They Came Through Charleston
By Richard K. MacMaster

During the Ulster-American Heritage Symposium, held at Rock Hill, South Carolina, this June, I learned from a friend that he is building a house on land that was granted to his family in 1765. They came through Charleston during the brief period of the South Carolina bounty and settled in Boonesborough Township. Many other Scotch-Irish families share their story.

The South Carolina Assembly passed an act in 1761 to encourage settlers to come to the colony. The colonial government would pay four pounds sterling for the passage of every poor Protestant brought to South Carolina from Europe. The measure was actually a benefit to shipowners who received the bounty for the passengers they carried in their ships.

The Charleston firm of John Torrans, John Greg, and John Poaug had used their influence to get the bill passed and were eager to take advantage of it. They alone of Charleston merchants had a network of business associates in Belfast and Londonderry, whom they set to work sending ships with passengers for South Carolina. All of the ships that carried emigrants from Ulster in the bounty years 1763-1768 were consigned to Torrans, Greg, and Poaug.

The three merchants petitioned for land, not for themselves, but for the settlers they would bring to South Carolina. In June 1762 the South Carolina Gazette reported: "We hear that application has been made to his Excellency our Governor, by petition, for two townships, of 20,000 acres each, to be surveyed and reserved for a number of poor Protestants the petitioners engaged to bring over." John Torrans, John Greg, and John Poaug were joined in their petition by the Rev. John Baxter and John and David Rea. In December 1762 two townships were laid out for the petitioners: Boonesborough (named for the royal governor) of 20,500 acres at the head of Long Canes Creek and Londonborough of 22,000 acres on Hard Labor Creek.

The first settlers, intended for Boonesborough, were already on the high seas. John Greg returned to Belfast in 1762 and advertised for passengers to sail for Charleston on the brigantine Success. This was wartime and a dangerous crossing. Seventy passengers arrived safely in Charleston in January 1763, after an adventure with a French privateer. The South Carolina treasury provided them with money for seed, farm implements, and their support before they moved out to their own lands "between Ninety-Six and Long-Canes."

The names of these early settlers were recorded by the authorities as they qualified for the bounty and land grants. Janie Revill published A Compilation of the Original Lists of Protestant Immigrants to South Carolina, 1763-1773 (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1939, reprinted Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1968). Using her book, a researcher can work out what ship their ancestor sailed on and, in some cases, this is a clue to where they lived in Ulster.

Shipowners often appointed agents to sell passage on one of their ships. In the case of the South Carolina bounty ships, individual agents recruited settlers from year to year. These agents visited places where they expected to sign up passengers or servants. In some cases they limited these recruiting trips to a very small area and presumably most passengers came from there. Most of the ships sailed from Belfast, because of the link between Torrans, Greg and Poaug of Charleston and Greg and Cunningham of Belfast.

In the summer of 1763 Thomas Greg, John Greg's brother, advertised for passengers and servants to go to South Carolina on the ship Falls of Belfast. As usually happened, sailing dates were put back several times. The Falls reached Charleston on January 8, 1764 with 90 passengers, including some who came as servants. Belfast passengers most likely came from County Antrim or County Down, since Greg appointed agents in Lisburn, Dromore, Ballynahinch, and Downpatrick.

The Prince of Wales arrived safely from Belfast in March 1764 with 170 passengers. She returned with passengers later that year, arriving at Charleston for the second time in January 1765. The Prince of Wales made a third voyage from Belfast to Charleston reaching the South Carolina port in March 1766 with 51 paying passengers and 21 servants. Matthew Rea of Drumbo, near Ballynahinch, and William Beatty of Belfast were authorized to secure passengers for these voyages.

The Falls returned to Charleston on March 7, 1766 with passengers, entering from Londonderry. Some of her passengers were indentured servants. Passengers on a ship sailing from Londonderry would be drawn from that port's hinterland in Cos. Donegal, Tyrone, and Londonderry.

The Belfast Pacquet arrived from Belfast October 15, 1766 "with between eighty and ninety Irish settlers," all in good health. (South Carolina Gazette, October 20, 1766.)

The Earl of Hillsborough sailed for South Carolina from Belfast on Christmas Eve 1766. She reached Charleston February 19, 1767 "with two hundred and thirty protestant settlers, encouraged by the large bounty given by this province, and the success their countrymen have met with in their several settlements here." (South Carolina and American General Gazette, February 20, 1767.) William Beatty, as agent, advertised that he would be in three market towns, Lurgan, Ballynahinch, and Dromore, each a few miles from the other in Co. Down, every week to meet with potential passengers. Many passengers on this ship probably came from in or near those three towns.

William Beatty also acted as agent for the Prince of Wales and made a regular circuit of Lurgan, Ballynahinch, and Dromore signing up passengers, so many on board this ship, too, came from this area. On May 14, 1767 the passengers on the Prince of Wales, "about 250 Irish protestants arrived here from Belfast, in order to settle in this province." (South Carolina and American General Gazette, May 15, 1767.)

Robert Wills of Belfast, William Ray of Ballyreany, and Samuel Jackson of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, owned a ship called the Nancy, which they dispatched to Charleston in 1767. In an effort to find prospective passengers, William Ray and Captain Samuel Hannah of the Nancy traveled from Belfast to Ballymena, Co. Antrim, then to Coleraine and Garvagh in Co. Londonderry, and on to Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, and finally to Armagh, Portadown, and Lurgan in Co. Armagh. They were successful in their quest. The Nancy brought 291 passengers to Charleston, when she arrived in port June 5, 1767. The Nancy was registered as a ship of 80 tons and by the rule of thumb in those days she could comfortably carry about 80 adult passengers. The owners falsely advertised her as 300 tons and crammed nearly 300 men, women and children into the limited space on board. Many of them were sick or dying when they reached Charleston. They later complained that Captain Hannah "not only nipped them of the provisions allowed them but heaped them one upon the other, to such a degree in their berths that it must be absolutely impossible they could survive as appears by the mortality which rages amongst them to this day."

The people of Charleston raised money for the victims of the Nancy. Henry Laurens of Charleston, who had engaged in the slave trade himself wrote that he "never saw an instance of Cruelty in ten or twelve Years experience in that branch equal to the Cruelty exercised upon those poor Irish." The authorities refused to pay the bounty to the Nancy's owners, since they had so exploited the passengers for their own profit.

John Bynan and David Gaussan, merchants in Newry, sent their ship Britannia to Charleston in May 1767. Passengers for a delay in sailing to give them "time to dispose of their effects." The owners asked them to be on board by May 4, when "the Ship, by the blessing of God, will then proceed on her intended Voyage for the Land of Promise." (Belfast News Letter, April 14, 1767.) The Britannia arrived from Newry on August 23, 1767 "with about 180 Protestant settlers, all in good health." (South Carolina and American

General Gazette, August 28, 1767.) Emigrants sailing from Newry most likely came from the south of Co. Down and Co. Armagh.

The Earl of Donegall sailed from Belfast in September 1767 with 266 passengers and reached Charleston on December 10, 1767. Agents for this ship recruited in Ballymoney and Ballymena, Co. Antrim, as well as in Belfast.

Greg and Cunningham sent their brig Chichester from Belfast with 146 passengers and Caldwell, Vance and Caldwell dispatched their ship Admiral Hawke from Londonderry with 91 passengers. Both vessels arrived at Charleston in the last days of December 1767.

The snow James and Mary with 186 passengers arrived from Larne early in January 1768. Passengers taking a ship from Larne probably came from north County Antrim, as the owners had agents in Larne, Carrickfergus, and Ballymena.

Greg and Cunningham's snow Betty Greg sailed from Belfast in October 1767 with 145 passengers. The Lord Dungannon brought 141 more emigrants from Belfast and Larne. Both reached Charleston early in February 1768.

The bounty system came to an end on the last day of the General Assembly session in July 1768. It had worked well in peopling Upper South Carolina, but the abuse of the system by the Nancy's owners made it unpopular and the legislature did not renew it. The records kept by the South Carolina government during the years they paid the bounty enable us to know the names of many Scotch-Irish pioneers, the ships they sailed in, and the ports they left from between 1763 and 1768.

*Note: Descendants of Archibald Paul: * See Paul Family: www.ajlambert.com*

Archibald and his family were among 180 other immigrants to "CharlesTown", SC, in 1767, reaching Charleston on January 12, 1768. They were administered the oath of allegiance and awarded their 400 acres of bounty land. Archibald received 100 acres and his wife and five children each received 50 acres. The voyage was about two months long. They were abroad the snow* James & Mary originating in Larne, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. John Moore was Master of the ship.

*A snow-type ship is similar to a brig – two masts with square sails on each. It was distinguished from a brig by having an extra small mast fitted abaft the main lower mast. This was known as the trysail mast and was set with a spanker sail (fore-and-aft triangular sail). The snow rig was at one time common around the coasts of the UK but it is believed that the last one, the "commerce" of Newhaven was built in 1862 and existed until 1909.

Source: Protestant Immigrants (Irish) to South Carolina, Janie Revill, A Compilation of the Original Lists of Protestant Immigrants to South Carolina, 1763-1773, (Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore, MD) Rec. Date: 1981, pg. 101-102.

Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, P. William Filby, Ed., with Mary K. Meyer, Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, (A guide to published arrival records of about 5000,000 passengers who came to the U.S. and Canada in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. First Edition, Volume 3 (o-R), Gale Research Co., Book Tower Detroit, MI 48226) Rec. Date: 1981, pg. 1623. Archibald Paul, age 36, arrived at Charles Town, SC, 1767.