

CHAPTER III

"WE'LL GANG WI' OOR MEN"

In the midst of today's many taken-for-granted conveniences, it is difficult for us to imagine the struggle for existence made in a new country by the early pioneer people. Early historical novels are full of the effort and ingenuity exerted by those men who first came to this continent and battled the elements, often single-handed, to wrest a home for themselves and their families from the very heart of the wilderness. Mark Twain, referring to the first Americans, in his inimitably humorous fashion makes a point regarding the contribution of the women of the early days to the success of these ventures. It was he who said that while much was written of the hardship of the fathers, nothing was said of the Pilgrim mothers, who had not only to put up with the same hardships, but had to put up with the Pilgrim fathers, as well. In a more serious vein, sincere tribute has been paid to the spirit which prompted these women to do their part daily without complaint or comment. Their courage is legendary. That the Scottish women who came over on the *Castalia* in 1873 were of the same calibre is revealed in the following excerpt from the church records of the colony:

"They (the Scotch Colonists) landed at Saint John, New Brunswick on the 10th of May 1873. There it was proposed to them to leave the women and children behind in the city, until the men should prepare the forest way, burn the winter choppings, and fit up the rude log buildings, for their habitations, as the season was backward and the snow still abundant in the forests and ice about the turbid rivers... but the lealhearted wives and daughters declared: 'We'll na bide ahin: we'll gang wi' oor men, tho' we suld hae tow traivel.' (We'll not stay behind, we'll go with our men, though we should have to travel.)"

There are two available records which tell of the arrival of the Castalia in St. John on that May day seventy-six years ago... first, Stevenson, the Surveyor General's report, and second, excerpts from the History of the St. Andrews Society of St. John, covering the period from 1798 to 1903 and written by I. Allen Jack, late Recorder of the City of St. John, both preserved today in the archives of the New Brunswick Museum.

"The History of the St. Andrews Society makes the following report: "... on the morning of Saturday, May 10th, the steamer Castalia, of the Anchor line, commanded by Captain Butler arrived in our harbor, having Captain Brown and 561 immigrants principally from the East of Scotland. The secretary promptly notified all members of the reception committee who promptly responded to extend to the newcomers a hand of welcome and congratulate them through our Chaplain on their safe arrival, which, of course, was done in Mr. Cameron's happiest style. About one-half of the passengers were transferred into the steamer "Olive" at about 9 a.m. being high water and taken through the falls to Indiantown. Here they entered the steamer "David Weston" and immediately sailed for Fredericton where they arrived in safety in the afternoon of the same day. The Band of the 62nd Battallion was engaged by your committee and played on board the steamer between the hours of 8 and 10 in the evening. Ofcourse, we need hardly mention the music was duly appreciated as the manner in which the fair lassies and gallant youths skipped up on the Castalia deck fully testified. Captain Butler was delighted with the reception given his vessel and cargo and as a mark of his appreciation in his turn received and entertained the committee and some others in the saloon where two hours were very happily spent, but we should mention that in the early part of the evening addresses were delivered by the Rev. Messrs. Cameron and Caie, Mr. Troup, who accompanied the colony, and several other gentlemen.

The spiritual comfort of the emigrants was attended to on Sunday afternoon by the Rev. Mr. Cameron, Chaplain of the society who held a service on board at 3 o'clock. The remainder of the colony took their departure on Monday forenoon upriver (from St. John) to Fredericton, N.B. under arrangements similar to those of Saturday and were accompanied up the river in the steamer David Weston... your committee supplied a quantity of refreshments both solid and liquid, the Rev. Mr. Caie delivered an oration on board the Rothesay (used to convey the balance of the Castalia's passengers from St. John to Fredericton) and all combined in doing their utmost to render the strangers comfortable and happy and to make them think they were not strangers but had simply left the old homestead to dwell among long absent brothers who came out previously to prepare the way for them.

Your committee remained in Fredericton until Tuesday a.m. and saw the last man of the Kincardineshire colony enter the steamer "Ida Whittier" (Capt. Whittier, John Greenleaf Whittier's cousin's "wheelbarrow boat") when she steamed away with her living freight, carrying them off to the new scenes of joy and sorrows amid the huzzas and cheers of those who witnessed their embarkation. The Honorable Edward Willis represented the Government on the passage up the river, and it was through the courtesy of him and his colleagues that your committee and their friends were conveyed to Fredericton. We therefore owe a debt to the Government for their cooperation with us in rendering the passengers content and happy."

Continuing from the Hon. Steven's report of the welcome: "Hon. Mr. Willis, Capt. Brown, the President and officers of the St. Andrews' Society, and other gentlemen remained on board the "Olive" until she reached Indiantown, where the colonists on board were transferred, with their effects, to the steamer "David Weston" (a model of which is to be seen today in the marine exhibit of the New Brunswick Museum in St. John). The exchange being effected, the latter steamer proceeded to Fredericton, Captain Brown going with the people, the other gentlemen remaining behind.

The up river trip was made in good time, the David Weston arriving at Fredericton a few minutes past six on Saturday evening. The people of Fredericton had assembled in considerably large numbers to welcome the colonists, headed by the Mayor, and as soon as the boat neared the wharf most enthusiastic cheering greeted them, to which a right hearty reply was given from on board. Here I met Capt. Brown and the party. After taking tea on board, they were all transferred to the Court House where accomodaions had been provided for them..

At eight o'clock after people had made proper arrangements for spending the night comfortably, His Honor Lieut. Governor Wilmot arrived, accompanied by many prominent citizens, including Dr. Jack, President of the University, Dr. Brooke, the Hon. Charles Macpherson and others. The Lieut. Governor addressed the colonists.... "he told them they had one hundred miles more to sail on the St. John River before they reached their intended home, and in his happy style, gave them an idea of the magnitude of the lakes and rivers of the new world. You are, said he, on the seaboard of a large nation who cherish the motto "Defence not Defiance" and who are ever prepared to stand by the old flag. He told them of our Free Schools, and the people's right to have every child educated. Scotchmen, the colonists are of a people who know how to appreciate education. He touched upon the acknowledged superiority of their nation as plowmen, and told how they introduced deep furrows on the north shore. He concluded by saying that from his heart he bade them welcome, and hoped that God would prosper them in their labors in the wilderness Dr. Jack also welcomed the colonists in the name of St. Andrew's Society of Fredericton,... Dr. Brooke and the Surveyor-General also addressed them and the Fredericton reception closed with three cheers for the Queen.

On Sunday nearly all attended divine service, chiefly at the Presbyterian churches. Captain Brown was, however, too ill to be much with them that day. During the day great numbers of the citizens visited them, and the warmest and most cordial reception greeted them, particularly from the St. Andrew's Society of Fredericton, with some of whom numbers of colonists dined.

On Monday morning all were on board the steamer Ida Whittier. 195 in all. The day was fine, and a pleasant passage brings us up to Woodstock at 5 p.m. where large numbers had assembled at the steamers wharf to welcome them. An hour was spent here, during which most cordial greeting took place tween some of the colonists and personal friends whom they met. Being very desirous of reaching Kilburn's Landing early next day, we push on up river until night-fall compelled the steamer to tie up at Mills, about 17 miles above Woodstock. I secured all the possible accommodations at Mills. But the night here was a very uncomfortable one. We were under way next morning at 5 O'clock, and at 11:30 arrived at Kilburn's landing. Here many from the country side had gathered to welcome those who were now to be their neighbors."

CHAPTER IV

FIRST YEARS IN THE COLONY

And so, approximately seventeen days after they had left their homes in Scotland, half of the colonists including the Fraser and Matheson families, spent their first days in Kincardine, New Brunswick, the rest having remained in St. John over Saturday and Sunday where the citizens there were doing everything to make them feel as much at home as possible.

It is well that their welcome in the new land had been warm and cheering, for their arrival was to be followed with difficult days.

Now the Surveyor General, B.R. Stevenson was inadvertently to become at once their leader, councillor and comforter in settling them in the colony. Although Captain Brown and his associates had indicated that everything was to be worked out to the most minute detail, it developed this was far from the case. Mr. Stevenson tells of the backward Spring having prevented preparations being carried forward as anticipated. With the responsibility of the success of the Immigration Policy of the Government largely dependent on his energetic and considered action, at this most critical period in the history of New Brunswick immigration, his problems were many, and he was called upon to engage in many duties and decisions which his practical experience had little prepared him for.

Primarily this included improvising accomodation near the river side for the housing and disposing of the people for a short time, as it was practically impossible to get all forward on the day of the landing to the houses which had been built for them. All sorts of complications developed from such ordinarily simple problems as the disposition of the baggage which was most extensive.

The stoves and furniture which the colonists had expected to find in their houses were still in temporary quarters in what was to be the store. Groceries, etc., which each colonist had arranged to have put in parcels and delivered on their arrival were still in bulk. Great confusion called for the exercise of patience of all and the need for organization in which the colonists could participate. Luggage and stoves were forwarded to the various houses and men set to work putting up the, then so necessary, stoves. Since it was impossible to find teams to accommodate all, temporary accommodation was obtained near the riverside for the large number of women and children, near the riverside, and by late afternoon, all were quartered. On Monday, May 12th the balance of the colony proceeded up river aboard the *Rothsay*, accompanied by thirteen members of the St. Andrew's Society, the press, met and were accorded similar programs of welcome aboard and at Fredericton. At five o'clock early Wednesday morning, May 14th, they reached Kilburn's landing.

By this time Mr. Stevenson had such organization in effect, and such necessary assistance that in a few hours he was able to arrange to have all of the second arrivals satisfactorily quartered by night.

Although the colonists had arrived in good health, the cold backward weather resulted in some mild illnesses. The snow in the woods, over a foot in depth, was disheartening to men who had twenty days before left fields in which the grain had already been sown. Many did not feel that a crop could be obtained that year but Mr. Stevenson was able to establish a degree of confidence in them and many of the men in the colony went to work on road making, thus furnishing them employment until their planting could be done. This enabled the men to be home with their families at night and contentment was restored among them.

With the weather moderating and evidences of spring during the latter part of May, by the first of June, some progress had been made with the burnings and various of the colonists began their planting. When choppings were difficult to clear, some rented small pieces of ground near the river side and planted potatoes and other vegetables. Up to this time, a few of those who did not wish to start a farm of their own found employment elsewhere in Victoria County, as well as in Fredericton and St. John. A tri-weekly mail was established and word began going back and forth to their relatives on the other side. By the sixth of June, Surveyor General Stevenson reports, that those who still remained, which was but all of a few, he felt convinced these would form the permanent colony.

Good progress had been made on road building as well as preparation for house building. Once the crops began to come up, the colonists were enthusiastic about rapidity of the growth. By the 16th of June all were quartered in the houses so far built and a sentiment which prevailed among them was illustrated in the Surveyor General's report by an incident which occurred when he met his road overseer early one morning after his family had slept for the first night in the house prepared for them. With a reverential manner he remarked "Thank God, I've slept for the first night in my own house and on my own land where I don't pay rent." By June 16th, Mr. Stevenson left the colony at which time he tells of having counted up the number of acres located, and the numbers represented by the locatees, and he found that, as of that date, there were 446 in Victoria County and elsewhere in the Province, 30, indicating but a five per cent loss to the Colony of the total number, that had arrived by the steamer Castalia, and that over 16,000 acres had been allocated to the Scotch colonists under the

Free Grant Act. Among those who did not stay on in the colony was only one practical farmer. It was therefore concluded that this Scotch immigration enterprise of the Government had been successful beyond the sanguine expectations of its friends, whose hopes had almost failed them six weeks before."

On July 12th, Mr. Stevenson again visited the colony paying the men who had worked on the roads and on house construction for their labor. This must have been welcome cash as it was, for many, the first they had earned in Canada. Many of them, Mr. Stevenson found, had succeeded in planting a fair crop of from one to four acres, and considering the amount of labor required to clear the land for planting, this was indeed creditable. No sickness had occurred in the colony, and a liberal supply of milk was by this time available since a large number of cows had been purchased by the various colonists.

Mr. Stevenson's report shows that he again visited the colony in September, and reported that their numbers had been increased by new arrivals in July and August. These new colonists had been given employment principally upon their own lots. On his next visit on November 7th, he reported the colony consisted of five hundred and forty three persons. All were well prepared for winter with their log houses chinked with moss and well banked for protection from the cold. These words, simple as they seem, in describing conditions tell those who know the northern woods in summer something of what these women and children in particular must have suffered in May and June in roughly put up log buildings with cracks open to every breeze, mosquito and black fly, - houses built in winter on uneven ground, snow covered logs, stumps and rocks.

During the previous summer twenty-five miles of road had been cleared and some of it turnpiked. Good health had been maintained in spite of the severe spring, and a new little colonist had arrived, bringing the total of children to two hundred. Two accidents had occurred; one colonist had lost his crop of four acres by a spreading fire in the clearing, and a woodsman of the district had been hurt by a falling tree. In August the colonists had their first new potatoes and oats from their plots. While this might seem a minor incident to report, when you consider the matter of supplying food to these families during the first summer, this must have been indeed welcome bounty from the land.

During the first summer and winter, Mr. Stevenson indicates that, with all of the organization and settling to be accomplished, little thought had been given to the establishment of schools in the colony. In the month of October a school was opened in the Kintore district, but owing to the lack of a schoolhouse in Kincardine no school could be opened there at that time. The colonists, who had held regular religious services, now began efforts to raise funds for church building purposes. A small sum was in the bank for the purpose and George Troup began efforts to raise funds in Scotland to assist in this work. It's interesting to stand in the sturdy, attractive Melville Kirk in the colony today, and consider what its completion must have meant to the colonists. In its belfry is the historic bell which was presented to the colonists by the Anchor Line. The inscription on it reads: "Colony Founded by Captain William Brown, of Stonehaven, Scotland, April 1873".

During the last visit to the colony, Mr. Stevenson reports having made inquiry of various ones as to their feelings regarding their new adopted land. He indicated that the almost invariable reply was well illustrated by one of the women, whose fortune it had been to spend the first night in the colony in one of the partially finished houses, without door or windows, and only part of a floor, but who then enjoyed comfortable quarters in the same house, now finished. About sixty barrels of potatoes and other crops, the first labor of herself, husband and small boy, had been raised from four acres cleared and planted upon their arrival. "Weel, indeed, Mr. Stevenson, I'd amaist a mind to leave next morning, but now you could na get me to gae back to Scotland ava." Another of these, referring to the near approach of the usual Michaelmas rent day in Scotland remarked, "Do you know that at times when I am alone at work, I find myself thinking where I am to get the rent."

These expressions of satisfaction must indeed have been music to the ears of the man who had encountered and cleared so many problems for these eager new colonists, upon their arrival in Kincardine.

In 1874, when a second similar colonization effort occurred, profiting by the mistakes and difficulties of the first venture, the establishment of this group of colonists was to be a far simpler matter.

* * * * *

Before proceeding with the story of Donald Fraser's early years in lumbering, which, over the years, were to grow to such great proportions and to attain such remarkable success, - it is interesting to read a paragraph from the Statistical Record of the colony, which appeared in the Journals of the Assembly for 1874,

which fully tabulated various phases of their efforts. It indicates that in 1874 there were 618 people living in 113 houses in the colony. Their crops consisted of approximately 394 acres, their stock numbered 16 horses, 76 cows, 16 oxen, 9 sheep, and 61 swine. Quite complete information was given concerning each colonist, and it is particularly interesting to note that Donald Fraser, who had four in his family and was settled on lot number 44 of 200 acres, had a house complete but no outbuildings, had three acres chopped, five acres cropped, one cow, two swine, one young animal, 100 bushels of grain, 70 bushels of potatoes, ten bushels of buckwheat, 30 bushels of turnips and an estimated total value of crop, stock, buildings and clearings of \$329.50.