

# People ask why the Skye and Highland Scots came to North Carolina?

## Highland Scots

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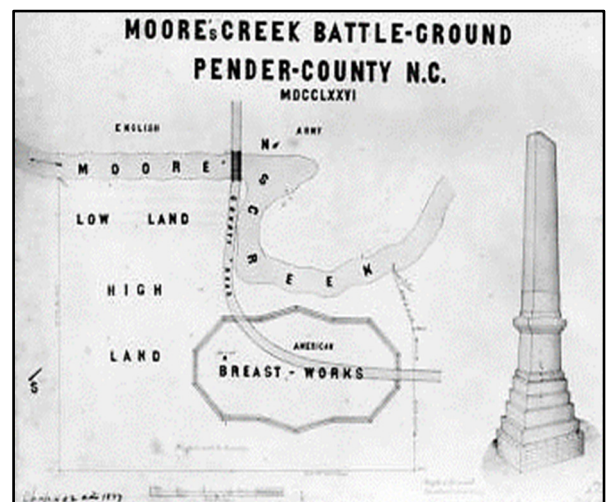


### A QUICK ANSWER FOR THOSE WHO DON'T WANT TO READ IT ALL:

Gabriel Johnston, Royal Governor of North Carolina, offered tax breaks to early Scots to migrate to Carolina. Subsequent offers by Johnston attracted Highland Scots to North Carolina primarily for economic and political reasons, for in Scotland, they had difficulties paying the increasing land rents and had experienced defeat against the English at the Battle of Culloden in 1745. Want more? Here's extra to tell the full story.

Flora Macdonald, born 1722, Milton, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, Scot.— died March 5, 1790, Kingsburgh House, Isle of Skye, Inner Hebrides, was a Scottish Jacobite heroine who helped Charles Edward,

the Stuart (AKA: Bonnie Prince Charlie) supposedly the claimant to the British throne, to escape from Scotland after his defeat in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745–46. Flora McDonald came to North Carolina in 1774 and sided with the British during the American Revolution.



In 1707, the two kingdoms of Scotland and England were united much to the dismay of those who supported the Jacobite cause. James VIII/III attempted to claim the throne twice, in 1708 and in 1715, which resulted in the Jacobite rising of 1715. The Jacobite rebellion timeline is quite complex. It all started with James VII, as we called him in Scotland or James II as he was known in England, the last Roman Catholic monarch to reign over the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland. Invaded by his Protestant son-in-law and subsequently overthrown, James was forced into exile in France. The Jacobites (which means supporter of James) were around from his time until well into the next century. After failing to persuade the French government to commit to another invasion, Prince Charles, the 'Young Pretender', decided to fund his own Jacobite rebellion in 1745. He sailed from France to Scotland, arriving on Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides in July 1745 and then travelled across the Highlands, to assemble a Jacobite army.

The Battle of Culloden (/kə'ʌdən/;[5] Scottish Gaelic: Blàr Chùil Lodair) was the final confrontation of the Jacobite rising of 1745. On 16 April 1746, the Jacobite army of Charles Edward Stuart was decisively defeated by a British government force under Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, on Drumossie Moor near Inverness in the Scottish Highlands. It was the last pitched battle fought on British soil.

Charles was the eldest son of James Stuart, the exiled Stuart claimant to the British throne. Believing there was support for a Stuart restoration in both Scotland and England, he landed in Scotland in July 1745: raising an army of Scots Jacobite supporters, he took Edinburgh by September, and defeated a British government force at Prestonpans. The government recalled 12,000 troops from the Continent to deal with the rising: a Jacobite invasion of England reached as far as Derby before turning back, having attracted relatively few English recruits.

## Continued: People ask Why the Skye and Highland Scots came to NC:

The Jacobites, with limited French military support, attempted to consolidate their control of Scotland, where, by early 1746, they were opposed by a substantial government army. A hollow Jacobite victory at Falkirk failed to change the strategic situation: with supplies and pay running short and with the government troops resupplied and reorganized under the Duke of Cumberland, son of British monarch George II, the Jacobite leadership had few options left other than to stand and fight. The two armies eventually met at Culloden, on terrain that gave Cumberland's larger, well-rested force the advantage. The battle lasted only an hour, with the Jacobites suffering a bloody defeat; between 1,500 and 2,000 Jacobites were killed or wounded, while about 300 government soldiers were killed or wounded. While perhaps 5,000 – 6,000 Jacobites remained in arms in Scotland, the leadership took the decision to disperse, effectively ending the rising.

Many Highland and Isle of Skye Scots, such as Flora McDonald and Hugh McRae, were also Loyalists who were defeated at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge (1776). When the Scots (Highland, Skye and others) migrated to America, North Carolina was a more popular place to settle than any of the other colonies. In 1739, Gabriel Johnston, royal governor of North Carolina and native Scotsman, encouraged 360 Highland Scots to settle in North Carolina and later provided them a ten-year tax exemption for doing so. Subsequent offers by Johnston attracted Highland Scots to North Carolina primarily for economic and political reasons, for in Scotland, they had difficulties paying the increasing land rents and had experienced defeat against the English at the Battle of Culloden in 1745. Also, the Highland evictions, beginning in the 1700s and continuing to the 1800s, forced many Scots to give up their land so that sheep could be raised. Many chose therefore to settle mainly in North Carolina, yet many sailed to New York, New Jersey, Georgia, and Canada. In the late nineteenth century, officials promoted working with North Carolina timber among the Highland Scots; but few enjoyed the work, so only a small number came to do so.



Bonnie  
Prince  
Charlie

Although their exact numbers are unknown, records reveal that countless Highland Scots migrated to North Carolina during the colonial period. Arriving in Wilmington, most who came had obtained a land grant from the government to settle in the Upper Cape Fear region, because they knew many parts of the Lower Cape Fear had been settled. In 1754, enterprising merchants from Wilmington had settled Cross Creek, an interior town on the Cape Fear River, so many Highlanders dwelled near the small creeks flowing into the river. Highland settlements were numerous in this region during the eighteenth century, and evidence of them can be seen today in Anson, Bladen, Moore, Cumberland, Richland, Scotland, and Robeson counties.

The early Scots raised livestock, including sheep and swine, and grew wheat and corn while some worked in the naval stores industry. Although many preferred to live outside of Cross Creek, they actively traded in the river town. The Lowland Scots who migrated from Scotland to North Carolina in the eighteenth century primarily settled in the Lower Cape Fear region, around Wilmington. The 1790 US census lists 150 inhabitants of the Upper Cape Fear Valley who named Scotland as their birthplace. Unlike Highlanders in other colonies, those in North Carolina intermarried with Lowland Scots.

While in Scotland in 1745, Flora McDonald helped save the life of Bonnie Prince Charlie, and from 1774 to 1778, she later resided with her husband, Alan, in the Barbecue community of Harnett County. In 1754, James Campbell arrived in Cumberland County and established three Presbyterian churches: Longstreet, located on the present-day Fort Bragg Army base; Old Bluff, near modern-day Wade; and Barbecue in western Harnett County. At the outbreak of the war, more than a few Highland Scots in the Upper Cape Fear were Loyalists, including Hugh McRae and Flora McDonald. Yet after their defeat at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge in February 1776, Loyalist support waned—as evidenced by the nearly four hundred who took an oath of allegiance issued by Cumberland County in 1778. As mentioned, not all Scots remained in North Carolina. After the Revolution, some left because they had lost their property by either being confiscated or by the local government.



## Continued: From Scotland to North Carolina; but Why North Carolina?

In the eighteenth century, Highland Scots spoke Gaelic in church and at home. Presbyterian ministers conducted services in Gaelic and English, and young children recited hymns and religious songs in Gaelic. In the early nineteenth-century Fayetteville, a Gaelic press published books that a nearby bookstore sold. Gaelic speaking in North Carolina declined after the Civil War and virtually disappeared as a spoken language by the mid-twentieth century. Scottish surnames, however, remained prevalent; some are Bain, Black, Campbell, Clark, Darrach, Gilchrist, McDonald, McDougald, McKay, McLean, McLeod, McNeill, McPhearson, McAllister, Morrison, Patterson, Ross, and Stewart.

In past blog posts, we've looked at the circumstances that led to many Highland Scots emigrating from Scotland. Our next question is, why did they immigrate to North Carolina?

A major impetus appears to be Gabriel Johnston, a Lowland Scot who served as Governor of North Carolina from 1734 to 1752. "He felt it would be good for the future of the Cape Fear Valley for it to be settled by large numbers of Protestant Highland Scots, so he began writing enthusiastic letters to friends in Scotland, inviting them to come to a land where there were two crops each year...land grants and possible exemption from taxation for time."



Gabriel Johnston's Coat of Arms bookplate



Not everyone was enthusiastic about Governor Johnston's partiality, however. "Among other charges brought against the Governor [in 1748] was his inordinate fondness for his brother Scotchmen, even Scotch rebels. His partiality for this latter class of Scotchmen, it was said, was so great, and his lack of joy at the king's 'glorious victory at Culloden' was so conspicuous, that he was accused of a want of fealty to the House of Hanover..." Nevertheless, "...like other Scotchmen, he was fond of the people of his native country, and sought to better their condition by inducing them to emigrate to North Carolina..." [William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Volume IV, 1734-1752 (Raleigh, NC: P.M. Hale, 1886), prefatory notes, p. ix-x.]

There were some Scots living in the colony earlier; before 1700, several Lowland Scots were present, and it is believed that Highlanders were living in the Cape Fear area as early as 1725. After Governor Johnston began to promote immigration into the colony, the first large group of Highlanders disembarked in September 1739. A party of 350 from Argyllshire, they made their way up the Cape Fear to settle in the Cross Creek area; the Cape Fear was convenient due to the ports of Brunswick and Wilmington, and the river for transportation farther upstream. In February 1740, two of the leaders of the Argyllshire colony appeared before the Colonial Legislature asking for special consideration for "themselves and several other Scotch Gentlemen and several poor people brought into this province" and for "substantial encouragement, that they might be able to induce the rest of their friends and acquaintances to come over." The Upper House responded favorably with tax exemptions and land grants, and the immigration to North Carolina continued. Some names associated with the 1739 party include McNeil, Forbes, Hamilton, Jones, and Campbell. "At a meeting of the council

held at Wilmington, June 4, 1740, there were presented petitions for patents of lands, by the following persons, giving acres and location, as granted.” Note the prevalence of Highland names – do you recognize any from Outlander?

“Occasionally, a list of emigrants has been preserved in the minutes of the official proceedings. Hence it may be read that on November 4, 1767, there landed at Brunswick, from the Isle of Jura, Argyle-shire, Scotland, the following names of families and persons, to whom were allotted vacant lands, clear of all fees, to be taken up in Cumberland or Mecklenburgh counties, at their option:

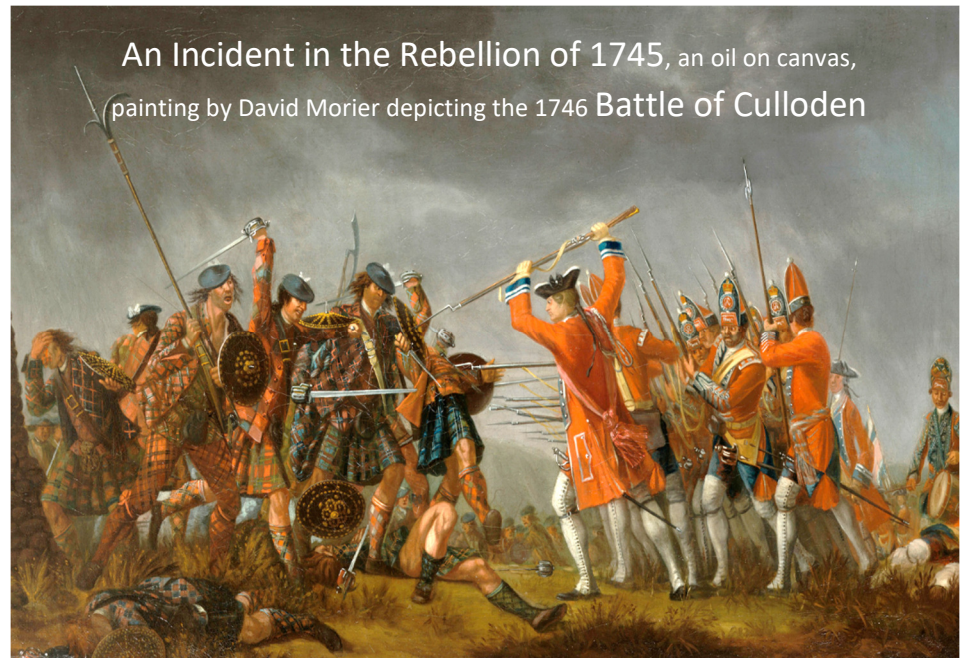
Names of land grantees: These names show they were from Argyleshire, and probably from the Isle of Mull, and the immediate vicinity of the present city of Oban.”

Those who came to Carolina and prospered wrote letters home, and thus word of mouth became a catalyst for emigration. “There was in fact a Carolina mania which was not broken until the beginning of the Revolution. The flame of enthusiasm passed like wildfire through the Highland glens and Western Isles.”

As a result, “Shipload after shipload of sturdy Highland settlers sailed for the shores of America, and most of them landing at Charleston and Wilmington found their way to their kinsmen on the Cape

Fear. In a few years their settlements were thickly scattered throughout the territory now embraced in the counties of Anson, Bladen, Cumberland, Harnett, Moore, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Hoke, and Scotland...The Scot’s Magazine, in September, 1769, records that the ship Molly had recently sailed from Islay filled with passengers for North Carolina, and that this was the third emigration from that county within six years. The same journal in a later issue tells us that between April and July, 1770, fifty-four vessels sailed from the Western Isles laden with 1,200 Highlanders all bound for North Carolina. In 1771, the Scot’s Magazine stated that 500 emigrants from Islay and the adjacent islands were preparing to sail for America, and later in the same year Governor Tryon wrote that ‘several ship loads of Scotch families’ had ‘landed in this province within three years past from the Isles of Arran, Durah, Islay, and Gigah, but chief of them from Argyle Shire and are mostly settled in Cumberland County.’ Their number he estimated ‘at 1,600 men, women, and children.’ A year later the ship Adventure brought a cargo of 200 emigrants from the Highlands to the Cape Fear, and in March of the same year Governor Martin wrote to Lord Hillsborough, secretary of state for the colonies: ‘Near a thousand people have arrived in Cape Fear River from the Scottish Isles since the month of November with a view to settling in this province whose prosperity and strength will receive great augmentation by the accession of such a number of hardy, laborious and thrifty people.’”

Such massive immigration to North Carolina has led to claims that the state now has more descendants of Scots than has present-day Scotland. In summary, favorable reports, support of the crown and governor, and financial incentives all conspired to make the ship route of Scotland to the Cape Fear a major migration pattern. As MacLean poetically described the aftermath of Culloden, “Left without chief, or protector, clanship broken up, homes destroyed and kindred murdered, dispirited, outlawed, insulted and without hope of palliation or redress, the only ray of light pointed across the Atlantic where peace and rest were to be found in the unbroken forests of North Carolina.”





## Flora MacDonald eventually retreated to North Carolina and lived here 5 or so years.



**Flora MacDonald** (1722 - 5 March 1790) was a member of Clan Macdonald of Sleat, and she is best known for helping Charles Edward Stuart evade government troops after the Battle of Culloden in April 1746. Her family generally backed the government during the 1745 Rising and MacDonald later claimed to have assisted Charles out of sympathy for his situation.

Arrested and held in the Tower of London, she was released under a general amnesty in June 1747. She later married Allan MacDonald and the couple emigrated to North Carolina in 1773. Their support for the British government during the American War of Independence meant the loss of their American estates and they returned to Scotland, where she died in 1790.

Tradition records that as the Anson battalion assembled in Cross Creek on 15 February 1776, Flora "addressed them in their own Gaelic tongue and excited them to the highest pitch of warlike enthusiasm", a tradition known among the Scottish clans as a "brosnachadh-catha" or "incitement to battle." They then set off for the coast to link up with some 2,000 British reinforcements commanded by General Henry Clinton, who in reality had only just sailed from Cork in Ireland. Early on the morning of 17 February, they were ambushed at Moore's Creek Bridge by Patriot militia led by Richard Caswell and along with his troops, Allan MacDonald was taken prisoner. After the battle, Flora was interrogated by North Carolina's Committee of Safety, before which she exhibited "spirited behavior." In April 1777, all Loyalist-owned property was confiscated by the North Carolina Provincial Congress and Flora was evicted from Killegray, with the loss of all her possessions.

SOURCE: [Flora MacDonald - Wikipedia](#), and other sites



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