

August 29th, 1949

Hon. Harold Connolly,
Minister of Trade and Industry,
Province of Nova Scotia.

Dear Harold,

Thanks very much for sending me a copy of Stewart's book. I sat down to read it at once, and finished it last night. As you observed to me in Halifax, the book is all right so far as it goes; but it would have been much better to eliminate the controversies of the Old Country (which have been written a thousand times) and to devote this space to the story of the Irish in Nova Scotia, which has never been written at all. As it stands, the title is misleading.

For example, there is not the slightest mention of the Irish in Queens County, one of the most remarkable stories in the history of Nova Scotia. There were Irish amongst the earliest settlers here; and one family, the Callahans, played a prominent part, not only in the settlement of Liverpool, but of what is now called Guysborough County.

At the close of the American Revolution a number of Irish veterans came here with Tarleton's Legion (the most famous of all the Loyalist regiments) and settled with their wives and families. By the early 1790's (and probably earlier) there was some sort of Irish society in Liverpool, for our friend Simeon Perkins mentions more than once in his famous diary on St. Patrick's Day, "I dine with the Irish gentlemen at Boyle's Tavern". This group or society was functioning when part of Dillon's Irish Brigade arrived, with many of its men and their wives and children ill of typhus. (They had been blown off their course on the voyage from Cork to Halifax.) Arrangements were made to take care of the sick, and the dead were buried on a pleasant little knoll at Ballast Cove, which has since become washed away almost entirely by the sea.

After Simeon Perkins' death, his house was the home of Captain Caleb Seely, a notable privateersman of the War of 1812 and a prominent merchant afterwards. Seely's business partner was an Irishman, Patrick Gough, and they conducted a busy trade with Newfoundland and the West Indies. As you know, there was a great emigration from Scotland and Ireland at this time, and unscrupulous shipmasters dumped thousands of Irish people in Newfoundland on the assurance that there was "good soil to be had for the asking". Patrick Gough frequently voyaged to Newfoundland on business of the firm, and it was undoubtedly through his generosity that the ship "Caledonia", belonging to Seely & Gough, brought a number of these poor people to Liverpool in the year 1827. The tale is still told in Queens County, how these people, some of them carrying babies in their arms, walked through the woods to what is now called West Caledonia, a distance of thirty-odd miles, and there cut out the farms on which their descendants live today. Altogether it is a chapter which cannot be overlooked in any account of the Irish in Nova Scotia. West Caledonia

remains to this day a community of almost pure Irish stock, something unique in our province, and its people have long been prominent in the farming, lumbering and gold-mining industries of Queens County.

At the time of their arrival, there was a small group of Scots in north Queens, who showed the Irish where to find good land and helped them through the first winter. It has been supposed that the name Caledonia was given to this district by the Scots; but I cannot find that this name was in use before the Irish came, and it is my belief that they named the place themselves in honor of the ship which rescued them from their suffering in Newfoundland.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,