

Idiosyncratic Localism, Provincial Moderation, and Imperial Loyalty: Planter Studies and the History of 18th-Century Nova Scotia

Elizabeth Mancke

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Idiosyncratic Localism, Provincial Moderation, and Imperial Loyalty: Planter Studies and the History of 18th-Century Nova Scotia

THE FRONT COVER OF THE 1988 *They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada* announced that it was “Planters Studies Series, No. 1.”¹ The implication of more volumes to come was boldly confident, and realized over the next 25 years with the publication of four more volumes.² As Margaret Conrad explains in her introduction to the first volume, the New Englanders who settled in Nova Scotia in the 1760s had been relatively obscure figures in Canadian history.³ John Bartlet Brebner, after spending a good portion of his scholarly career studying them, observed in the foreword to his 1937 *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years* that he had perhaps wasted his time in writing the study and, by extension, the reader’s time by making the book longer than the topic probably warranted. In that book and his earlier one (the 1927 *New England’s Outpost*) Brebner emphasized the influence of lower New England on northeastern North America, and especially Acadia and Nova Scotia, during the 17th and 18th centuries – an emphasis that influenced scholarship for most of the 20th century. In his 1986 *The Shaping of America*, for instance, Donald Meinig, following Brebner, calls the entire northeast, from Long Island to Labrador, “Greater New England.” George Rawlyk, on the other hand, writing almost two generations after Brebner, struggled to step out of his long shadow – eventually escaping it by studying the region’s religious history, beginning with Henry Alline (the New Light evangelist of New England Planter descent).⁴

1 Margaret Conrad, ed., *They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada*, Planter Studies Series, No. 1 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1988), 9-13.

2 See Margaret Conrad, ed., *Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800*, Planter Studies Series, No. 2 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1991); Margaret Conrad, ed., *Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800*, Planter Studies Series, No. 3 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995); Margaret Conrad and Barry Moody, eds., *Planter Links: Community and Culture in Colonial Nova Scotia*, Planter Studies Series, No. 4 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2001); and T. Stephen Henderson and Wendy G. Robicheau, eds., *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830*, Planter Studies Series, No. 5 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2012).

3 Conrad, “Introduction,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 9-13.

4 John Bartlet Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), vii-viii; Brebner, *New England’s Outpost: Acadia Before the Conquest of Canada* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1927); D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Vol. 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 100-9; and George Rawlyk, “J.B. Brebner and Some Recent Trends in Eighteenth-Century Maritime Historiography,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 97-119.

Elizabeth Mancke, “Idiosyncratic Localism, Provincial Moderation, and Imperial Loyalty: Planter Studies and the History of 18th-Century Nova Scotia,” *Acadiensis* XLII, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2013): 169-181.

In the last 25 years, much has changed. In *The Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World, 1759-1830* (Planter Studies Series, No. 5), Jerry Bannister notes in a broad overview of “Planter Studies & Atlantic Scholarship” that Brebner has been largely eclipsed and this signals an historiographical shift away from continentalist interpretations of the region and toward interpretations that stress trans-Atlantic and circum-Atlantic linkages and influences.⁵ That shift also heralds other scholarly developments. From Atlantic and imperial perspectives, Nova Scotia was not marginal to 18th-century developments; rather, in Bannister’s framing, “the Planters arrived at ground zero in the battle for North America.” New England, in turn, was but one influence on the region and not necessarily the dominant one. The intellectual currents pulling scholarship in new directions are diverse. Bannister emphasizes the “Atlantic turn,” which took hold in the 1990s and which arose initially because of influence from historians at prominent east coast universities in the United States: Jack Greene, at Johns Hopkins University, began an Atlantic history program in the 1970s and, during the 1990s, Bernard Bailyn received Mellon funding for workshops on Atlantic history that brought together junior scholars and helped to mainstream the field.

The Atlantic turn, however, is not sufficient to explain the vitality of Planter Studies and the considerable contribution it has made to 18th-century Maritime history. By revisiting the first four Planter Studies volumes published in 1988, 1991, 1995, and 2001, along with the 2012 release of the fifth volume, it is possible to identify how the promotion of scholarship by the Planter Studies Centre at Acadia University has laid the groundwork for an historiographical shift in 18th-century Nova Scotia history that warrants analysis and reflection. These volumes contain over 80 articles on topics ranging from settlements of New Englanders, to the Acadian legacy on the landscape, to religious ferment, to material culture and literary expression, to politics and law, to Loyalists, to historiography and genealogy. Five Planter Studies conferences brought together scholars from universities, museums, Parks Canada, provincial archives, and non-professional historians. For those of us interested in finding new ways to analyze the Atlantic region in the early modern era, no group offered as rigorous, stimulating, and welcoming a venue.

In the early 1980s, when the Canadianists at Acadia University constituted the Planter Studies Committee, community studies had reached their apex among colonial American historians, especially those working on New England. At the first conference in 1987, participants shared a general sense that Planter history would be well served if scholars conducted similar community studies on the dozen or so townships in Nova Scotia settled by New Englanders. Graeme Wynn argued “detailed community studies, manageable in scale, and allowing exhaustive use of the available documentation, promise insight into many of the questions about which we know least.”⁶ His master’s student, Debra McNabb, had in 1986 just

5 Jerry Bannister, “Planter Studies & Atlantic Scholarship: The New History of 18th-Century Nova Scotia,” in Henderson and Robicheau, *Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic*, 21-35 (quotation on 21).

6 Graeme Wynn, “The Geography of the Maritime Provinces in 1800: Patterns and Questions,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 150.

finished a brilliant study of land distribution and accumulation in Horton Township, and contributed a chapter as well.⁷ Three other essays – by R.S. Longley, D. Murray Young, and Esther Clark Wright and reprinted in this first volume – were on group settlements of New Englanders in the Annapolis Valley, the St. John Valley, and Cumberland township respectively.⁸ My contribution was drawn from my comparative community studies of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, and Machias, Maine.⁹ Subsequent Planter Studies volumes feature the work of Barry Moody on Granville Township, Carole Campbell on the Scots-Irish in Truro, and Kenneth Paulsen on the Foreign Protestants in Lunenburg.¹⁰ Prominent American scholars, including Jack Greene and Philip Greven, reinforced the pursuit of community studies modeled on those done for colonial New England.¹¹

The flaw in this emphasis on community studies was that 18th-century Nova Scotia townships simply did not generate the kinds of records that New England townships generated.¹² Church records with detailed and systematic accounting of baptisms, marriages, and deaths from which to calculate age of marriage, the number of children born per couple, the spacing of children, or life expectancy were not widely available.¹³ Town governments were proscribed by the British metropolitan government, so New England settlers in Nova Scotia did not produce town meeting minutes, annual lists of town officers, and accounts of town taxes.

7 Debra Anne McNabb, “Land and Families in Horton Township, Nova Scotia, 1760-1830” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1986); McNabb, “The Role of the Land in the Development of Horton Township, 1760-1775,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 151-60. See also Graeme Wynn and Debra McNabb, “Pre-Loyalist Nova Scotia,” in *Historical Atlas of Canada, Vol. 1, From the Beginning to 1800*, ed. Cole Harris (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Plate 31.

8 R.S. Longley, “The Coming of the New England Planters to the Annapolis Valley,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 14-28; D. Murray Young, “Planter Settlements in the St. John Valley,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 29-35; and Esther Clark Wright, “Cumberland Township: A Focal Point of Early Settlement on the Bay of Fundy,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 36-41.

9 Elizabeth Mancke, “Corporate Structure and Private Interest: The Mid-Eighteenth Century Expansion of New England,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 161-77.

10 Barry Moody, “Land, Kinship and Inheritance in Granville Township, 1760-1800,” in Conrad, *Making Adjustments*, 165-79; Moody, “Growing Up in Granville Township, 1760-1800,” in Conrad, *Intimate Relations*, 78-97; Carol Campbell, “A Scots-Irish Plantation in Nova Scotia: Truro, 1760-1775,” in Conrad, *Making Adjustments*, 153-64; Kenneth Paulsen, “Land, Family and Inheritance in Lunenburg Township, Nova Scotia, 1760-1800,” in Conrad, *Intimate Relations*, 110-21; Paulsen, “Lunenburg and the Formation of Local Government in Nova Scotia,” in Conrad and Moody, *Planter Links*, 145-53; Paulsen, “New Light or No Light: The Religious Experience in Lunenburg, 1753-1790,” in Henderson and Robicheau, *Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 243-56.

11 Jack Greene, “Recent Developments in the Historiography of Colonial New England,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 61-97; Philip Greven Jr., “Family and Community in Early America,” in Conrad, *Intimate Relations*, 1-18.

12 Barry Cahill, “New England Planters in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 120-31. Cahill does not discuss the differences, but his descriptions of available records indicate that records pertaining to land are the most prevalent. See also Allan E. Marble, *Deaths, Burials, and Probate of Nova Scotians, 1749-1799, From Primary Sources* (Halifax: Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia, 1994).

13 Moody, “Growing Up in Granville Township,” has a section discussing family size, but the data he used was gleaned from genealogical and cemetery records (89-91, n38).

Probate records survived in some counties¹⁴ but few county court records are extant¹⁵; land records are the most prevalent extant documents. The township grants by the provincial government allow scholars to compile lists of the original grantees, which can then be compared to the actual settlers listed in reissued grants. From land distribution records and deeds, settler persistence can be estimated.¹⁶

The Planter Studies conferences allowed scholars working on Nova Scotia to test the idea of modelling their work on histories of colonial New England and the questions that shaped them. David Jaffee, in his thoughtful and provoking contribution to the fourth conference – “New England Diaspora: Village Culture in Post-Revolutionary New Hampshire and Nova Scotia” – analyses how the “discontinuity in serial town settlement” kept New England town institutions from being transplanted to Nova Scotia and created divergent cultural developments from those occurring in New Hampshire and throughout New England. Jaffee shows how the institutions of town government in New England continued to provide integrative forces that allowed “a new literary marketplace and Yankee identity” to develop. In Nova Scotia, a religious awakening, he argues, provided the cultural expression for new corporate identities to be forged.¹⁷ Although other scholars might take issue with some of his points, his essay is an important intervention into the debate about how much 18th-century Nova Scotia was developing in ways that were distinctly different from New England. Barry Moody’s analysis of families and migration led him to conclude that Granville Township “does not fit the [New England] pattern.” Planters had larger families and lived in more ethnically diverse communities than did their relatives in New England. He cautions against placing too much emphasis on what is similar – most notably, domestic architecture – and thereby failing to realize that under those Nova Scotia roofs family formation and cultural practices diverged from New England practices.¹⁸

The limits of community studies were more than offset by the intellectual ecumenism that the organizers of the Planter Studies conferences practiced, both through their acceptance of papers on cultural groups other than New Englanders and their bringing together of scholars from diverse disciplines and professional experiences. Presentations on gravestone analysis, archaeology on former Acadian sites, close readings of diaries, general store account books, and Planter furniture were welcomed.¹⁹ The marked number of papers using cultural analysis emerged in tandem

14 On use of probate records, see Richard Henning Field, “The Material Lives of the Yeoman Planters of Kings County, Nova Scotia: A Preliminary Survey Based on Probate Inventories, 1761-1797,” in Conrad, *Making Adjustments*, 180-8, and Moody, “Land, Kinship and Inheritance,” 165-79.

15 Cahill, “New England Planters at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia,” 127-9.

16 On use of grants and land records, see McNabb, “The Role of Land in Settling Horton Township,” 151-60; Campbell, “Scots-Irish Plantation in Nova Scotia,” 153-64; and Moody, “Land, Kinship and Inheritance,” 165-79.

17 David Jaffee, “New England Diaspora: Village Culture in Post-Revolutionary New Hampshire and Nova Scotia,” in Conrad and Moody, *Planter Links*, 81-104 (quotation on 104).

18 Moody, “Growing Up in Granville Township,” 96-97 (quotation on 97).

19 For a sampling, see Deborah Trask, “‘Remember Me As You Pass By’: Material Evidence of the Planters in the Graveyards of Nova Scotia,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 298-306; M.A. MacDonald (with Robert Elliot), “New Brunswick’s ‘Early Comers’: Lifestyles Through

with, rather than in imitation of, the cultural turn in the 1980s and 1990s, with scholars of 18th-century Nova Scotia innovating methodologically to take advantage of the artifacts available to them. Given the limited range of institutional records for the study of Planter history, cultural analysis of objects such as 18th-century songbooks with hand-drawn illustrations, a hand-stitched sampler, or hymns as poetry assumed greater value.²⁰ Researchers could present work in progress, test analyses, offer curiosities from the material record, and find others willing to discuss their work.

The merits of methodological ecumenism can also be seen in Carol Campbell and James F. Smith's assiduously researched and eloquently crafted *Necessaries and Sufficiencies: Planter Society in Londonderry, Onslow and Truro Townships, 1761-1780*, a work nearly three decades in the making (with one essay by Campbell appearing in the second Planter Studies volume). The authors scoured archives in North America and Britain for records pertaining to the settlers in these three townships: Scots-Irish Presbyterians recruited by Alexander McNutt in Ireland and Scots-Irish relocating from New Hampshire. Campbell and Smith utilized fragments of evidence that many scholars would have discarded, contextualizing them to reconstruct daily life in Truro, Onslow, and Londonderry; in so doing, they provide evocative descriptions of brick-making, the 18th-century uses of items people bartered, the dangers of sea travel and the loss of loved ones, and Presbyterian restrictions over oath-taking and the ensuing controversies with the provincial government. In the third part of the book, they examine the involvement of people from these townships in the attack on Fort Cumberland launched by Jonathan Eddy from Machias, Maine – a section that merits reading by anyone interested in the impact of the American Revolution on Nova Scotia and especially in conjunction with Ernest Clarke's *The Siege of Fort Cumberland, 1776*.²¹

Necessaries and Sufficiencies, a microhistory, illustrates the historiographical shift of the last 25 years away from the social science methodologies used in community studies. As historical case studies of aspects of social development, community studies address macro-scale questions (often at the expense of unusual micro-scale details). Microhistories, in contrast, are not primarily concerned with testing the interpretive issues that concern social scientists, but in analyzing

Authenticated Artifacts, a Research Project," in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 262-97; Elizabeth Mancke, "At the Counter of the General Store: Women and the Economy in Eighteenth-Century Horton, Nova Scotia," in Conrad, *Intimate Relations*, 167-81; Jonathan Fowler, "From Acadians to Planters in the Grand-Pré Area: An Archaeological Perspective," in Henderson and Robicheau, *Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 37-62; and Gwen Davies, "'Clean Your Teeth and Set Straight': Planter Children in the Early Years and Beyond," in Henderson and Robicheau, *Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 285-320.

20 Nancy F. Vogan, "The Musical Traditions of the Planters and 'Mary Miller Her Book'," in Conrad, *Making Adjustments*, 247-52; Vogan, "The Robert Moor Tunebook and Musical Culture in Eighteenth-Century Nova Scotia," in Conrad, *Planter Links*, 154-64; and Thomas Vincent, "Henry Alline: Problems of Approach and Reading the Hymns as Poetry," in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 201-10.

21 Carol Campbell and James F. Smith, *Necessaries and Sufficiencies: Planter Society in Londonderry, Onslow and Truro Townships, 1761-1780* (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press, 2011); Carol Campbell, "A Scots-Irish Plantation in Nova Scotia: Truro, 1760-1775," 153-64; and Ernest A. Clarke, *The Siege of Fort Cumberland, 1776: An Episode in the American Revolution* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

particular times and places and grounding stories in contextualized “little facts” – an approach that draws on the methodologies of cultural studies, anthropology, and ethnography. Microhistories do not justify themselves as case studies of broader phenomena; rather, they are often pursued because of idiosyncratic facts that fit awkwardly in social science-oriented studies with their macro-scale concerns. As well, scholars writing microhistories often use a narrative style, with emphases on specific individuals, to help make the past more real and accessible to readers. In contrast, social histories, including most community studies of colonial New England towns, have been criticized for deploying the dry prose of social science research reports that discourage non-specialist readership.²²

Many of the essays in the Planter Studies volumes capture the merits of microhistories, conveying fascinating aspects of 18th- and early 19th-century Nova Scotia. Most essays reference broader trends in the history of British North America, the Anglo-Atlantic world, or the British Empire, but are also cautious about macro-scale generalizations. Daniel Conlin describes the singular success of privateers operating out of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, which was the home of 58 per cent of privateers in the province between 1793 and 1805. Residents of Barrington, westward on the South Shore from Liverpool, seem to have led less swashbuckling lives, with fewer men participating in privateering. Many avoided jury duty in Shelburne, the county seat, prompting David Murray to question whether court days were as uniformly festive as commentators have suggested, particularly for people who did not live near a county seat. His research shows that legal practices in Nova Scotia developed in ways that deviated from both British and American practices. Peter Haring Judd and Philip Girard each detail the difficulties of early ministers to Planter settlements. Benajah Phelps, studied by Judd, was born into an established Connecticut family, trained at Yale, and became the first settled minister in Cornwallis. After 12 difficult years of indebtedness, poor crops, and parish controversies over money, Phelps, a rebel sympathizer, left Cornwallis in 1778 and made his way back to Connecticut where he resumed his ministry, sent for his family, and lived out the rest of his years. Irish-born James Murdoch, Girard’s subject, was ordained a Presbyterian minister in Ireland, came to Nova Scotia in 1766, and became the first settled minister in Horton township. But he soon found himself alienated from his New England parishioners, whose religious and social sensibilities jarred with his own. In the 1780s they parted ways, and Murdoch began a decline into poverty, accompanied by mental problems; in 1799 he died alone on the shore of the Musquodoboit River, perhaps succumbing to either the epilepsy or alcoholism that plagued his life.²³

22 Francesca Trivellato, “Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?” *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011), [ismrg_cisj_9025](http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z94n9hq), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z94n9hq>; István Szijártó, “Four Arguments for Microhistory,” *Rethinking History* 6, no. 2 (July 2002): 209-15; John Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life,” *CAS-eSeries*, No. 5 (2010), www.cas.uni-muenchen.de/publikationen/e.../cas-eseries_nr5.pdf. Brewer offers an intriguing discussion of the comparative merits of social history case studies and microhistories.

23 Daniel Conlin, “They Plundered Well: Planters as Privateers, 1793-1805,” in Conrad, *Planter Links*, 20-35; David Murray, “Just Excuses: Jury Culture in Barrington Township, Nova Scotia, 1795-1837,” in Conrad, *Planter Links*, 36-57; Peter Haring Judd, “An ‘Uncompromising Whig’

These vignettes and others complicate our understanding of 18th-century Nova Scotia, and draw into question the typicality of any Planter settlement. Indeed, each new study seems to reinforce the idiosyncratic localism of Planter townships. If the Planter Studies Committee had any ambition of documenting a Planter heritage with specific ethno-cultural and political characteristics, then the object of the search has become ever more elusive. New Englanders may have been the largest ethno-cultural group to settle in Nova Scotia between the founding of Halifax in 1749 and the arrival of thousands of Loyalists in 1783, but studies of the townships they settled suggest that each became idiosyncratic. Making Nova Scotia even more heterogeneous were Irish and Scots-Irish Protestants in the Minas Basin and Cobequid townships, Foreign Protestants along the South Shore, Acadians moving into remote outposts, immigrants from Yorkshire settling in Cumberland, Scots arriving on the Northumberland Shore beginning with the *Hector* in 1773, and the Mi'kmaq struggling to preserve their territory. Bill Wicken provides a fascinating study of how in 1771 some Mi'kmaq began petitioning for land grants in response to all the land being given to immigrants, much of which they had not ceded.²⁴ Brian Cuthbertson's quantitative analysis of provincial elections from 1758 to 1847 identifies only Hants, Kings, and Queens counties as well as Barrington and Yarmouth townships as "unquestionably Planter in population," meaning that in these locations the "major settlement group was New England Planter."²⁵ Other townships and counties had so many settlers from places other than New England that Cuthbertson felt that the cultural sensibilities within them were no longer primarily derivative of New England, an assessment supported by Moody's findings on Granville.

With the release of the fifth Planter Studies volume, it is perhaps time to reconsider and reframe the project. Despite the avowed emphasis on the New Englanders who settled in Nova Scotia in the 1760s, the Planter Studies Centre has practiced a more general mandate to support diverse scholarship on the settlement of Nova Scotia after the founding of Halifax – and especially after the deportation of the Acadians between 1755 and 1758 and before the American Revolution.²⁶ Although approximately 7,000 New Englanders moved to Nova Scotia, the settling of the province was not primarily a New England project.²⁷ Rather, it was an

and Rebel Pastor in Planter Nova Scotia, 1766-1778," in Conrad, *Planter Links*, 58-80; and Philip Girard, "Preacher to Planter to Patriarch: The Vicissitudes of the Reverend James Murdoch," in Conrad, *Planter Links*, 105-18.

24 Bill Wicken, "Mi'kmaq Land in Southwestern Nova Scotia, 1771-1823," in Conrad, *Making Adjustments*, 113-22.

25 B.C. Cuthbertson, "Planter Elections: The First One Hundred Years," in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 253-63 (quotations on 253); and Cuthbertson, *John Bluenose at the Polls: Epic Nova Scotian Election Battles 1758-1848* (Halifax: Formac Publishing, 1994).

26 See Cahill, "New England Planters at the Public Archives," 120-24, for a useful overview of demographic shifts in Nova Scotia.

27 William Shirley, governor of Massachusetts (1741-1749 and 1753-1756) and mastermind of the 1745 attack on Louisbourg, also proposed a plan to settle Nova Scotia with a combination of New Englanders and disbanded soldiers. But this was an imperial plan hatched by an imperial official posted to Massachusetts. See Chester Martin, *Empire and Commonwealth: Studies in Governance and Self-Government in Canada* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 60-7.

imperial project to stabilize and secure a vulnerable periphery in the Anglo-Atlantic world within which Nova Scotia had been perceived to be since 1713. Planting loyal subjects, or if not subjects then people who were likely to become loyal subjects (such as the Foreign Protestants who settled Lunenburg in the mid-1750s), became an imperial priority after 1749.²⁸ Existing inhabitants of Nova Scotia whose loyalty was suspect – Acadians – were deported and other settlers were recruited from diverse populations in North America and Europe.

New Englanders recognized this imperial objective, and when their agents went to Halifax to negotiate land grants they also negotiated concessions such as a ten-year exemption from impressment into the Royal Navy and assistance with the relocation costs that Keith Mercer has studied.²⁹ British merchants who moved to Halifax after it was established in 1749 agitated for an assembly, arguing that one was necessary to attract loyal subjects. When Governor Charles Lawrence resisted, the Board of Trade finally ordered him to do it; in October 1758, not long after the fall of Louisbourg to British troops, the first legislative assembly convened in Halifax.³⁰ Lawrence then referenced the assembly in his proclamation inviting New Englanders to settle in Nova Scotia by saying that the colony had a government like that in other colonies. Responding to the queries of New England agents and knowing that the vast majority of New Englanders were dissenters from the Church of England, Lawrence extended religious toleration to all Protestant settlers. The Anglican Church was the established denomination, but its privileges were limited in the interest of securing loyal settlers. With land as the primary attraction, the Nova Scotia government included more strictures in the grants than did New England governments. Grantees were required to settle, which New England grants did not require, thus underscoring the importance of loyal subjects on the ground and not simply absentee speculators holding paper title. During the 1760s, grantees in most Nova Scotia townships relinquished original grants to the provincial government and these were reissued with the names of actual settlers listed and the removal of the names of grantees who did not settle.³¹ The control of grantees was further limited by the government's appointment of committees in each township to manage the distribution of the undivided land.

When reframed in this way, the settlement history of Nova Scotia post-1749 was not about creating a new New England but about securing an imperial periphery with the settlement of loyal subjects. Consequently, imperial officials were not overly particular about the sources of such people. The harshness of some policies used to

28 Longley, "Coming of the New England Planters," 16-18.

29 On impressment, see Keith Mercer, "Planters and Press Gangs: A Social History of Naval Impressment in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1759-1815," in Henderson and Robicheau, *Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 205-43. On transport and provisions, see Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca. 1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 16-17, and Longley, "Coming of the New England Planters," 19-25.

30 D.C. Harvey, ed., "Governor Lawrence's Case Against an Assembly in Nova Scotia," *Canadian Historical Review* 13, no. 2 (1932): 184-94.

31 On relinquishment of grants, see Wright, "Cumberland Township," 37-8; Mancke, "Corporate Structure and Private Interest," 166-7; and Paulsen, "Land, Family and Inheritance in Lunenburg Township," 111.

achieve that objective, most notoriously the deportation of the Acadians but also the dispossession of the Mi'kmaq, has been legitimately decried decade after decade.³² The practice of “planting” people on vulnerable frontiers, however, had a long legacy in the English world: English and Scots Protestants settled on “plantations” in Ireland in the 16th and 17th centuries, and in Ulster they are still referred to as “loyalists.” In North America, Georgia had been established in the 1730s in the contested lands between Florida (Spanish territory), and South Carolina (British territory). Georgia, unlike the later settlement of Nova Scotia, was originally conceived in Britain by James Oglethorpe as a humanitarian project to resettle Britain’s poor in North America. The Board of Trade supported the project because it would stabilize a contested imperial frontier. Nova Scotia, in contrast, was organized by pragmatic, and at times ruthless, military men whose primary agenda was to stabilize the area with people who would be loyal subjects of the British Crown.

Generous grants of land were the lure. In an analysis of settlers from Chatham, Massachusetts, to Liverpool and Barrington, Robert McLaughlin found that nearly two-thirds ranked in the lowest 35 per cent in terms of property owners in Chatham.³³ In eastern Connecticut, the land market in the decades preceding the migration of New Englanders to Nova Scotia had high prices. Patricia Norred shows that the largest parcel sold was 200 acres; many were 50-75 acres in size.³⁴ In contrast, Debra McNabb and Barry Moody reveal that settlers in Horton and Granville, respectively, were granted 500 acres and upwards, more than a family could utilize in one generation and more than they could reasonably buy in Connecticut. In both townships the land was divided within the decade, giving common people far more land in a short period of time than their ancestors had received in most New England townships. Land divisions of such large size effectively took hundreds of acres out of production for at least a generation. Julian Gwyn argues persuasively that the Acadian deportation hurt the Nova Scotia economy for decades, and that the New Englanders who took over the land were less efficient farmers. McNabb’s assessment of under-utilization of land would support Gwyn’s argument. If the imperial objective was an expanding colonial economy, then the policy of granting townships to settlers to divide among themselves in 500+ acre holdings was disastrous. If the objective was to secure loyal settlers, then the policy of large grants, even if the land would be under-utilized for a generation or more, was effective. Campbell and Smith found that most settlers in Cobequid, in the face of pressure from provincial officials to swear oaths of loyalty during the American Revolution, did so to save their lands, even when oath-taking violated tenets of their Presbyterianism.³⁵ Between the founding of Halifax and the American

32 John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2005).

33 Robert McLaughlin, “New England Planters Prior to Migration: The Case of Chatham, Massachusetts,” in Conrad and Moody, *Planter Links*, 12-19.

34 Patricia A. Norred, “Before They were Planters: Economic Conditions in Eastern Connecticut, 1740-1760,” in Conrad, *Intimate Relations*, 66-79; Longley, “Coming of the New England Planters,” 15-16.

35 McNabb, “The Role of Land in Settling Horton,” 151-2, 155-6; Moody, “Land, Kinship and Inheritance,” 165-6; Julian Gwyn, “Were the Minas Basin Planters Successful Farmers?” in

Revolution, loyalty for generous grants of land was the quid pro quo of settlement. In turn, if loyalty for land was part of the agreement between settlers and the Nova Scotia government in the 1750s and 1760s, then the question of “the failure of Revolution” in Nova Scotia becomes less relevant.³⁶ Some settlers did indeed decide to support the revolution, either by returning to their erstwhile colonies or participating in the Cumberland invasion, but they were a minority.

In a thoughtful and important essay on Nova Scotia political culture at the time of the American Revolution, Donald Desserud argues that it was defined by Montesquieuan moderation – which he discerned in two critical contexts.³⁷ During the 1760s, the press in Halifax – first the *Halifax Gazette* and then its successor, the *Nova Scotia Chronicle* – ran frequent articles on political affairs reprinted from New England and British publications; there was simultaneous printing of pro-British and pro-American pieces, thus framing a debate on the pages of the newspaper. As imperial tensions intensified in the early 1770s, practices shifted to choosing articles that expressed moderate positions in contrast to the earlier practice of publishing articles that reflected the range of the trans-Atlantic debate. The second arena of moderation was the legislative assembly. In 1775 its members, organized by John Day (then representing Halifax, but from Newport), drafted a proposal for how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of colonial governments might be reformed and realigned to address the concerns that were convulsing the British world. As Desserud notes, Nova Scotians had not missed a decade of political ferment and development, as Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk argue in *A People Highly Favoured of God*, but had been fully engaged with it and had crafted a politics of moderation.³⁸

Desserud’s findings show that during the 1760s and 1770s Nova Scotians began to develop a political culture that was distinctly different from that of the other North America colonies, one in which moderation was privileged. His assessment also helps to make sense of multiple aspects of Nova Scotia’s 18th-century history that have previously eluded solid explanation. There has been much ink expended in trying to explain why Nova Scotians of New England extraction did not rebel, with the implication that there was a disjunction between pre- and post-revolutionary political cultures. Desserud’s work, by contrast, points toward a continuity in provincial-level political culture from the first assemblies to the reform movements of the early 19th century, and it supports Brian Cuthbertson’s electoral evidence that Planter political culture was “conservative, though tolerant . . . open to arguments for reform, but completely closed to any suggestion of radicalism.”³⁹ Desserud’s assessment also fits with Neil MacKinnon’s work on Loyalists in Nova Scotia.

Henderson and Robicheau, *Nova Scotia Planters in the Atlantic World*, 81-98; Campbell and Smith, *Necessaries and Sufficiencies*, 232-5.

36 George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Revolution Rejected 1775-1776* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall, 1968) is still useful for assessing the debate.

37 Donald Desserud, “Nova Scotia and the American Revolution: A Study of Neutrality and Moderation in the Eighteenth Century,” in Conrad, *Making Adjustments*, 89-112.

38 Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972).

39 Cuthbertson, “Planter Elections,” 263.

Those Loyalists who sat in the assembly found common cause with members from the outports, many of Planter descent, and against the Haligonian interests.⁴⁰ Before relocating to Nova Scotia, Loyalist political culture in garrison towns during the American Revolution was characterized by political moderation in contrast to their rebel country mates – attitudes that were surely transferred to Nova Scotia by the refugees who resettled there.⁴¹

A political culture that privileged moderation would also help explain why religious concerns were muted at the provincial level while often being intense at the local level. Nova Scotia was officially Anglican, but by the late 1750s it was becoming clear to officials in Halifax that they would have difficulty imposing Anglicanism on outport populations. In Lunenburg, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), the missionary arm of the Anglican Church, sought to convert the Foreign Protestants to Anglicanism and thereby assist “assimilation and securing the[ir] loyalty.” For two decades SPG clergy struggled with Lunenburg’s residents; they only succeeded among the Montbéliardais Lutherans, who were willing to attend Anglican services led by a French-speaking minister. The German-speaking Lutherans and Calvinists, in contrast, eventually found clergy of their own denominations. In the meantime, colonial officials had accepted that local offices in Lunenburg would be held by people who spoke German and generally demurred on being Anglican.⁴² Governor Lawrence’s 1759 promise of religious toleration to all Protestant dissenters, coupled with the inability of local communities to tax for support of religion, had the effect of undermining New England Congregationalism, which had relied on tax revenues. It collapsed within a generation of New Englanders settling in Nova Scotia, Yarmouth excepted,⁴³ unleashing evangelical energies that were highly malleable and experimental and which drew on diverse religious traditions, including Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist. New religious affiliations reconfigured the cultural geography of the region, sometimes reinforcing ties to New England, as did Henry Alline, while at other times forging Atlantic ties, as did itinerant Methodists who moved between the Maritime colonies, Britain, Bermuda, and West Indian colonies.⁴⁴

Another suggestive consequence of political moderation was that it muted humanitarian issues at the provincial level. In an unsettling essay, Barry Cahill examines a controversy among Burgher and Anti-Burgher Presbyterian ministers over the morality and ethics of slaveholding. In 1788 James MacGregor, a young

40 Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 118-36.

41 Robert McCluer Calhoun, *Political Moderation in America’s First Two Centuries* (New York: Cambridge, 2009), 66-81.

42 Paulsen, “New Light or No Light,” 243-56 (quotation on 245); Paulsen, “Lunenburg and the Formation of Local Government,” 145-53.

43 Gwen Guiou Trask and F. Stuart Trask, “The Reverend Jonathan Scott, Planter, Preacher, and Patriarch,” in Conrad, *Intimate Relations*, 258-73. A Baptist church emerged in Yarmouth amidst considerable social unrest. See Daniel Goodwin, “From Disunity to Integration: Evangelical Religion and Society in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, 1761-1830,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 190-200.

44 Allen B. Robertson, “Methodism Among Nova Scotia’s Yankee Planters,” in Conrad, *They Planted Well*, 178-89.

Scots minister in Pictou, only two years in Nova Scotia, and recently invited to join the Truro Presbytery, published an 11-page letter to Daniel Cock, an elderly minister in Truro, “Urging him to set free a Black Girl he held in Slavery” (as the title proclaimed). MacGregor was rebuked by a clerical colleague of Cock, David Smith of Londonderry, who justified Cock’s possession of the girl by saying she was only in perpetual indentureship.⁴⁵ Ironically, as Cahill notes, by relocating from Scotland to Nova Scotia, Daniel Cock gained more power at the local level than he had had in Scotland as a Presbytery moderator. Cahill also begins and ends his essay by emphasizing the need to examine slaveholders as much as slaves to understand the culture of Nova Scotia. In another article, Cahill details the demise of slavery in Nova Scotia, as slaveholders attempted and failed to protect their right to human property in statute law while judges on the Supreme Court slowly undermined what residual legality it had. Slavery disappeared with little fanfare, unlike most other places in the Anglo-Atlantic world, but was replaced with quite virulent racism, often played out in local contexts.⁴⁶ Cahill’s work hints at how tensions in Nova Scotian society were kept within local bounds or religious circuits while at the provincial level people sought to effect change of a humanitarian nature more discreetly and with minimal controversy. It suggests that provincial-level caution around humanitarian issues entrenched idiosyncratic localism and, at the same time, reinforced the power and conservatism of local elites.

What can we take from this retrospective on 25 years of Planter Studies? First, the field has moved further than any of us probably appreciated. In reviewing the essays I was struck by how many critical insights and nuggets of scholarship are contained in them, and I have certainly not mined them thoroughly. I am also struck by how few would have been published in other venues. A large number are shorter than journals accept. Many are excellent analyses of an incident, a document, or an artifact, but the authors did not have a larger scholarly literature in which to situate their work and thus would have had a hard time finding a publication venue. The decision to produce a book after each conference served to signal both scholarship-in-progress, which the numbered volumes convey, as well as a serious, solid, and collective scholarly enterprise (reinforced by the attractive book format). It was a bold editorial decision both by the Planter Studies Centre and *Acadiensis* Press, and it has paid off.

Second, in total the essays suggest that when people settled in Nova Scotia after 1749 that local identities and local cultures took precedence over provincial culture. The groups moving in were too culturally diverse to be assimilated into a single culture, and provincial officials abandoned any pretense of establishing provincial practices that could be applied in multiple localities. Localities were governed through the county court system, but there was substantial variation among counties and even within any one county. There seemed to be a largely unacknowledged acceptance that if a locality exhibited loyalty, it would be left alone: loyalty

45 Barry Cahill, “Colchester Men: The Pro-Slavery Presbyterian Witness of the Reverends Daniel Cock of Truro and David Smith of Londonderry,” in Conrad, *Planter Links*, 133-44.

46 Barry Cahill, “Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist Nova Scotia,” *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 43 (1994): 73-135. See also Harvey Amani Whitfield, “The Struggle Over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies,” *Acadiensis* XLI, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 17-44.

expressed as allegiance to the empire, as moderation in provincial affairs, and as liberty at the local level. This balancing of different jurisdictional sensibilities probably enhanced the power of local elites and muted social agendas, often at the expense of vulnerable groups such as blacks, Acadians, and Mi'kmaq.

Third, the Planter Studies volumes underscore how important it is to understand Nova Scotia, and the Atlantic region more generally, on its own terms. The scholarly ecumenism practiced by the Planter Studies Committee permitted contributors simply to relate Nova Scotian stories or analysis of artifacts on their own terms and without reference to macro-level notions of social development or societal stages. Scholars of Planter Nova Scotia use social history methodologies to count and quantify, but not so much to assess. Given its size, Nova Scotia was probably more culturally diverse than other British American colonies and so to have judged it for decades against the standard of the lower New England colonies, which it could not meet, was to judge it for what it was not. All the little microhistories have begun to create a patchwork in our understanding of what Planter Nova Scotia was like, so that we can begin to ponder whether a distinctly new British colonial culture had emerged.

Finally, there are still huge gaps in Planter Studies that works such as *Necessaries and Sufficiencies: Planter Society in Londonderry, Onslow, and Truro Townships, 1761-1780* are beginning to fill – one township at a time. Others have pointed out the need for more research on women and children. Moreover, loyalism as an imperial sensibility, rather than just a reaction to colonial turmoil, deserves greater attention. The implications of political moderation on provincial and imperial developments also merit analysis. But the new directions that 25 years of Planter Studies have charted suggest that the research will continue to be innovative and stimulating.

ELIZABETH MANCKE