informed colonist-British and colonist-native relationships in

⁵⁰ Campbell, *History of Yarmouth*, 19.

⁵¹ Diary of John Seccombe, 7 August 1761, 29 August 1761; Diary of Simeon Perkins, 7 April 1772, 26 May 1772, 5 March 1773.

⁵² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 529-534.

many, if not most, of the other British colonies. They did, however, have to navigate a tricky relationship with a group of older inhabitants that most other eighteenth-century migrants did not: the Acadians.

Acadian Connections

The New England Planters, who moved to Nova Scotia before the end of the Seven Years' War, would have viewed the French, and the Acadians in particular, as a dangerous enemy. Anti-French—and, especially, anti-Catholic—beliefs were a cornerstone of a shared understanding of what it meant to be a British subject in both the British Isles and the British colonies.⁵³ Furthermore, many of the Planters had fought against the French in the previous war, some in the campaign at Fort Beausejour and the removal of the Acadians that followed.⁵⁴ Even those not involved in the war may have been intimately familiar with Acadians, as many Planters came from communities in New England where Acadians had been sent after 1755.⁵⁵ Indeed, New Englanders were instrumental in the deportation at all levels. John Faragher argues that the deportation was a conscious act of “ethnic cleansing” organized largely by New Englanders in order to clear out Nova Scotian lands for their fellow countrymen. Acadians were “transported to

⁵³ Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise & Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 19; John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 352.

⁵⁴ For example Jonathan Scott's brother David, who moved to Yarmouth in 1773, served in the 1758 campaign against Louisbourg. Trask and Trask, “The Reverend Jonathan Scott,” 269.

⁵⁵ For example, Norwich, Connecticut, home of Simeon Perkins, had an Acadian exile population. See Figure 15 in Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 151.

distant destinations in New England vessels...forced from their homes by troops and officers from New England, and it was expected that those very men would repossess and resettle the land.”⁵⁶ While Faragher underplays the role of imperial authorities, the connection between the removal of the Acadians and the arrival of the Planters is sometimes very clear. For example, one newspaper report from 1759 reports the removal of several families of Acadians from Cape Sable in advance of a boatload of potential settlers.⁵⁷

Regardless of whether the Acadian deportation was undertaken explicitly to clear Nova Scotia for New England settlement, as Faragher argues, the New England Planters benefitted enormously from their removal. On the most obvious level, most of the Planter Townships laid out in the 1760s were on Acadian lands, the best farming land in the province. The Annapolis Valley townships benefitted from Acadian-cleared land and the Acadian-built dyke system. Planters in some cases may have even taken advantage of Acadian orchards, buildings and other improvements. Archaeologist Jonathan Fowler suggests that land-holding patterns in Horton Township, which have appeared to some historians as random land grabs, may have been attempts to consolidate earlier Acadian hamlets and family farms and the improvements they contained.⁵⁸ Even on the South Shore Planters encountered and benefited from the echoes of the recent Acadian past.

⁵⁶ Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 333.

⁵⁷ “Halifax, Nova-Scotia, July 7,” *The Boston News-Letter*, 2 August 1759.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Fowler, "From Acadians to Planters in the Grand-Pré Area: An Archaeological Perspective," in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830* ed. T.S. Henderson and W. Robicheau (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2012), 58-60.

John Campbell recorded a tradition that the first fishermen who settled at Yarmouth simply took up lands previously cleared by Acadians.⁵⁹

The result, Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk argue, was that any attempts made by Planters to use the language, often invoked in the other colonies, of rights they had gained by “civilizing...a savage and wild continent” fell flat.⁶⁰ “The fact that there were houses, dykes and fences, even though not in the best condition...made the point much less convincing than it was in the other colonies where virgin land had been improved and eventually civilized,” they write.⁶¹ That the British had subsidized their arrival in the province made this claim even less convincing. Later, Planters also faced unflattering comparisons between their agricultural efforts and those of the Acadians, who were believed by some contemporary commentators to have been able to produce near-miraculous crop yields with a bare minimum of effort, while the Planters barely met subsistence needs.⁶²

Nova Scotia’s recent past as a French—and, perhaps more importantly, Catholic—dominated colony meant that it was viewed by many colonists as a particularly alien place, before the deportation but lingering even after. In 1750, James Fairservice

⁵⁹ Campbell, *History of Yarmouth*, 33.

⁶⁰ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 17-18.

⁶¹ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 19.

⁶² For comparisons between Planter and Acadian agricultural practices praising the Acadians, see for example John Robinson and Thomas Rispin, *A Journey through Nova-Scotia, Containing A Particular Account of the Country and its Inhabitants...* (York: 1774), 13-14, 22. For an account emphasizing the high yield of Acadian agriculture and minimal effort that contains a strong anti-French bias, see *The Importance of Settling and Fortifying Nova Scotia: With a Particular Account of the Climate, Soil, and Native Inhabitants of the Country* (London: 1751), 12-13. For an account of the poor state of Planter agriculture in the Annapolis Valley, see Gwyn, “Shaped by the Soil,” 81-89.

described his experiences in Nova Scotia during 1746-1746 Minas campaign as a test of both military might and religious will, and celebrated the news of the founding of Halifax. “I rejoice to hear of the spreading of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ in the dark places of the earth, even in Nova-Scotia,” he wrote, “where little more than blind Popery ever appeared amongst them.”⁶³ Geoffrey Plank, examining the diaries of New England soldiers who served in the Saint John River Valley during the Seven Years’ War, concludes that they viewed the region as menacing and apart from their New England world, where “the animals as well as the people seemed strange.”⁶⁴

This view of Nova Scotia as especially heathen and threatening persisted into the late 1760s. Ebenezer Gay, in his 1768 ordination sermon for Cumberland-bound Caleb Gannet, claimed Nova Scotia was “till of late years...wholly a land of heathenish darkness, and popish superstition, and where the labourers are still very few.”⁶⁵ Similarly, in an entry in his journal in June of 1767, Nehemiah Porter described Yarmouth Township, where he had only recently arrived, as the “ends of the earth.”⁶⁶ The previous day he had preached to the people of Cape Forchu from Joshua 24:5, a passage which

⁶³ James Fairservice, *Plain Dealing: or, The Proud Man Fairly Dealt With* (Boston: 1750), frontmatter.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Plank, “New England Soldiers in the St. John River Valley,” in *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* eds. Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 66.

⁶⁵ Ebenezer Gay, *A Call from Macedonia: A Sermon Preached at Hingham in New-England, October 12 1768 at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. Caleb Gannet, to the Work of the Ministry and Pastoral Care of a Society of Protestant Chritisans in the town of Cumberland and Province of Nova-Scotia* (Boston: John Fleet, 1768), 27-28.

⁶⁶ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 15 June 1767. Paraphrased from Isaiah 52:10: “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

asks hearers to choose between the true God and “the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell.”⁶⁷

Acadians were not simply part of Nova Scotia’s past. Although over 10,000 Acadians were deported from Nova Scotia in and after 1755, some escaped capture, and many more began to return to the region in a trickle after they were allowed to resettle starting in 1764.⁶⁸ Both Planters and the British authorities viewed the Acadians, like their sometime Native allies, with suspicion and viewed them as an even larger threat. For example, seeking permission for further expulsions, Jonathan Belcher wrote to Jeffrey Amherst in 1761 and expressed fear that the remaining Acadians would begin harassing the new settlements being made on their former lands.⁶⁹ Two years later, on being informed of a plan to settle a number of Acadians at Mirimichi, Governor Wilmot wrote to the Lords of Trade that if allowed, the Acadians there would,

pursue every scheme which could be immediately, or hereafter, beneficial to France, and to the detriment of His Majesty's Subjects; for I conceive My Lords, that the French King would find these people a numerous, active, zealous and steady body of subjects.⁷⁰

Planters and other British colonists also distrusted the intentions of Nova Scotia’s Acadians. A 1764 advertisement in the *Halifax Gazette* posted by a Dartmouth man

⁶⁷ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 14 June 1767.

⁶⁸ Maurice Basque, “Atlantic Realities, Acadian Identities, Arcadian Dreams,” in *Shaping an Agenda for Atlantic Canada* eds. J. Reid and D Savoie (Halifax and Winnepeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2011), 66.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Belcher to Jeffrey Amherst, 15 April 1761, 80, RG1 vol. 40, NSA.

⁷⁰ Montagu Wilmot to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 10 December 1763, 3, RG1 vol.39, NSA.

whose horse had disappeared “supposed [it] to have been carried away by the French.”⁷¹

Jonathan Scott reported in his diary that the Yarmouth militia was mustered in February 1773 after a rumour that the Acadians settled at St. Mary’s Bay had murdered the crew of a New England vessel that had run aground there.⁷²

The degree of Planter-Acadian interaction during the pre-Revolutionary period is unclear. Some scholars, such as Geoffrey Plank, have argued that after the brutal experience of the deportation Acadians voluntarily exiled themselves and avoided contact with outside groups.⁷³ While many of the resettled Acadians lived in remote areas such as Northern New Brunswick and the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, others lived near or even in Planter townships. Acadian tenant farmers, for example, worked tracts of land near their own former farms around Fort Cumberland.⁷⁴ Acadians were also brought in to teach new settlers in the Annapolis Valley townships how to repair the dykes.⁷⁵ As late as 1764, Acadians ran the Partridge Island ferry that connected the Annapolis Valley to the Chignecto settlements, and the island may have sustained an Acadian community as late as 1768.⁷⁶

⁷¹ “Strayed or Stolen...,” *The Halifax Gazette*, 13 December 1765.

⁷² Diary of Jonathan Scott, 25 February 1773.

⁷³ Plank, *Unsettled Conquest*, 164.

⁷⁴ Clarke, *Siege of Fort Cumberland*, 15, 116.

⁷⁵ Allen B. Robertson, "Estate Management in Falmouth Township: Spatial Development & Re-imagined Landscape," in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830* eds. T.S. Henderson and W. Robicheau (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2012), 74; Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 428.

⁷⁶ See Chapter three for more information on Acadians in Partridge Island in the late 1760s.

Acadian communities also sprang up near Yarmouth and Barrington. Jonathan Scott, for example, noted in a later account of his years in Nova Scotia that “the situation [in Chebogue] of the Church and people was about one hundred miles from any church or gospel minister...except the French Roman Catholics, who were on both sides of the town.”⁷⁷ Nehemiah Porter recorded that his farm was along the road to one of these settlements.⁷⁸ Henry Alline not only spoke with Acadian fiddle players in his hometown of Falmouth Township in the 1770s, he did so in French.⁷⁹ Maurice Basque points to the paucity of scholarship on Acadian interactions with others in the post-deportation years, arguing that while community histories and genealogies suggest cooperation and even marriage, these connections are not reflected in Acadian—or, for that matter, Planter—historiography.⁸⁰ While interaction with Acadians likely varied geographically and temporally, they were in many places an active presence by the late 1760s and not simply a memory of the Acadia that Nova Scotia had once been. The Acadians, therefore, represented a hostile, older tradition that crippled Planter claims to political rights and lent the province an alien nature even as it provided the new settlers with many obvious material advantages. The Acadian tradition could not be ignored: it was obvious in the land the Planters now claimed, and many Planters had Acadian neighbours or even tenants.

⁷⁷ Records of the Church at Minot, Maine, quoted in Trask and Trask, “The Reverend Jonathan Scott,” 263.

⁷⁸ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 8 July 1767.

⁷⁹ Henry Alline, *Journal*, 42.

⁸⁰ Basque, “Acadian Identities,” 67.

The Planter Migration: Themes and Patterns

Of the four major eighteenth-century demographic movements that created Nova Scotia—the expulsion of the Acadians, the arrival of the German-speaking “Foreign Protestants,” the Planters and the Loyalists—only the Planter and Foreign Protestant migrations were voluntary. Of these two, the Planter migration was by far the larger, involving perhaps three times as many people as the arrival of the Palatinate Foreign Protestants in 1750-1752.⁸¹ Its voluntary nature also makes it an outlier in the general trends of early modern Atlantic world migration, where the vast majority of population movements occurred in various states of unfreedom. For example, around 69% of transatlantic migrants from 1600-1800 were black Africans who arrived in chains, and of the European migrants, perhaps 75% were indentured servants, transported convicts or redemptioners.⁸² Indeed, of the Foreign Protestants recruited to Nova Scotia by the agent John Dick, the majority sailed as redemptioners, most bound to work for the governor of Nova Scotia on their arrival in order to pay the cost of their passage.⁸³ In contrast, the Planters arriving prior to 1762 were provided with free transport and arrived in the province without any such obligations. They therefore represent a unique moment in the history of eighteenth-century migration to Nova Scotia.

⁸¹ Winthrop Pickard Bell, *The “Foreign Protestants” and the Settlement of Nova Scotia: The History of a Piece of Arrested British Colonial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 284. Bell records 2,459 “souls” recruited by the efforts of the province’s main agent, John Dick between 1750-1752.

⁸² Games, “Migration,” 41.

⁸³ Bell, *The “Foreign Protestants,”* 146-151. Bell notes that this arrangement with the government was unique in the British colonies, and allowed the Foreign Protestants to discharge their debts far faster than similar redemptioners in places such as Philadelphia.

The idea, however, that the Planter migration was free requires significant qualification.⁸⁴ Some people arrived in the province as indentured servants, bound to serve in a particular household for a set number of years, under conditions that could be as harsh as slavery, if temporally limited. For example, Simeon Perkins heard a case in which a “servant girl” belonging to James McDonald accused him of abuse. Perkins’ response was to “advise[] her to be more obedient” and send her back.⁸⁵ Still others who arrived were slaves, either bought in the province or brought there in the 1760s. Simeon Perkins and John Seccombe both owned slaves, who lived and worked in their homes for many years but exist in the surviving records only marginally.⁸⁶ The majority of Planter migrants arrived in Nova Scotia as members of family groups. The dynamic of New England families, however, meant that not all members had equal say in the decision to move. Although many heads of households may have experienced the migration as a free one, it is unclear that their families and dependents experienced it as such. The wives, daughters and minor sons of Planter patriarchs who came with their families were legally under the control and authority of their father or husband.

⁸⁴ Most of Dick’s Foreign Protestants

⁸⁵ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1 July 1769.

⁸⁶ For references to slaveholding in Simeon Perkins’ diary, see Diary of Simeon Perkins, 7 March 1777, 12 July 1777, 29 August 1777. For a discussion of the Seccombe family’s slaves, Dinah and Solomon, see Alexandra Montgomery, “‘To Boston in Order for Chester:’ The Seccombe Family Diaries and Planter Mobility, 1761-1783,” in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830*, eds. T.S. Henderson and W. Robicheau (Fredericton: Acadensis Press, 2012), 144-145. For a more general discussion of slavery in Planter Nova Scotia, see Gary C. Hartlen, “Bound for Nova Scotia: Slaves in the Planter Migration, 1759-1800,” in *Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia 1759-1800*, ed. M. Conrad (Fredericton: Acadensis Press, 1991), 123-128; T.W. Smith, “The Slave in Canada,” *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society* 10 (1896-98).

Both roles within families and age conditioned how Planters experienced the migration. Daniel Vickers argues that in colonial New England, the defining categorization that determined how a person experienced life was neither gender nor class, but age. “One cannot make sense of early modern society,” he writes, “without serious attention to the significance of age, seniority, and the course of people's lives.”⁸⁷ Young men did not escape the authority of their fathers and begin arranging an independent life until they reached the age of 21, and they often remained subject to some kind of parental control until the father's death.⁸⁸ Girls were subject to parental authority until they married, generally some time in their early twenties.⁸⁹ Until that point, parents were responsible for the situation of their children, and in return children were expected to work hard for the good of the family unit.⁹⁰ The launching of children was taken very seriously within New England. For example, laws passed in Massachusetts in the mid-seventeenth century insisted that “parents and masters...breed and bring up their children and apprentices in some honest calling, labor or employment.”⁹¹

The logic of parental control of children and young people is evident in the Planter migration. The migration was undertaken not by individuals or young, fortune-seeking men, as was overwhelmingly the case elsewhere in the Atlantic world, but by

⁸⁷ Daniel Vickers with Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 5.

⁸⁸ Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 66-67.

⁸⁹ John T. Waters, “Family, Inheritance and Migration in Colonial New England: The Evidence from Guildford Connecticut,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 39,1 (Jan 1982): 66.

⁹⁰ Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 64-76.

⁹¹ Quoted in Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 24.

families. In these situations, heads of households went, and their dependents followed. Jonathan Scott, for example, moved to Yarmouth because his eldest brother Moses, his appointed guardian since the death of his father when he was a child, had moved there some years previous. Although he had tried to make it on his own in the Boston area, Scott was still a young man, not yet twenty, and lacked the necessary family and personal connections. He recalled in his diary that he “was out of employ and had neither money nor friends that could afford me much help.”⁹² Moving to Nova Scotia for Scott was not a free choice. Due to his youth, the absence of his father and his falling out with his former master, he recalled that he felt “almost obliged to go to Nova Scotia” despite an earlier, failed attempt after which Scott had “concluded never to go thither again.”⁹³

Staggered Migrations

As this example suggests, although families moved during the Planter migration, not all family members moved at once, and not always in the same direction. Migrations of families often stretched out over several years and could involve multiple trips back. This staggered approach meant that rather than resulting in a total separation from their New England lives, ties were continually renewed and maintained over the course of the several years needed to complete transition to Nova Scotia.⁹⁴ The Seccombe family of Harvard, Massachusetts and Chester, Nova Scotia provides an example of the extended and staggered nature of family migration. John Seccombe, a proprietor of Chester Township and the first settled minister, did not arrive to take up his lands until the

⁹² Diary of Jonathan Scott, October 1764.

⁹³ Diary of Jonathan Scott, October 1764.

⁹⁴ On this point see Games, “Migration,” 45.

summer of 1761. However, his two sons, John and Willis, then eighteen and twenty, had visited the township site the previous summer.⁹⁵ By the time Seccombe arrived in Chester his sons had returned to the family home in Harvard. Seccombe's wife and two daughters were also still in Harvard. While Seccombe was in Nova Scotia, his seventeen-year-old daughter Mercy, who also kept a diary, recorded "pleasuring" trips to the pond with her siblings, her health problems, lectures held at her father's former meeting house, the departure of her sister to visit relatives in Weston and the arrival of domestic help.⁹⁶ By late the next year, her father was back in Massachusetts, traveling with his wife to Medford and Weston, Massachusetts, their respective hometowns.⁹⁷ The following summer, Mercy's brothers left for Chester again.⁹⁸ Mercy's diary stops here, and does not resume again until early 1769. By this time, Mercy, her sister Hannah, her mother and father were all living in Nova Scotia. Her brothers John and Willis, now over twenty-one and eager to build independent lives, had returned once more to New England.

⁹⁵ Diary of John Seccombe, 14 August 1761. For the ages of Seccombe's children, see Thomas Baldwin ed., *Vital Records of Harvard, Massachusetts, to the year 1850* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Company, 1917), 95.

⁹⁶ Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 21 July-9 October 1761.

⁹⁷ Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 2 November 1762.

⁹⁸ Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 27 April 1763, 18 May 1763, 7 June 1763.

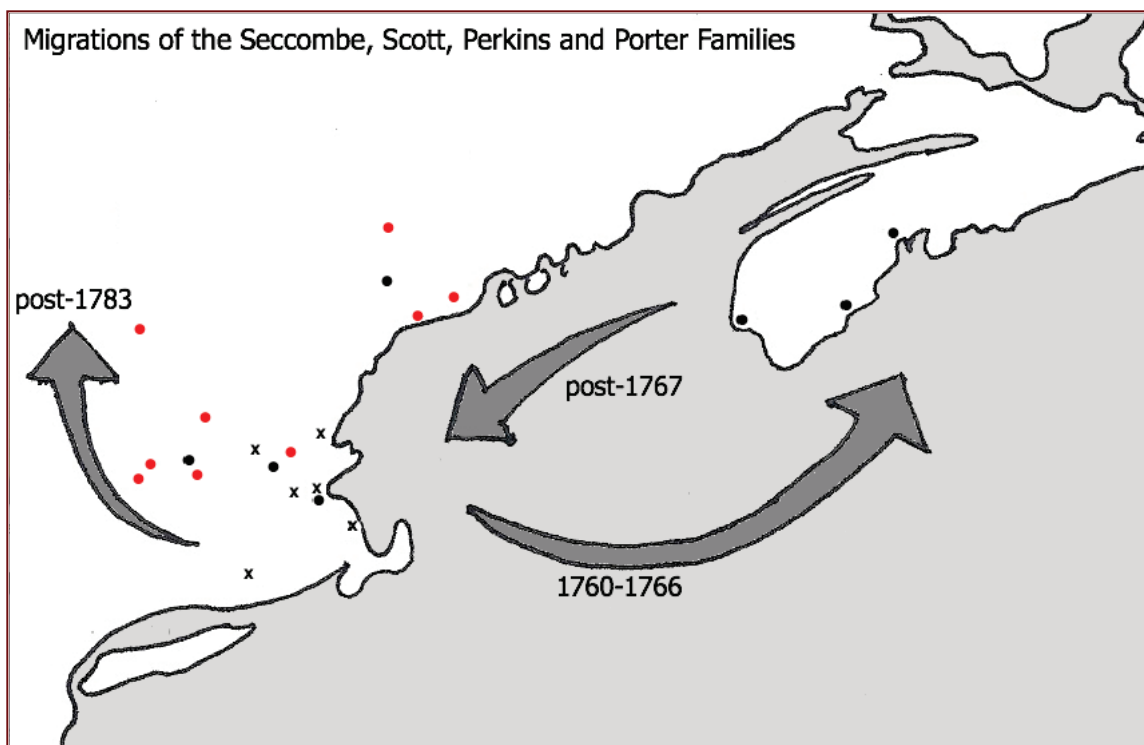


Figure 2.1: Migrations of the Seccombe, Scott, Perkins and Porter Families. Black crosses indicate birthplaces of the first generation. Black dots indicate first generation destinations. Red dots indicate second-generation destinations. Harvard and Ipswich, marked with crosses, were also second-generation destinations. There is some evidence that suggests two of Porter's sons eventually settled in Cuyahoga County, Ohio; this region is located west of the map area.

This staggered pattern of family arrival can also be seen within the other diaries examined for this project. Simeon Perkins, for example, did not retrieve his young son from New England until 1772, nearly eight years after his first arrival in Nova Scotia.⁹⁹ Nehemiah Porter, although his pattern is slightly different and will be discussed at length below, first arrived in Nova Scotia with his eldest son and then brought the rest of his children over the course of several years. Perkins also records in his diary a number of instances of families reuniting slowly in Liverpool. For example, the extended Godfrey family arrived in Liverpool from Chatham in 1767, as did the daughter of Captain

⁹⁹ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1 July 1772.

Doggett.¹⁰⁰ In 1774, William Dean's family came to Liverpool from Boston.¹⁰¹ Trans-Atlantic immigrants also brought their families over the course of several years. For example James McDonald, who had been in the Liverpool area at least since 1766, did not reunite with his wife and children that he had left behind in Scotland until June 1774.¹⁰² Planter family separations were much shorter, however, and the proximity of New England meant that individual family members could move between both spaces with relative ease, as with John Seccombe's return visit to New England in 1762.

Transplanted Children

In addition to bringing them to Nova Scotia, parents could also use their authority over their children to send them out of the family home. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich discusses the practice of sending out daughters to live with other family members for reasons of economic necessity, to provide girls with an education, and to supply family members near and far with much needed assistance with household labours.¹⁰³ Within communities, "women exchanged daughters the way they exchanged kettles and sleighs."¹⁰⁴ Sons, too, were exchanged within families, often under the auspices of apprenticeship, for the same reasons as their sisters. Simeon Perkins, for example, was apprenticed to a cousin, and Boston-born Benjamin Franklin was apprenticed to his older

¹⁰⁰ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 15 April 1767, 30 April 1767.

¹⁰¹ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 6 March 1774.

¹⁰² Diary of Simeon Perkins, 26 August 1766, 10 June 1774, 19 June 1774, 30 June 1774.

¹⁰³ Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, 80-82.

¹⁰⁴ Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, 81.

brother as a printer.¹⁰⁵ Such tactics were often born of economic necessity, by families who had too many children and without the means to employ or care for them at home, but they had the effect of strengthening ties between families and communities.¹⁰⁶

Heads of Planter households used these systems to maintain family ties with New England. In 1771 Nehemiah Porter discussed sending two of his daughters, Hannah, 19, then living at Yarmouth, and Sarah, 16, to assist their newly married sister Rebecca, 21, who had just begun setting up a farm household back in Ipswich.¹⁰⁷ He likely did so, as there is no later mention of Sarah at Yarmouth and her brother Nehemiah mentions Hannah going back and forth from New England in a letter to his brother-in-law in 1773.¹⁰⁸ Later, Porter, unmarried and wandering New England as an itinerant preacher, called Hannah from Yarmouth to assist in his peregrinating household.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Simeon Perkins arranged for his son Roger, 13, to be apprenticed to a relative in Norwich, Connecticut in 1773.¹¹⁰ Education was another impetus to send children back to New England. In 1774, Samuel Starr of Cornwallis sent his seventeen-year-old son Joseph to live with an uncle in Norwich in order to see to family affairs and complete his

¹⁰⁵ Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 24, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, 81; Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 23.

¹⁰⁷ Nehemiah Porter to his children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771, 11, MG1 vol.770A, NSA. For the ages of Porter's children, see Essex Institute, *Vital Records of Ipswich, Massachusetts, to the Year 1849, Vol. 1: Births* (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss, 1910), 603.

¹⁰⁸ Nehemiah Porter Jr. to Allan Baker, 29 March 1773, 13, MG1 vol.770A, NSA.

¹⁰⁹ Nehemiah Porter to his children in Yarmouth, 25 September 1773, 17, MG1 vol.770A, NSA.

¹¹⁰ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 18 October 1773, 4 January 1775.

education.¹¹¹ Although not Planters in the strictest sense, John Allan and Anna Winslow of Cumberland were both sent to New England as young people for educational reasons.¹¹²

The flow of youths on the cusp of independence could also go the other way. Three of Simeon Perkins's younger brothers, Jabez, Hezekiah and Ebenezer, spent significant amounts of time living with him in Liverpool, although they never settled or took up lands there. Hezekiah and Ebenezer especially seem to have been sent by Perkins' parents in Norwich in order to assist him and get experience in seafaring and trade. Hezekiah lived in Liverpool with Perkins as early as 1766, when he was fifteen, and sailed several fishing trips for his elder brother and otherwise assisted in his business.¹¹³ By 1772, at age 21, Hezekiah was sailing as a captain for Perkins. Soon afterward, however, he ceased living at Liverpool and set himself up independently in New England working the West Indies trade.¹¹⁴ In January 1773 Perkins described how his other brother Ebenezer, then seventeen, had been "sent by [his] parents" to live with him at Liverpool.¹¹⁵ Ebenezer's stay in Liverpool was less successful than his elder

¹¹¹ Joseph Starr to Samuel Starr, 1 November 1774, 2, MG1 vol.2631, NSA.

¹¹² Clarke, *The Siege of Fort Cumberland*, 11; Frederic Kidder, *Revolutionary Operations in Maine and Nova Scotia During the Revolution, Chiefly Compiled from the Journals and Letters of Colonel John Allan* (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1867), 10; Anna Green Winslow, *Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771*, ed. Alice Morse Earle (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1894), iii.

¹¹³ See for example Diary of Simeon Perkins, 20 September 1766, 21 June 1767, 8 September 1767, 2 June 1772.

¹¹⁴ Hezekiah leaves Liverpool: Diary of Simeon Perkins, 13 September 1773. For Hezekiah's operations in the West Indies, see Diary of Simeon Perkins, 8 April 1774, 8 September 1774, 4 January 1775.

¹¹⁵ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1 January 1773.

brother's, however. Less than a month after his arrival he injured his foot, and that August he returned to New England.¹¹⁶

Indeed, the case of Nehemiah Porter's children, discussed briefly above, may be best conceptualized as a case of New England youths being sent to Nova Scotia rather than the other way around. Porter's wife Rebecca died in 1763, leaving eight surviving children, five of who were under ten. Three years later Porter lost his parish and, with it, his livelihood. This made the issue of how to launch and care for his children one of real concern. Porter, who became minister of Chebacco Parrish, Massachusetts in 1750, was ordained at a time when offering ministers land and houses as part of their settlement was increasingly rare; by 1760, only 15% of contracts included any land for the minister.¹¹⁷ Losing his parish, besides being a devastating professional and personal setback, left him without a source of income and without land to fall back on. With all of his children still living at home this would have been a serious concern. The cheap, plentiful land in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where many of his parishioners may have fished and where some members of his extended family had already set up households, may have seemed the answer to his prayers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 26 January 1773, 19 August 1773.

¹¹⁷ James W. Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760," *Journal of Social History*, 9,2 (Winter 1975): 259.

¹¹⁸ For Chebacco fishermen in Nova Scotia, see Vickers, *Famers and Fishermen*, 193. Porter also mentions the arrival of "Chebano [sic] boats" in Cape Forchu harbour, Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 7 October 1767.

Both Porter and his eldest son, also named Nehemiah, then fourteen, were listed as grantees of Yarmouth in 1767.¹¹⁹ Porter and Nehemiah Jr. arrived there in June 1767, and less than a month after their arrival Porter viewed the lands he was to take up.¹²⁰ He was not overly impressed, and wrote that he “found some [of the land] to be good, other some not so good.”¹²¹ Nevertheless, on 8 July he took up his lands, 100 acres near Chebogue lying along the road to the “French Settlements.”¹²² Within three days Nehemiah Jr., was sowing tobacco. The next month he received two cows and ten sheep from New England, setting them to graze on his new land.¹²³

In the coming years he moved more of his children to Yarmouth, even as his own association with Nova Scotia—where he never stayed for longer than a summer—was weakening. In 1768 he moved his thirteen-year-old son John, and in 1769 his ten-year-old son Ebenezer and nineteen-year-old daughter Rebecca came with him to Yarmouth.¹²⁴ In 1771, the year Porter decided to end his attempts at a ministry in Nova Scotia, Nehemiah, Hannah, Ebenezer and eleven-year-old Joseph were living in Yarmouth.¹²⁵ They were under the care of Porter’s younger brother, Hasadiah Porter, who had arrived in Yarmouth in 1768. Porter wrote to them with detailed advice on how

¹¹⁹ Grantee list reproduced in Campbell, *History of Yarmouth*, 56.

¹²⁰ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 25 June 1767.

¹²¹ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 25 June 1767.

¹²² Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 8 July 1767.

¹²³ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 11 July 1767, 1 August 1767.

¹²⁴ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 23 August 1768, 3 June 1769.

¹²⁵ Nehemiah Porter to his children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771.

to get the things they would need to survive and grow the farm, and sent them a great deal of supplies. Porter knew that his separation would be prolonged, and that he would be unable to direct and raise his children as he might have otherwise wished. For example, Porter clearly felt some guilt for being unable to educate his children personally. “It may be you will never have such opportunity with me to learn as you have had,” he wrote.¹²⁶ He also advised them to pray, read the bible regularly, and attend worship services “if there be any,” and urged them to write to him first thing in spring about how they were and if they required anything.

Table 2.1: Nehemiah Porter's Children

Name	Born	Arrived in NS c.	Left NS c.	Married	Died
Rebecca	1750, Ipswich MA	1769	1769	1769, Ipswich MA	1825, Ipswich MA
Hannah	1751, Ipswich MA	1771?	1773	1776, Ipswich MA	1833, Ipswich MA
Nehemiah	1753, Ipswich MA	1767	n/a	1776, Yarmouth	?
John	1754, Ipswich MA	1768	1770?	1777, Ashfield MA	1838, New Lebanon NY
Sarah	1755, Ipswich MA	?	?	1776, Whatley, MA	1783, Whatley, MA
Samuel	1757, Ipswich MA	n/a	n/a	1782, Ashfield, MA	1836, Ohio?
Ebenezer	1758, Ipswich MA	1769	1773?	?	?
Joseph	1760, Ipswich MA	1771?	1774?	1784, Ashfield MA	1844, Ohio?
Elizabeth	1761, Ipswich, MA	n/a	n/a	n/a	c.1761, Ipswich MA

¹²⁶ Nehemiah Porter to his children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771.

Nevertheless, Porter and his children seem to have viewed their stay in Nova Scotia as temporary. Rebecca married in New England in late 1769, and by 1771 was living in Ipswich, Massachusetts, and had taken in her fourteen-year-old brother Samuel to help on the farm.¹²⁷ John also returned to New England before 1771 and was working as a house-joiner in Rowley, Massachusetts.¹²⁸ Hannah's return to New England in the 1770s has already been discussed, and Porter also planned for Ebenezer's return in fall 1773. Even Nehemiah Jr., who held land in his name and ran the family farm in his father's absence, was initially unsure about his future there. In 1773 he wrote to his brother-in-law Allan Baker,

I my self determine to lay [in Nova Scotia] till I can gitt a stock of cattle & some aforehand, so that I can gitt place in New England, which will be I hope in a few years if I should live & prosper & then I intend to come away, if the Lord will.¹²⁹

After their father was settled as the minister of Ashfield in 1774, all of the Porter children except Nehemiah Jr., Rebecca and Hannah—who married an Essex County farmer in 1776—moved to the western Massachusetts township to be with him. Only Nehemiah Jr. remained in Nova Scotia. After the end of the Revolutionary war, Porter deeded his Yarmouth lands to his son, no doubt happy to close the door on a place whose inhabitants he described in his letters as “hypocrites and workers of iniquity.”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Nehemiah Porter to his children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771.

¹²⁸ Nehemiah Porter to his children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771.

¹²⁹ Nehemiah Porter Jr. to Allan Baker, 29 March 1773.

¹³⁰ Land Transaction, Nehemiah Porter to Nehemiah Porter, 10 May 1784, 29, MG1 vol.770A, NSA; Nehemiah Porter to Nehemiah Porter Jr., 4 October 1776, 15, MG1 vol.770A, NSA.

Extended Visits

Dependents and young people were not the only ones who spent time in both New England and Nova Scotia. John Seccombe, Simeon Perkins and Jonathan Scott all spent significant time visiting New England prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution. Perkins was in New England from November 1767 to June 1769, and for two months in spring 1775.¹³¹ In addition to the time he spent in New England while his family was still living there, Seccombe spent several months in New England in late 1769.¹³² Scott went to New England in order to be ordained in 1772, staying there for almost two months.¹³³ The next year, he spent about a month there.¹³⁴ Ebenezer Fitch, who occasionally lived with the Seccombe family in Chester, spent almost seven months in New England in 1770.¹³⁵ As with Seccombe, Scott and Perkins, this extended stay did not signal an intention to abandon his Nova Scotian life. Within days of his return to Chester he was published to Seccombe's eldest daughter Hannah.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Perkins appears to have been in New England during the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, although his diary notes for this period seem to have been lost. Diary of Simeon Perkins, 20 March 1775, 29 May 1775.

¹³² Diary of Mercy Seccombe. 2 July 1769, 4 December 1769.

¹³³ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 20 March 1772, 5 May 1772, 8 May 1772.

¹³⁴ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 20 March 1773, 8 April 1773, 13 April 1773.

¹³⁵ Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 29 March 1770, 22 October 1770.

¹³⁶ Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 28 October 1770. Earlier references to "Hannah's quilt"—likely referring to the New England custom of preparing quilts for new brides before their marriage—suggest that Hannah and Eben's marriage was planned long before Eben's trip to New England. For reference to the quilt, see Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 9 August 1769. For the connection of quilting and marriage, see Laurel Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, 143-144.

Although it is hard to tell the reasons for and the itineraries of their trips from the documents left behind by Perkins, Seccombe and Fitch, Scott's diary records both how he spent his time in New England and his reasons. It is clear that Scott placed a great deal of importance in maintaining his New England ties. Although his first trip—for the purposes of ordination—is mostly self-explanatory, his second trip was taken explicitly to strengthen the links forged the previous year, to seek advice from New England authorities, and to visit with family members he had not seen for many years.¹³⁷ This second trip was not taken out of necessity for supplies or to tidy up loose ends of a finished New England life: instead, it was meant to strengthen bonds with New England, even as Scott made what he intended to be a permanent life for himself in Nova Scotia.¹³⁸

Communication Networks

Planters also maintained contact with New England through letter writing. The Seccombes, Porters, Scott and Perkins were all in regular letter contact with New England right up until the outbreak of the Revolution made contact with the rebellious colonies illegal. Letter writing allowed even less mobile Planters to maintain meaningful connections with their old friends and home towns. Mercy Seccombe, for example, suffered from poor health and only rarely records leaving the family home in Chester, Nova Scotia. However, she, like her father and mother, maintained frequent letter contact with New England, writing at least four times in the 1769-1770 period and regularly

¹³⁷ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 20 March 1773.

¹³⁸ Upon returning home from this trip, Scott remarked in his diary that "I felt content in my situation, and thought Yarmouth was the best place for me; and that I could do more good here, than anywhere else." Diary of Jonathan Scott, 13 April 1773.

mentioning letters sent and received by other members of her family.¹³⁹ Sadly, she does not mention to whom she is writing—perhaps to her errant brothers or her old friends from Harvard. Her father’s letters also show that she maintained an independent relationship with Rev. Bruin Romkes Comingo of Lunenburg, who seems to have been very concerned for her health and frequently sent her religious pamphlets, flowers and foodstuffs.¹⁴⁰

Mail using the official postal system had to be routed through Halifax, a process that could be very slow and required the payment of postage. Enforcing the use of this system was difficult. An announcement placed in the *Halifax Gazette* on 29 August 1765 warned readers that,

...whereas great numbers of letters are privately collected and delivered contrary to law, to the prejudice of the revenue; notice is hereby given, that all carriers, coachmen, wagon drivers, shippers of stage boats, watermen, wherrymen, dispersers of newspapers, and all other persons, whatever hereafter detected in the illegal collecting, conveying or delivering of letters & packet will be prosecuted with the utmost severity¹⁴¹

These warnings seem to have not had much effect. Five years later, James Stevens, the postmaster at Halifax, complained that,

sundry gentlemen...have frequently by whatever means received numbers of letters, [from] on board ships and vessels which have come into this harbor, which letters they have distributed about the town by their servants to the persons whose property they were to the great prejudice of the King's Revenue.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Diary of Mercy Seccombe, 28 July 1769, 3 August 1769, 2 September 1769, 20 March 1770; 17 March 1770, 5 May 1770, 8 May 1770, 29 September 1770.

¹⁴⁰ John Seccombe to Bruin Comingo, August 24 1772, April 3 1773, and February 2 1775, MFM 10995, NSA.

¹⁴¹ “Post-Office, Halifax Nova-Scotia, 20 June 1765,” *The Halifax Gazette*, 29 August 1765.

¹⁴² Letter from James Stevens, 20 March 1770, 20, RG24 vol.79, NSA.

The Perkins, Scott, Seccombe and Porter families most often received and sent mail through these informal means, passing them on to ships bound to or near the letter's destination and receiving letters and news from onboard incoming ships.¹⁴³ They often personally knew the captains of these ships, and these direct connections allowed outpost Planters to circumvent Halifax and maintain the privileged place of New England. For example, of 35 letters Simeon Perkins recorded receiving from New England correspondents prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, only three arrived to him via Halifax; another three are from unclear origins. The rest reached him directly from New England, usually from ships arriving from Boston or his hometown of Norwich, Connecticut.

Movement of people and information across the Gulf of Maine was facilitated by the large number of New England ships that regularly called on the harbours of Yarmouth, Barrington, Liverpool and Chester. Ships from New England—on trading voyages and, especially, fishing trips—are regularly mentioned by Simeon Perkins, Jonathan Scott, Nehemiah Porter, and John and Mercy Seccombe in the pages of their diaries throughout the 1760s and 70s. The crews of these ships were not passive visitors. They interacted with townspeople, passed on and heard news, carried letters and were active in the communities they visited. For example, Nehemiah Porter noted on 5 July 1767 “a number of vessels from divers parts” in Yarmouth harbour.¹⁴⁴ In August, he

¹⁴³ For a few of a great many examples of letters being given to or received from ship captains from or bound to New England, see *Diary of Mercy Seccombe*, 28 July 1769, 5 May 1770; *Diary of Simeon Perkins*, 2 December 1773, 13 February 1777; *Diary of Nehemiah Porter*, 15 August 1767.

¹⁴⁴ *Diary of Nehemiah Porter*, 5 July 1767.

mentioned the presence of several fishing vessels from Marblehead and Manchester, and “a considerable number of their hands” attended meeting on Sunday, including one man known to Porter from Massachusetts.¹⁴⁵ In addition, many Planters who had settled in Nova Scotia and were involved in shipping or fishing regularly made the trip between Nova Scotia and New England. Simeon Perkins, for example, mentions over 20 vessels bound for or arriving from his hometown of Norwich between 1767 and 1775, several of which were under his employ.¹⁴⁶

Planters also used these direct connections in order to obtain passage for themselves and their families, rather than first travelling to Halifax or chartering their own vessels. For example, Jonathan Scott gained passage between Yarmouth and New England and Yarmouth and Halifax by going along with his father-in-law’s fishing vessel, even working the passage that brought him to Massachusetts to be ordained as a minister.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Nehemiah Porter gained passage back to Chebacco in October 1767 aboard a Chebacco fishing vessel, even though it meant several stops to fish along the way.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 16 August 1767.

¹⁴⁶ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 3 July 1767, 6 July 1767, 31 August 1767, 5 September 1767, 22 October 1767, 9 November 1767, 21 November 1767, 2 July 1769, 8 July 1769, 20 May 1770, 23 May 1770, 1 July 1772, 15 December 1772, 8 May 1773, 19 May 1773, 5 September 1773, 7 September 1773, 1 October 1773, 2 June 1774, 14 August 1774, 22 September 1774, 29 November 1774, 8 September 1775, 16 December 1775, 17 December 1775. Perkin’s diary is incomplete for 1771, 1768 and much of 1766, 1767 and 1772, so the number is likely much higher.

¹⁴⁷ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 21 March 1772.

¹⁴⁸ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 15 October 1767.

Continued Planter connections with New England did not preclude the creation of new ties in Nova Scotia. For example, close to half of Simeon Perkins' correspondents during the pre-Revolutionary period were from Halifax or other rural Nova Scotian townships. Furthermore, although John Seccombe, Simeon Perkins and Jonathan Scott each made extended trips back to New England prior to 1776, they also made trips to Halifax (table 2.2). Even Nehemiah Porter made at least one trip to Halifax in 1770, when he preached for a month at Mather's Meeting House.¹⁴⁹ In each case Halifax trips occurred later than those to New England. In the case of Simeon Perkins, his first recorded trip to Halifax was not until after the outbreak of the Revolution.¹⁵⁰ However, these trips also occurred multiple times. In the case of Jonathan Scott, his trips to Halifax seem to have in some way replaced his trips to New England, which were carried out at least in part for the purposes of religious instruction and discourse.¹⁵¹ After his first visit to Halifax in 1774, Scott was delighted to find a community of like-minded religious people:

¹⁴⁹ Nehemiah Porter to Elliot and Cooper, 16 November 1770, in *Congregational Churches*, 8-9.

¹⁵⁰ As a magistrate and member of the Assembly, it seems very likely that Perkins had been to Halifax at least once before. If so, however, they are not recorded in his diary, and while he was in regular contact with Halifax people it was all through mail or their visits to Liverpool. He was also adept at finding excuses to avoid going there, and his trip in 1775 was only due to the extenuating circumstances of the growing colonial conflict and the difficult position of Liverpool in relation to this.

¹⁵¹ One of Scott's complaints about Yarmouth that he recorded prior to his 1792 move to Maine was that there was no one to discuss religious issues with.

I thought there were none that feared God in Halifax, but blessed be a gracious God I find myself mistaken; and thanks be to his holy name that he has brought me here to meet so many of the excellent of the earth; in whom I greatly delight and with whom, through grace, I hope to dwell for ever.¹⁵²

Table 2.2: Seccombe, Perkins, Scott and Porter Trips to New England and Halifax to 1776. Plus signs indicate that additional trips are suggested but not explicitly confirmed in the surviving sources.

Name	Date of Arrival in Nova Scotia	First Trip Back to New England	Number of NE Trips to 1776	First Trip to Halifax	Number of Halifax Trips to 1776
John Seccombe	1761	1762	2+	1761	9+
Simeon Perkins	1762	1764	3	1775	2
Jonathan Scott	1764	1764	3	1774	3
Nehemiah Porter	1767	1767	5+	1770	1

Conclusion

The New England Planters came from a culture in which migration was a normal and expected part of life and which did not necessarily preclude older connections and contacts. Far from being isolated from their New England families by their moves, many Planters were preoccupied with them, and maintained close, regular contact up to the Revolutionary war. Despite the normalcy of migration in New England culture and the variety of strategies Planters used to maintain contacts, Nova Scotia's long history of European settlement and the distinctly un-New England goals of the government at Halifax meant that the Planter migration was unlike contemporary migrations to New

¹⁵² Diary of Jonathan Scott, 13 July 1774.

Hampshire and Maine. Therefore, although New Englanders in Nova Scotia were able to maintain ties with their homelands to great degree, they would prove unable to reproduce the societies from which they came. Nowhere was this fact more evident than in the attempts to “plant” the Congregationalist Church in Nova Scotia.

Chapter Three

The Builders Build in Vain: Reproducing Congregationalism

Congregationalism, a defining aspect of New England culture, was never completely reproduced in Nova Scotia. This was due to the unsettled conditions of the colony, structural aspects that favoured Anglicanism and disrupted Congregationalism, and a distinct lack of attachment to the tenants of Congregationalism displayed by the colonists in the face of a host of new religious options, especially Anglicanism, Presbyterianism and, later, Methodism and Baptist churches. By 1770, Congregationalism was in crisis in the province. This chapter explores the evolution of Congregationalism in Nova Scotia through the 1760s and 70s, arguing that while Planters tended to keep up connections to New England, the religious environment of the province de-emphasized the importance of New England almost immediately in favour of links within the province and across the Atlantic. Those who desired a reproduction of New England religious life would not find it in Nova Scotia.

Most of the New Englanders who came to Nova Scotia in the early 1760s were Congregationalists, a Calvinist denomination that emphasizes the church as a community of visible saints who, through bodies known as “congregations,” independently manage their own affairs. As a religious community that existed ubiquitously and almost exclusively in the New England colonies, Congregationalists in Nova Scotia relied on strong connections back to Massachusetts and Connecticut. New Englanders in Nova Scotia sought Harvard and Yale educated ministers for their new communities. They also looked across the Gulf of Maine for answers to their religious problems, and as a source of support for their fledgling congregations. For example, Sylvanus Conant and Solomon

Reed of Middleborough, Massachusetts arrived in Yarmouth in the summer of 1770 at the invitation of the Chebogue Church in order to settle a dispute between the parishioners of Chebogue and Rev. John Frost.¹ The year before, the church at Cornwallis petitioned several Boston-area congregations for aid to help them in supporting their minister, Benajah Phelps.² Throughout the 1760s and 70s, religion was a key line of communication between rural Nova Scotia and populous southern New England.

Nova Scotia's New Englanders, however, were never able to reproduce the Congregational ideal of their home colonies. Despite initial efforts, the New England religious landscape of settled, Harvard- and Yale-educated ministers was never a reality in Planter Nova Scotia. Although itinerant ministers and religious dissent had existed in New England in increasing numbers following the Methodist-inspired "Great Awakening" of the 1740s, the ideal remained a settled ministry.³ In such an arrangement, a community would come together to call a specific individual to be their minister. If he accepted that call, the minister was supposed to remain with that congregation for the rest of his career. For example, Ebenezer Gay's ordination sermon for Caleb Gannet, called to Cumberland in 1768, emphasized this relationship, arguing that in an ideal society all

¹ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 20 May 1770.

² Beckwith, Huntington, Bigalow, Newcomb, Cogswell and Morton to Elliot, 8 November 1769, in *Congregational Churches in Nova Scotia*, ed. Samuel A. Green (Cambridge: John Wilson & Son, 1888), 3-5.

³ Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 187.

ministers would be called to particular churches, “lest many being ordained *sine titulo*... should corrupt and dishonour the ministry.”⁴

However, very few Nova Scotian congregations in the Planter years experienced this relationship. Ministers were difficult to attract to the colony, and those who stayed rarely remained more than a few years. This was exacerbated by the political structure of the colony, which made it difficult to raise the minister’s rate and encouraged the activities of Anglican missionaries. Contrary to much writing about New England religion, which tends to emphasize the importance of orthodoxy and attachment to Congregationalism even beyond the period of the Great Awakening, most Planters seem to have been eager to experiment religiously.⁵ Anglicanism, Presbyterianism and Methodism provided attractive alternatives. Religion in Planter communities, even where nominally dissenting, was flexible and tended to reject attempts to reproduce strict denominational lines. In response, what was called Congregationalism was often a hodgepodge of dissenting sects, rules sufficiently relaxed to allow things such as uneducated ministers and itinerancies that existed only on the margins of New England

⁴ Gay, *Call from Macedonia*, 16.

⁵ Especially in the early days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Congregationalism’s defining characteristic was its strict orthodoxy and punishing treatment of religious dissent, a characteristic that forms the cornerstone of Perry Miller’s *New England Mind*. Although it is generally agreed that the religious atmosphere in the New England colonies had relaxed and opened up after the Great Awakening of the 1740s, many historians argue for a strong continuity of the importance of at least the idea of colony-wide Congregational consensus, for example Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture*, 96. For other examples of the enforcement of Congregational orthodoxy into the mid-eighteenth century, see Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms*, 43. Zuckerman also attributes Anglican efforts to expand into New England as a contributing factor to “the creation of a revolutionary situation in Massachusetts.” *Ibid.*, 248.

life. By the end of the eighteenth century, New England Calvinist Congregationalism hardly existed in Nova Scotia at all.⁶

Religion has been arguably the most studied aspect of the New England Planter communities. Following Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk's *A People Highly Favoured of God*, most of this work has focused on the "New Light" revival of Henry Alline.⁷ This was an enthusiastic, if theologically eccentric movement that swept the province from 1776-1783. Rawlyk and Stewart framed this movement as the watershed moment that allowed the New Englanders of Nova Scotia to become Nova Scotian, finally turning their focus from the New England colonies and creating a uniquely Nova Scotian religious expression in the midst of the chaos of war.⁸ The Planters, Rawlyk and Stewart argued, had by removing to Nova Scotia missed out on the crucial decade that radicalized New England and allowed for the birth of a revolutionary movement. Instead, the outlook of the Planters remained stuck in "traditional values and assumptions [that] failed to transcend their traditionality."⁹ This "traditionality" was confronted by the reality of a New England that had changed in ways incomprehensible to the Planters after the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, sending the Planters into a spiraling

⁶ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 131.

⁷ For some of the literature on Alline in addition to *A People Highly Favoured of God*, much of it clustered around the two hundredth anniversary of his death, see for example George Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984); J.M. Bumstead, *Henry Alline, 1748-1784* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1984). as well as the edited edition of his diary and the diary of his follower, John Payzant.

⁸ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 180-4.

⁹ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 4.

identity crisis only resolved by “accept[ance of] Alline's analysis of contemporary events” and religious conversion.¹⁰

While study of Henry Alline has waned in recent years, religion in Planter Nova Scotia remains an important area of study. Elizabeth Mancke in *Fault Lines of Empire*, argues that Congregationalism in Nova Scotia underwent a transformation even before Alline’s revival. The political structure of the Nova Scotian townships, which disallowed town government and disrupted the traditional New England pattern of life, removed key factors of religious cohesion.¹¹ Congregationalism, moreover, was already on the decline throughout New England even before the arrival of the Planters.¹² In the absence of mechanisms such as the ability to tax the town for the minister’s rate, Mancke argues, it simply declined faster in Nova Scotia. Examining the religious situation in the Township of Liverpool, Mancke finds that by the time the Allinite revival reached the town in the early 1780s, Congregationalism along traditional lines was already on its last legs.¹³ Instead of a radical break with a New England they no longer recognized, Mancke argues that in Liverpool Alline’s revival was more about “unresolved New England issues” signaling a desire to “maintain continuity with [the] New England past” in the absence of a strong Congregational church.¹⁴

¹⁰ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, xxii.

¹¹ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 111.

¹² Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 132.

¹³ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 129.

¹⁴ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 129-30.

Building on Mancke's argument that Nova Scotian Congregationalism experienced a decline in the early years of settlement, this chapter examines its fate beyond Liverpool and throughout the colony. It first briefly discusses the state of Congregationalism in New England during the late 1750s and 1760s, the time during which most Planters arrived in the Province, in order to provide context and a sense of the community that New England settlers hoped to "plant" in Nova Scotia. It then discusses the impediments to Congregationalism in Nova Scotia, both those that it shared with other regions only recently settled by European Protestants—for example, the difficulty of attracting ministers to remote places and paying them adequately—and those that were unique to the province, such as the especially aggressive presence of the Church of England. It will then investigate three case studies, examining the religious careers of three Congregationalist ministers who were active in Nova Scotia prior to the Revolutionary War: Nehemiah Porter, Jonathan Scott and John Seccombe. The fact that Congregationalism was never able to gain traction in the province had important implications for the ties and allegiances of New England Planters, as well as their responses to the Revolutionary Crisis.

Settled Congregationalism

The Congregationalist Church was a defining feature of New England and one of the principal institutions organizing civic life in New England's towns. Along with township government and a shared English ethnic background, Congregationalism was a key aspect of New England culture that made it distinct from that of the other American colonies. Puritan religion was central to the structure of New England life and its pattern

of land use and migration. As Virginia DeJohn Anderson argues, in the seventeenth century “there could be no town without its church and no church without its town.”¹⁵ The minister, therefore, was the key player of the early phase of New England expansion. Richard Bushman, describing the migrants who settled Connecticut in the seventeenth century, writes that “often...the minister led the migration, and a cross-section of an entire community was transplanted. Social forms were never allowed to disintegrate.”¹⁶ Successful transplantation of Puritan communalism that centered on the church, perhaps even more so than reproduction of township government and New England forms of land distribution, was the means by which New England expanded from the first scattered communities of the Bay Colony to encompass four colonies by the mid-eighteenth century. Of these, only Rhode Island was a religiously pluralistic colony; in the others, aside from royally appointed governors and a few elite families, non-Congregationalists existed on the fringes of society.

The strength and centrality of the New England church, however, was rocked by the great religious revival of the 1740s known as the Great Awakening. Across New England, religious groups split into “old lights” who opposed the revival and the “new lights” who supported it. While the Congregational church survived and New England remained a deeply religious culture, the old hegemony of the Puritan church had been permanently altered and new religious options and itinerant preachers became fixtures of the landscape.

¹⁵ Anderson, *New England's Generation*, 93.

¹⁶ Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 56.

Migrant Congregationalism

Nova Scotia faced a number of problems in reproducing New England religious traditions that were shared by similar remote, New England-settled regions, such as Down East Maine.¹⁷ Chief among them was attracting the young, educated men who were the ideal candidates for a settled town minister. Career opportunities for prospective ministers were stagnant in the settled heartland but steadily rising along the fringes of settlement as New Englanders pushed further into the backcountry.¹⁸ These jobs, sometimes deep in the woods and far from the trappings of society and culture, proved to be a hard sell to men just leaving Harvard and Yale. James Schmotter describes the increase of available positions during the second half of the eighteenth century as “quantitative, not qualitative,” and argues that they were deeply unattractive to the educated, ambitious young men the new townships sought to employ.¹⁹ The new townships of New Hampshire, Maine and Nova Scotia responded to ministerial unwillingness by including often-significant parcels of land in ministerial settlements, a practice almost unheard of in southern New England after 1750.²⁰

However, as a colony in which the Church of England was the established religion, and which had only a few years before been home to thousands of French Catholic Acadians, Nova Scotia had a reputation in the New England colonies as a

¹⁷ See for example Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 113, 129.

¹⁸ Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers,” 255.

¹⁹ Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers,” 256.

²⁰ Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers,” 259.

particularly alien place.²¹ They therefore may have faced even greater troubles in attracting the necessary educated ministers willing to take on what was essentially a frontier mission. Gay's ordination sermon for Gannet, in addition to describing the province as "distant," "heathenish" and devoid of religious men, recognized a common unwillingness to go there. To that end, Gay noted encouragingly that Gannet had brought "up no such report of it, as should dishearten his brethren, the sons of New-England, and of Harvard, from endeavouring, when they may be called, to go over, and help the people there."²²

Townships struggled to find ministers, and searches lasted for many years. For example, Cornwallis Township began its search in 1761, but did not obtain a settled minister until five years later.²³ Others were never able to obtain a minister. There were also false starts: Horton Township sent a call to Daniel Fuller to minister to them in February of 1766, but he seems to have refused.²⁴ This may be the same Daniel Fuller who was assistant minister in Gloucester, Massachusetts, beginning in 1769, and was promoted to full pastor in 1777.²⁵ If that is the case, Fuller may have hedged his bets, putting off the start of his career in order to wait for a position closer to his hometown of

²¹ See for example Plank, "New England Soldiers in the St. John River Valley," 66-67; Gay, *A Call from Macedonia*, 27-28, 32.

²² Gay, *A Call from Macedonia*, 32.

²³ Handley Chipman to Daniel Cock and David Smith, 30 June 1777, D1900.001.2.1, Handley Chipman Deposit, Esther Clark Wright Archives.

²⁴ Horton Subscribers to Rev. Mr. Daniel Fuller, 25 February 1766, 245, MG1 vol.181, NSA.

²⁵ Daniel Fuller, *The Diary of the Rev. Daniel Fuller, With his Account of his Family*, ed. D. Appleton (New York: De Vinne Press, 1894), 4.

Middleton.²⁶ The preachers who did come to Nova Scotia were often slightly irregular, or who may have had problems finding more desirable positions in southern New England. For example, of the six educated New England Congregationalist ministers known to have been in province in 1770, three—Nehemiah Porter of Yarmouth, Israel Cheever of Liverpool and John Seccombe of Chester—had been removed from their previous parishes. Benajah Phelps of Cornwallis, meanwhile, was dogged his entire career by accusations of an irregular ordination and Presbyterian sympathies.²⁷

A common pattern emerged by the late 1760s. Ministers would be called by Planter communities, only to remain for a few short seasons, fall out with the parish, and return to New England (table 3.1). For example, Phelps, the Yale-educated pastor of Cornwallis, stayed in Nova Scotia from 1766 to 1778.²⁸ Caleb Gannett, Harvard-educated minister at Cumberland, arrived in 1768 and stayed only three years.²⁹ Asareleh Morse graduated from Harvard in 1767 and accepted a call to Granville some time around 1770 or 1771; however, in 1784 he was ordained minister of the West Tisbury Church on

²⁶ Fuller, *Diary of Rev. Fuller*, 17.

²⁷ Peter Haring Judd. "An 'Uncompromising Whig' and Rebel Pastor in Planter Nova Scotia, 1766-1778," in *Planter Links: Community and Culture in Colonial Nova Scotia*, ed. M. Conrad and B. Moody (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2001), 62.

²⁸ Judd, "Uncompromising Whig," 58, 75-76.

²⁹ John Adams, *The Papers of John Adams*, vol. 2, ed. R.J. Taylor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 411-2. Gannet was later a steward at Harvard College, which holds a diary written by him for the years 1776-1782. The 1776 entries are discussed in Maurice W. Armstrong, "The Diary of Caleb Gannet for the Year 1776," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3,1 (Jan 1946): 117-122.

Martha's Vineyard, and had been living for a few years on Cape Cod.³⁰ Samuel Wood, Harvard class of 1745, left Barrington shortly before the outbreak of the Revolutionary war after barely five years of service.³¹ Nehemiah Porter preached sporadically at Yarmouth from 1767-1771, never settling there on a year-round basis. Israel Cheever, pastor at Liverpool, remained in the province his whole life but was forced to resign from the ministry in 1782 after falling out with his flock. He only narrowly survived church crises in 1772 and 1776-1777.³² Indeed, only one, John Seccombe of Chester, Harvard class of 1731, was able to make a full career in Nova Scotia.³³ He lived in Chester until his death in 1792, leaving the ministry only when he was "so enfeebled in body he could not climb the pulpit stairs."³⁴

³⁰ Payzant, *Journal*, 21, n17 108-109; Charles E. Banks, "Annals of West Tisbury" in *History of Martha's Vineyard* (Boston: George H. Dean, 1911), 92-93; W.A. Calnek, *History of the County of Annapolis*, ed. A.W. Savary (Toronto: William Briggs, 1897), 302.

³¹ Edwin Crowell, *A History of Barrington Township and Vicinity, Shelburne County, Nova Scotia 1604-1870* (Yarmouth: 1900), 598-9.

³² Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 125; Diary of Simeon Perkins, 28 April 1772, 1 May 1772, 3 May 1776, 21 May 1776, 1 August 1776, 6 October 1776, 10 October 1776, 30 April 1777.

³³ Buggy, "Seccombe." *DCB*. Samuel Sheldon Poole, educated at Harvard, arrived in Yarmouth in 1774 after being called by the church at Cape Forchu, and preached for a time at Liverpool in 1777. However, while he went on to have a full Nova Scotian career as a Justice of the Peace and representative for the township in the assembly, he does not seem to have kept up his preaching. Campbell, *History of Yarmouth*, 83-84; Diary of Jonathan Scott, 21 August 1774; Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 124.

³⁴ "Deaths," *Royal Gazette*, November 27 1792; Henry S. Nourse, *History of the Town of Harvard, Massachusetts 1732-1893* (Salem: Higginson Book Company, 2005), 195.

Table 3.1: New England Congregationalist Ministers in Nova Scotia Before the Revolution

Name	Education	Community	Start	End	Reason
Aaron Cleveland	Harvard	Halifax	1750	1753	Converted to Anglicanism
John Seccombe	Harvard	Chester	1761	1792	Death
Israel Cheever	Harvard	Liverpool	1761	1782	Dismissed; Stayed in Nova Scotia
Benajah Phelps	Yale	Cornwallis	1766	1778	New England
Nehemiah Porter	Harvard	Yarmouth (Cape Forchu)	1767	1771	New England
Samuel Wood	Harvard	Barrington	1767	c.1773	New England
Caleb Gannett	Harvard	Cumberland	1768	1771	New England
John Frost	n/a	Argyle/Yarmouth	1769	c.1771	Death?
Asareleh Morse	Harvard	Granville	c.1770	c.1780	New England
Jonathan Scott	n/a	Yarmouth (Chebogue)	1772	1792	New England
Sheldon Poole	Harvard	Yarmouth (Cape Forchu)	1774	post-1777	Left ministry; stayed in Nova Scotia

Congregationalists were not the only religious community to have problems with pastors in Planter Nova Scotia. James Lyon, a Princeton-educated Presbyterian minister who was active at Halifax, Onslow and Pictou, left Nova Scotia for Machias, Maine in

1771, where he was active in the Revolutionary cause.³⁵ James Murdoch, also a Presbyterian, who was settled at Horton, did not leave the province, but was forced out of his office in the 1780s and died “in a rude log dwelling, with no stipend and no meeting-house, sick and dispirited” in 1799.³⁶ Baptist Ebenezer Moulton, the first minister at Yarmouth, returned to Massachusetts in the late 1760s after preaching in Yarmouth and the Annapolis Valley for the better part of a decade.³⁷ The Calvinists at Lunenburg, meanwhile, had been petitioning German congregations in the mid-Atlantic colonies for a minister for several years. In 1770 they took matters into their own hands and ordained one of their own, Bruin Romkes Comingo.³⁸ In general, it is far easier to find examples of religious figures who left Nova Scotia in these years than those who stayed.

By the early 1770s, it had become clear that the traditional mechanisms of Congregationalism would not work in Nova Scotia. In response, churches and religious societies began to relax rules and look for compromises in order to obtain religious leaders for their communities. For example, some began ordaining men who lacked formal education, and were already members of the communities that required ministrations, a practice that was seriously frowned upon by New England Congregationalists. An early example is John Frost of Argyle, who in 1769 “was

³⁵ Timothy J. McGee, “James Lyon,” *DCB*; Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 112. During the Revolutionary war, Lyon actively advocated for the annexation of Nova Scotia.

³⁶ Philip Girard, “Preacher to Planter to Pariah: The Vicissitudes of the Reverend James Murdoch,” in *Planter Links: Community and Culture in Colonial Nova Scotia*, ed. M. Conrad and B. Moody (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2001), 106.

³⁷ Diary of Jonathan Scott, p.91, n5.

³⁸ James Murdoch, “An Appendix, Containing the Reasons of the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Bruin Romcas Comingo,” in John Seccombe, *A Sermon Preached at Halifax, July 3d, 1770, At the Ordination of the Rev. Bruin Romcas Comingo* (Halifax: 1770), 2.

ordained by the brethren, without any assistance, either ministers or messengers from other congregations.”³⁹ Another was the ordination of Jonathan Scott in 1772, which, unlike that of Frost, took place in New England under the supervision of a committee of ministers.

The most publicized of these ordinations was that of Bruin Romkes Comingo in 1770. An uneducated Lunenburg fisherman of German decent, his ordination represents a new approach to bringing Protestantism to rural Nova Scotia, as well as the blurring of denominational lines and collapse of traditional distinctions already present in the province. The makeup of the ceremony is telling in this regard. Meant to serve a congregation of German Calvinists, Comingo was ordained by a committee of Congregationalists and Presbyterians under the direction of John Seccombe at a ceremony in Halifax attended principally by Anglicans.⁴⁰

It was a controversial action, and the ordination ceremony was published, according to John Seccombe, in order to “prevent misrepresentations of the transactions of [the] day.”⁴¹ The irregularity of the event is clear throughout the proceedings. In explaining to the assembly the reasons for ordaining Comingo, Rev. James Murdoch, the Presbyterian minister of Horton, acknowledged that the primary objection to Comingo’s ordination was that “he has not had a liberal education, and is unacquainted with the languages.”⁴² In response, Seccombe focused his ordination sermon on the idea that

³⁹ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 21 September 1769.

⁴⁰ Seccombe, *A Sermon Preached at Halifax*, 26.

⁴¹ Seccombe, *A Sermon Preached at Halifax*, unpaginated front matter.

⁴² Murdoch, “Appendix,” 3.

grace, rather than formal learning, was the most important trait for a pastor, although he did acknowledge the “peculiar disadvantages” that Comingo faced as an uneducated man.⁴³ Both Seccombe and Murdoch pointed to Continental precedents, and argued that such things had been practiced before “in cases of necessity.”⁴⁴ All present acknowledged the irregularity and undesirability of the ordination, but argued that the situation in Nova Scotia made it necessary.

Regardless of how a minister was ordained or his educational background, a major barrier to the transplantation of Congregationalism in Nova Scotia was the question of ministerial support. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, town governments taxed the population for the support of the minister. In Nova Scotia, town government was banned, and this was technically impossible, although individual communities took it upon themselves to find ways to raise the minister’s rate by voluntary or involuntary contributions from the parishioners.⁴⁵ Nova Scotian ministers regularly went unpaid, a fact frequently lamented by Scott, Porter and Seccombe, and the impoverished state of the colony’s dissenting ministers was the impetus behind several rounds of petitioning and pleas for support both in New England and the British Isles.⁴⁶ Indeed, Elizabeth

⁴³ Seccombe, *A Sermon Preached at Halifax*, 20.

⁴⁴ Murdoch, “Appendix,” 4.

⁴⁵ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 71. See also Chipman to Cock and Smith, 30 June 1777, where Chipman discusses how the Church and Society at Cornwallis chose to support their new minister by compulsory subscription and Chipman’s objections to same.

⁴⁶ For example, “Halifax, in Nova Scotia,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, March 26 1770.

Mancke argues that the lack of a mechanism to ensure that ministers were adequately paid was the principal reason for Congregationalism's speedy collapse in Nova Scotia.⁴⁷

Pay was certainly an issue that caused a great deal of ill feeling between ministers and their congregations. In 1776, Nehemiah Porter wrote bitterly to his son at Yarmouth that he “omit[ted] to ask the people [at Yarmouth] for my wages because I suppose they are so hardened as not to know their sin in keeping them back.”⁴⁸ Scott lamented in his diary he had “but little to support my family, but what I labour with my hands to procure.”⁴⁹ His inability to support himself contributed to his decision to leave Yarmouth in 1792.⁵⁰ By 1770, John Seccombe, who had no fixed salary, had been reduced “to very necessitous circumstances.”⁵¹ According to a letter written by Benjamin Gerrish and Malachy Salter of Halifax trying to obtain support for the province's dissenting ministers, of eight settled Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers residing in Nova Scotia in 1770, all but two were destitute.⁵² One of those two, Caleb Gannet, left the province the following year in part due to “inadequate support.”⁵³ Lack of regular payment forced many ministers into side work in order to ensure the survival of themselves and their families, a situation widely understood to be less than ideal. “They who preach the gospel

⁴⁷ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 122.

⁴⁸ Nehemiah Porter to Nehemiah Porter Jr., 4 October 1776, 25, vol.770A, MG1, NSA.

⁴⁹ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 17 August 1772.

⁵⁰ Diary of Jonathan Scott, p.95-97.

⁵¹ Benjamin Gerrish and Malachy Salter to Andrew Eliot and Samuel Cooper, 18 January 1770, in *Congregational Churches*, 6.

⁵² Gerrish and Salter to Eliot and Cooper, 6-8.

⁵³ Gerrish and Salter to Eliot and Cooper, 7 n1.

should live of the gospel” was a common refrain, but men like Scott, who farmed and raised cattle on the side, had little choice.⁵⁴

Money, however, was not the only cause of Congregationalism’s troubles in Nova Scotia. Failure to pay ministers was by no means a solely Nova Scotian, or even Congregational, problem. Even places like Maine, which had legal tax mechanisms in place to theoretically ensure that minister’s salaries would be paid, were often in arrears.⁵⁵ Indeed, throughout New England, pay disputes between ministers and their flocks were one of the most common causes of friction between ministers and congregations. James Schmotter, for instance, estimates that between 30-40% of ministerial disputes between 1750-1760 were over the minister’s rate.⁵⁶ Schmotter suggests that ministerial complaints about money had become so loud and frequent that they had become, by mid-century, stereotypical, and “many New Englanders became convinced that their pastors were concerned only with their own pocketbooks.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, examining the complaints of Scott, Porter and others reveals that although pay was a real concern, the primary issues that drove ministers from the province were religious schism and the inability to maintain a good relationship with their flock rather than concern over making ends meet. Regardless of which colony they preached in, religious men on the fringes of British settlement were unlikely to be regularly paid.

⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:14, quoted in Gay, *A Call from Macedonia*, 22., and also Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 19 August 1767.

⁵⁵ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 113.

⁵⁶ Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers,” 257-258.

⁵⁷ Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers,” 257.

One major problem facing rural Nova Scotian congregations, which they did not face in New England, was the aggressive and state-sponsored missionary efforts of the established church of Nova Scotia, the Church of England. The Church of England was established in the southern colonies, New York, New Jersey, Newfoundland and the West Indies, and was significantly present in Pennsylvania and Delaware. The Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel did send missionaries to New England, however it is considered by many historians to have been anathema to the majority of Congregationalist New Englanders.⁵⁸ The response of the Planters, however, serves to complicate this assumption. In Halifax, the dissenting New England population often attended worship at St. Paul's church and Church of England ministers occasionally served as pulpit supply at Mather's Meeting House in the years before 1787.⁵⁹ The Established Church also found ready converts in the backcountry settlements. In 1768, the Congregationalist Church in Cornwallis wrote to various dissenting churches in Boston, seeking support. Explaining the problems their society faced, they wrote that "several of the more loose and unstable of our people have already gone over to [the Church of England]. And the door is open for many more: and if we now part with our minister...we of consequence in a few years shall all be churchmen or nothing."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier*, 99, 160, 227; Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms*, 248; Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture*, 97, 135, 370.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Townshend, Laura B. Morgan, Judith Fingard and Graham Morgan, *St. Matthew's United Church: Sentinel on the Street, Halifax, 1749-1999* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1999), 13.

⁶⁰ Memorial of the Congregationalist Church in Cornwallis to Pastors and Brethren in Boston and Massachusetts, 8 November 1769, in *Congregationalist Churches*, 4-5.

Some Anglicans made life difficult for dissenting ministers beyond reducing their congregational numbers. Caleb Gannet, for instance, was pushed out of Cumberland in 1771 by a dispute with Anglican John Eagleson over the rights to the glebe lands.⁶¹ Similarly, in 1769 Benajah Phelps complained to Eleazar Wheelock, founder of Dartmouth College, that “a number of Episcopalians...are violent in their endeavours to brake up the dissenting cause, and in order to accomplish their designs they level all their rage and malice at me.”⁶²

Other threats to the cohesion of New England Congregationalism in Nova Scotia were perhaps less intentional. During this period, the dividing lines between the various “dissenting” Protestants blurred nearly to the point of merger, a point illustrated dramatically by the multi-denominational ordination of Bruin Comingo discussed above. The lack of settled, educated ministers—the Congregational ideal—meant that Planters had to turn elsewhere for religious instruction and solace. John Payzant recalled that, twenty years old and living in Falmouth in the late 1760s, he “had never heard a gospel sermon.”⁶³ Payzant also records a great number of itinerant religious figures who began appearing in the township, many of them apparently not associated with a church.⁶⁴ Necessity made strange religious bedfellows: for example, Jonathan Scott, a staunch Congregationalist to the last, was married by the Baptist itinerant preacher Ebenezer

⁶¹ Adams, *The Papers of John Adams*, 411-2; Ernest Clarke, “The Cumberland Glebe Dispute and the Background to the American Revolution in Nova Scotia, 1771-1774,” *The University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 42 (1993): 102.

⁶² Quoted in Judd, “An Uncompromising Whig,” 66.

⁶³ Payzant, *Journal*, 17.

⁶⁴ Payzant, *Journal*, 17-22.

Moulton simply because there was no one else in the township who could perform the service.⁶⁵

The most noticeable effect of this blurring is the conflation of Congregational and Presbyterian churches and ministers. Writing about the religion of early Yarmouth County settlers, J.R. Campbell wrote in 1876 that:

[I]t is...plain, from various considerations, that the lines between the congregational and Presbyterian systems [in Nova Scotia] were not very sharply defined. The constant use of the phrase "Congregational or Presbyterian," in which, two words of very different signification are used as if they had the same meaning, is evidence to the point. It was probably as convenient for the necessities of the settlers *then*, as it might be for the good feeling and harmony of the community *now*, not to enquire too narrowly, or define too closely.⁶⁶

Many Planters found themselves in environments where Presbyterian pastors were simply the only option. James Murdoch, for example, a Presbyterian minister from Ulster, was the only settled religious figure in the overwhelmingly New England township of Horton.⁶⁷ In some cases there was debate over which denomination an individual belonged to. Benajah Phelps, for example, educated at Yale and associated with several important figures of New England religion, is generally considered a Congregationalist minister.⁶⁸ However, Handley Chipman, a prominent citizen of Cornwallis, thought him no such thing. Chipman maintained that Phelps “never declared himself a Congregational,” instead implying that his views placed him in the Presbyterian camp. Further adding to the confusion, a note in Nehemiah Porter’s diary refers to the “Rev. Mr.

⁶⁵ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 14 March 1768.

⁶⁶ Campbell, *History of Yarmouth*, 102-103.

⁶⁷ Girard, “Reverend James Murdoch,” 108.

⁶⁸ On Phelps and his credentials, see Judd, “Uncompromising Whig.”

Phillips, Presbyterian divine at Cornwallis.”⁶⁹

Although sharing many points of doctrine and sharing the label of “dissenting” in the eyes of the Church of England, Presbyterian and Congregational churches differed on the question of church governance. Congregationalists believed that church affairs were to be managed by the congregation of believers in a given community, each independent from the other, while Presbyterians vested authority in a small group of church elders, or Presbyters, which centered on the minister himself and which did not allow for independent churches. This distinction was an important in the eyes of many in both New England and Nova Scotia. Handley Chipman, for example, writing to Presbyterian ministers Daniel Cock and David Smith, explained his unwillingness to have Cock and Smith ordain Henry Alline for the ministry by stating that:

[I]t is an unusual [thing] where I have been acquainted to git Presbyterian Ministers to examine those of the Congregational perswasion, and I cannot see any good can thereby ensue, however gracious and worthy they are, or capable of performing that work, because we know one part holds the power in the ministry mainly, and the other party in the church, etc.⁷⁰

The blurring lines between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism are also significant for their reorientation of Planter links. Congregationalism was a key feature of New England town life and encouraged and even required links back to the New England colonies. Presbyterianism on the other hand, associated with the Church of Scotland and Scots and Scots-Irish immigrants, did not; if anything, it drew adherents into a trans-Atlantic, rather than colonial, religious sphere. By moving to Presbyterianism rather than New England Congregationalism, Planters lost a key feature of what made New England

⁶⁹ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, end notes for the year 1767.

⁷⁰ Chipman to Cock and Smith, 30 June 1777.

culture distinct.

Porter, Scott and Seccombe: Snapshots from the Mission Field

Individual ministers reacted differently to the difficulties faced by Congregationalism in Nova Scotia. Most, including Nehemiah Porter of Yarmouth simply gave up and returned to New England. Others, like Jonathan Scott, tried to preserve New Englander's ties to the denomination of their home colonies. A very few, like John Seccombe, tried to adapt to the changing nature of their congregations by cooperating with other Protestant communities. By examining the religious careers of these three ministers in detail, a clearer picture of the challenges to and responses of the Congregationalist community can be gained. Ultimately, only the most open and flexible of them—John Seccombe—was able to have a successful career in the province.

Nehemiah Porter

Nehemiah Porter was born 20 March 1720 at The Hamlet, Essex County, Massachusetts.⁷¹ Although from an impoverished, non-ecclesiastical background, he had been taken under the wing of Samuel Wigglesworth, the pastor of Hamlet Parish from an early age.⁷² He studied at Harvard, and, after receiving his bachelor's degree in 1745 and master's in 1748, he became pastor of nearby Chebacco Parish in 1750.⁷³ However, he

⁷¹ Joseph B. Felt, *History of Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton* (Cambridge: Charles Folsom, 1834), 262.

⁷² "Miscellany – Biography," *The Boston Recorder*, 12 August 1820, 132; Felt, *History of Ipswich*, 279.

⁷³ Felt, *History of Ipswich*, 262; "Boston: Wednesday Last Being the Annual Commencement at Cambridge," *The Boston Post-Boy*, 11 July 1748, 2.

fell out with his parishioners, and on 3 May 1766 he agreed to resign from his post.⁷⁴

Soon after, he arrived at Cape Forchu, part of Yarmouth Township on the western tip of Nova Scotia.

Porter's diary covers the summers of 1767, 1768 and 1769, when he was in the Yarmouth area preaching and attending to family concerns. Although offered the position of settled Congregationalist minister at Cape Forchu, and often assumed to have been a steady presence during the late 1760s, the evidence from his diary and personal papers suggest that his role in the Yarmouth region was seasonal, informal, and ultimately not intended to be permanent.⁷⁵ Much of his family remained in New England throughout this period, and Porter appears to have continued to think of his old parish at Chebacco as home. For example, on his return to New England in the fall of 1767, he recorded a joyful homecoming:

...found my family all at home and in good health thro the great goodness of Almighty God, who has been gracious pleased to preserve and proper me and my

⁷⁴ Felt, *History of Ipswich*, 262

⁷⁵ See, for example, Campbell, *History of Yarmouth*, 63; Brebner, *Neutral Yankees*, 192, 294; Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 26; Daniel C. Goodwin, "From Disunity to Integration: Evangelical Religion and Society in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, 1761-1830," in *They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada* ed. M. Conrad (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1988), 191. Goodwin suggests that Porter was "forced to return to New England" by religious dissent in Yarmouth, which is true but overstates his commitment to the community in the first place, another potential cause of schism. Brebner refers to Porter's time at Yarmouth as "considerable," and includes him in a list of other clergymen who left Nova Scotia due to the poor financial situation in the province. Instead, it appears that this is the reason why Porter did not invest himself there in the first place, although he presumably saw great opportunity for his children. Porter's account of rejecting the town's call can be found in *Diary of Nehemiah Porter*, 19 August 1767.

family the summer passed, so that we have been quite comfortable, O that we might praise the Lord for his goodness to us.⁷⁶

Similarly, in October of 1768 he wrote that he “arrived at my own house in Chebano [Chebacco] in good health and found my family well thro’ the great goodness of Almighty God, who is kind to the evil and unthankful.”⁷⁷ He consistently refers to his home in New England as “my own house” or a similar variant.⁷⁸ In contrast, he records his return to Yarmouth in 1768 and 1769 with little emotion, and although he thanks God in June 1769 for an “exceeding pleasant passage,” such a sentiment is hardly surprising from so devout a pastor.⁷⁹

Yarmouth seems to have been only one of several places in which Porter regularly preached. An unsettled minister who took his religious duties very seriously, Porter preached wherever his travels took him. For example, returning to New England from Cape Forchu in the fall of 1767 aboard a fishing vessel, he preached at Grand Passage on Brier Island after being stuck there for a few days due to inclement weather.⁸⁰ Similarly, during his return voyage in 1768, he preached for two days at Newcastle in Maine.⁸¹ In 1770, he preached at Mather’s Meeting House in Halifax for a month.⁸² Porter was not the only Congregationalist minister who engaged in this kind of casual preaching while

⁷⁶ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 17 October 1767.

⁷⁷ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 27 October 1768.

⁷⁸ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 13 June 1767; 27 October 1768

⁷⁹ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 9 June 1769.

⁸⁰ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 12-15 October 1767

⁸¹ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 23-24 October 1768.

⁸² Nehemiah Porter to Elliot and Cooper, 16 November 1770, in *Congregational Churches*, 8-9.

travelling. Certainly it was needed in the backcountry areas of Nova Scotia and Maine, which saw little ministerial activity. Jonathan Scott, for example, preached at Liverpool in 1776 after he became stuck there when British forces impressed the ship he was travelling on, and on two occasions he describes ministers visiting from other areas as preaching for him at Yarmouth.⁸³ Porter, however, seems to have made something of a career for himself as an itinerant preacher before he received his call to Ashfield. For example, in letters to his children after his permanent return to New England in the early 1770s he mentions preaching at Beverly and Salem, and appears to have preached for quite some time in Easton.⁸⁴

Initially, Porter apparently considered settling permanently at Yarmouth. Some relations of his had already settled in Nova Scotia—he records in his diary interactions with a “cousin Samuel” already at Yarmouth in 1767, and his brother Hasadiah was living at Cape Forchu by 1768.⁸⁵ Porter also settled several of his children in Yarmouth, assisting them in procuring land, livelihoods and necessary supplies.⁸⁶ Responding to the

⁸³ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 10 June 1774, 21 August 1774, 24 March 1776. For more on Scott’s ill-fated detour in Liverpool and the fate of the impressed men, see Keith Mercer, “Planters and Press Gangs: A Social History of Impressment in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1759-1825,” in *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830* ed. T.S. Henderson and W. Robicheau (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2012), 205-242.

⁸⁴ Nehemiah Porter to his Children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771, 11, vol.770A, MG1, NSA; Nehemiah Porter to his Children in Yarmouth, 25 September 1773, 17, vol.770A, MG1, NSA.

⁸⁵ Felt, *History of Ipswich*, 262; Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 22 August 1767; 25 August 1767; 21 September 1767; 26 August 1768; Nehemiah Porter to his Children in Yarmouth, 9 November 1768, 5, vol.770A, MG1, NSA; Nehemiah Porter to his Children in Yarmouth, 17 April 1769, 7, vol.770A, MG1, NSA; Nehemiah Porter to his Children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771, 11, vol.770A, MG1, NSA.

⁸⁶ For a more detailed discussion of Nehemiah Porter’s children, see Chapter Two.

call issued by the Cape Forchu church in 1767, Porter wrote in his diary that he “liked the country and people well enough to spend the rest of [his] days among them.”⁸⁷ However, he did not accept their call, and by about 1771 Porter appears to have stopped his seasonal appearances at Yarmouth.⁸⁸

Porter’s split with his sometime congregation in Cape Forchu was not amicable. Churchgoers in Yarmouth complained that he was not “friendly to the revival of religion” and “did not so well agree with the doctrines of grace in some particulars.”⁸⁹ In December of 1771 he wrote to his children at Yarmouth that he had been prevented from coming to see them that winter due to “the raging anger of some of the principal people” at Yarmouth, and expressed doubts that he would come in the spring.⁹⁰ Two years later, he wrote to his children that,

I do not understand that any person belonging to Cape Forchu desires to see me there as a preacher, not even for a little while - and none of my friends here advise me to go thither again - and I think it most likely to be God's will that I should go where I may be best employed.⁹¹

In 1774, he accepted a call to the town of Ashfield in western Massachusetts, a post he retained until his death at the age of 99.⁹² Porter was a chaplain for the American army

⁸⁷ Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 19 August 1767.

⁸⁸ Goodwin, “Disunity to Integration,” 191.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Goodwin, “Disunity to Integration,” 191.

⁹⁰ Nehemiah Porter to his Children in Yarmouth, 9 December 1771.

⁹¹ Nehemiah Porter to Nehemiah Porter Jr., 25 September 1773, 15, vol.770A, MG1, NSA.

⁹² Frederick G. Howes, *History of the Town of Ashfield, Franklin County, Massachusetts, From its Settlement in 1742 to 1910* (Ashfield: The Town, 1910), 34-35; “Miscellany – Biography,” *Boston Recorder*, 132.

during the war, and, in his later years, sometimes claimed credit for defeating Burgoyne by leading a prayer service on the battlefield.⁹³ His bitterness towards Nova Scotia persisted. Writing to his son Nehemiah in 1776, encouraging him to leave Nova Scotia and return to Massachusetts after the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he wrote that “[God] is punishing the inhabitants for their iniquity—and purging his Church from their filthiness.”⁹⁴

Jonathan Scott

Porter responded to the troubles Congregationalism faced by withdrawing from the province. In this he was not alone. Of the four settled Congregationalist ministers from New England besides Porter who were in Nova Scotia in 1770, three—Caleb Gannett, Samuel Wood and Benajah Phelps—returned to New England well before the outbreak of war, as did one of the settled Presbyterian ministers, James Lyon.⁹⁵ Jonathan Scott, however, faced many similar problems but stayed in the province, eventually becoming the most vocal proponent of New England religion during the 1780s.⁹⁶ However, unlike Porter, Phelps, Wood, Gannett and Lyon, he was a product of the attempt to reconcile Congregationalism with the realities of the Nova Scotian frontier. As a result, he had far closer ties to the province, which he tried to balance throughout his career with his attachment to New England.

⁹³ Howes, *History of the Town of Ashfield*, 26, 35-36.

⁹⁴ Nehemiah Porter to Nehemiah Porter Jr., 4 October 1776, 25, vol.770A, MG1, NSA.

⁹⁵ John Seccombe did double duty in Halifax and Chester for most of the Planter period.

⁹⁶ See Jonathan Scott, *A Brief View of the Religious Tenets and Sentiments Lately Published and Spread in the Province of Nova-Scotia....* (Halifax: John Howe, 1784).

Jonathan Scott's background and ordination has many parallels to Bruin Comingo's. He was born in Lunenburg, Massachusetts, the youngest son and second youngest of eight children.⁹⁷ After failing at his trade as a shoemaker and a disastrous first attempt to settle in Nova Scotia, he arrived at Yarmouth in 1764 and worked for many years as a fisherman. As suggested by Nehemiah Porter's contentious experiences there, Yarmouth during the 1760s experienced much religious strife and little stability.⁹⁸ In addition to Porter and a number of temporary religious visitors from New England, the Yarmouth area was also home to Rev. Ebenezer Moulton, formerly a Baptist preacher in Brinsfield, Massachusetts, Rev. Sheldon Poole, who preached for a time at Cape Forchu, and Rev. John Frost, who was based out of nearby Argyle.⁹⁹ In 1769 there was an attempt to make Frost, who also lacked a formal education, the settled minister of Chebogue. This, however, met with disaster and almost split the church. Outside negotiators in the form of Sylvanus Conant and Solomon Reed were called in from New England in order to smooth over the division, and Frost returned to Argyle, returning to the Yarmouth area only rarely.

⁹⁷ Diary of Jonathan Scott, p.8.

⁹⁸ Although both ministered within the bounds of Yarmouth Township, Porter served the community of Cape Forchu, while Scott was the called minister of Chebogue. The communities were close, and Scott frequently preached at Cape Forchu as an invited guest. However, despite the overlap between Scott's lay ministry and Porter's activities there, neither mentions the other in their diaries or other materials I have found. This can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that prior to his ordination, Scott generally went fishing during the spring, summer and early fall, the period during which Porter was most active in the community.

⁹⁹For Rev. Moulton, Diary of Nehemiah Porter, 10 June 1767, 15 June 1767, 8 July 1767; Diary of Jonathan Scott, 14 March 1768. For Rev. Poole, see Diary of Jonathan Scott, 21 August 1774. For Rev. Frost and the controversy surrounding his activities at Yarmouth, see Diary of Jonathan Scott, May 1769-April 1770.

According to his diary, Scott had been concerned with religious matters for some time. He was not entirely comfortable with this, and in his diary he recalls his fear that expressing his increasing religious fervor would brand him a “New Light,” threaten his upcoming marriage and make him a “laughingstock.”¹⁰⁰ However, he was met with approval, and in the late 1760s, the community at Yarmouth began encouraging him to take up roles of religious leadership. This only led to new anguish, as, reflecting the unorthodoxy of such an event, Scott doubted his ability as an uneducated man to be a true minister.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, in 1772 he travelled to New England to be ordained under the direction of Conant and Reed. Unlike Comingo, Scott journeyed back to New England to be ordained, and relied entirely on New England as a source of his religious authority and legitimacy.

Even after returning home from his ordination, Scott maintained close contact with New England. He returned again in the spring of 1773 to visit his family, but more importantly to “advise with Christian ministers, about some particulars in church-discipline, about which I am at a loss, and want advice how to proceed.”¹⁰² He became an eloquent defender of New England Congregationalism in his later years, and is perhaps best known in the literature as the most prominent opponent of Henry Alline’s New Light

¹⁰⁰ Diary of Jonathan Scott, Fall 1766. Scott’s use of ‘New Light’ in this and other contexts seems to mean a kind of revivalist enthusiasm, rather than referring to the political and religious split between “Old Light” and “New Light” Congregationalists in New England in the 1740s. See, for example, his description of the Methodist William Wren as a “New Light,” cited later.

¹⁰¹ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 25 November 1768.

¹⁰² Diary of Jonathan Scott, 20 March 1773.

revival of the 1780s.¹⁰³ He named his fourth child Jonathan Edwards Scott, after the prominent New England theologian and minister.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, he was to return to New England, finishing out his career as the Congregationalist minister at Bakerstown (later known as Minot) in Maine.

Despite these close ties to New England and the New England Congregationalist tradition, Jonathan Scott bore the mark of Nova Scotia's flexible religious environment. Especially before his ordination, he was open to expressions of faith from all denominations, and paid little heed to doctrinal differences. For example, in his diary he recounts that by hearing the preaching of Ebenezer Moulton, a Baptist, he "learned more of the way of salvation...than ever before."¹⁰⁵ Even after his ordination in the New England tradition, Scott was open to expressions of honest faith from other religious groups. On a 1774 trip to Halifax, for example, he spoke frequently with William Wren, a Methodist, concluding that

[H]is discourse is spiritual, heavenly and divine; and consequently, very edifying; his conversation is, before men, without blemish; all that I can hear against him is, he is a Methodist, or New-Light: but I am ready to conclude that he is a man after Gods own heart; and may heaven's best blessings rest upon him.¹⁰⁶

Despite this, Scott took the advice of John Fillis, and refused to preach for the Methodist

¹⁰³ See for example Gordon Stewart, "Jonathan Scott," *DCB*; Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 105-120.

¹⁰⁴ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 13 May 1773.

¹⁰⁵ Diary of Jonathan Scott, p.11.

¹⁰⁶ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 11 July 1774.

meeting.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, Scott's allegiance was to the New England faith into which he was ordained.

However, in the later years of his ministry he was drawn increasingly towards Halifax and away from Massachusetts, ending his trips to New England in favour of new connections he had made in the Nova Scotian capital. After his first visit in 1774, he wrote happily that "I thought there was none that feared God in Halifax; but, blessed be a gracious God, I find myself mistaken."¹⁰⁸ He visited several times in the mid- to late-1770s in order to collect relief money for dissenting ministers and build on his new relationships with other Nova Scotian ministers, including John Seccombe, and prominent New Englanders who lived in Halifax such as Henry Newton, Benjamin Green and John Fillis. Scott therefore occupies a middle ground of Nova Scotian Congregationalism: borne of compromise, and balancing old links with New England with new links within Nova Scotia.

Ultimately, like Nehemiah Porter and so many other Congregationalists in Nova Scotia, Scott fell out with his flock. He had been quite successful in the early years of his ministry, repairing divisions in the church that predated his ordination and bringing

¹⁰⁷However, this did not stop his companion John Crawley, who had come with him from Yarmouth and was a member of Scott's church as well as a very prominent Yarmouth citizen, from leading the Methodist meeting nine days later. This act scandalized Scott, who wrote that Crawley's "imprudent step" would "redound to the dishonor of Christ and Religion," and lamenting that he had not known of Crawley's intention beforehand. *Diary of Jonathan Scott*, 13 July 1774. Fillis was a staunch Congregationalist, and later than year he nearly lost his many governmental posts by protesting the arrival of East India Tea and Halifax and was accused (but later acquitted) of burning hay meant for British forces that were being moved to occupy Boston: A.A. Mackenzie, "John Fillis," *DCB*.

¹⁰⁸ *Diary of Jonathan Scott*, 31 July 1774.

several members back into the flock.¹⁰⁹ His diary reports no major schisms through to 1777, and his last entry notes that on 27 April of that year “the greatest number of communicants that ever were at the Lord’s table at once in this place” gathered to take communion.¹¹⁰ Things went rapidly downhill after that, however. Scott’s beloved wife Lucy died that December, forcing Scott to distribute his many young children throughout the township.¹¹¹ The Yarmouth church experienced a major schism in the 1780s, and in 1792 Scott wrote that communion had not been offered since 1781.¹¹² He requested dismissal many times, but it was not granted until 1792.¹¹³ He then relocated to Bakerstown, later Minot, in Maine, where he remained the rest of his life. Despite this end, Congregationalism had managed to survive longer in Yarmouth than anywhere else in the colony.¹¹⁴ This dubious feat can perhaps be chalked up to Yarmouth’s proximity to New England, but also Scott’s role as a community insider, and the fact that his ministry had begun as a compromise with the unorthodox religious environment of Nova Scotia. Unlike Porter’s acrimonious exit, Scott’s parishioners recorded their “most sincere grief and sorrow” at his departure.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Diary of Jonathan Scott, p.21; 24 September-24 October 1772.

¹¹⁰ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 27 April 1777.

¹¹¹ Trask and Trask, “The Reverend Jonathan Scott,” 264.

¹¹² Diary of Jonathan Scott, p.95.

¹¹³ Trask and Trask, “The Reverend Jonathan Scott,” 267.

¹¹⁴ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 131.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Trask and Trask, “The Reverend Jonathan Scott,” 271.

John Seccombe

Perhaps more than anyone else, John Seccombe of Chester represents the most successful plantation of a New England Congregationalist minister, if not Congregationalism itself, to Nova Scotia. Unlike Nehemiah Porter, Seccombe had a long, successful career in Nova Scotia, which lasted until the end of his life. And unlike Scott, he was formally educated: indeed, he appears to have been the only formally educated Congregationalist minister who arrived in the province before the Revolution, stayed through it, and died there still actively engaged with his pastoral community.¹¹⁶ He managed this by displaying a willingness to work with groups of other Protestant denominations and to adapt himself to the needs of beliefs of his congregation, even to the point of having his own church absorbed by Baptists in 1789.

Seccombe was, by all accounts, a decidedly affable man. Despite an early career racked by scandal and separation, he was well respected by his Nova Scotian peers. For example, Malachy Salter and Benjamin Gerrish described him in glowing terms and “earnestly recommended” him as a worthy man and object of assistance to New England ministers Andrew Elliot and Samuel Cooper in 1770.¹¹⁷ Jonathan Scott described him as “a lover of God and Christ... meek and humble, tender and charitable” and he “greatly delighted in his company.”¹¹⁸ He was a religious man, but of a type different from Scott or Porter. Unlike their diaries, which are filled with religious concerns and anguish,

¹¹⁶ Cheever stayed in Nova Scotia for the rest of his life but stepped down from the ministry in 1782, for the usual reasons. Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 71.

¹¹⁷ Gerrish and Salter to Eliot and Cooper, 18 January 1770, 6.

¹¹⁸ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 19 April 1775.

Seccombe's diary is filled almost exclusively with the types of food he ate and with whom he ate it. Seccombe, clearly, was a man interested in public life and sociability.

John Seccombe was born in early May 1708 in Medford, Massachusetts.¹¹⁹ He attended Harvard College, graduating in 1731.¹²⁰ His student reputation was not what might be expected of a prospective Congregationalist minister. He was a prankster and frequently in trouble. Susan Bugey notes that he was generally known for "skirmishes with college authorities, and ready wit, rather than for his scholarship."¹²¹ After graduating, but still while living in Cambridge, Seccombe wrote a comic poem entitled "Father Abbey's Will." This light-hearted verse, purporting to be the last will and testament of the late Matthew Abdy, the sweeper at Harvard College, was to be John's lasting legacy outside of town histories and a few published sermons.¹²²

Seccombe accepted a call to the newly established township of Harvard, Massachusetts in 1733.¹²³ His ministry there was plagued by scandal. In 1738, following allegations of marital infidelity, Seccombe was forced to present a petition to a town meeting which almost resulted in his dismissal.¹²⁴ In 1757, he was dismissed from his

¹¹⁹ Reckoned April 25 on the old-style Julian Calendar, in use until 1752. John reported his birthday as May 6 in a letter to Bruin Comingo in the 1780s. Nourse, *Harvard*, 185; John Seccombe to Bruin Comingo, June 6 1780.

¹²⁰ Bugey, "Seccombe," *DCB*.

¹²¹ Bugey, "Seccombe," *DCB*.

¹²² John Seccombe, *Father Abbey's Will; to Which is Added A Letter of Courtship to his Virtuous and Amiable Widow with Historical and Biographic Notes*, ed. J. Hubbard (Cambridge: 1854), 9.

¹²³ Nourse, *Harvard*, 182.

¹²⁴ Nourse, *Harvard*, 189.

post at Harvard, at his request. The exact reasons for this are unclear. It was possibly due to fallout relating to his affair of years before, but may have just as easily been the result of religious differences between himself and his parishioners.¹²⁵ Four years later, he relocated his family to Chester, Nova Scotia, one of the initial grantees of the township and the first settled minister.¹²⁶

The most prominent aspect of Seccombe's career was his willingness to work with other denominations, and he often quoted Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."¹²⁷ Seccombe was sympathetic to religious revival and "New Lights" from his New England days, and he brought this sympathy for revival movements to his tenure in Nova Scotia. He was also friendly with the province's established church: on his first visit to Halifax in 1761, he met several times with John Breynton, the Anglican rector of St. Paul's. They discussed taking a trip together to the Annapolis Valley, and Seccombe attended his sermons.¹²⁸ His involvement with the multi-denominational Comingo ordination has already been discussed, and in 1789 he brought his congregation into open communion with the Chester Baptist church.¹²⁹ Summing up this tendency, Seccombe's entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* notes that he was

¹²⁵ Nourse, *Harvard*, 194., records the tradition that John's dismissal was due to his affair.

¹²⁶ Diary of John Seccombe.

¹²⁷ Diary of John Seccombe, 31 December 1761; Seccombe, *A Sermon Preached at Halifax*, 26.

¹²⁸ Diary of John Seccombe, 7 December 1761, 28 December 1761.

¹²⁹ Buggiey, "Seccombe."

“A very godly man” to the Baptists, “a true Gospel minister . . . not after the *Loaves* nor the *Fishes*” to an Anglican, and “the first Character in this Province” and “the Father of all . . . [its dissenting] Churches” to a Presbyterian, Seccombe was regarded as “a great lover of good men of all ages, ranks and denominations.”¹³⁰

Seccombe’s ability to communicate, negotiate and organize across denominational lines served him well in Planter Nova Scotia, and contributed to his longevity as a religious figure. His pragmatic approach to religion also meant that he was more concerned with links within the province than back to New England. This does not mean that he lost contact with New England, however. He wrote often to friends and colleagues there, and returned for a visit in 1769. However, the connections that enabled him to have a long and full career as a Nova Scotian religious leader were Nova Scotian in character.

Conclusion

Rather than experiencing a shift during the revolutionary crisis or finding themselves religiously frozen in time after 1759, Nova Scotia’s New Englanders were faced with an environment far different from New England and reacted accordingly. Living on formerly Catholic lands in a nominally Anglican colony, the Planters lost their Congregationalist identity in favour of more flexible and pragmatic expressions of religious faith and punishing religious leaders who displayed too much rigidity. Yet they maintained regular contact with New England, and still looked towards New England as a source of religious legitimacy.

Attempts at compromise were made, such as ordaining uneducated men, but this was only a temporary cure, and tended to de-emphasize the strong ties to New England

¹³⁰ Bugey, “Seccombe.”

that made Congregationalism possible. Complicating this breakdown was the arrival of the Scots-Irish and their Presbyterian traditions and ministers, and the arrival of hundreds of Yorkshire Methodists in the 1770s. Along with Anglicanism, these provided new, more immediate options for religious expression that tended to emphasize trans-Atlantic, rather than colonial, links. These tensions set the stage for the revival movement led by Henry Alline, yet another minister who lacked formal education, in the late 1770s and 80s. Congregationalism on the New England model was not only dead long before the revival of Henry Alline swept the province of its last remnants; it had hardly ever existed within the province in the first place.

A line of cultural connection—the shared religious faith of Congregationalism—that could have tied the New England settlements in Nova Scotia tightly to the colonies they had left instead became a source of alienation as embittered pastors fought with their congregations and young educated New Englanders declined the journey north. Without them, Nova Scotia also lacked community leaders that elsewhere in the colonies became key proponents of the revolutionary movement that was to sweep New England and the other colonies in the mid-1770s. For example, of the many ministers who returned to New England before and in the early days of the conflict, at least three—Nehemiah Porter, Samuel Wood and Benajah Phelps—became staunch supporters and, in the case of Porter and Wood, chaplains of the patriot cause.

New Englanders in Nova Scotia were then forced to turn to forms of religious expression that moved them away from the New England mainstream, and towards a new kind of identity. Presbyterianism and Anglicanism both had structures that planted far more firmly in Nova Scotia than Congregationalism had, and Allinite evangelical

movements and their Baptist descendants and Methodism soon also became popular religious options among New Englanders living in Nova Scotia after the Revolution.¹³¹ The fact of Congregationalism's decline was not unique to Nova Scotia. However, the way in which it did decline drew Planters away from their homelands and towards Halifax and across the Atlantic. What was never at stake, however, was Planter Protestantism. In all the religious confusion of Planter Nova Scotia, the Planter's identity as Protestant, English-speaking settlers—the very qualities that imperial authorities desired, and the things that allowed them to settle in Nova Scotia—never wavered.

Facing the disastrous state of the Yarmouth church and quoting from Psalm 127, Jonathan Scott wrote in his diary that “we are stretching out our hands to churches at New-England, for help and assistance...but alas! If the Lord build not the house, the builders labour in vain.”¹³² In the case of Nova Scotian Congregationalism, the New England churches proved unable to help. Faced with a variety of factors that both discouraged Congregationalism and encouraged other expressions of religion, those that would build Congregationalism on Nova Scotian soil, including Scott himself, would ultimately labour in vain.

¹³¹ See for example Allen Robertson, “Methodism Among Nova Scotia's Yankee Planters,” in *They Planted Well*, 178-189.

¹³² Diary of Jonathan Scott, 26 February 1771.

Chapter Four

Philadelphia Township: Colonial Suspicion and British Success

It had been almost two weeks since the ship had left Marblehead. The passage had been rough and long, beset by heavy gales that often worked against their northerly course. Nathan Sheppard, like almost everyone else on board, was sick, and “very dearly.” Finally, on May 19, 1768, they had arrived at Partridge Island, near modern-day Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. Surveying the land from on board the ship, Sheppard was not impressed by what he saw. The ground was bad, and the land was “so steep a man can scarce crawl up to the top without difficulty.” He spent the day interrogating the few inhabitants, who lived in ramshackle Acadian dwellings built on legs to keep them off the marshy ground. They told Sheppard that the land he had come for was another eight miles away; that its title was in question; and that it contained very little meadow ground. Deflated, Sheppard then sat down to write to his colleague in Philadelphia, silversmith William Ball. He would press on despite these discouragements, he wrote. But he could only conclude gloomily that the land he had come to was “no place fit for a town.” The

problem, however, was that founding a town was precisely what had brought him there. Ultimately, he would fail.¹

The story of colonial arrivals in Nova Scotia often stops after the early 1760s, sometimes focusing the migration story entirely on the key years of 1759-1760. However, as the previous two chapters have discussed, New England migration to Nova Scotia was a protracted and unsure process that went far beyond the first wave of grants and was still on insecure footing well into the 1770s. The story of Nova Scotia in the late 1760s and pre-Revolutionary 1770s, where it is told at all, has focused on land speculation, the failed activities of Alexander McNutt and the arrival of settlers from the British Isles. More often, however, the narrative skips right from Planter arrival to the outbreak of war, ignoring the crucial middle years of Planter establishment, which were characterized not by an increasing reproduction of New England cultureways and landscapes, but by the creation of an environment that was in fact increasingly unlike New England.² These years saw both the arrival of Yorkshire, Scots-Irish and Highland Scots settlers, and the

¹ Nathan Sheppard to William Ball, 19 May 1768, Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP. This letter is dated 1767, however the contents of the letter, as well as its timing, make it fairly certain that it was written in 1768. It seems unlikely, for example, that Nathan Sheppard would be bringing settlers to Nova Scotia before their land was granted, and he makes reference to his orders for 1768. His arrival at Nova Scotia on 19 May after leaving Marblehead on 7 May (6 days sailing, 6 days becalmed) would also work with the timeline laid out by William Ball in his letter to Michael Franklin of 30 April 1768, where he states that Sheppard has set out from Philadelphia shortly before. The letter was written hastily and it is very possible that Sheppard simply miswrote the date. All of the HSP Nova Scotia Land Company materials referenced in this chapter are in the final two folders of the referenced box, which has also been marked “Nova Scotia.”

² Brebner, for example, ignoring the arrival of the Yorkshire and Scottish settlers, denies that there was any significant settlement in the province after 1763: “generally speaking, Nova Scotia had to wait again for settlers until the American Revolution presented her with her next large influx.” Brebner, *Neutral Yankees*, 94.

trickling return of the Acadians to lands in modern-day New Brunswick and St. Mary's Bay. At the same time, New England and the other American colonies grew increasingly distrustful of the Nova Scotian project, a process that, like Seven Years' War enthusiasm over Acadian removal and British settlement, paralleled changing colonial attitudes towards the British.

This does not, however, mean that colonial interest in the province stopped cold after the end of subsidized land and passage in 1762. As discussed especially in Chapter Two, ties between the Planters and their New England homelands remained strong in these years, and settlement continued to trickle in both directions across the Gulf of Maine. This chapter examines in detail a particularly notable act of colonial interest in Nova Scotia during these "lost years:" the attempt, using Philadelphia money and mostly New England settlers, to settle a new township on the shore of the Minas Basin in the late 1760s. The founding of Philadelphia Township is very similar to the contemporaneous founding of Pictou, originally known as the Philadelphia Plantation. However, while Pictou is best known for its eventual success in attracting Highland Scots settlers and heralding the start of Scottish influence on the province, Philadelphia Township remained a solely colonial venture. For that, it suffered, in the process revealing how different relationships between Nova Scotia and the other British colonies had become over the previous decade.

Nova Scotia in the years between Planter arrival and the outbreak of Revolution has often been conceptualized as a time of wanton land speculation in which government corruption and disinterest led to thousands of acres of land passed off to insiders with little interest in development or settlement. Marcus Hansen memorably referred to the

period as “a veritable carnival of land-grabbing,” a description which has been much quoted elsewhere.³ Fred Anderson describes the period after the arrival of the Planters as “a decade of feverish speculation” characterized by “wild schemes, conflicting claims, and unfulfillable promises that actually hindered the colony’s recovery from the devastations of war and depopulation.”⁴ John Brebner notes that “from 1764 onward settlement and speculation were sadly allied.”⁵ Philadelphia Township, however, suggests that the story was more nuanced. At least some companies granted land attempted to settle and improve on their grants. That they failed to do so has implications for our understanding of the changing relationship between Nova Scotia and the other colonies in the years before the outbreak of the Revolution.

Philadelphia Township: The Town That Wasn’t

What did Nova Scotia mean to Nathan Sheppard? A Quaker, he had lived in the Delaware Valley area his whole life. He was born in 1726 in Cumberland, New Jersey, and married his wife Sarah in the Abington, Pennsylvania Monthly Meeting in 1755.⁶ By the 1760s he and his family lived in Germantown, just outside Philadelphia, where he ran

³ Marcus Hansen, *The Mingling of Canadian and American Peoples*. Quoted for example in Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 523; Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett*, 179; Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 364.

⁴ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 523.

⁵ Brebner, *Neutral Yankees*, 94.

⁶ Benjamin H. Shoemaker, *The Genealogy of the Shoemaker Family of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1903), 46-47.

a shop, having previously dabbled in milling.⁷ However, in the late 1760s, he became an agent for a group of Delaware Valley-area merchants and artisans interested in establishing a settlement in Nova Scotia. The Philadelphia area was a hotbed of land speculation and frontier interest in the years after the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Peace with the French saw thousands of acres of land opened for settlement. Settlers, some organized into companies and some acting on their own, generally without the approval of British authorities, spilled into the backcountry of Pennsylvania, Virginia and the Carolinas.⁸ Nova Scotia, finally free of French influence on Cape Breton and the northern reaches of the province, also stood to benefit from colonial desires for new land and expansion.

Several groups in the mid-Atlantic colonies became interested in Nova Scotian lands during this period. Most notable of these was Alexander McNutt, a former military officer who was promised vast swaths of land on both sides of the Minas Basin.⁹ Historians have not treated McNutt kindly. All the same, although he was ultimately unable to fulfill all of his promises to the Nova Scotia government, he nevertheless brought several hundred Scots-Irish settlers to Nova Scotia and did much to raise interest in the mid-Atlantic colonies about the potential of Nova Scotian lands.¹⁰ As a result of

⁷ Shoemaker, *Shoemaker Family*, 46-47; “To be Lett,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 April 1764, 4; “To the Public,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 July 1767, p. 1; Philadelphia Township Articles of Agreement, 13 February 1768, 2, Accession 2011-030, NSA.

⁸ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 523-527.

⁹ William Otis Sawtelle, “Acadia: The Pre-Loyalist Migration and the Philadelphia Plantation,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 51, 3 (1927): 272.

¹⁰ On this point, see Carol Campbell and James F. Smith, *Necessaries and Sufficiencies: Planter Society in Londonderry, Onslow and Truro Townships, 1761-1780* (Sydney: Cape Breton University Press, 2011), 43-4.

his promotional efforts, many Philadelphia luminaries became involved in or gained possession of lands in Nova Scotia. They included American founding fathers John Witherspoon and Benjamin Franklin.¹¹ Sheppard and his associates, including silversmith William Ball, blacksmith-slash-attorney Benjamin Armitage Jr. and future Loyalist and merchant Alexander Bartram, were not quite so illustrious.¹² However, they were determined to stake a claim and convinced that profit could be made in Nova Scotia.

It is unclear whether or not the Nova Scotia Lands Company was related to McNutt. After the ship arrived in 1768, Sheppard seems to have asked after McNutt and learned that the whole area had once been promised to him, but had since been forfeited.¹³ Nowhere else in the records is McNutt mentioned, and both the timing of the grant and the attempts to settle it are later than McNutt's highpoint of 1765.¹⁴ It is likely, however, that they were at the very least inspired by McNutt's activities: of the fourteen land companies who requested township grants using McNutt as an agent in 1765, nine of

¹¹ Sawtelle, "Philadelphia Plantation," 275, 282.

¹² The known occupations of the several members of the Nova Scotia Lands Company are as follows: four merchants, three shopkeepers, two silversmiths, two blacksmiths, two farmers, a coppersmith, a house carpenter, a saddler, a notary, an innholder, and a tanner. Philadelphia Township Articles of Agreement, 13 February 1768. For Bartram's loyalism and his patriot wife Jane's acquisition of his Loyalist compensation, see Wayne Bodle, "Jane Bartram's 'Application': Her Struggle for Survival, Stability, and Self-Determination in Revolutionary Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 115,2 (April 1991): 185-220. Many thanks to Wayne Bodle for this reference.

¹³ Nathan Sheppard to William Ball, 19 May 1768.

¹⁴ Brebner describes 1765 as the "climax" of the land speculation period, and finishes his account of McNutt's active period in 1766. Brebner, *Neutral Yankees*, 96-100.

them were from the Philadelphia area, and it seems likely that Sheppard and company had heard of the available land through one of these schemes.¹⁵

In 1766, Sheppard, Ball, Armitage, Bartram and several other Delaware Valley merchants and artisans petitioned the Nova Scotia government for a township grant of 100,000 acres on the north side of the Minas Basin.¹⁶ Although the Nova Scotia Council twice approved their plans for a township, on September 30 1767 Nathan Sheppard et al. were granted only twenty thousand acres of land, stretching some ten miles along the Minas Basin between modern-day Parrsboro and Economy, Nova Scotia (fig 4.1).¹⁷ Although they repeatedly made inquiries about the remaining 80,000 acres and sent agents to Halifax and London, they never received it.

¹⁵ Brebner, *Neutral Yankees*, 97.

¹⁶ Richard Bulkley, "Nova Scotia, At a council Holden at Halifax, on the 20th of November 1766" Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP; 20 November 1766, Minutes of the Nova Scotia Council 1766-1783, p. 30-31, vol.189, RG1, NSA. A map of the Minas Basin drawn by Charles Morris in 1761 notes that this area was reserved for McNutt: Charles Morris, "A Plan of Minas Basin and Coequid [sic] Bay with the several towns granted therein, drawn by Cha. Morris Chf. Surv. 1761," 205-1761, NSA.

¹⁷ 13 July 1767, Minutes of the Nova Scotia Council 1766-1783, 57; 20,000 Acres on the North Side of Minas Basin to Nathan Sheppard et al., 30 September 1767.

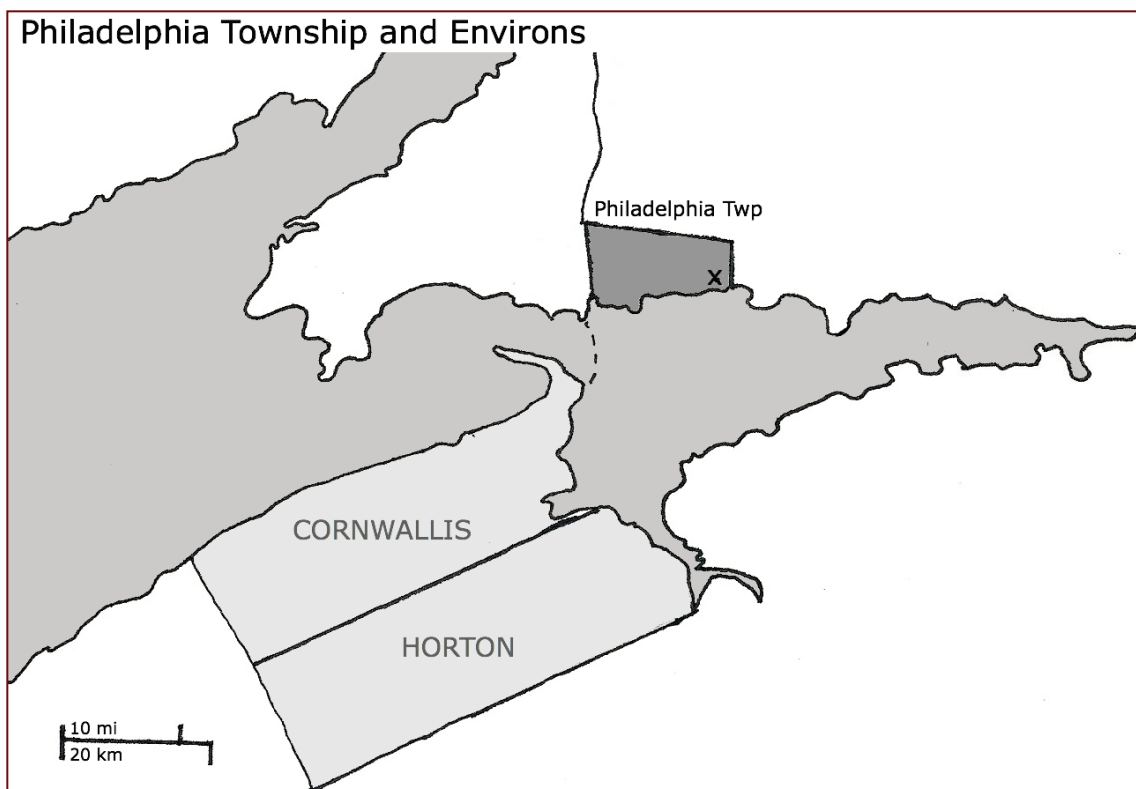


Figure 4.1: Philadelphia Township and Environs, showing the approximate location and extent of the Philadelphia Township grant. Includes the mill lands (marked by an X), the Partridge Island-Blomidon ferry, the Cumberland road, and Cornwallis and Horton townships. The additional 80,000 acre grant sought by the company was located behind the 20,000 acre grant.

After receiving this grant, Sheppard and company began recruiting for the settlement. Advertisements, claiming that some “good families” had already arrived at the township appeared in Philadelphia newspapers starting in late January 1768 and ran through May, advising that “those who purpose to become adventurers” should make themselves known to one of several agents throughout the greater Philadelphia area.¹⁸ However, it seems their most successful efforts at finding interested settlers were in New

¹⁸ The first ad appears in the January 25 *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, and the January 28 *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The last ad appears in the May 5 *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The “good families” may refer to father and son Noah and Nathan Bowen, who seem to have already been living on the grant when Nathan Sheppard arrived in 1768: “Copy of Instructions for the year 1768,” 7 April 1767, Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP.

England. In December of 1767 at least three families from the vicinity of Salem, Massachusetts were contracted to leave the following spring, and financial records show that Nathan Sheppard first travelled from Philadelphia to Salem before departing for the grant from Marblehead.¹⁹

It is unclear how many settlers the company was ultimately able to attract, as there are no lists of settlers that I have been able to find; however, it seems clear that not very many people arrived at the grant that spring. Pictou, settled around the same time and organized by people with a greater access to capital, was able to attract perhaps only 30 people from the colonies. Examining the names that appear in the surviving documents of the company reveals 58 names, all male; of these, perhaps six were hired workmen from the Philadelphia area. Several were likely settlers from nearby communities, such as Horton and Cornwallis, hired to work on the mill. From the rest, a few family groups emerge, and a rough estimate drawn from these names suggests perhaps a dozen families of varying size were present on the grant in 1768.

On February 18 1768, the members of the Nova Scotian Lands Company signed an elaborate agreement of indenture “in order the better to secure each of the grantees properties share and interest in the lands and premises.”²⁰ Each promised to fulfill the terms of the twenty thousand acre grant and the additional eighty thousand acre grant, should it come, facing a penalty if they failed to do so.

¹⁹ The contracts, in the form of articles of indenture, for Samuel Wessel, Jonathan Gamester, and Nicklos Fermer, all of Salem, MA, are in Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP.

²⁰ Philadelphia Township Articles of Agreement, 13 February 1768.

On April 30, 1768, William Ball wrote to Nova Scotia Lieutenant Governor Michael Francklin that Nathan Sheppard had set out in a schooner filled with settlers and “all the materials and a number of workmen for the immediate building of a grist and sawmill.”²¹ Benjamin Davids of New Jersey, the company’s other official representative on the ground in Nova Scotia, was preparing to leave shortly. He, unlike Sheppard, was planning to stay there. The same day Ball wrote, Sheppard and Davids were given power of attorney, empowering them to make deeds for up to two hundred acres to settlers and whatever other actions were in the best interests of the Nova Scotia Lands Company.²²

Ball was deeply optimistic about the future of the township. “We have the greatest reason to expect we shall soon be able to extend our settlement beyond the limits of our present grant,” he wrote to Francklin, further explaining that the company had employed an agent in London to pursue the additional eighty thousand acre grant. He recommended one Joseph Vannmeter, en route to the settlement, for town magistrate, arguing that the settlement would grow so quickly that one would soon be required.²³

And, indeed, the township seemed set for success. At least on paper, it was well located for profit-making. The township grant was located on the north shore of the Minas Basin just east of Partridge Island, an important transportation hub between the Annapolis Valley townships and those on the Isthmus of Chignecto. A ferry between Partridge Island and Cape Blowme Down—known today as Blomidon—had been in

²¹ William Ball to Lieutenant Governor Francklin, 30 April 1768, Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP.

²² “Benjamin Armitage and Company to Shephard & Davids,” Horton Registry of Deeds, H1, p.250, vol.1, RG47, NSA.

²³ William Ball to Lieutenant Governor Francklin, 30 April 1768.

service since Acadian times. It was re-established by Governor Wilmot as recently as 1764. In that year, he licensed two Acadian men, Francis Arseneau and John Bourg, to run a ferry “from Partridge Island to Cape Blowme Down, Horton, Fort Edward & the different settlements on each side of the Bason of Minas” contingent on their “good behavior.”²⁴ Leading from Partridge Island was the road to Cumberland Township and the other Chignecto settlements, passing just to the east of the Philadelphia Grant. By 1774, a traveller from Yorkshire described the area as full of taverns and inns catering to the needs of travellers.²⁵ At least one of the settlers contracted to go to Nova Scotia seemed to have this in mind. A hand-written addition to his contract to settle at Philadelphia Township notes that Jonathan Gamester (or Kamester) of Salem “was the first that signed, [and] he shall have the first offer of keeping tavern and ferry in the said town or county.”²⁶ The grant was also, in comparison to grants gained by other Philadelphians at Pictou and the Petitcodiac River, well positioned for shipping items back to Philadelphia and Boston, a fact noted by Nathan Sheppard in a letter to the Company in October of 1768.²⁷ Its proximity to Cornwallis and Horton Townships, the two largest agricultural settlements in the province, perhaps suggested an additional source for items to ship back to the other colonies.

²⁴ Montagu Wilmot, 9 February 1764, Commission and Order Books of the Governor and Lieutenant Governors, RG1 vol.165, p.314-315, NSA.

²⁵ Robinson and Rispin, *A Journey through Nova-Scotia*, 16.

²⁶ Articles of Indenture for Jonathan Gamester, 24 December 1767.

²⁷ Nathan Sheppard to the Nova Scotia Lands Company, 1 October 1768, Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP.

This rosy picture, however, began to fall apart quickly. In his May 19 letter to Ball, Sheppard painted far more muted scene. In addition to the bad land he observed around Partridge Island and the disappointing lack of meadowland suggested by the inhabitants he talked to, the settlers he had brought were complaining about the distance of the land they were about to take up to easily navigable water, an impression that was not likely improved by the notoriously high tides of the Bay of Fundy. As well, Lieutenant Governor Francklin had gone on a tour to Cumberland and the St. John River settlements, delaying Sheppard's attempts to contact him as he had been instructed to do. The sickly settlers, meanwhile, were put up in single house, perhaps one of the bark-covered stilt houses Sheppard observed dotting Partridge Island, until such a time as the land could be viewed and portioned out.²⁸ It was an inauspicious beginning.

The summer did not go well. Records kept of the costs incurred by building the saw and grist mills indicate that over forty men were employed to assist in its completion, a motely mix of new settlers just brought over by Sheppard, settlers from nearby communities and workmen brought from Philadelphia.²⁹ But by October, the sawmill was still not completed, and Sheppard complained that the workers were "such a slackening crew of people ... I believe never was to gather before."³⁰ When it was finally

²⁸ Nathan Sheppard to William Ball, 19 May 1768.

²⁹ "Account for the Mill at Nova Scotia for 1769," Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP. The date of 1769 has been added later. The presence of Nathan Sheppard, the Philadelphia workmen and other factors indicate that like the first Sheppard letter, this document has been misdated and in fact refers to activity from the summer of 1768.

³⁰ Nathan Sheppard to William Ball, 1 October 1768, Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP.

completed, presumably some time in late fall, it had cost over three hundred and fifty pounds.³¹ Only then was Sheppard free to begin issuing deeds to the new settlers, which appear in the Horton Registry of Deeds starting in November 1768.

Damaging operations on the ground was a feud brewing between Sheppard and Benjamin Davids. Sheppard complained to Ball that Davids was “drinking to excess,” contradicting his orders to the workmen and refusing to hand over money to pay them.³² He had given up on settling in the province and wanted only a vessel to return home. In a letter to the company Sheppard alleged that Davids was actively damaging settler morale, telling Sheppard that he would rather “sell his right out of the company that have any thing farther to do with our lands,” and that he “would not give a pipe of tobacco for all our lands nor sixpence if all our settlers left it.”³³

And the settlers were indeed threatening to leave. Sheppard and Davids’ power of attorney and their instructions empowered them to grant only two hundred acres to settlers.³⁴ Most of the settlers they brought, however, seemed to find that woefully inadequate, and demanded five hundred, an amount they claimed was freely available elsewhere in the province.³⁵ Either amount was still far greater than the eastern New England average, which Kenneth Lockridge estimates to have been only 43 acres by the

³¹ “Account for the Mill at Nova Scotia for 1769.”

³² Sheppard to Ball, 1 October 1768.

³³ Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

³⁴ “Benjamin Armitage and Company to Shephard & Davids,” Horton Registry of Deeds.

³⁵ Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

late eighteenth century.³⁶ The process of parceling out land was also going far to slow for many of the settlers, and only two—Noah Miller and Joseph Golden—were settled on their lands by October.³⁷ Only five deeds made by Sheppard are recorded in the Horton Registry of Deeds, including one intended as a store plot deeded to the other members of the company. A further deed was recorded in 1771, by the oral testimony of Noah Bowen, so that the recipient of the land, John Eagles, could sell it and move on.³⁸ It is possible that more land was granted without a registered deed, but it is clear that the process was slow and created much discontent. Sheppard concluded that if he were to return to Pennsylvania over the winter, no one at all would remain on the grant.³⁹

The dire tone of these letters can in large part be attributed to Sheppard's own low morale. He had never intended to relocate to Nova Scotia, and from the letters he seems to have had a temperament quite unsuited to the task he was assigned. By October, he was already done with his association with the Philadelphia Township. "The disagreeable task of dealing with so many ordinary people as I have this summer," he wrote to the company, "has quite discouraged me from having any thing to do with agency again in

³⁶ Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society 1630-1790," *Past and Present* 39 (April 1968): 68.

³⁷ Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

³⁸ Nathan Sheppard and Benjamin Davids to Benjamin Armitage, Alexander Bartram, William Shee and William Ball, Horton Registry of Deeds, H1, p.261, vol.1, RG47, NSA; Nathan Sheppard and Benjamin Davids to Noah Miller, Horton Registry of Deeds, H1, p.263, vol.1, RG47, NSA; Nathan Sheppard and Benjamin Davids to David Bowen, Horton Registry of Deeds, H2, p.5, vol.1, RG47, NSA; Nathan Sheppard and Benjamin Davids to Noah Bowen and Nathan Bowen, Horton Registry of Deeds, H2, p.42, vol.1, RG47, NSA; Nathan Sheppard and Benjamin Davids to John Eagles, H2, p.122, vol.1, RG47, NSA. The deed following the Eagles deed records the sale of the same land to John Porter.

³⁹ Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

settling our lands.” In his place, he suggested Noah Miller, explaining that he was as likely to get the 80,000-acre grant as anyone else.⁴⁰ There was also trouble at home for Sheppard, whether he knew it or not: the same month that Sheppard finally began giving deeds to the land, he was disowned from his Quaker meeting in Germantown. Although his wife and children continued as faithful Quakers in good standing, Sheppard remained alienated from the faith for the remainder of his life.⁴¹

Despite this, Sheppard was still hopeful about the township’s possibilities, and encouraged the company to continue with their attempts, arguing that their settlement was perfectly positioned for sending cut boards and “country produce” to market at Philadelphia and Boston. But it was also becoming increasingly clear that there was no obvious path to profit in the wilderness of Nova Scotia: not enough time had passed for the settlers, barely on their land, to produce anything of trade value, the saw mill was not yet operational, Sheppard had been unable to establish additional sources of produce for trade and he had been unable to follow up on rumours of deposits of iron ore in the vicinity. No further news on the eighty thousand acre grant had come, and what had once seemed to be certain was becoming a remote possibility.⁴² Indeed, Nova Scotia during these years was a hard place for anyone to make a living. Julian Gwyn has found that during the eighteenth century, both the Annapolis settlements and the Atlantic coast failed to thrive economically.⁴³ For example, Gwyn finds that Nova Scotia was unable to

⁴⁰ Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

⁴¹ Shoemaker, *Genealogy of the Shoemaker Family*, 47.

⁴² Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

⁴³ Gwyn, “Shaped by the Soil,” 81-97; *Ibid.*, “Shaped by the Sea,” 99-121.

grow enough flour to meet its own needs throughout the nineteenth century, relying instead on imports, and was a “largely subsistence economy” throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁴ The Planters had benefited from several years of governmental largesse and subsidized land and travel; those who came to Philadelphia Township had no such benefit.

It is unclear when Sheppard left Philadelphia Township, but once he did, he did not return. In 1769 he sold his share in the company to his sometimes attorney and fellow company member, Benjamin Armitage Jr., for a consideration of five shillings. In accordance with the company charter, however, selling out his shares put Sheppard and his wife in debt to Armitage to the tune of one hundred pounds.⁴⁵ His association with the Philadelphia Township had been financially disastrous. William Ball’s financial records indicate that Sheppard was owed over five hundred and fifty pounds for expenses he had incurred setting up the township and building the mill, money that it is unclear he was ever paid.⁴⁶ He fades from the record after 1769, although he seems to have relocated his family to the Baltimore area in the early 1790s, when he was almost seventy years old.⁴⁷ His son Moses Sheppard’s 1857 obituary contains this sad note, which, although clearly

⁴⁴ Gwyn, “Shaped by the Soil,” 94; *Ibid.*, *Excessive Expectations*, 33.

⁴⁵ There are two copies of the contract between the Sheppards and Benjamin Armitage Jr. in the William Ball papers. It is also recorded in the Horton Registry of Deeds: Nathan and Sarah Sheppard to Benjamin Armitage Jr., Horton Registry of Deeds, H2, p.43, vol. 1, RG47, NSA. Armitage refers to himself as Sheppard’s attorney in a newspaper advertisement relating to a lawsuit Sheppard had become involved in, although elsewhere he is described as a blacksmith: “To the Public,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 July 1767, 1.

⁴⁶ “Account for the Mill at Nova Scotia for 1769.”

⁴⁷ Shoemaker, *Genealogy of the Shoemaker Family*, 47.

apocryphal, may contain a kernel of truth about the ultimate price of Nathan Sheppard's connection with Nova Scotia:

At the commencement of the American Revolution, when men's minds were honestly divided between the great questions that agitated the colonies, Nathan Sheppard adhered to the cause of George III, and it is said that, in consequence of his loyalty, he left the colony of Pennsylvania and went to Nova Scotia, where he remained probably but a short time. In consequence of this abandonment of his property in Pennsylvania, it became, either through confiscation or the faithlessness of his agents, lost to him, and instead of occupying the position of one independent in pecuniary matters, he was reduced to utter poverty.⁴⁸

The township itself fared little better. Sometime after Sheppard pulled out of the company, someone in the company, likely William Ball, drafted a letter to Governor Campbell. The letter laid out the plight of the settlement as a last ditch effort to get out of paying quitrents. Almost all the settlers, finding it impossible to support themselves, had left. The mill, built at so much expense, had washed away and had to be rebuilt, and the previous summer the mill dam, which Sheppard had mobilized so much labour for, had likewise washed out. In all, the writer estimated that the company had spent upwards of two thousand pounds attempting to plant the settlement. The draft is undated and it is unclear if a final version was ever sent; I have been unable to find any record of it.⁴⁹

Active company interest in the grant may have persisted into the early 1770s.

Minutes of the Nova Scotia Council show that in 1772, a William Ball petitioned to

⁴⁸ Nathan Crosby, *Obituary Notices for Eminent Persons Who Have Died in the United States for 1857* (Boston: Philips, Sampson and Company, 1858), 328. Moses Sheppard was an abolitionist and founder of an early psychiatric hospital, which is still open in Baltimore as the Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital.

⁴⁹ Unsigned letter to Lord William Campbell, Box 1662-1769, Ball families Papers, 1676-1879, #28, HSP. This letter appears to be in William Ball's handwriting and is near other documents which date to 1769, although given the problems with dates on some of the other documents in the collection this is an imperfect means of dating.

obtain 1,000 acres of land lately vacated near Partridge Island.⁵⁰ His co-petitioner, John Porter, described as being from “New Philadelphia,” had the previous year purchased John Eagle’s land on the grant for £5 consideration.⁵¹ However, after this point, the record falls silent.

In 1784, the grant was one of many brought before the court of escheats and forfeitures as the province attempted to make room for the flood of Loyalist refugees who had arrived after the end of the American Revolution. The court declared that Nathan Sheppard, William Ball, Benjamin Armitage Jr. and the rest had “not complied with any of the conditions contained in the said grant made to them.” Only two portions of the original grant were settled to the liking of the court. The first, a two hundred acre plot owned by Jacob Walton, had been purchased from one of Sheppard’s settlers some years before. The second was the mill and mill lands, saw and grist mill intact, which Stephen Harrington had purchased at a public auction. None of the settlers who arrived in 1768 were anywhere to be seen. The land, excepting Walton and Harrington’s plots, reverted to the crown. When questioned about the original grantees, Harrington commented that they had made “great and valuable improvement to the amount of above one thousand pounds,” and while he mentioned that he had acquired his lands for a “valuable

⁵⁰ 4 January 1772, Minutes of the Nova Scotia Council 1766-1783, p.162. The land in question may have been on the grant, rather than in Partridge Island. In 1770, the land Ball and Porter were now angling for was granted to Jacob Bacon, Jacob Bacon Jr, Walter Watten and John Lockhart. Bacon Sr. and Watten helped to build the mill and mill dam in 1768, and Watten shares a last name with one of the men from Salem contracted to arrive in spring 1768. However, Bacon is recorded as hiring a boat to the workers, suggesting he was a more established settler rather than a new arrival who would have been living on the grant.

⁵¹ John Eagles to John Porter, Horton Registry of Deeds, H2, p.123, vol.1, RG47, NSA.

consideration,” the Nova Scotia Lands Company seems to have earned little good from their investment.⁵²

Colonial Failure?

Philadelphia Township failed, but it failed for reasons that had little to do with the efforts and intentions of its overseers. Unlike McNutt, the Nova Scotia Lands Company represented by Nathan Sheppard tried their best to make good on the terms of their grant. Instead, they were defeated by the difficulty of recruiting colonial settlers, a government at Halifax with little interest or ability to assist them, and a lack of obvious ways to turn a profit. None of these factors were unique to Nova Scotia. Both the seventeenth and eighteenth century are littered with similar stories: colonies that collapsed, townships that never were, and dreams that were not realized. John Reid, writing about Nova Scotia/Acadia’s own history as a series of “lost colonies” throughout the seventeenth century, argues that “the creation of lost colonies was a normal and even...predictable phenomenon.”⁵³

Colonial failure on large and small scale continued throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. At the same time as Sheppard and others struggled to turn Nova Scotia into a workable colonial space, the Acadians whose land had been co-opted were engaged in a series of spectacular colonial failures from the coast of France to South

⁵² The King vs. Nathan Sheppard & Others, Court of Escheats and Forfeitures, 66, vol.377, RG1.

⁵³ John G. Reid, “The ‘Lost Colony’ of New Scotland and Its Successors, to 1670,” in *Essays on Northeastern North America*, 66.

America and beyond.⁵⁴ Many forays into the continental backcountry during these years also ended badly. Some met violent ends: the Connecticut settlers of the Susquehanna Company, for example, touched off violent conflict with the Delaware whose lands they desired.⁵⁵ Some others, like Philadelphia Township the product of private firms and land speculators, had difficulty attracting settlers or were unable to find an economic logic in the lands they took up.

However, Philadelphia Township's failure, like all failures, occurred in a specific historical context. During the same months in which Sheppard and his associates were struggling to establish Philadelphia Township, John Dickinson's pre-revolutionary classic *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* was being serialized in newspapers throughout the colonies. Dismissing Nova Scotia as nothing more than a British garrison, Dickinson asked:

What justice is there in making us pay for defending, protecting and securing these places? What benefits can we, or have we ever derived from them? ...the British colonies are to be drained of the rewards of their labour, to cherish the scorching lands of Florida, and the icy tracts of Canada and Nova Scotia, which never will return to us one farthing that we send them.⁵⁶

Regardless of economic or political fact, as the 1760s and 1770s wore on, Nova Scotia itself increasingly took on the character of failed, expensive, imperial experiment in the colonial presses: a drain on money and resources, a symbol of all the things that were

⁵⁴ On these, see Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*.

⁵⁵ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 529-534.

⁵⁶ John Dickinson, "Letter VIII," *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. Quoted version was printed 8 February 1768, *The Boston Evening-Post*.

wrong with the British Empire.⁵⁷ The failure of Philadelphia Township and other colonial-sponsored settlements and the economic hardships faced by Planters that led to notable amounts of outmigration only strengthened this view.

Suspicion had been building especially since Nova Scotia's embrace of stamped paper during the Stamp Act crisis. Instead of burying stamp-men alive and forming mobs, Nova Scotians had complied with the act with only moderate opposition.⁵⁸ *The Nova Scotia Gazette*, while later meeting trouble for its failure to comply fully, printed several issues on stamped paper. In response, mobs throughout the colonies burned copies of the gazette in taverns; an especially scandalized writer for the *New York Gazette* referred to the appearance of a stamped Halifax paper as "the most noble ignoble tragedy that ever could be tragedized since the creation of man."⁵⁹ The colonial papers generally presented the province as a victim, and occasionally claimed that the people of Nova Scotia were on

⁵⁷ On this theme see also "Copy of a Letter from a Gentleman at Boston, to His Correspondent in London," *The Boston Evening-Post*, 19 December 1768; See also Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 10-13, which provides more examples of the same, although I disagree with Stewart and Rawlyk's argument that this view of Nova Scotia pre-dates the Planter period.

⁵⁸ For an account of a stamp-man being buried alive in the Caribbean, see *The Halifax Gazette*, 31 October 1765. This account is likely not true, but shows the extent of the fervor at least as imagined by the colonial press. For a more general account of the chaos caused by the act in most of the other British mainland colonies, see Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 664-687.

⁵⁹ *New-York Gazette*, 23 December 1765. Also re-printed as "New York, Dec. 23," *The Boston Evening-Post*, 30 December 1765, and, ironically, *The Halifax Gazette*, 30 January 1766. For various tavern-burnings, see "Philadelphia," *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 26 December 1765; *The Halifax Gazette*, 27 February 1766.

the verge of uprising.⁶⁰ The *Boston Evening-Post*, for example, claimed in November of 1765 that “the inhabitants [of Nova Scotia] are very uneasy with the beginning of their slavery, and it was thought they would not be holden of their chains long.”⁶¹ However, by the late 1760s, this had turned into simple suspicion, and from the outbreak of the Revolution on Nova Scotia was all but ignored.⁶²

British Success?

In examining the larger story behind the failure of the settlement, it is most telling to compare Philadelphia Township with the most well known Philadelphia venture on Nova Scotian soil: Pictou, also known as the Philadelphia Plantation. Although backed by more powerful persons who had recourse to greater amounts of capital, Philadelphia Plantation in 1768 seemed to be headed down the same path as the township on the other side of the Chignecto peninsula. In October of that year Sheppard wrote to Ball that Pictou was “like to be broke up,” along with the other Philadelphia-sponsored settlements on the Petitcodiac River.⁶³

⁶⁰ For papers predicting Nova Scotia would shortly begin protesting the act, see “Philadelphia, December 16,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 30 December 1765; “At the late exhibition of a stamp-man’s effigies...,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 11 November 1765; *The Boston Evening-Post*, 2 December 1765; *The Boston Evening-Post*, 25 November 1765.

⁶¹ *The Boston Evening-Post*, 25 November 1765.

⁶² For an exception, see the vote of the Continental Congress to invade Nova Scotia in Clarke, *The Siege of Fort Cumberland*, 205; however, this action was never taken.

⁶³ Sheppard to Company, 1 October 1768.

It was not to be. John Witherspoon, a Scot and a future signer of the Declaration of Independence, suggested recruiting new settlers for Pictou among highland Scots.⁶⁴ In 1773, the ship *Hector* arrived with nearly 200 new settlers. Many more followed, and Pictou, begun in 1767 with just 30 settlers from Pennsylvania and on the verge of collapse the following year, was to become an early Scottish stronghold and one of the most thriving settlements in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. Only by reaching across the Atlantic was Pictou saved; Philadelphia Township, relying totally on colonial contacts, faded rapidly into obscurity.

Pictou's success and Philadelphia Township's failure encapsulates a key trend in the years just before the Revolution. Coinciding with the decline of interest in the province from the other British colonies, interest in the province from the British Isles increased. Between 1767 and 1775, perhaps more than 2,000 immigrants, mostly from Scotland and Yorkshire, arrived in the province.⁶⁵ The Yorkshire immigrants settled largely on the Isthmus of Chignecto, around Cumberland Township, while the Scots settled around Pictou and, later, Cape Breton. The Yorkshire migration is covered in depth in Bernard Bailyn's *Voyagers to the West*, where the migration to Nova Scotia is analyzed alongside other British migrations in the 1760s and 1770s. In contrast to the Planters, who were among the poorest in the communities they came from, the Yorkshire settlers who came to Nova Scotia were on the average better off than those who went elsewhere in the British colonies, and more likely to arrive in family groups than as single

⁶⁴ Sawtelle, "Philadelphia Plantation," 282-283.

⁶⁵ Bumsted, "Resettlement and Rebellion," 168.

people or indentured servants.⁶⁶ The arrival of Nathan Sheppard and the Philadelphia Township settlers in 1768 therefore coincides with a major cultural and demographic shift within Nova Scotia. They landed at a moment when, as the American colonies grew suspicious of the Nova Scotia project and the Planters were failing to establish a “new” New England, the province—and the entire Atlantic Canadian region—was about to become even more British in character and population.

These newcomers were not always impressed by the efforts of the Planters. In 1774, John Robinson and Thomas Rispin of Yorkshire travelled through Nova Scotia with intent to come and settle the country. They published their observations in York that same year. Their stated aim was to present an unbiased report of the state of the province for other prospective settlers. In contrast to the opinions proffered by John Dickinson and other colonial revolutionaries, Robinson and Rispin described Nova Scotia as a “land of liberty and freedom.”⁶⁷ They arrived in Halifax in April and made their way through the centre of the province, travelling through the townships of the Annapolis Valley, skirting the former Philadelphia Township and finally arriving at Amherst and the Chignecto townships, where most Yorkshire emigration was destined.

⁶⁶ Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 208, 238.

⁶⁷ Robinson and Rispin, *Journey Through Nova Scotia*, 4.

Robinson and Rispin's report was not overwhelmingly positive. While they saw great potential in Nova Scotian lands, they were underwhelmed by the settlers currently occupying them:

[Nova Scotia's] inhabitants are few; and those in general, ignorant, indolent, bad managers, and what is the natural consequence of such qualities, the greatest part of them are poor: They have neither inclination nor industry to make great improvements.⁶⁸

They were particularly dismissive of the New Englanders. They were "lazy indolent people," drunk, and "very bad farmers."⁶⁹ They compared them repeatedly—and unfavourably—to the Acadians, whose land they occupied. "When the French possessed this province," they wrote,

they had it all diked in, and grew corn in such plenty the they sold wheat for one shilling a bushel... But since the English came in, they have been so backward in repairing the banks, and so negligent of their tillage, that they have not grown wheat sufficient for themselves.⁷⁰

What Nova Scotia needed, they argued, was good English farmers.⁷¹

Conclusion

Between 1770 and the outbreak of the American Revolutionary war, the British Isles became the most important source of new immigration to Nova Scotia as thousands of men, women and children from Ulster, Yorkshire and Scotland sought new lives in the

⁶⁸ Robinson and Rispin, *Journey Through Nova Scotia*, 32.

⁶⁹ Robinson and Rispin, *Journey Through Nova Scotia*, 15, 36.

⁷⁰ Robinson and Rispin, *Journey Through Nova Scotia*, 13. See also *Ibid.*, 14, 22.

⁷¹ Robinson and Rispin, *Journey Through Nova Scotia*, 14.

province.⁷² Meanwhile, American Revolutionaries all but ignored Nova Scotia, and many of the Americans who had once seemed Nova Scotia's future trickled out of the province, primarily to Maine. Among these was Noah Miller, the man once tapped by Nathan Sheppard as Philadelphia Township's savior. In 1776 he became involved in Jonathan Eddy and John Allan's ill-fated Cumberland Rebellion and was forced to flee to Maine.⁷³

There was nothing preordained, however, in the colonial coolness towards Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia was not a static concept. Ten years before the arrival of the Planters, plans to settle Halifax and increase the British settler population of Nova Scotia met with enthusiasm on both sides of the Atlantic. The settlement of Nova Scotia by Protestant colonists was a "favourite scheme" of the widely-read British publication *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and found a great deal of favour throughout Britain.⁷⁴ For example, a 1751 pamphlet from London claimed that "there is no part of North America where they can boast of a more fertile soil, or any land that will produce grain with so little labour, even without the common labour of manuring of land."⁷⁵ The year before, in Massachusetts, James Fairservice dedicated his pamphlet *Plain Dealing* to Nova Scotia governor Edward Cornwallis, praising the founding of Halifax and planned settlement of the province as Protestant civilizing mission, "a rich blessing...bestowed on us in the dark places of North America."⁷⁶ Fairservice claimed that he would "invite [his] best friends

⁷² Bumsted, "Resettlement and Rebellion," 160.

⁷³ Ernest Clarke, *The Siege of Fort Cumberland*, 218; Cyrus Eaton, *Annals of the Town of Warren, in Knox County, Maine* (Hallowell: Masters & Livermore, 1877), 181.

⁷⁴ "It is with great pleasure..." *The Gentleman's Magazine* 19 (March 1749): 112.

⁷⁵ *The Importance of Settling and Fortifying Nova Scotia*, 10.

⁷⁶ Fairservice, *Plain Dealing*, frontmatter.

to come and partake of the felicity of [Cornwallis'] wise and good government" by moving from New England to Nova Scotia.⁷⁷ In the first years of the Planter movements, as discussed in the Introduction, Nova Scotian news was widely and sometimes prominently reported in colonial newspapers, and the province was described as a place of possibility and prosperity.

The project of British Nova Scotia was not a failure, and it was to receive a new influx of American settlement after the arrival of the Loyalist refugees. Other townships settled in the 1760s did succeed, and many settlers from the American colonies lived happy lives on its coasts and in its interior. The story of Philadelphia Township, however, reminds us of the contingency of history: communities do not always succeed, settlers do not always stay, and historical actors do not have the benefit of knowing where the chips will fall. Indeed, William Ball was not deterred from future investments in the region by the failure of the settlement. Found among his papers, right next to the letter to Lord Campbell explaining the collapse of the township, are documents referencing a new land scheme: this time on the Island of Saint John, later to be known as PEI.

⁷⁷ Fairservice, *Plain Dealing*, frontmatter.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

How well did the Planters plant? Economically, they struggled, and Julian Gwyn argues that they were unable to transcend the level of a subsistence economy.¹ John Reid and Elizabeth Mancke have both argued that Nova Scotia experienced a different kind of relationship with Britain than the more thickly settled colonies to the south. Reid emphasizes that the key imperial relationship in the northeast during the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century was with aboriginal groups, not Euro-American settlers. Without discounting the historiographical importance of the Planters, Reid notes that the migration, as an attempt to enact cultural change, had the character of a “failed military intervention” and that the role and experience of the Planters was “entirely distinct from the role and the experience of colonial populations in the more populous areas of the Thirteen Colonies.”² Mancke claims that the relationship that Planters experienced to empire was more akin to what would develop in the next century in the colonies that would become Canada.³ Both conclude that the pattern seen in Nova Scotia is not a “deviation or anomaly,” but evidence that Nova Scotia belonged to a different set of colonial experiences—“another British America.”⁴ The Planters studied for this thesis reacted to this new world with uncertainty and trepidation.

¹ Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, 33.

² Reid, “Pax Britannica or Pax Indignea,” 187.

³ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 162.

⁴ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 159; Reid, “Pax Britannica or Pax Indignea,” 187.

The Planter individuals and families considered in this study placed a premium on maintaining their ties with New England. This occurred on both an institutional level and a personal one. Newly arrived New Englanders tried to recreate the township and religious structures of the places they had left. They allotted land on familiar models, held town meetings even though disallowed, and recruited Harvard-educated ministers to provide religious instruction and solace. As discussed in Chapter Two, these connections also played out on the individual and family level. Within families, dependent children were sometimes exchanged across the Gulf of Maine to address labour needs and economic hardships. Older family members and heads of household also took extended trips back to New England. Even when individuals did not travel, networks of ships connected Nova Scotia to New England and passed along news and letters, allowing even stationary Planters to maintain contact with friends and family members elsewhere.

These attempts, however, met with a variety of difficulties. Particularly on the institutional scale, Planters were unable to turn connections into a transplanted culture. Elizabeth Mancke has shown that Planters were restricted from replicating the townships of New England in several crucial ways that tended to increase their reliance on Halifax. Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk argue that New Englanders were also unable to export their traditions of dissent, finding themselves in a place where pleas to seventeenth-century precedent were meaningless.⁵ New England religion, as discussed in Chapter Three, proved equally illusive. This is not to say that the Planters were unable to bring any of their identities as New Englanders to Nova Scotia. Keith Mercer, for example, has argued that South Shore Planters brought with them a vibrant tradition of

⁵ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, 18-20.

opposition to press gangs to Nova Scotia, which ultimately proved so successful that the British navy could no longer press on Nova Scotian shores by the war of 1812.⁶

However, Nova Scotia was not New England, and the culture that would develop there would be one that was new.

Paralleling these developments was the changing relationship between the other colonies and Nova Scotia. The warm moment of imperial-colonial cooperation that came with the fall of New France and brought thousands of New Englanders to the province had cooled significantly by the late 1760s, and become a chill by the start of the Revolution. Nova Scotia, which had been won by imperial arms and was supported by a vast outlay of Parliamentary money, was linked in the minds of many colonists with imperial corruption. It was, furthermore, not economically attractive to moneyed colonial interests, a factor which brought both Georgia and Maine into the American Revolution despite strong Loyalist factions. As discussed in Chapter Four, colonial speculators like Nathan Sheppard and the Nova Scotia Lands Company were unable to either settle their lands with colonists or turn a profit. In the early 1760s, government subsidies and warm relationships had brought 8,000 New Englanders to Nova Scotia, including 30% of the population of Chatham, Massachusetts, and made the activities of the Nova Scotia legislature front-page news.⁷ By 1768, Sheppard and his associates could attract fewer than fifty people, despite trolling both the Delaware Valley and New England for

⁶ Keith Mercer, "North Atlantic Press Gangs: Impressment and Naval-Civilian Relations in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, 1749-1815," (PhD diss., Dalhousie University, 2008), 22-23.

⁷ McLaughlin, "New England Planters," 16.

interested settlers, and pre-Revolutionary pamphlets linked Nova Scotia to the worst of imperial excesses.

Planters were in an uneasy situation. Still linked to New England, they could not reproduce it, and their homelands were becoming increasingly hostile toward their homesteads. Many, like the Porters, existed between the poles of New England and Nova Scotia, moving back and forth frequently with no need to commit to either one. This tenuous state collapsed after the outbreak of the Revolution in 1775. Nehemiah Porter Jr., still in Yarmouth, abandoned his plans to return to New England. Writing to Elisabeth Smith of Ipswich, to whom he may have once promised marriage, he warned her that,

...the times are so precarious and such determinations of mindes are so infallible that I would not have you put to much dependence on whayevr past between you and I...for I am in a distant land, and when I shall see you again tis uncertain.⁸

That same year, a proclamation by Governor Francis Legge was read through the Planter communities. It banned all communication between those living in Nova Scotia and the rebel colonies. This effectively outlawed the everyday life of the Chester, Liverpool and Yarmouth communities, and no doubt many others, where the ebb and flow of people, letters, and gossip between Nova Scotia and New England was an everyday phenomenon. Simeon Perkins found he could get no news of his brothers, his son, or the rest of his family. When his father died in 1776, Perkins got the news secondhand and six months later, from a man who “[did] not know when or how he died.”⁹ He did not learn the date of his father’s death for another six months.¹⁰ By contrast, when his brother Timothy died

⁸ Nehemiah Porter Jr to Elisabeth Smith, 16 June 1775, 23, MG1 vol.770A, NSA.

⁹ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 29 November 1776.

¹⁰ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 15 May 1777.

in 1773, Perkins heard less than a month later.¹¹ It also had more prosaic effects: New England was Nova Scotia's major trading partner, and a source of much-needed provisions.¹² Although Gwyn suggests that the outbreak of war also saw an increase in the Nova Scotian import trade as British manufactures were imported and then re-exported to New York and British-occupied Philadelphia—and perhaps smuggled into New England—the spoils of this trade were reaped by Halifax merchants rather than outport Planter settlers.¹³ As Nehemiah Porter Jr. wrote to his father, in Yarmouth the outbreak of war meant that “itt is like to be very hard times hear for bread.”¹⁴

The sudden strict boundary between Nova Scotian and New England caused problems for many Planters. For example, the ship that Jonathan Scott sailed on during his ill-fated trip to Halifax in 1776 “was seized because she was looked upon as rebels property, as she had no register only one from New England.”¹⁵ However, it was crewed by inhabitants of Yarmouth. The master, John Clemens, may have been the same John Clemens (or his son) who had tried to seize a New England vessel in Yarmouth harbour only four months before.¹⁶ Surely, these were trying times, and Atlantic Planters faced predation from press gangs and privateers alike.¹⁷ John Seccombe, for example, became

¹¹ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 22 April 1773.

¹² Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, 40-41.

¹³ Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, 31.

¹⁴ Nehemiah Porter Jr. to Nehemiah Porter, 16 June 1775, 21, MG1 vol. 770A, NSA.

¹⁵ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 25 March 1776.

¹⁶ Diary of Jonathan Scott, 16 November 1775.

¹⁷ See Mercer, “Planters and Press Gangs: A Social History of Naval Impressment in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1759–1815,” 205-242.

stranded in Halifax during the war. In 1781, he wrote to his friend Bruin Comingo that he knew “not what help my wife has at present; nor what her dependence is for help. I long to be at home...[but] I am afraid to go, or to send any thing on account of the privateers.”¹⁸ On 10 March 1776, Israel Cheever of Liverpool preached from Isaiah 9:12: “The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth.” As Simeon Perkins noted, this was a “sermon suitable to the times.”¹⁹ The easy intercourse between Nova Scotia and New England was ended.

Nova Scotia’s loyalty during the American war has resulted in much scholarly speculation. Why, it is asked, did a colony, peopled with New Englanders, fail to act like New England, and rebel? As Ernest Clarke has shown, they did, but only in limited numbers and during a relatively short time frame.²⁰ John Seccombe, for example, was brought before the legislature and made to pay a fine for preaching a supposedly seditious sermon.²¹ On the whole, however, Planter Nova Scotia was loyal. Brebner argues that Planters, isolated and scattered, echoed their Acadian precursors and chose political neutrality.²² Echoing Brebner’s emphasis on Nova Scotia’s isolation, Rawlyk and Stewart argue that by missing the 1760s, Planters remained stuck in “traditional” modes and failed to understand the changes occurring in New England, resulting in a colony-wide

¹⁸ John Seccombe to Bruin Comingo, 19 July 1781, MFM 10995, NSA.

¹⁹ Diary of Simeon Perkins, 10 March 1776.

²⁰ Clarke, *Siege of Fort Cumberland*, 212.

²¹ Cahill, “Treason of the Merchants,” 67.

²² Brebner, *Neutral Yankees*, 299.

identity crisis resolved only by Henry Alline's revivalism.²³ These arguments, however, do not account for the myriad ways in which Planters remained vitally connected to their former New England homes.

More recent explanations have emphasized the ways in which Nova Scotia experienced a different kind of relationship to empire. Elizabeth Mancke suggests that the political structure of the colony precluded rebellion by restructuring or removing the relationships that prompted regions such as Maine to rebel.²⁴ This analysis is helpful in that it leaves room for the many connections Planters maintained with New England, which kept Planters informed about conditions in New England even as it did little to change their own circumstances.²⁵ Similarly, John Reid argues that Planters had "crossed into a different sphere from that which had spawned the rebellion...in which loyalism was a possible and relevant choice."²⁶ The findings of this thesis support these suggestions.

Loyalty to the crown and desire for stability came naturally to eighteenth-century New Englanders, and recent scholarship suggests that it was a choice that was "possible and relevant" almost until the moment of conflict throughout the British colonies. Historians such as David Grayson Allen emphasize the extent to which the seventeenth-century migrations that brought the ancestors of many Planters to New England were

²³ Stewart and Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God*, xxii, 4.

²⁴ Mancke, *Fault Lines of Empire*, 258.

²⁵ Simeon Perkins was very interested in the unfolding conflict in New England, and recorded many scraps of information—not all of it accurate—in his diary. He nevertheless remained loyal, mustering the Queens' County militia, attempting to defend the township from the activities of American privateers and eventually fitting out a privateer to make counter-raids on American shipping.

²⁶ Reid, "Pax Britannica or Pax Indignea," 189.

conservative. Rather than creating a new world, they attempted to recreate the old; any change came only “in spite of themselves.”²⁷ Into the eighteenth century, change was never a goal of New England society. The fear of declension was loud, and men and women strove for stable, communal societies. Even after the upheaval of the Great Awakening and the demographic shifts of the eighteenth century, New Englanders remained strikingly cohesive. Christine Heyrman, for example, studying the coastal fishing and trading areas of Gloucester and Marblehead, where many Planters had connections, finds that “the strength and resilience of traditional patterns of association and inherited beliefs and values” remained strong at least through the mid-eighteenth century.²⁸ Recent scholarship on loyalty and the American Revolution has emphasized that most colonists still identified strongly with the king until as late as 1774.²⁹

The final push came not from an evolution within colonial society, missed by the Planters, but from without. Fred Anderson, for example, argues that the Seven Years’ War revealed differences between colonist and British ideas about the relationship between colony and empire, leading to a precipitous decline culminating in the crises of the 1760s and the Revolution.³⁰ T.H. Breen examines the dynamism of Georgian England, which the colonies sought to emulate, not reject. However, the new and robust British nationalism was not an inclusive one. It was the British who created the identity

²⁷ David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 7.

²⁸ Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture*, 18.

²⁹ McConville, *The King's Three Faces*, 9, 281.

³⁰ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 733-734, 745.

category of “American,” not the other way around. The colonial reaction was humiliation and emotional pain.³¹

The Planters, too, tried to avoid upheaval as best they could. Nehemiah Porter, for example, had little love for Nova Scotia by the mid-1770s, and he was to become a staunch supporter of the Revolution and chaplain for the Continental Army and the model of a patriot pastor. He even obtained a pass for his son Nehemiah to return to New England from Yarmouth in 1776. Nevertheless, he wrote to him shortly after “that you had best to tarry where you are if you can make it do.”³² The Scotts, Perkinses, Seccombes and Porters all tried, like their friends and cousins in Massachusetts, to hold on to the worlds that they had come from, and get along as best they could in the new. Planters were not isolated from New England events, and moving to Nova Scotia had not frozen their culture in time after 1765, as Rawlyk and Stewart contend. Instead, New Englanders in both places were changing, however begrudgingly, to address different sets of circumstances and relationships. In New England, colonists felt pushed to rebel. In Nova Scotia, although many left the province and returned to New England and many more flirted with rebellion, most remained loyal. New England, long suspicious of Nova Scotia, did not push them to join.

Indeed, as an Atlantic World perspective that examines all of the colonies reminds us, Nova Scotia was hardly alone in its loyalism. The West Indies, Newfoundland, Quebec, and the Hudson’s Bay trading posts never rebelled. East and West Florida,

³¹ T.H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising," *The Journal of American History* 84,1 (Jan 1997): 22, 29-30.

³² Nehemiah Porter to Nehemiah Porter Jr., 4 October 1776, 25, MG1 vol.770A, NSA.

handed over to the new American Republic, likewise did not, even though they became part of the new nation after 1783. Other areas that were newly and sparsely settled, like Maine and Georgia, entered the Revolution only reluctantly, and mostly due to the influence that they were under by the older and more densely settled colonies of the Carolinas and Massachusetts.³³ The thousands of Loyalists who flooded into the maritime region after 1783 are also a reminder that even where revolution was successful, not everyone was in favour. Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan's volume on the *Loyal Atlantic* emphasizes loyalty as an Atlantic world ideology every bit as dynamic as Republicanism.³⁴ Nova Scotia remained part of the mainstream, and was to play a crucial role in the reimagining of the British Empire and the meaning of being a British subject after 1783. That empire was to continue on, and emerge as the strongest world power of the nineteenth century. That the Planters could choose stability and loyalty was a fact perhaps envied, rather than pitied, by many who found themselves engulfed after 1775.

Throughout the Planter period, the Seccombes, Perkinses, Scotts and Porters showed time and again that they had no interest in creating a new world or severing connections with their New England homes. However, a successful life in Nova Scotia, like that experienced by Simeon Perkins and John Seccombe, meant new connections and

³³ Maine, of course, was still part of Massachusetts. For a comparison of the situation in Georgia and in Nova Scotia, see Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, 41; For Maine, see James S. Leamon, *Revolution Downeast: The War for American Independence in Maine* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), xiv. Additionally, Alison Games finds a general connection between recent influx of migrants, from any location, and the strength of loyalism during the war. Games, "Migration," 47.

³⁴ Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, "Introduction" in *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* J. Bannister and L. Riordan, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 17-18.

patterns of behaviour that evolved in new directions from their New England friends and relatives. Those Planters that tried to reproduce New England too strictly—like Nehemiah Porter and Jonathan Scott—ultimately found themselves unable to live in Nova Scotia. However, until the outbreak of the Revolution, it was possible to live between these worlds: Planters sailed New England ships, New Englanders passed Nova Scotian letters and the Porter children traversed the Gulf time and again. The Planters were, and remained, loyal and Protestant. However, they did little to alter the fundamentally uncertain and unsettled character of eighteenth-century Nova Scotia.

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