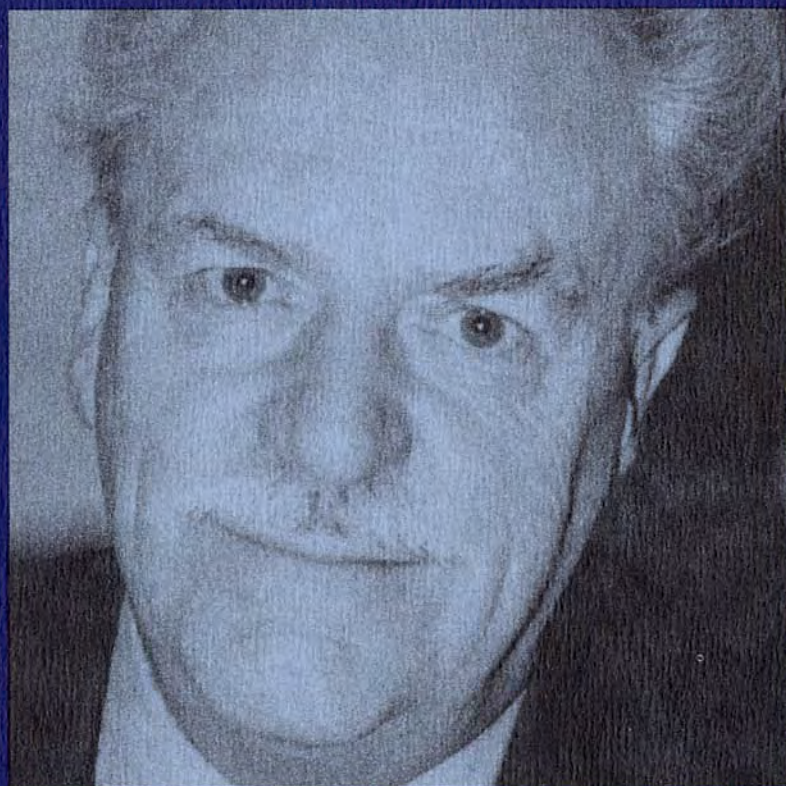


# THE SCOTS



# IN CANADA

J.M. Bumsted

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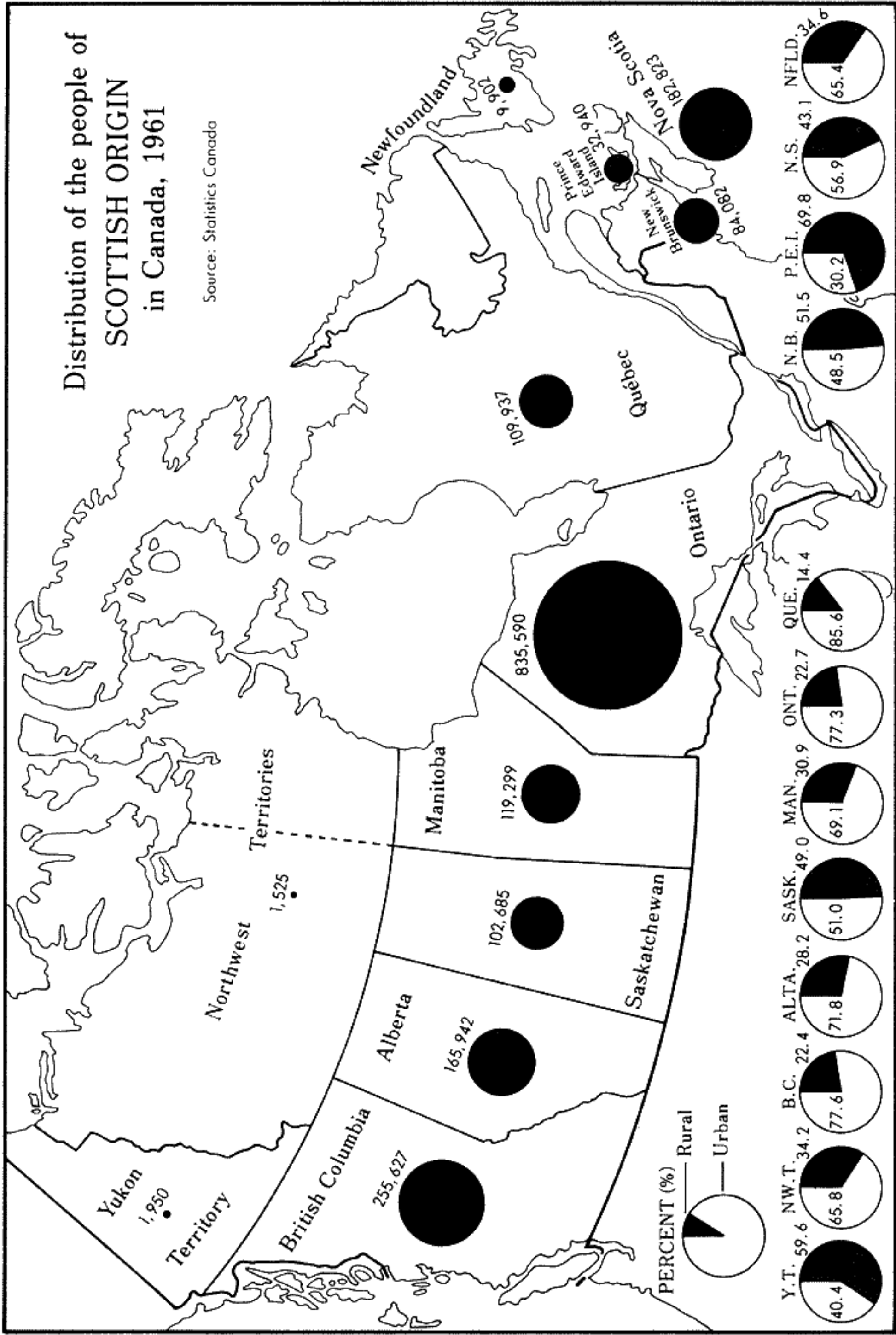
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# **THE SCOTS IN CANADA**

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# Distribution of the people of SCOTTISH ORIGIN in Canada, 1961

Source: Statistics Canada



# THE SCOTS IN CANADA

## I — The Scottish Background

In 1961, the last census year in which the category was recorded, over 1,800,000 Canadians declared themselves of Scottish origin, thus constituting the Scots as the third largest ethnic group in Canada, exceeded in number only by the English and French. By the 1971 census the Scots, like other constituent peoples of the British Isles — the English, the Welsh, and the Irish — had been reclassified as “British”, thus neatly reducing most of the Canadian population to the two founding peoples required by bilingualism and biculturalism, while ignoring centuries of historical development. Whatever Statistics Canada might ordain, the Scottish people have always seen themselves as distinctive, with their own culture and heritage. Not all settlers from Scotland were Anglophones, particularly during the early decades of the Scottish influx to Canada when Gaelic speakers predominated, and even those who spoke the Scottish dialects of English had a strong sense of distinctiveness from the people of England. Despite their numbers and unquestioned importance to the development of Canada, the Scots (or Scotch, as they often called themselves before the beginning of the twentieth century) have never quite received the attention they deserve. To a considerable extent this deficiency is a product of the ambivalent position of being both British and a separate people. A substantial literature — both fiction and non-fiction — has been devoted to individuals and to communities in Canada of Scottish origin, but the Scots have seldom been treated as a separate people in general studies of immigration, settlement, and ethnicity. Since Scots have been involved with Canada since the seventeenth century and have composed a significant proportion of the population, both rural and urban, in nearly all the provinces, the story of Canadians of Scottish descent is a difficult one to tell in any coherent fashion. The tendency is to offer individual vignettes rather than an account of a people whose experience in Canada is concentrated neither chronologically nor geographically.

The historical background of the exodus of Scots to Canada is complicated by the growth of two Scotlands. Geography, climate, and historical process all combined to draw sharp distinctions between the Lowland and Highland regions of Scotland. The former was characterized by a coastal plain running from the north down the east side of the country to merge with another plain dominating the entire southern third. The latter, encompassing the west and north coasts while extending into the central area, was dominated by mountains and scattered offshore islands. The Lowland climate, while damp and cool, was equable; the Highlands not only experienced more extremes of winter and summer, but along the coasts, one of the wettest and windiest climates in the world, particularly evident during autumn harvest season. Linguistically, most of Scotland gradually became English-speaking, leaving the Gaelic language confined almost exclusively to the more remote Highland areas. The two regions differed considerably in culture and life-style as well, the Lowlands developing a society based on arable farming and gradual industrialization, and the Highlands a pastoral existence based on cattle raising. By the late middle ages, more-

over, the semi-isolated pastoral life of the Highlander had produced a form of organization based upon the clan as a social, economic, and military unit. When in the eighteenth century the military function of the semi-feudal clan was used to support revolts against the reigning monarchs of Britain, successful efforts were undertaken to break up the clans and convert Highland martial talent to the services of the British army. Only as they ceased to be viable institutions did the clans regularize those symbols — such as bagpipes and tartans — so dear today to the descendants of Highlanders.

If the distinction between Highland and Lowland was productive of conflict — often military — within Scotland itself, an equally intense rivalry developed between the neighbouring kingdoms of Scotland and England. Throughout the middle ages, Scottish policy was to extend territory southwards, while English policy was to subdue Scotland. Under Robert Bruce the Scottish monarchy reasserted its independence in the early fourteenth century, and the succeeding years were characterized by continual Anglo-Scottish hostility. By the sixteenth century, when Scotland was torn by religious strife, France and England contended for dominance in the northern kingdom, a struggle culminating in the troubled reign of Mary Queen of Scots. Mary's son James VI became James I of England in 1603 and throughout the seventeenth century the two nations shared a monarch, although during the periods of civil war the monarchy was disrupted. Finally, in 1707 Scotland disappeared as an independent nation. The linguistic triumph of the Lowland Scots tongue (a vernacular version of an English language historically originating on the island of Britain) was assured everywhere in Scotland outside the Highlands by the fifteenth century, but the sharing of a common language with England did not decrease conflict and may even have enhanced it. After the union of 1707 Scots maintained their historic hostility to the more numerous and dominant English, although its expression took new forms. While outwardly conforming to the demands of the English, the Scots emphasized their moral superiority over those to the south.

A byproduct of the long centuries of conflict with England was a continuing close Scottish relationship with the continent of Europe, particularly France. Scottish law and legal practice developed independently of England, and looked overseas rather than south for inspiration. Scottish medicine, science, and philosophy were strongly influenced by the continent as well. After the union with England, Scottish culture came to full flower, probably encouraged by the political impotence felt by leading men in Scotland and certainly greatly affected by the new currents of thought abroad in Europe. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the men of "the Scottish Enlightenment", of whom Adam Smith and David Hume were only the most renowned, completely reshaped British (and international) thought in a variety of fields, particularly in science, medicine, philosophy, and political economy. Ideas, often a synthesis of Scottish and European thinking, flowed to England in virtually a one-way channel. The English might have had the political power, but Scots dominated the life of the mind.

A principal factor in the flowering of Scottish cultural and intellectual activity after 1707 was the superiority of Scottish educational institutions over those of other parts of Britain. Since at least the days of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, led by John Knox, Scots had placed a high premium on education and

the production of a literate population. The reformers had insisted on the availability of schooling for all, and by the seventeenth century, most Lowland parishes had schools of high standards. That any bright Scot — at least in the Lowlands — could and usually did receive a sound education was an important feature of what one scholar has called Scotland's most enduring contribution to western civilization, the concept of the "democratic intellect". Ability, rather than class origins or financial resources, was the key criterion for the Scottish educational system. The Scots did not stop with local schools, but created a number of universities which by the eighteenth century were generally acknowledged to be the finest in the world. Scottish education — which emphasized the needs of contemporary society — produced highly mobile and well-trained individuals who often could not be accommodated at home but were ideally suited for roles of leadership in Britain's overseas empire. Thus Scots held a disproportionate percentage of official appointments in Britain's colonies, and tended to dominate the professions and commerce. The Scottish system of education also served as a model for colonial systems, including those of the various provinces of Canada. To some extent this transfer followed from the number of Scots involved in education, but to a greater degree it was because Scottish educational philosophy — based as it was on concepts of talent and utility rather than class or tradition — was ideally suited to the needs of developing countries.

Despite its clear sense of moral and intellectual superiority over England, Scotland was never able to match England economically. Scotland remained a relatively poor country, particularly in terms of the agrarian and natural resource bases upon which capital formation for diversification have often depended. Throughout its history Scotland, like other countries with a surplus population, saw many of its most ambitious and talented members leave the land of their birth in pursuit of satisfactory employment, often in underdeveloped countries. During the middle ages, Scots — mainly the more highly skilled — went either to the continent of Europe or to England. The settlement of North America in the seventeenth century drew large numbers of less skilled Scots, but the major Scottish settlement overseas in this period was in northern Ireland. The plantation of Ulster attracted thousands of Lowland Scots, who merged with the local population to form the "Scotch-Irish". Over-population in Ulster by the eighteenth century forced many of the Scotch-Irish to America, and they were the largest single immigrant group to the American colonies during much of the century. Despite their lengthy Irish sojourn, many Ulsterites persisted in regarding themselves as Scots, providing a further complication in attempting to sort out the Scottish contribution to North American development. Most of the early outflow of people directly from Scotland involved Lowlanders. The younger sons of the Highland elite often went abroad, but ordinary Highlanders did not begin emigrating until the last third of the eighteenth century, when the Highlands had been to some extent integrated into Britain and the pressures upon the clan system exposed the extent of over-population.

Although most of those departing Scotland in any era were "surplus", they were not so much harried out of Scotland as attracted to other places. As with other immigrant groups to Canada, those Scots who arrived were on the whole the ambitious and energetic members of their home society, individuals who had

made a conscious decision that the future was more promising elsewhere. Like other immigrant groups, Scots tended to stick together in the new land, forming communities and networks of mutual support and assistance. Highlanders, given their background, were on the whole more resistant to assimilation and integration. But whether Highlanders or Lowlanders, the Scots in Canada retained an ambivalent attitude toward the land of their origins, romanticizing and sentimentalizing the Scotland they had abandoned — and to which they usually had no intention of returning permanently. In short, in many respects the Scots behaved similarly to other immigrant groups in Canada. If there was a difference between the Scots and other ethnic groups, it resided in the extent of their swift success in assuming roles of leadership and influence in Canadian society.

## **II — The First Wave: Scottish Immigration to Canada 1763-1815**

Although the Scots did not arrive in large numbers in what is now Canada until the 1770s, a Scottish presence begins much earlier in the nation's development. One of the Scottish courtiers of James VI, Sir William Alexander, was granted in 1621 a charter for the land between the St. Croix River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to be called New Scotland, or Nova Scotia. Alexander sold Nova Scotia baronetcies to the Scottish merchant classes in profusion, and he established small settlements on Cape Breton and on the Bay of Fundy. The Scottish Kirke brothers captured Quebec in 1629 from a base in Nova Scotia, but King Charles I returned Quebec to France and surrendered Scottish claims to Nova Scotia in a treaty of 1632. The most substantial and enduring introduction of Scots into Canada in the early period was in the western fur trade. Beginning in the 1720s the Hudson's Bay Company began recruiting many of its employees in the Orkney Islands, the last port of call for Company ships heading for the Bay. The Orcadians, or Orkneymen as they were called in Canada, were highly prized for their endurance, their obedience, and their thrift. Before 1800, an average of 70 Orcadians were recruited annually for Company service. Most of these men eventually returned to their homes after their tour of duty, but some — particularly those who had established lasting relationships with Indian or mixed blood women in the later years of the century — remained in the country. Unlike their Highlander compatriots and competitors, who came to dominate the fur trade at the end of the eighteenth century, the Orcadians were relatively unambitious, and few of them achieved positions of leadership in the early West.

The introduction of Highlanders to Canada in large numbers can be credited to the British Government, which came to regard Highland soldiers as the world's finest because of their bravery, endurance, and loyalty. This last characteristic, ironically, was emphasized despite the Highland involvement in revolts against the Hanover monarchy in 1715 and 1745. While many clansmen supported the deposed Stuart monarchs, particularly during the '45 which culminated in the catastrophic defeat of the army of Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden, others were being formed into the crack regiments of the British army overseas. During the Seven Years' War, Highland regiments were prominent in the fighting and particularly feared by the French forces in Canada. The officers and men of these regiments were greatly impressed with



the territory in which they had fought, and many received land grants in the conquered regions after 1763. In addition to these potential settlers, Canada received a small but highly influential influx of Scots — both Lowlander and Highlander — in the movement of Anglophone merchants and officials to Quebec during the period of occupation (1759-63) and in the first years of British rule. These individuals came quickly to dominate Canadian commerce and the fur trade, establishing links with Scotland and the western territories which would endure for many years.

The first major movement of Scots to territory now in Canada began in 1770 as part of a general exodus of population from Scotland to the American colonies, mainly to the thirteen which would rebel in 1775. The Canadian part of this exodus became particularly important after the close of the American Revolution, and consisted mainly of Highlanders. This initial period of immigration lasted until 1815, when Britain began altering its attitudes and policies regarding the movement of its people to its overseas colonies, including British North America. Before 1815, the British government, responding mainly to the objections enunciated by the leaders of Scotland to any loss of population, placed as many obstacles as possible in the way of departure to America, including an effort to price the cost of the overseas passage beyond the resources of most seeking to leave. Those who managed to make their way to Canada did so in the face of considerable opposition rather than with any public approval or assistance and almost without exception they funded their own passage. Government policy, however, was responsible for the resettlement in British North America of the Loyalists, those Americans who had supported and often fought for the British Crown during the civil war in America. Included among the Loyalists and British soldiers disbanded in America were large numbers of people of Scottish origin, many of whom had left Scotland for the colonies in the years immediately preceding American independence and had refused to support that cause.

Perhaps as many as 15,000 Highlanders immigrated directly to British North America from Scotland before 1815, and there were several thousand more among the Loyalist refugees from the United States. Approximately 80 per cent of these people had originated in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, a region not well suited either to large scale sheep farming or to extensive cultivation of arable land. In this region population had grown rapidly in the second half of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries, as the people found ways of supplementing subsistence agriculture through military service, unskilled labour in the south, the sale of cattle, and through kelping. The kelp industry particularly flourished in the years before 1815, when kelp provided a major source of alkalines for British industry. Seaweed was gathered or cut offshore through exhausting and labour-intensive effort by thousands of workers, burnt in a kiln to reduce its bulk, and sold to outside merchants. The major landlords had quickly gained control of the industry, and kelp had become a major component of their incomes. Because kelping was labour-intensive, the kelping lairds had no wish to diminish their work force, and subdivided land to encourage and accommodate additional population.

Few of the early arrivals, whether coming directly from Scotland or via the American colonies, had been cleared off their lands in favour of sheep or evicted

for other reasons. Indeed, Scottish landlords desperately attempted to prevent their people from leaving for a land which seemed to offer a better future. Because the estates supplying most of the emigrants before 1815 were not being cleared, most of the Scottish elite fastened on the view that fast-talking immigration promoters were deluding and abusing a simple and backward people with false notions of North American prosperity and opportunity. Certainly in this period the recruiting of potential settlers in Scotland was done exclusively by private entrepreneurs, most of whom hoped to make money either through the transportation of passengers to America or through the subsequent lease and sale of land to them — or both. Because of the force of the local opposition, the contractors were forced to operate furtively on the margins of society, and some of the complaints against them were legitimate. Most of the worst abuses involved Highlanders transported to the thirteen colonies, often under labour contracts called indentures. Indentured labour was only one step short of slavery, but it was seldom used in British North America.

The contractors were under considerable pressure to keep the cost of passage as low as possible, and did overcrowd vessels, underprovision passengers, and occasionally experience outbreaks of epidemic disease aboard their vessels. They also undoubtedly exaggerated the ease of the transition from the bleak and harsh Highland environment to the North American one, downplaying the problems of settlement in heavily-timbered and isolated wilderness and over-emphasizing the salubrity of the climate. But most Highlanders, like other prospective immigrants over the years, did not depend upon the sales pitches of the promoters, particularly after the first years of settlement. Letters and visits home from successful immigrants confirmed much of what the contractors advertised. Land was readily available, free of landlord oppression; military service was not required from the colonial population, taxes were low, and religious freedom was a reality. Despite some exceptions, such as the Roman Catholic population of the Island of St. John (Prince Edward Island), immigrants were enfranchised and allowed to participate in politics and public affairs. By standards at home, most Highlanders prospered materially in British North America. Yet only the most prosperous of the tenantry in the Highlands could finance their way to the New World, since the cost of passage represented several years income for most families and considerable capital by Highland standards was required to emigrate.

Aside from the relative prosperity of the immigrants, one of the principal distinguishing features of this early Highland resettlement was its family-oriented character. Most immigrant groups to Canada have followed a pattern in which unaccompanied males are the first arrivals, to be followed if successful by women, wives, and children. Lowland Scots often shared in this pattern, but from the outset Highlanders moved to Canada as families, often extended families including other relations besides the nuclear core of husband, wife, and children. Moreover, the extended families tended to merge with others in the small Highland communities, and the employment of special vessels further encouraged community migration. Because such a high proportion of the first wave came from the Western Highlands and Islands, a region almost exclusively Gaelic-speaking and containing much of Scotland's small Roman Catholic population, both Gaelic-speakers and Roman Catholics predominated in the

exodus. Nearly all of the Highland immigrants to Canada before 1815 spoke Gaelic as a first language, and few outside the Loyalist contingent were fluent in English. Well over half the arrivals were Catholics, greatly depopulating the Catholic districts and leading the Scottish Church to fear for its very existence. The Church nevertheless reluctantly sent clergymen to minister to the immigrants, and Gaelic-speaking Scottish priests — usually of Highland origin — became the principal non-francophone leaders of the Roman denomination in much of early Canada. Settling in remote areas, where land was cheap and where they would be left alone, these new arrivals found maintenance of their traditional culture quite possible.

Between 1770 and 1815 Highlanders settled in considerable numbers in Prince Edward Island, Upper Canada, and Nova Scotia. Another Highland settlement was begun in 1811 by the Earl of Selkirk at Red River, but it did not flourish and finally succeeded through the internal migration within the west of fur traders (often Scots) and their families rather than through immigration directly from Europe. While a few thousand arrivals spread over nearly half a century do not seem a major force in comparison with the later volume of immigration to Canada, at the time they represented a substantial addition to the existing population of British North America, especially outside Quebec, and produced a still greater cultural impact because of their tendency to settle among their own people in certain districts. By 1815 the “Ur Communities” of Highlanders were well established, especially around Pictou and Antigonish (Nova Scotia), Glengarry (Upper Canada) and Belfast (Prince Edward Island). The success of these settlements attracted further immigrants, and they became the focus of mythology and legend (later often translated into fiction) for generations of Canadians of Highland descent. In all these communities the Highland traditions were preserved, and for much of the nineteenth century they were the centres of distinctive ethnic enclaves in their respective provinces.

### **III — The Second Wave: Scottish Immigration, 1815-1870**

In the half century after Waterloo, the patterns of Scottish immigration and settlement in British North America altered dramatically. The British authorities quickly came to view the exodus of Scots — and the other constituent peoples of the British Isles — as a positive good rather than a terrible evil. The writings of Thomas Malthus, who argued that food supply increased arithmetically while population expanded geometrically, were extremely influential. A major economic depression after the Napoleonic Wars was succeeded by a long period of transition and modernization. The United Kingdom became the greatest industrial and commercial nation in the world, but prosperity, particularly for those who could not adjust quickly to changing conditions on farms and in cities, did not sweep away poverty. The ruling classes perceived the British Isles to be overpopulated, and the departure of the surplus — especially among the poor who required public and private assistance for their survival — would simultaneously eliminate the unwanted while peopling underdeveloped colonies. Although more than three times as many British immigrants went to the United States as to British North America, British policy deliberately encouraged the emigration of its excess poor within the empire. The provinces of British North America were permitted, and on

occasion forced, as during the years of potato famine, to open their doors to a substantial influx of new arrivals. Various schemes for transportation and resettlement were implemented to effect the transfer of people from one side of the Atlantic to the other.

Detailed and accurate statistics for immigration to British North America are not available for this period (and the extent to which the new arrivals subsequently crossed into the United States is a matter of controversy). Annual totals are merely rough calculations, and sophisticated breakdowns of the figures by place of origin or destination do not exist. Even to establish the numbers of Lowland and Highland Scots is impossible. Nevertheless, according to statistics kept by the British government of departures for overseas destinations, over 1,300,000 British subjects (English, Irish, Welsh, and Scots) sailed for British North America between 1815 and 1870. Of this total, 170,000 (or 14 per cent) had been born in Scotland. Records at the port of Quebec, the major place of arrival in British North America, indicate that of 845,000 British immigrants recorded there between 1829 and 1859, 103,000 (or 12 per cent) were from Scotland. Other figures for 1853-60 show Scots making up 16.5 per cent of the arrivals from the British Isles in all of British North America. These 1853-60 figures also indicate that by the 1850s 95 per cent of Scots were coming to the united province of Canada, representing a considerable shift from earlier decades when perhaps half of the newcomers had settled in the Maritime provinces. According to the first Canadian census of 1871, 157 out of every

Table I: Scottish Immigration to Canada

Years	No. of Immigrants	Years	No. of Immigrants
pre-1815	15,000	1919-1930	191,000
1815-1870	170,000	1931-1945	23,800
1870-1900	80,000	1946-1960	147,000
1900-1918	246,000	1961-1970	76,226

Table II: People of Scottish Origin in Canada

Year	Number	% of Canadian Population
1871	549,000	15.7
1881	649,000	15.0
1901	800,000	14.8
1921	1,170,000	13.3
1941	1,398,000	12.1
1961	1,894,000	10.4

thousand Canadians were of Scottish origin, and the distribution ranged from a low of 4.1 per cent in Quebec to 14.3 per cent in New Brunswick to 20.2 per cent in Ontario to 33.7 per cent in Nova Scotia. The proportion of Scots (44.9 per cent in 1881) was even higher in Prince Edward Island, which joined Confederation in 1873, and substantial in Manitoba (16.7 per cent in 1881) and British Columbia (7.8 per cent in 1881), which entered Canada in 1870 and 1871. Newfoundland, which remained separate from Canada until 1949, never contained a significant Scottish population.

Many Scottish immigrants were brought to British North America through resettlement schemes sponsored by the government or by private charitable organizations. Particularly prominent were various efforts after 1825 to rid the Highlands of excess population through emigration. By this time the Highlanders were being cleared for sheep and estates modernized. The landlords actively co-operated in — and even initiated — ventures to transport and relocate their “surplus” population. In the Lowlands, agricultural labourers and skilled artisans in trades altered by mechanization and industrialization (such as weaving) were also assisted to emigrate as an alternative to being supported at home as paupers. At the same time, too much emphasis must not be placed upon the assisted emigration of the redundant poor. Most of the Scottish newcomers continued to finance their own departure from Scotland and subsequent resettlement in British North America. Their motives were the classic ones for emigrants: declining or shifting prospects at home combined with the promise of a better life — at least in the long term — in a developing nation.

The transatlantic passage to America, often a difficult and dangerous one, was kept within the financial reach of ordinary Scots by the nature of the shipping patterns between Britain and her North American colonies. Cargoes from British America, particularly of the principal exports of timber and grain, were extremely bulky, while shipments to the colonies of manufactured goods required far less space. This space differential was often made up by transporting immigrants on the outward run to North America. Human accommodation on vessels intended principally to carry unprocessed goods was seldom comfortable. Overcrowding, bad provisioning, and sanitation problems were complicated by the increasing presence of diseases such as smallpox and cholera in the impoverished areas from which many emigrants originated and by the slowness of sailing vessels designed for other purposes. The extent to which the passage should be regulated by the government was a subject of ongoing controversy until the general shift to steam vessels, even for freighting, in the 1860s. A week at sea, whatever the conditions in the steerage quarters, was obviously far less debilitating and dangerous than earlier voyages of six to ten weeks duration.

Unlike the earlier immigration, which had almost exclusively featured semi-pastoral Highlanders, the post-1815 movement involved a fairly representative cross-section of virtually the entire Scottish population. Both the Highlands and the Lowlands sent considerable numbers, and Lowlanders came from both the agricultural districts and the industrializing urban ones. While most of those moving came from the working classes of Scottish society, a considerable number of business and professional figures immigrated to British North America in the years before 1870. Particularly prominent among the middle

class immigrants were school teachers and religious leaders, although there were some with medical and legal training, especially among those Scots appointed to official positions within the colonial governments. Reflecting the general situation in Scotland, most of the new arrivals were Protestants of Presbyterian persuasion, although they hardly produced a unified denomination as a result. The Church of Scotland had been rent by a number of schisms and divisions in the first half of the nineteenth century, and many of the dissenters — especially among the smaller religious sects — were attracted to immigration as part of a general strategy of starting afresh free from the dead hand of the past. The religious controversies of Scotland were thus imported to enliven affairs in the North American colonies. So too were Presbyterian attitudes toward Sabbath observance and the strict regulation of morals. The immigrants were attracted in substantial numbers to most provinces in British North America — with the exceptions of Newfoundland and Quebec. Highlanders continued to cluster in those regions where their compatriots had settled before 1815 — the north coast of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, and the Eastern districts of what is now Ontario — while Lowland farmers preferred the broad arable lands of western Ontario and urban artisans and the middle classes tended to gravitate toward the cities. But there was no single dominant pattern of Scottish economic involvement or social situation.

What the newcomers did have in common was a tendency to settle among and to fraternize with their fellow Scots — whether in town or countryside — combined with a strong commitment to the creation of Scottish institutions within their community. Public life focussed around the Kirk or church and various Scottish fraternal organizations, including the St. Andrew's Society. Scots — whether Highlander or Lowlander — acquired a reputation for “clannishness” and mutual support in business and politics. Moreover, Scots were quick to emphasize the need for institutions of local education. A number of writers, most notably Ralph Connor in *Glengarry School Days* and Andrew Macphail in *The Master's Wife*, have described Scottish-dominated schools in British North America in the nineteenth century. These accounts emphasize that while education was made available to all, particular attention was paid to those identified as bright and talented. As a result, Macphail's little community school at Orwell, Prince Edward Island, sent nearly 200 of its pupils to university during the nineteenth century.

The products of the local schools, if they moved on to Canadian universities, found their courses dominated by Scottish-trained professors whose teaching was heavily influenced by their background. While Scottish influences could be found everywhere in the universities, they were perhaps most evident in the teaching of moral philosophy, a subject regarded by most Canadian institutions of higher learning in the nineteenth century as the culmination and central unifying feature of an undergraduate education. Moral philosophy, a characteristically Scottish development, emphasized the need for moral purpose in life and inculcated a sense of earnestness which has often been regarded as distinctively Canadian. To some unmeasurable extent, the image of Canadians as a sober and earnest — if unadventurous — people, hearkens back to the Scottish heritage in Canada.

In addition to their influence upon education, the Scots were particularly

visible in the fields of politics and business. Even more than elsewhere in Britain, Scotland offered limited scope for political activity for anyone who did not possess considerable landed wealth. The right to vote did not extend to ordinary citizens, and Scottish members of the Parliament in Westminster were notorious for their support of the government in power, which held their allegiance through an unabashed wielding of patronage. Many Scots were undoubtedly attracted to British North America by the knowledge that political life was far more open than at home to ordinary men of ambition. The extent of their leadership politically far exceeded their numbers in the population. The Scots did not all share the same political views. Many supported the family compacts which developed in most provinces in British North America. But despite the prominence of men like John Strachan, who led the Family Compact in Upper Canada, Scots were frequently found among the critics of the elitist political structures of early British North America. The most notable critic was William Lyon Mackenzie, a fiery and outspoken newspaper editor who had immigrated to Upper Canada from Dundee as a young man, but every province had its roster of radicals of Scottish origin. During the 1860s, Scots-born politicians in Canada West, notably John A. Macdonald and George Brown, took the lead in the Confederation movement, and the first two prime ministers of Canada, Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie, had both immigrated from Scotland in the earlier years of the century. That the leaders of both political parties in Canada were Scots illustrates again the difficulty of identifying a single Scottish identity or style.

From the beginning of British settlement in what would become Canada, Scots tended to dominate economic affairs, particularly in the fur trade, the timber trade, banking, and railway management. A full 20 per cent of Canada's industrial leaders in the 1880s — a group formed and molded in the years from 1815-70 — had been born in Scotland, and another 28 per cent had Scottish-born fathers. Thus nearly half of one major cadre of Canadian economic leaders came from a people who constituted 16 per cent of the total population. Significantly, the Scottish-born fathers of the industrial elite had been mainly farmers (46 per cent), with 14 per cent in craft occupations, 11 per cent in management positions, and 21 per cent involved in manufacturing. While these figures probably do not perfectly reflect the Scottish population in British North America, they do suggest the occupational distribution of Scots in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The period from 1815 to 1870 witnessed the establishment of the Scots as one of the major ethnic components of the Canadian population. The extent of their integration and assimilation into Canadian society varied considerably. Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, often Roman Catholics, living in well-established communities, were more resistant to acculturation than were Lowland Scots, most of whom mingled relatively easily within the British anglophone majority. But several points must be emphasized about Scottish integration. The Scots had a long tradition of struggle to maintain a separate identity in the face of a simultaneous pressure to integrate into a foreign society and over the years had gained considerable experience in the ambivalence of being both accommodative and distinctive. They were able to ensure that the anglophone culture in Canada in 1870 was far more "British" than the dominant society in the British Isles.

Finally, newcomers from Scotland continued to arrive in Canada in substantial numbers after 1870. Unlike many other ethnic groups whose major immigrant experience was relatively time specific, and where generational patterns of assimilation can be identified, the Scots have had an immigrant generation alive in Canada since 1770.

#### **IV — The Third Wave: The Scots Since 1870**

Changes in the patterns of Scottish immigration and settlement since 1870 have reflected enormous alterations in both Canada and the United Kingdom. The Highlands of Scotland after 1870 became a stable — if underdeveloped — region, and the population pressures for immigration no longer existed as they had previously. Highlanders would continue to come to Canada, but not again as a substantial proportion of the Scottish arrivals or in large absolute numbers. As for the Lowlanders, they were becoming an increasingly urbanized and industrialized population, and the percentage of agriculturalists among the Scottish newcomers was further reduced. Within Canada, urbanization and industrialization were both occurring, especially in central Canada, while at the same time a last great agricultural frontier — the Canadian West — was being settled and populated.

From 1871 to 1901 the flow of Scots remained relatively constant. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century 80,000 Scots entered Canada, at an average annual rate of 2600, not substantially different from the 3100 per year of the 1815-70 period. Then came the great immigration boom of the early twentieth century. While this period is often seen as one characterized by a shift away from British immigrants to those from other parts of the world, especially eastern and southern Europe, such a perception is only relative. Between 1901 and 1914 nearly 1,200,000 people from the British Isles immigrated to Canada and 240,000 of these newcomers, or 20 per cent of the total, had been born in Scotland. Almost as many Scots came to Canada in a brief space of fifteen years than had arrived in the previous century. After the hiatus of World War I, nearly 200,000 more Scots immigrated between 1919 and 1930, and since World War II, another 147,000 between 1946 and 1960.

Scottish immigration since 1870 has continued to reflect the broad composition of Scottish society, but that society has altered significantly. A large proportion of the new arrivals have come from the heavily industrialized and urbanized region around Glasgow — where nearly half of the population of Scotland has come to live — and many have been skilled workmen in heavy industrial trades which have been experiencing economic decline since before World War I. Trade unionism was highly developed in these industries, and the Scots have made a considerable impact upon organized labour in Canada with their militancy and experience. Like most immigrant groups, the Scots have shunned the Atlantic region and Quebec in favour of Ontario and the West. Although a substantial population of Scottish origin lives in the three Maritime provinces, with the exception of the workers attracted to the coal-based industries of Nova Scotia, it is a native-born population whose ancestors came to Canada in the early migration. Some Scots entered agriculture in the west, but the vast bulk have taken their skills to the cities and into non-agrarian employment. Scots have continued their political prominence, maintaining



before 1940 a number of seats in the House of Commons double that justified by their proportion of the Canadian population and being even more over-represented in the cabinets of both political parties. In business, industry, commerce, and education, Scots have continued to be prominent.

It would be chimeric to argue that the Scots have not become increasingly assimilated into anglo-canadian society. Although the first arrivals were perhaps the most distinctive and resistant to acculturation, the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders have been longest in Canada. While they retained their traditional culture throughout the nineteenth century, except in some districts of Cape Breton it disappeared within a generation at the turn of the twentieth century. Later arrivals have kept a first-generation Scottish presence alive in Canada, but with a decreasing substance to their identity. The relative loss of observable and measurable points of distinction is not a result solely of Canadian assimilative pressures. Scottish culture itself has long been under siege and the use of Gaelic as a first language has rapidly declined in the Highlands of Scotland as well as in Canada. Scotland now finds itself in a position similar to that of English-speaking Canada vis-a-vis the United States, attempting to preserve a distinctiveness increasingly hard to define in the face of a larger and more dynamic southern neighbour which speaks the same language. At the same time, English or British culture is itself in trouble, because of the omnipresent mass culture and technology which both Europe and North America now share. When Canadian Scots attempt to resist assimilative pressures, they find that the homeland has little to offer except the symbolic vestiges of Scottishness, essentially cheap tartan gimcracks. The recent debate in Scotland over "devolution" — a scheme of political reform whereby Scotland would have acquired a political autonomy roughly equivalent to that of a Canadian province and the failure of the population to support the change in a referendum — illustrates the extent of the problem.

Thus immigrants from Scotland in the twentieth century have increasingly shared in an international set of life-styles and values, although their relative likeness to Canadians in the context of the global village does not necessarily mean that their adjustment to Canadian society has been made easier. The decision to immigrate is often made more agonizing by the realization that the Canadian future for members of an international middle class culture will be only marginally better and different than that in Scotland, and by the extent to which the airplane has made it possible to retain an emotional foot in both countries. New ambivalences create new problems, and for all the superficial ease of transition from Scotland to Canada in recent years, earlier arrivals who were forced to make more conscious and absolute choices — and with a greater chance of a vastly improved future as a result — may have found adjustment to their new situation emotionally more bearable. Statistics have not been kept on the return of immigrants to their native land, but for Scots as for other peoples from the developed nations of the world there is some evidence of such a movement.

The difficulty of adjustment to Canada has been increased for the Scots — as for other recent immigrants from Great Britain — by a new insistence that to be Canadian requires more positive action than was previously asked of British subjects. Canadian and British citizenship are no longer synonymous, and while

Canada and Great Britain still share a monarch, they no longer share a flag, a national anthem, or a passport. For the vast majority of recent Scots arrivals, little remains of the "auld country" but traces of dialect, cultural memories, and relatives to be visited on holiday. The forces of school, workplace, and the media rapidly Canadianize an immigrant group which no longer begins with a strong distinctive culture.

#### **V — The Scots as an Ethnic Group: A Comparative Perspective**

As an ethnic group in Canada the Scots stand in a category by themselves, ambivalently a part of a "founding people" but with their own separate identity. As Table I illustrates, Scots have been entering Canada in a relatively constant flow for nearly 200 years. This fact distinguishes them from most non-British peoples, whose entrance into Canada in substantial numbers usually postdates Confederation and often occurs within the confines of the present century. Even among the British peoples, the Scottish immigration pattern is distinctive. Although the English and Welsh share the lengthy duration and continual flow characteristics, the former have been too numerous to become a recognizable subpopulation set apart from the whole, and the latter's numbers too small not to disappear into the majority culture. While the Irish are similar to the Scots in their sense of separate identity, they entered Canada in extremely large numbers during a fairly restricted period (1820-1870) rather than in a steady movement spread over several centuries.

Table III indicates the relatively broad distribution of Scottish people outside Quebec and the extent to which that distribution has evened itself out over the years since Confederation, so that the distribution range in 1961 is small and regional differences practically non-existent in English Canada. The proportion of Scot in all regions has been gradually dropping, although more precipitously in the East (the 1961 Atlantic figures are deceptive, since for the first time they include Newfoundland, which has a very small Scots population) than in the West. Outside Quebec and Newfoundland, Scots are to be found everywhere in Canada in substantial but never dominant numbers and they are evenly distributed between urban and rural populations. In the cities they seldom have their own neighbourhoods, although there are still Scottish communities in parts of rural Canada. Such a pattern of distribution is again quite different than that of more recent immigrant groups to Canada, although it probably reflects the direction in which most will gradually move.

In the earliest years of immigration and settlement, when the Scottish presence was dominated by Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, the Scottish experience was far more akin to that of recent immigrant groups than to that of other people from the British Isles. The Highlanders emigrated as extended families and settled in closed agricultural communities, in which they resolutely preserved their Old World traditions. This process was continued by many non-British immigrants to the Canadian prairies in the half century after Confederation, but not by more recent arrivals, who have tended to enter urban Canada without families in the first instance.

The Scottish presence in Canada has been powerful enough from a sufficiently early period to influence the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture which has developed over the years. Indeed, the Scots' influence has clearly been

TABLE III  
DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE OF SCOTTISH ORIGIN IN CANADA

Year	Total No. (and %)					
	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Other
1871	171,599 (25.4)	49,458 (4.1)	328,889 (20.3)	no data	no data	no data
1881	244,789 (28.1)	54,923 (4.0)	379,003 (19.6)	10,415 (16.7)	3,892 (7.8)	1,217 (2.1)
1901	233,445 (26.1)	60,068 (3.6)	399,530 (18.3)	72,905 (16.9)	31,068 (17.3)	3,136 (6.6)
1921	232,745 (23.2)	63,915 (2.7)	465,400 (15.8)	305,774 (15.6)	104,965 (20.0)	792 (6.5)
1941	250,374 (22.1)	90,582 (2.7)	578,127 (15.3)	331,078 (13.6)	152,677 (18.6)	1,136 (6.7)
1961	309,917 (16.3)	109,937 (2.1)	835,590 (13.4)	387,926 (12.2)	255,627 (15.7)	3,475 (9.2)

disproportionate to their numbers in the population, particularly in education, politics, and business. The extent to which Scots have assimilated to the dominant culture and the extent to which that culture has taken on their values is a nice question, ultimately unanswerable. The opportunity for such a symbiotic relationship with the majority culture has not been given to many immigrant peoples in Canada, largely because the culture has taken shape and the ethnic groups insufficiently powerful to have much effect on it, except in minor ways. The Scottish opportunity was a product of their early arrival, but also of their sense of identity and indeed of superiority over other elements of the Anglo-Canadian population. Unlike most immigrant groups, the Scots have never been intimidated by the majority.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

A good general survey of the history of Scotland is Gordon Donaldson's *Scotland: The Shaping of a Nation* (Newton Abbot, 1974) and the best social history — which regrettably does not deal with the modern period — is T.C. Smout's *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830* (London, 1970). In *The Scot Overseas* (London, 1966), Donaldson looks at Scottish emigration to all parts of the world over the centuries. On British emigration in general, see N.H. Carrier and J.R. Jeffery, *External Migration: A Study of the Available Statistics 1815-1950* (London, 1953). For an overview of the Scot in Canada, W. Stanford Reid, ed., *The Scottish Tradition in Canada* (Toronto, 1976) is the best book available. The first wave of Highland immigration is discussed in J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America 1770-1815* (forthcoming Edinburgh & Winnipeg, 1982). Helen I. Cowan in her *British Emigration to British North America: The First Hundred Years* (Toronto, 1961) puts the second wave Scots from 1815-70 in a larger perspective. D. Campbell and R.A. MacLean's *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Nova Scotia Scots* (Toronto, 1974) also concentrates on the period before Confederation. Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia* (Toronto, 1968) is a fascinating study of cultural retention and ultimate decline. Students are warned that John Prebble's *The Highland Clearances* (London, 1963), while compelling reading, is not a very reliable work in terms of its scholarship. The end of the second and the beginning of the third wave are discussed in Norman Macdonald's *Canada, immigration and colonization, 1851-1903* (Toronto, 1966).

Few general studies have been made for the post-1870 period, but John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Scotch* (Toronto, 1964) describes the Scottish communities in Ontario in the opening years of the twentieth century. A loving autobiographical account of a Scottish community on Prince Edward Island in the nineteenth century is provided by Sir Andrew Macphail in *The Master's Wife* (Toronto, 1977). The Scots in Canada have played an important role in Canadian literature, and many of their novels are a useful way to understand the Scottish tradition. *Glengarry School Days* (Toronto, 1975) by Ralph Connor (the Rev. C.W. Gordon) is particularly recommended, and two novels describing the post-1870 experience by Frederick John Niven, *The Flying Years* (Toronto, 1974) and *The Transplanted* (London, 1944), deal with material not encountered elsewhere. Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (Toronto, 1974) is a beautiful evocation of the ways in which the mythology of the early settlers can impinge on a sensitive individual in modern Canada.



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