Scottish settlement had a profound impact on the development of Nova Scotia. Although its broad contours are familiar to most readers, there are some aspects of Scottish settlement that still remain unclear or are blurred by romantic and impressionistic analysis. A Scottish foothold was established in the colony at Pictou Harbour (Pictou County) with the arrival of the Hector in 1773. Immigration was interrupted by the American Revolution, but it resumed in the early 1790’s and continued through the 1830’s. Settlement first expanded into the eastern districts of the peninsula (Antigonish, Guysborough, and Cumberland counties) and later onto Cape Breton Island. The vast majority of the settlers came from the Highland districts of Inverness and the Hebrides, and most of them were Roman Catholic. Though many of the passenger lists have been lost, a conservative estimate would place the total number of immigrants between 25,000 and 30,000.

Until recently, most writers viewed the early Scottish inhabitants of Nova Scotia as passive and tragic victims exploited at every turn by heartless landlords, greedy emigration agents, and uncaring land speculators and colonial officials. As well, it was widely assumed that there was a high degree of cultural transfer between old world and new. It was believed that this inhibited the pace of settlement. Indeed, some authors argued that the Highland settlers were poor and backward farmers interested in little more than self-sufficiency. Recently, scholars have revised or corrected many elements of this traditional interpretation.
Many now view the exodus from the Scottish Highlands as both a voluntary move from below as well as a clearance from above. In addition, earlier immigrants were wealthier and more mobile than once thought, particularly those who arrived before 1815. Perhaps one of the most interesting avenues of recent study, however, concerns the examination of the settlement process as a key to understanding the course of rural development. Writers, such as Rusty Bitterman and Stephen J. Hornsby, find that Scottish settlement was anything but a levelling experience. Moreover, they suggest that major socioeconomic divisions, for a variety of reasons, emerged between “front” and “back” land farmers. Hornsby adds that these differences, to a certain extent, replicated relations between crofters and cottars in Scotland. Rosemary E. Ommer offers a somewhat different interpretation of the settlement process. She proposes that the small local kin groups, which formed the underlying basis of Highland society in Scotland, were, with some modification, reconstituted in Nova Scotia, both for emotional and practical reasons. The values and kinship ties associated with these groups influenced demographic behaviour, settlement patterns, and economic decision-making.
Most of the recent work focuses on Cape Breton. Although the majority of Highland immigrants eventually settled on the island, it would be inappropriate to assume that all of the Scottish settlements in the colony developed in a similar manner. The chronology of immigration, the resources of the inhabitants, and the availability and quality of the land varied considerably between the island and the mainland.

This article looks more closely at how kinship and cultural factors may have influenced the settlement process. Naturally, it is impossible in a brief essay to examine effectively all aspects of the question, so four of the more important dimensions will be considered: immigration, land granting and settlement patterns, demography, and agricultural development.

The article focuses on St. Andrew's Township, Antigonish (see Map I). It was primarily an agricultural district settled by a large and, by the standards of the day, a fairly prosperous Highland population. The small Acadian community within St. Andrew's, Pomquet, has been excluded from the discussion. This will allow us to concentrate on the Highland experience.

St. Andrew's contains rich sources of information, some of which are either no longer available or difficult to use for Cape Breton. They provide important insights into the settlement process. First, there are several detailed passenger lists. They tell us a great deal about the first Highland immigrants who settled in the township. Second, land records and surveys reveal the manner in which the land was distributed and settled. Third, the individual household returns of the 1817 and 1827 censuses document the demographic and agricultural background of settlement.

II

The majority of Highland immigrants who settled in St. Andrew's arrived before 1815. Most of them were Roman Catholics. Genealogical records, local accounts, and passenger lists indicate that they came from the mainland districts of the Scottish Highlands: Strathglass, Moidart, Arisaig, Morar, Knoydart, and Lochaber. Although all of these areas were located in Inverness, some of the districts were widely separated and quite different.
Most of us are now familiar with the broad character of the dramatic changes taking place in Inverness and the other parts of the Highlands during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and there is no need to provide a lengthy review here. It is important to stress, however, that the Highland Scots who immigrated to St. Andrew's came from highly stratified communities. Typically, the upper most part of the socio-economic pyramid was occupied by the chiefs, or increasingly by absentee proprietors who owned the estates. They were followed by tacksmen, joint tenants, sub-tenants (or cottars), and in some places crofters and grassmen. Although this system once had a strong patriarchal and familial outlook, it was, to a large extent replaced, in the words of one scholar, by "the pursuit of profit." The tacksmen or agents collected the rents from the numerous small farmers who were the joint and sub-tenants. Crofters and grassmen were extremely poor. The former became more numerous after the turn of the century, worked tiny plots of land, and were heavily dependent upon other forms of employment, such as gathering and processing kelp. Most of them were found in the western districts and islands. Grassmen, however, faced the most difficult circumstances because they did not have access to land for cultivation, but only leased grazing rights.

Although Scottish agriculture became more productive after the turn of the nineteenth century, it could not keep pace with the growth of population, especially in the western districts. There simply was not enough arable land to support the population. Naturally, this raised concerns among the tenants and other groups regarding access to land for their children, particularly in the face of the sheep clearances. This, together with the glowing reports circulated by immigration agents and returning troops regarding conditions in Nova Scotia and the other British colonies, provided the necessary stimulus for many to leave.

The Atlantic crossing was not only long and dangerous, but also expensive. Consequently, immigration was not an option widely available to the poorest groups in Highland society, especially after the passing of the British Passenger Act of 1803, which saw average fares rise from approximately £4 per adult to more than £10.
Most of the Highlanders immigrating to St. Andrew’s first disembarked at Pictou Harbour and made the rest of the journey over land. Although the vessels that transported them to the colony were required to submit passenger lists, most have long since been lost and therefore it is impossible to accurately measure the total number of Scottish immigrants in St. Andrew’s. Fortunately, lists for the vessels Dove and Sarah have survived and they offer some insight into the social and demographic makeup of the earliest settlers.16

The two vessels transported 569 persons to Pictou Harbour in 1801 and most of them settled in St. Andrew’s and the neighbouring Township of Dorchester.17 The lists contain useful information about each passenger. For example, they show that Alexander Chisholm, a Strathglass “farmer”, brought his wife Mary, and his children Duncan (14 yrs.), Cath (4 yrs.), and Patrick (3 yrs.) to the colony. Evidently, Alexander was also responsible for (or employed) a girl named Cath McDonald (14 yrs.).

Kinship and community ties clearly played an important part in the migration process. They eased the sorrow of leaving and provided an important source of support in the new land. Although the lists reveal that the passengers came from many different Highland districts and communities, it was rare to find a single family or individual making the journey alone. Typically, parties of two or more families or individuals left together from the same parish or area.

The passenger lists also show that most Highland Scots made the voyage to Nova Scotia with other family members, though a small number appear to have travelled alone. In total, there were 114 families and 39 “unaccompanied” adults on the Dove and Sarah. Approximately 68 percent of the family heads were listed as “tenants” or “farmers”, 2 percent were craftsmen, and 25 percent were “labourers”.18 In addition, there was at least one tacksman, Alexander Fraser of Strathglass, on board the Sarah. Approximately 4 percent of the families making the crossing had female heads. Perhaps they and their children were joining husbands and fathers who preceded them. All of the adult males making the voyage by themselves were described as “labourers”. It is impossible to ascertain what this term actually meant. Were
they cottars or true labourers? In any case, it is likely that their representation dropped considerably after the passing of the Passenger Act of 1803.

Although some of the families on board the Dove and Sarah contained as many as 13 persons, the typical family possessed 4.5 members. Roughly three-quarters of the families brought children on the voyage and their average age was 6 years. Surprisingly, the ratio of men to women was quite good (108 to 100). While there were some unattached males making the voyage, this was partly compensated by the presence of a large number of women who accompanied families on the crossing. Regrettably, there is no information about these women and their relationships with the families they accompanied.19 Some of them may have been relatives and others servants.

Clearly, then, the Scottish immigration to St. Andrew's involved the more mobile and perhaps affluent members of Highland society. Most travelled in family groups, often in the company of other persons from the same clan, community, or parish. Although the journey to Nova Scotia was arduous and largely unassisted, the socio-economic background of the immigrants, as will be seen later, eased the settlement process.

III

The acquisition of land was of crucial importance to the Highland settlers. Fortunately, most of it in St. Andrew's was sufficiently fertile for regular cultivation.20 Indeed, the land along the St. Andrew's River was quite good. Although subsistence could be secured with about 50 acres of land, most settlers sought larger grants not only to improve their own lives, but also to provide a sufficient legacy for their children when they came of age.21

The first settlers encountered considerable delays before they obtained clear title to land. In 1790, the Crown rescinded its previous policy of "free" grants. Instead, it opted for a programme of land sales in order to raise revenue and improve efficiency. Although few details exist, it is likely that most settlers were issued tickets of location or simply squatted. The Crown's new land policy, however, received little support from Highlanders and other settlers, and few sales were made.22 In 1808, the
Crown returned to a policy of free land, which remained in force until 1827.

The size of a free grant varied with the applicant's marital status. Single persons were allowed 100 acres and married couples 200 acres. Although these grants were somewhat smaller than the ones made to the handful of Loyalists who settled near Antigonish Harbour, they were very large in comparison to the typical holding in the Scottish Highlands. Moreover, they were much larger than the grants issued to the Acadians in the adjacent township of Tracadie. An examination of St. Andrew's

![Figure I](image)

**Figure I**
Road to Manchester

Sources: P.A.N.S., R.G. 1 and 20.

66
land grant records, however, reveals that the average grant actually contained 264 acres, which was well above the stipulated size of grants. Indeed, some of the lots were much larger, though none had more than 500 acres.\textsuperscript{24} Although more research is required, it appears that some of the settlers may have purchased additional land and therefore possessed some capital when they arrived in St. Andrew's.

Settlement was highly dispersed, though it tended to follow the main rivers and roads. The nearest town, Antigonish, was situated in the adjacent township of Dorchester. Land granting took place at a feverous pace and, by the late 1810s, most of the land had been alienated.

Many writers have commented on the extent to which kinship and old community ties influenced Highland settlement patterns in Nova Scotia. In St. Andrew's, there is some evidence of kinship and regional clustering among these settlers, though the degree varied greatly in different parts of the township. Figures 1 and 2 show the distribution of grants on the road to Manchester (Guysborough) and along the St. Andrew's River. In both instances, the grants were made in the 1810's. Nearly all of the grants on the Manchester Road were held by settlers from Strathglass (Chisholms and MacKenzies) and Lochaber (McDonalds and McIntoshes). By contrast, there was less clustering and more variety on the St. Andrew's River, where at least five different districts - Strathglass, Lochaber, Arisaig, Knoydart, and Argyleshire - were represented. What explains this rather striking difference? In all likelihood, it was more difficult for large parties to settle together in locations where the demand for land was greater, as was the case with the fertile intervales lands along the St. Andrew's River. This suggests that kinship and old community ties were not the only factors guiding settlement patterns.

\textbf{IV}

Few would deny that kinship was an important bonding agent in the Highland immigration to St. Andrew's, but local conditions, particularly the highly dispersed character of settlement, meant that the nuclear family became the principal form of demographic and economic organization. This in turn encour-
aged the development of a community which was more open and individualistic than one might have expected.

Some insight into the demographic background of settlement can be found in the censuses of 1817 and 1827. The earlier enumeration not only reported the size of each family, but also recorded the number of men over 50 years, men between 16 and 50, women over 16, and boys and girls under 16; the later census was less detailed in this respect and it only noted the inhabitant's gender and the overall size of each family.

**KEY**

- Strathglass
- Lochaber
- Arisaig
- Knoydart
- Argyleshire

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**Figure II**

St. Andrew's River

Sources: P.A.N.S., R.G. 1 and 20.
During this period, the typical household contained between 6 and 7 persons, though some had as many as 13. In most instances, the larger households merely reflect the presence of more children rather than extended or complex families. According to the individual returns, the average household consisted of 1.6 males above the age of 16 years, 1.3 females above 16, and 3.2 boys and girls. The returns also show that it was extremely rare for a person to live on his/her own. This is not too surprising, given the demands and loneliness of frontier life. As one might anticipate, the early years of settlement witnessed a sizeable imbalance between the two genders. In 1817, for example, there were 127 men for every 100 women. This imbalance would not be redressed until the next generation matured.

V

The vast majority of Highland immigrants settling in St. Andrew’s became farmers. Within a remarkably short period of time, they created a productive market-oriented agricultural economy. The census of 1827 offers a useful profile of the state of farming at the end of the first generation of settlement. It shows, for example, that Ranald McDonald possessed 30 acres of improved land. He harvested 15 bushels of wheat, 30 bushels of coarse grains, 200 bushels of potatoes, and 10 tons of hay; he kept 11 cattle, 1 horse, 20 sheep, and 10 swine. Although this was for its time a rather extensive survey of agriculture, census takers failed to note the overall size of Ranald’s farm. Nor did they gather details about his dairy production, vegetables and fruit.

Highland settlers devoted most of their attention to the cultivation of fodder crops and the raising of livestock, especially cattle. Farmers in other parts of the colony did so as well. This was a sensible strategy because Nova Scotia’s climate discouraged the large-scale production of wheat and corn. In addition, there was a considerable demand for live animals and dairy products in regional markets.

The census shows that over 96 percent of the families in St. Andrew’s possessed at least 1 acre of improved land. The typical farm had 31 improved acres and some contained as many as 60. This is rather impressive for an area of recent settlement. By
contrast, few farmers in Scotland could ever expect to own or lease this much land.

Farmers allocated about half of their improved acreage to field crops. Table 1 shows the average output per farm. Wheat was a relatively minor crop, which was grown mainly for home consumption. Indeed, many families probably mixed wheat flour with the flour of other grains to make their bread. They seldom devoted more than an acre or two to wheat and typically harvested about 17 bushels.

**Table 1**

**Average Farm Output in St. Andrew's, 1827**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Returns</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Acres</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat (bushels)</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Growing</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Grain (bushels)</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Growing</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes (bushels)</td>
<td>242.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Growing</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay (tons)</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Growing</td>
<td>98.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Owning</td>
<td>98.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Owning</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Owning</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Owning</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of 1827

More attention was given to "coarse" grains, particularly oats and barley. These crops served a dual purpose in the early farm economy. They were either ground into meal and flour for
human consumption or used as fodder for livestock. The average farmer grew approximately 27 bushels.

A variety of root crops were cultivated. Unfortunately, census takers gathered statistics on only the potato harvest. According to one account more than fifty different varieties were grown in the colony. The potato was the most frequently planted crop in early agricultural settlements because of its high yield. Although bulky, it produced more nutrients per acre than wheat. In Nova Scotia, the root took on added importance. First, it was a significant source of feed, particularly for swine. Second, it could be grown with a minimum of care and therefore was attractive to those who wished to pursue other economic opportunities as well. The average harvest was considerable, ranging from 200 to 300 bushels. Some farmers produced much larger crops.

Farmers cut huge amounts of hay. Indeed, it was their most important crop. At least one-third of the improved acreage was devoted to it. Whereas 5 or 6 acres were typically sown with grains and roots, 11 were used for hay-making. This reflected the heavy demand for winter feed. The balance of the improved acreage was left fallow, used for orchards and gardens, and employed as pasture. Unfortunately, little is known regarding these aspects of farming in 1827.

Farmers raised a variety of animals, but the main focus was cattle raising. The typical herd numbered 11 head and some had as many as 26. The early settlers probably acquired their animals from the more established settlement of Pictou or perhaps from the Acadian farmers of Tracadie. It is important to note, however, that cattle raising by its very nature was a market-driven pursuit; there was no incentive for the farmers to maintain large herds merely for subsistence purposes. Some contemporary observers and scholars have suggested that the Highlanders gave an inordinate amount of attention to the activity and kept too many animals. In comparison to other contemporary farming communities this was simply untrue. In Tracadie and Amherst Townships, for instance, the average farmer owned 11 and 16 animals respectively in 1827.

The heavy emphasis on livestock raising and the large number of cattle present on most St. Andrew's farms reduced the need for horses, which were more costly to maintain. Another factor
that may have lowered the demand for these animals was the availability of water transport. Roughly one-third of the farmers possessed at least one horse.

Sheep raising was an important activity in the settlement, a fact often overlooked in the cultural stereotypes. The animals provided farmers with wool and meat. Flocks were quite large and the average farmer owned 21 animals. This was well beyond the needs of the typical household.

Most farmers raised swine. However, herds were fairly small in comparison to the other kinds of animals kept and numbered about 4 head. Their modest size may have resulted from a shortage of feed. Perhaps a contributing factor was the availability of salted pork from the United States, which could be purchased at a cheaper price by provisioners.

Clearly, the farming regime was quite different from the one followed in the Scottish Highlands. In St. Andrew’s, the early farms were larger and more extensive in character. They also produced more fodder and supported a larger number of animals during the winter. It is likely that they produced more dairy products as well. The dispersed nature of settlement probably encouraged a more individualistic approach and mentality towards farming, though the larger farm owners may have hired additional labour on an occasional basis.32

The typical Highland family enjoyed more economic security and comfort by the end of the first generation of settlement than most of their counterparts could ever hope to obtain in Scotland. Average farm statistics, however, can mask a broad range of experience. In order to obtain some insight into the nature of socio-economic relations in the settlement, it is useful to look briefly at how wealth and productive assets were distributed. The two most important items surveyed in the census of 1927 undoubtedly were improved acreage and cattle. Table 2 shows the distribution of both assets among the largest 1, 10, and 25 percent and smallest 25 and 10 percent of the owners.

Settlement in St. Andrew’s was not in its strictest sense a levelling experience. There were some inequalities in the distribution of wealth and productive assets, which probably can be attributed to the chronology of settlement. For example, the
largest 10 and 25 percent of the farmers owned 17 and 39 percent of the improved acreage. The concentration was a little greater regarding cattle and the corresponding figures were 20 and 44 percent. In comparison to other new world agricultural settlements, this concentration was hardly extreme. Thus, the evidence suggests that a fairly open agricultural community existed in St. Andrew's in the early nineteenth century.

**Table 2**

**Distribution of Improved Land and Cattle in St. Andrew's, 1827**

**Improved Land**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 1%</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10%</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 25%</td>
<td>2,215</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 25%</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 10%</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cattle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 1%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10%</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 25%</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 25%</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 10%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of 1827

The Scottish settlement that emerged in St. Andrew’s had much in common with many that were formed by other ethnic groups on the coastal frontier of North America in the eight-
teenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, the similarities have been obscured by cultural and romantic stereotypes. Like most “old world” immigrants, some of the inhabitants of Inverness, Scotland, fearful of the changes and growing pressures at home and lured by the opportunities in the “new world”, decided to make the Atlantic crossing. The cost of travel meant that only the more mobile inhabitants with some capital could leave; the risks and uncertainty encouraged many to depart with family and friends. Thus, it should hardly be surprising that many of the Highland immigrants attempted to maintain or renew some of these ties in St. Andrew’s. The evidence shows that kinship and old community attachments had a significant influence on settlement patterns, but this was hardly peculiar to the Scots. Similar kinship and regional clustering can be found in many Acadian and New England communities in Nova Scotia as well. From a demographic and economic standpoint, the St. Andrew’s settlement resembled many other agricultural districts in the colony. Indeed, the Highland immigrants, with almost no assistance from government, quickly and effectively modified their “old world” skills to suit the conditions in St. Andrew’s.

We should not assume, however, that the nature of Scottish settlement was always the same in Nova Scotia. For example, there were some interesting differences between St. Andrew’s and Cape Breton. Socio-economic relations and structures appear to have been less stratified on the mainland than they were on the island. Much of this probably can be attributed to differences in the chronology of immigration, the resources of the early inhabitants, the conditions of settlement, and perhaps to the more limited agricultural base in Cape Breton. More research must be undertaken. It would be interesting to compare, for instance, the development of Scottish settlements in Nova Scotia with those found in Ontario and Quebec. This would provide us with further insight into how local conditions affected various aspects of the settlement process.

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NOTES


6 Ibid.


For a useful discussion of the activities of agents, see Bumsted, *The People's Clearance*, chs. 3-5.


These lists and others are reprinted in Bumsted, *The People's Clearance*, Appendix B.

For a description of the vessels and passengers, see Bumsted, *The People's Clearance*, pp. 90-1.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain the precise meaning of the terms "tenant" and "farmer" as used in the passen-
ger lists. It is likely that they referred to joint and sub-tenants. In addition, some of these families included males over 16 years of age who were described as labourers. Whether the latter were really labourers or merely young sons waiting (or hoping) to follow in their fathers’ footsteps is uncertain.

The lists described all women above the age of 16 years as “spinsters” regardless of their marital status.


Census takers did not differentiate between households which held legal title to the land from those which used or leased it.
John Byrne, for example, was a farmer in St. Andrew's. According to the 1827 census, he possessed 20 acres of cultivated land, however, he did not obtain legal title to this land until his father's death in 1832. See the Will Books for Antigonish County, P.A.N.S., R.G. 40.


27 For a detailed discussion of this point, see MacNeil, "Society and Economy in Rural Nova Scotia, 1761-1861," ch. 5.

28 For information on crop yields, see the Census of 1871.

29 This was the practice in the River Philip settlement of Cumberland County. See the annual report of the River Philip Agricultural Society in the J.P.N.S.H.A., 1849.


31 See census of 1827.

32 A small number of households kept servants. For further details, see the census of 1827.