

Scottish Roots Run Deep In New Brunswick

Province should use archives to promote heritage tourism

As New Brunswickers of Scottish descent prepare to celebrate Tartan Day next week, a group of dedicated researchers are hoping to make the holiday more meaningful in the coming years. They are the team behind the ambitious plans for the NB Scottish Portal, an online historical and genealogical interface which will tell the story of the Scots in the province.

The Portal project was launched in 2012 by the New Brunswick Scottish Cultural Association, a not-for-profit organisation which promotes Scottish culture and history in the province. The group was inspired by the success of a similar project undertaken in the early 2000s by the Irish Canadian Cultural Association and the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Like the Irish, the Scots are keen to differentiate their story from the rest of New Brunswick's English speaking peoples. Among the earliest European settlers in the region following the Seven Years War, the Scots were instrumental in the development of the forestry and shipbuilding industries in what later became New Brunswick. Many early Loyalists were also of Scottish extraction, including disbanded soldiers from Scottish regiments.

Scottish immigration to New Brunswick continued well into the nineteenth century, with settlements in every corner of the province from Kincardine to Balmoral. These immigrants and their families engaged in a variety of trades and occupations, so that no area of New Brunswick's history remains untouched by them. They were pioneers in education and in business, and were proud to make their new homes in what they envisioned as a land of opportunity.

Today, although nearly half of New Brunswickers claim some Scottish ancestry (it is believed that the percentage is much higher), their story has not been told. Through its interactive databases and informative features, the NB Scottish Portal will solve that problem for future generations.

With the expertise of the staff at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, as well as the capable management of Koral LaVorgna, Ph.D. candidate at UNB, the Portal will become to jumping off point for anyone looking for information on the Scots who settled in New Brunswick.

“Almost every element of Phase I is under construction. We have extracted the Community Place Names and are reviewing that substantial listing. We have begun to compile Educational Resources to complement the Portal. But most importantly, we are conquering the Census,” LaVorgna says. “The 1851 Census files had been provided by Automated Genealogy, but the volunteers have eagerly and enthusiastically extracted the Scottish-born from the 1861 NB Census. The Census is the genealogical bedrock of the Portal, and it is quite an accomplishment that every county is currently under review. It is quite impressive that five counties are ready for data entry.”

Like the Irish Portal before it, the Scottish Portal will enable New Brunswickers (with or without Scottish ancestry) with more information about the history of their province and some of the people who helped to make it great. Very soon, the first databases will be launched for the benefit of all users, and the virtual site will begin to compliment the rich history of Scottish-

related historical sites in New Brunswick: the Doak House, MacDonald Farm, King's Landing Historical Settlement, etc.

For more information, check out www.nbscots.com/scottishportal

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