

Deep Roots: Who Were the Scots Who Eventually Settled in Texas?

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Who were the Scots who eventually settled in Texas? First of all, very few Scots came directly to Texas. Those who did were usually entrepreneurs such as the group of men from Dundee in southeastern Scotland who invested in a Ranch run by Henry Campbell (a lone Scot) in Motley County. It became the Matador Land & Cattle Co. in 1882, in the PanHandle. That huge ranch of 1½ million acres – larger than what is now the King Ranch – was managed for years by Scots. For over 30 years by Murdo Mackenzie from Tain, in the north of Scotland. You can read about the Matador Ranch and Mackenzie on line, in the Handbook of Texas online.

There were also Scots who worked for the government of the United States and others for Scottish Universities who explored and mapped Texas from around 1805 to 1835. Many of those chose to stay and fight in the Texas revolution. They were quickly followed by other native Scot adventurers, and Scottish descendants from other States. When the Capitol building was being erected in Austin, the builders brought in prison laborers to work on it. The Texas master masons did not like this, so they went on strike, boycotting the building. About 80 Scottish stonemasons, highly skilled in working with granite, were brought in to finish the job – which they did in a timely manner. There is a plaque to their memory in the Capitol. Many of these workers stayed and sent for their families. – as an aside, Scotsmen were also recruited to build the White House in D.C. But these immigrants were actually a small part of Scots in Texas.

The bulk of Scots immigration landed in other States and ended up in Texas. We will look at two groups: The Scots from Scotland and the Ulster Scots – sometimes incorrectly referred to as “Scotch Irish.” Among those actually from Scotland, we can again subdivide into two distinct groups because they left for differing reasons. These were the Lowland Scots and the Highland Scots. Ulster Scots can also be subdivided into the *Landowners* and the tenants and laborers

Why did they leave? What makes a very proud people pick up stakes and head off to an un-known land? Well, there were several reasons. Political unrest drove many away. From the time of the Reformation, political and religious unrest was rampant in Europe. After 1603, the Scots and English Crowns united. James the 6th (VI) of Scotland became James the 1st (I) of Great Britain. He immediately moved to London. There was continuing tension between the Roman Catholics, the Protestant Anglicans (Episcopalians in Scotland) and the Presbyterians. When James the 6th died, Charles I followed. He was Roman Catholic. Tensions continued between Protestant and Catholic and culminated in Civil War in 1642. Oliver Cromwell, a non-royal, was the winner of that war. Charles I was beheaded, and his sons fled abroad. Cromwell ruled. Scottish armies were defeated by Cromwell three times between 1648 and 1651 and, on each occasion, several hundred prisoners were sent to the American colonies. Another 200

persons who were found guilty of participating in a rebellion were deported to East Jersey. The majority of these prisoners were lowlanders or from the Borders.

It was common practice for those on the losing side to be deported. The great majority of these prisoners were sold into servitude in Virginia and the Carolinas. These were not “indentured servants” who could earn their freedom in a few years, but rather were “owned” by their masters. I have a record of many of these names in a book here on the table (*Directory of Scottish Settlers in North America*). Some escaped. Some were set free because of compassionate masters, and others married and had families who were eventually freed by virtue of the American Revolution, when many of the owners, who were Loyalists, fled to Canada.

Eventually Cromwell died and Charles II ruled. This is when life for Presbyterian Scots became unbearable. The Church of Scotland at that time had an Episcopalian constitution – that is, it was governed by Bishops. The Presbyterians did not believe in the Bishop-governing system, but rather that they should be under the auspices of the local church council, or presbytery. They were forced to worship in secret because there were severe penalties – including death – for preaching in their own style. They met in secret, in groups that were known as Conventicles. Needless to say, this pressure forced many to choose emigration.

The Scots are sometimes credited as being the pioneers of Western migration. By 1773, there were Scots in Kentucky, and in 1779 they were across the Ohio. Descendants of the Carolina Scots were pioneers in Missouri and Tennessee, and then to Texas by 1822. Many of the Scots who came early to this country were traders and merchants. Scottish immigrants were very often skilled craftsmen such as printers, miners, jewelers, cooks-butchers and bakers, saddle-makers and artists. The Virginians recruited most of their schoolmasters, teachers and tutors from Scotland. These were predominantly the Lowlanders...but what about the Highlanders? They were by no means among the “middle class.”

In 1745, Prince Charles Edward Stewart, who had been living in France, decided he was going to return to Scotland and lead the Highlanders to victory against the King of Great Britain, the Hanoverian George II. King George’s right-hand-man, was his youngest son, the Duke of Cumberland. He was sent to rout out these rebels. Cumberland’s nickname was “the Butcher,” for obvious reasons. This was accomplished in the Battle of Culloden moor in 1746, when the chiefs of the Highland Clans were slaughtered. After this failed rebellion, Highland Scots were persecuted. They were forbidden to speak their language in public, to wear tartan (plaid), to play their musical instruments, or to carry weapons. With the demise of the Clans, new Lairds moved in to the Highlands. Most of them were Scots themselves, and they proceeded to eject fellow Scots from the land.

The common life of the Highland Scot was crofting. This is small holding farm on leased land, usually about 4-5 acres. The hillsides were used as a common grazing ground for their cattle. Rents were paid to the landlord – the Laird who ruled the estate. When the landowners found they couldn’t squeeze any more rent out of the crofters, they decided to

look for other sources of income. They found it in sheep. Crofters were forcibly ejected from their homes, sometimes burned out, their animals killed, and given the choice of moving to the coast to get employment fishing – a job they did not know how to do – or to emigrate. Thousands chose to emigrate. Some went to Nova Scotia, some to New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia, and many to the Carolinas. There are, thank goodness, well-kept records of those who came into the Carolinas. It is from these beginnings that most Scots Texans came. These “Highland Clearances” as they are known, continued until the 1860’s when Queen Victoria settled in Balmoral.

An immigrant Lowland Scottish ancestor from 18th century was probably Presbyterian, a Highland ancestor could well be Roman Catholic (Jacobites); also, many Episcopal clergy emigrated to America. After the American Revolution, Episcopal Bishops were required to consecrate new priests; after all, they could hardly ask the English Anglican Bishops after the hostilities!

What of the Ulster Scots? Where did they come from? When James VI/I made it clear that Irish policy would be dominated by interests of the English governing class, there was a steady exodus of Irish soldiers and churchmen to Roman Catholic countries in Continental Europe. The Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnel and other Gaelic Ulster lords joined the flight from Ireland. Their departure created a void and opened the way for the “plantation” in Ulster of a new landowning class, predominantly Scotsmen from the Lowlands and Southern-Uplands. This was a very successful British settlement because the tenants and laborers – the workers – came with the landowners. By the end of James’s reign in 1625, there were more than 8,000 Scots over the age of seventeen capable of bearing arms in Ulster. These Scots were protestant Presbyterians. Their Presbyterianism was kept in rather a low profile until Oliver Cromwell came to power. Then there were great upheavals as Roman Catholic and Protestants rose up against each other. In 1653, much land owned by Ulster Roman Catholics was confiscated. Catholics and Anglicans were forbidden to practice their religion. Thus, the Protestants themselves were split. The Presbyterians refused to comply with Anglican ways, and vice-versa. By the end of the seventeenth century, it is estimated that there were between 40,000 and 50,000 Scots living in Ulster. In the fifty years after 1725, it is estimated that over 200,00 Ulster Scots protestants emigrated to America.

All of these factors contributed to the earliest exodus of Ulster Scots to the Colonies. The Roman Catholic fate of Ulster was sealed by the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Later, hardship and famine, particularly the potato famine of 1845-1850, drove them away. It is said that during those 5 years, another 200,000 Irish, both Ulster Scots and Irish, sailed to the United States and another 100,000 sailed for Canada (the most economical way to try to enter the United States). About one-fifth of these emigrants died on the journey.

Why did they come to Texas? You might ask, “Why not?” But the Texas of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a far cry from the Texas we know and love today! First of all, they came for adventure. Texas was a big unknown, and was for some a blank slate upon which they could make their mark. One of our better-known Texans of Ulster Scots

lineage, is Sam Houston. Sam Houston's ancestors were "planted" Scots in Ulster. His grandparents emigrated to the colony of Virginia. Sam was born on the plantation in Rockbridge County, VA. When he was thirteen, his father died, and his mother moved to Blount County, Tennessee. He spent some adventurous years as a Cherokee, but joined the US army in 1812 to fight the British. He rose in stature, studied law and eventually ended up fighting for Texan independence. He is just one. The list of famous Scots and Ulster Scots goes on to include Stephen Austin, Davy Crocket, Jim Bowie, Jim Hogg, Frank Dobie, John Wesley Hardin (the outlaw) and Jesse Chisholm whose father was Scots and his mother Cherokee. Many well-known Indian Chiefs were of mixed Scots/Indian heritage. [Editor's note: In 1846-1847, the first governor of the State of Texas was James Pinckney Henderson, a North Carolina Scot who also served the Republic of Texas as Attorney General and Secretary of State.]

But all Scots and Ulster Scots were not famous. Some, of course, followed the line of battle and took up arms in Texas' struggle against the army of Santa Anna. There were over twenty of the Alamo defenders of direct Scottish or Ulster Scottish birth. Many of the others were descendants of immigrants.

Others came to work, like the builders of the Capitol. There were the ranchers and the sheep farmers as well, immigrants seeking that most precious of all resources, land! Some of those seeking land founded towns, such as Salado, a town founded in October 1859 by a group of Scottish settlers. Others came to escape prison, especially before Texas became a part of the Union.

A number of Scots settled here when rumors of Civil War erupted. They associated the North with "British Rules", and preferred the Southern Way. Over one third of Scots and Ulster Scots in the United States live in the southern States. Over half of Texas' counties are named after Scots or Ulster Scots.

Where are they today? You don't have to look far. Many of you only have to look at your own family tree! There are those of Scots heritage from the Pan Handle to Houston and from Arlington to Midland to Kerrville and San Antonio. All of these places hold annual Scottish Gatherings-sometimes called Highland Games. San Antonio holds its Scottish Gathering and Celtic Music festival every year in the Corny-val grounds in Helotes. This year it is the last week-end in March. The Scottish Society of San Antonio, in existence for over 40 years, celebrates the birthday of the great poet, Robert Burns, every year with a huge dinner and dance at the Sam Houston Club. They also man a booth at the annual Folklife Festival. One of the main streets in San Antonio, McCullough, was named after the first Scottish Protestant minister in the city. Although the Scots sometimes feel as if they don't exist in the eyes of the city, the San Antonio Pipes and Drums are much in demand for every parade, civic function or military event held in the city, as well as weddings, graduations and funerals.

There is great difficulty in estimating the exact number of people of Scottish descent living in Texas because all census records show is either "Caucasian" or "Anglo" both of

which are dreadful misnomers if one is of Celtic heritage. I am greatly offended at being classified as an “Anglo” when I don’t have a drop of Anglo-Saxon blood in me!! I must admit to being very proud of our son many years ago who, upon registering for University, cited as his ethnicity (under “other”) Celtic-Teutonic!

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