

## Henry Alline – A Planter Boy’s Immigration Story

The year was 1759. Henry Alline, 11 years old, was living in Newport, Rhode Island, the fourth child of seven in the family of William and Rebecca Alline. His parents had for several months been earnestly considering a big move for their family. Now it seemed a decision had been made. Henry, his parents, and his brother and sisters would be moving to Nova Scotia.

Although he was making an adequate living as a grain mill owner, William owned little land, and it was land that a man handed on to his children. Rhode Island and adjacent colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts had each become crowded, making



Tombstone of Henry Alline

land too expensive for William Alline to purchase. His oldest son, also William, now 18, would soon need his own property on which to support himself and start his own family.

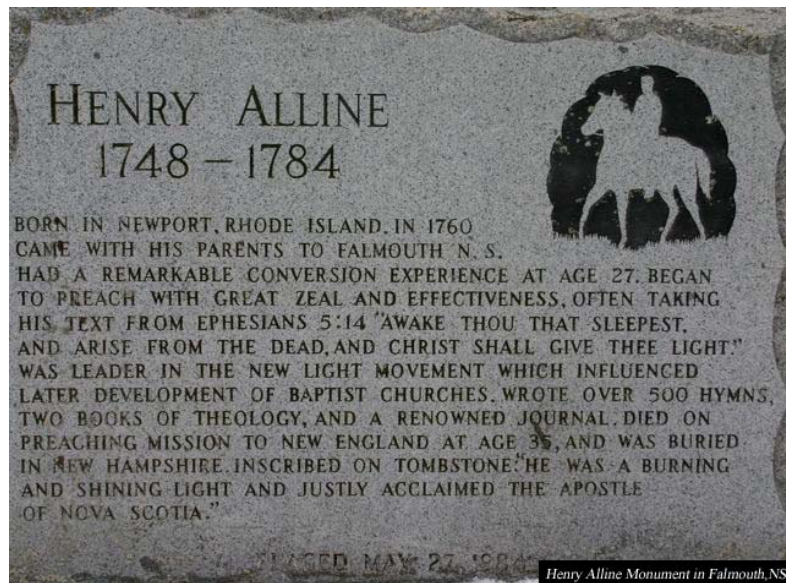
Two proclamations had been advertised recently in the area newspapers by the governor of Nova Scotia. The first in the previous October stated that the lands vacated by the French were available for settlement. The French had been defeated at Louisburg just the previous summer, and 7000 French speaking Catholic Acadians had been expelled from rich agricultural lands in Nova Scotia four years before in 1755.

The second proclamation in January 1759 gave details promising 100 acres per family plus 50 acres for every child in it. It also promised freedom of religion, a very important matter for the Alline family. They were strong Congregationalists, one of several Dissenter groups not adhering to the beliefs of the favored Church of England. The proclamation also promised township government with officials elected by the population, rather than government by appointed officials, another matter valued by most in the New England colonies.

It all seemed too good to be true, but there were other factors worrying to the Allines, and especially to young Henry. War with the French in Canada was still ongoing. Attacks on English settlers by the French and their Indian allies were a recent memory in New England, and still a concern in Nova Scotia. Would they be safe? Also schools were available to Henry and his brothers and sisters in Newport, but would there be any in Nova Scotia? Henry had enjoyed going to School in Newport, a bustling port of almost

6000 people. He was a serious boy who also pondered the words of the preachers in the services his family faithfully attended. Would there be a church where they were going?

Now forward to the fall of 1760. Henry and his family were now in Falmouth Township of Nova Scotia, on their 500 acre grant just north of the Pisiquid (now Avon) River. They had come later than the first wave of fellow Planters as Henry's mother had delivered an eighth child, his youngest sister Abigail, in June, so they could not travel with the others who had left at that time for Nova Scotia.



All the Falmouth settlers' trips had been quite uneventful, bringing the whole of their household belongings on small sailing ships that had taken about a week to travel up the Bay of Fundy, through the Minas Channel, and down the river to the muddy landing place on the north bank about a half mile below where the St. Croix River branched off to the south.

The family was living in a couple of large tents as were many of their neighbours, there not being time, or available lumber, to build a house before winter would begin with its damp cold and slushy snow. Besides the general discomfort of living in a tent rather than a house, Henry and his sisters were terrified of being struck dead when lightning lit up the tent. Henry also had fearful dreams about being killed by a falling tree, triggered no doubt by helping to clear some of the woods on their land grant, such work being new to a former town boy. Death and serious injury while felling trees was an unfortunate too common an occurrence for pioneer woodsmen as it continues up to the present day.

Henry was particularly uneasy at night, afraid that each noise he heard outside the tent might be Indians about to attack them. A blockhouse, Fort Lawrence, had been erected nearby, with soldiers stationed in it, but would they hear them if attacked, or be able to come soon enough if they did? Henry had worried about such attacks when in Rhode Island, but since arriving in Falmouth those worries had increased. Their neighbours on the next lot were the Payzants who had lived through a terrific ordeal the past few years. Young John Payzant, the same age as Henry, had told him about it.

The Payzant family emigrated from the island of Jersey several years previous and settled on an island in Mahone Bay in 1754, just off the new town of Lunenburg settled by fellow Protestant immigrants in 1753. His father Louis had been in the family ship building business and hoped to do the same in Nova Scotia.

One summer's night in 1756 a group of natives landed their canoes on the island, attacked the Payzant home, killed John's father as well as a family servant, and took John, his mother Marie, and the rest of the family off in their canoes. They traveled along streams and in the woods across Nova Scotia, passing along the Pisiquid River just below where the family now lived. For weeks they continued to travel, all the way to near Quebec from where the Indians had left months earlier. They lived among the Indians for over three years until the English captured Quebec and Marie Payzant and her children were discovered. As compensation for her family's loss and suffering Marie Payzant was given a lot in Falmouth among the settlers from New England. Payzant continues a family name in the area 250 years later. The local hospital was once titled Payzant Memorial.

Henry had one further concern. Nearly all the families were being given food by the provincial authorities as crops had not been successful in the shorter growing season even for many who had arrived in the spring early enough to do a planting. Would life get better the next year? Would they even have seed for planting?

With this nightly fear of being massacred, fear of thunder storms and falling trees, no house in which to live, no school to attend, no village church in which to go to Sunday services, and the meager diet of corn, mackerel, and flour, 12-year-old Henry Alline wondered if this move by his family to be pioneers in Nova Scotia had been a big mistake.

*Afterward: The Allines did survive the hardships of that first winter and the couple years following. Henry's older brother William moved out to his own lot several miles away across the river in Newport Township. His father was able to build and operate a small grain mill. The settlers built houses, cleared some upland of woods, hunted, fished, and were able to harvest enough hay, grain, and vegetables to sustain their animals and themselves. In fact they started an agricultural exhibition in Windsor in 1765 that has continued ever since. Although a few settlers returned to New England most continued in spite of daily hardships and broken promises about self-government and complete freedom of religion in the townships.*

*As he moved through his teens Henry Alline became a leader in the social life among the local young people. However family responsibilities on their farm became more prominent for him as his parents aged and became dependent on his support.*

*As he entered his twenties Henry became increasingly concerned with religious questions that had been troubling him ever since his pre-teen days in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1776 he became a traveling preacher and leader of what was called the New Light movement in Nova Scotia. People came by the boatload to hear him speak in churches, barns, and open fields on any day of the week. His neighbour John Payzant married one of Henry's younger sisters, Mary, and joined Henry as an important minister in the early churches of rural Nova Scotia. Their work is viewed as an important influence in the history of the Baptist Church in the region. It became known as part of "The Great*

*Awakening in Nova Scotia”, following that of the same name in New England in the early 1740s.*

*Sadly Henry did not have a long life. He worked extremely hard as a preacher, traveling on horseback, and by boat, but contracted tuberculosis at an early age. The disease finally overtook him while he was traveling and preaching in New England just after the close of the American Revolution. He died at the home of a friend, David McClure, in North Hampton, New Hampshire on February 2, 1784 only a week after preaching his last sermon, and was buried there just 35 years of age.*

*Henry had kept a journal to which his friend McClure added a chapter describing the last days of Henry’s life. That journal, ”The Life and Journal of the Rev. Mr. Henry Aline”, was published years later in Boston in 1806. It is one of a very few first person accounts of the New England Planter immigration to Nova Scotia.*

*Henry Aline wrote almost 500 hymns which were very popular in Nova Scotia and New England in the two decades following his death. A number were published in “Hymns and Spiritual Songs” in 1797. During his life Henry had also written a few other prose works, describing his personal philosophy and a few sermons, which were among the early publications by colonial Nova Scotia authors. Unfortunately, as with many aspects of the Planter contribution to Nova Scotia’s history, these became obscured by the Loyalist immigration that immediately followed the peace ending the American Revolution, so have largely been ignored by those writing on the early history of Nova Scotia and Canada.*

## Bibliography

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