

## **The 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot - Royal Highland Emigrants Loyalist Re - enactment**

*By Brian McConnell \**

There is a old Chinese proverb “A picture is worth Ten thousand words.” If the picture below could speak it might tell the story of how my wife Ann and I, who appear in it, learned about the 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, also known as the Royal Highland Emigrants, by learning about their uniform and clothing.



In September, 2014, while attending a meeting of the Nova Scotia Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada in Shelburne, Nova Scotia I met two historical re-enactors, one from the 3<sup>rd</sup> New Jersey Volunteers, and another from the Royal Artillery. I was told there was another group of re-enactors in Nova Scotia, the 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, also known as the Royal Highland Emigrants. (1) These units participated in the American Revolution as part of the British military and many of their members were Loyalists.

The Royal Highland Emigrants were started in 1775 and formed into two battalions, the 2<sup>nd</sup> became headquartered in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In the summer of 1778 the HQ moved to Fort Edward at Windsor. The officers were all born in Scotland and it recruited in parts of America, including New York, Massachusetts, and the Carolinas as well as Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. In 1779 they became the 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment as part of the British regular military establishment.

One of the Officers, Captain Allan MacDonell, emigrated to America in 1773 and settled near Johnston, Tryon County, New York. His nephew Lieutenant John MacDonell and him reported for military service to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion at Halifax in August 1778. After the war he settled in Ontario as a Loyalist. Others who remained in Canada after the Revolution were Captain Ranald McKinnon and Captain John MacDonald. McKinnon served with the 77<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot (Montgomery Highlanders) during the French Indian War in America and afterwards remained in Nova Scotia where he was granted land at Argyle. He returned to his home at Argyle after the American Revolution while MacDonald went back to Prince Edward Island where he had settled in 1772. (2)

Although the Officers of the Royal Highland Emigrants were from Scotland this was not entirely the case for the enlisted soldiers. A roll of twenty recruits at Halifax in August 1775, as appears below, indicated nine were born in Ireland, six in England, three in Scotland one in France, and one in Nova Scotia. (3) The youngest was 16 years old and oldest 43. Previous occupations included labourer, carpenter, weaver, taylor, barber, rope maker, blacksmith, and brushmaker.

**Recruits for Royal Highland Regiment of Emigrants, Halifax 7<sup>th</sup> August 1775 \***

<u>Names</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Height</u> Feet inches	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Sgt. Thomas Jackson	30	5 6	Co. Fermanagh, Ire.	Labourer
William Buchanan	21	5 7	Co. Limerick, Ire.	Weaver
Duncan McKenzie	20	5 4	Inverness, Scot.	Brushmaker
Malcolm McDonald	16	5 2	Perth, Scot.	Taylor
James Ridgway	35	5 6	Cheshire, Eng.	Labourer
John Pidon	36	5 7	Lorraine, France	Labourer
Paul Mitchel	43	5 1	Co. Limerick, Ire.	Labourer
Francis Martin	16	5 3	Co. Antrim, Ire.	Labourer
Richard Walker	35	5 8	Yorkshire, Eng.	Labourer
Thomas Blackburn	30	5 10	Yorkshire, Eng.	Woolen Manufacturer
Thomas Hemsell	30	6 -	Nottinghamshire, Eng.	Labourer
John Robinson	34	5 5	Yorkshire, Eng.	Labourer
Henry Rigby	24	5 8	Halifax, NS	Carpenter
Daniel Leary	33	5 8	Co. Cork, Ire.	Barber
Patrick O'Neal	40	5 10	Co. Tipperary, Ire.	Ship Carpenter
Timothy Cromeen	40	5 5	Co. Cork, Ire.	Blacksmith
John Shay	27	5 7	Co. Cork, Ire.	Rope Maker
James Wright	40	5 9	Co. Cork, Ire.	Carpenter
Peter McQuin	32	5 7	Inverness, Scot.	Labourer

\* Source: William L. Clements Library, Thomas Gage Papers, Vol. 133 (4)

Being the 5<sup>th</sup> great grandson of a Loyalist soldier and with a keen interest in history, I wished to learn more about how to become a re-enactor. I inquired through a link on the internet and was contacted by Kerry Delorey, President of the 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Regimental Association. Through information he provided I began the process of getting my kit as a soldier. All members are responsible for obtaining their uniform, musket, and other accessories shown in the equipment list below. The total cost can exceed \$2,000. However, when you consider you are taking on a serious hobby it is not excessive. With other hobbies like sailing or biking you have to purchase a boat or bike too and also have cost of fuel. Re-enactors have the cost of travel and food and black powder while attending at re-enactments but these can be reduced by sharing among the members of the group.

**EQUIPMENT LIST (Enlisted soldier, 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion):**

Bonnet, Horsehair neckstock with brass clasp, 2 linen shirts , 1 woolen waistcoat , 84th regimental coat, 18-hole cartridge box, belt and bayonet frog, Raccoon sporran and belt, 5 yards ancient Black Watch tartan, kilt belt, two pair red and white highland hose, red woven wool Garters, linen trousers, leather straight last rough side out black shoes, brass shoe buckles, 2nd model short Land pattern musket, Bayonet with scabbard, Highland backsword and scabbard, sword belt, heart-shaped brass belt tip, linen haversack, Tin Canteen, Tin cup, wooden bowl, spoon, fork, Enlisted man's tent.

An article in the Truro Daily News published on August 22, 2011, described how Francis Nickerson, was a “volunteer re-enactor with the 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Regimental Association. (3) It noted how the Association researches, preserves, and presents authentic re-creation of a Highland military regiment and camp as it existed in Nova Scotia during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).” Nickerson joined the Association in 1986 and remains active as a Captain in the Royal Artillery. When he joined he was a soldier in the 84<sup>th</sup>. The Royal Artillery are also part of the Association. Prior to becoming a re-enactor he had been a commercial fisherman and town crier for Town of Truro.

The 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Regimental Association is a member of the Brigade of the American Revolution and the National Firearms Association. It is also registered with the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies as a non - profit Society and is a shooting club with a provincial government approved range. As set out in its By-laws the purpose of the Association is to:(a) Develop and promote an accurate historical re-enactment of local military life and the community environs of the American Revolutionary period (1775-1783); (b) Train the participants in the safe handling of muzzle-loading firearms; (c ) Research, portray and preserve the history of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot (1775-1783), the original Royal Highland Emigrants.(5)

During the summer members of the Association have annually appeared as re-enactors at Windsor, Liverpool, Shelburne, Annapolis Royal, Sherbrooke, and Halifax. At the re-enactments tents are pitched, and children and adults are dressed in 18<sup>th</sup> century clothing. Food is also prepared. The wives and children of soldiers sometimes traveled with them and that is demonstrated in re-creating all aspects of military and civilian life. Members of the Association have come from all backgrounds including police officers, lawyers, a doctor, and a retired Church of England minister.



A reproduction of the badge of The 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment is shown in the photo above. It was three inches round with the motto "QUICQUID AUT FACERE AUT PATI" meaning "Whatever either is to be done or endured" and "NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSET" meaning "No one harms me with impunity" inset in circles. The tartan in the photo is the Black Watch. (6)

Members of the 84<sup>th</sup> were issued a kilt with the tartan of the government set, also called Black Watch. However, it had little in common with current kilts, as in 1700s as shown in picture below it was pleated and belted around waist with surplus being fastened to the left shoulder by way of a button, broach, or wrapped around the epaulets. This form of kilting is properly called a plaid. It could be also used by the soldier if needed as a raincoat, blanket, or cape.



The picture above, based on a water colour done of a soldier in the Royal Highland Emigrants, shows the soldiers wore their hair long tied in the back. It was done by Frederick Von Germann during the Saratoga Campaign in 1778 and is only known image of an enlisted man in 84<sup>th</sup>. Men also powdered their hair. Facial hair was shaved every three days by regulation. In remote postings this may not have been strictly enforced, however, not a single contemporary painting or drawing of a soldier with a beard during the American Revolution exists.

The 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, consisted of 10 Companies, each with less than 100 men. During the American Revolution they served in Nova Scotia, which then included present day New Brunswick and Newfoundland, as well as parts of the United States including New York, Virginia, and South Carolina. (7) In July 1781 five Companies were sent with the British southern army campaign to the Carolinas and saw action at the Battle of Eutaw Springs. While serving in the Maritimes they also served on ships in actions against privateers.

*Distribution of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 84<sup>th</sup>, June 1780 \**

With the Grand Army

*1 Light Infantry Company*

In Nova Scotia

*At Halifax*

*1 Grenadier Company*

*At Fort Hughes (Cornwallis Township)*

*1 Battalion Company*

*At Annapolis Royal (Bay of Fundy)*

*2 Battalion Companies*

*At Fort Howe (Embouchure of the River St. John)*

*2 Battalion Companies*

*At Fort Edward (Windsor Township)*

*2 Battalion Companies*

In Newfoundland

*Placentia Garrison*

*1 Battalion Company*

*Total 10*

Detachments

*1<sup>st</sup> Detachment of Recruits acquired at New York are at present occupying the post at Jamaica, Long Island.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Detachment Recruits acquired to the Southward still on board a Transport in the harbor at New York.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Detachment those acquired at Newfoundland that on their voyage passage from thence ( in December, last) they were drove off the Coast of America and from no Accounts having been received of them till lately, they were long Conjectured to have undergone the unfortunat fate of capture or perishing at sea. The Transport they were embarked in is ( in February last) reported to have reached Ireland and of course supposed to now either arrived in Nova Scotia of on her passage thither.*

*John Small, Major Commanding*

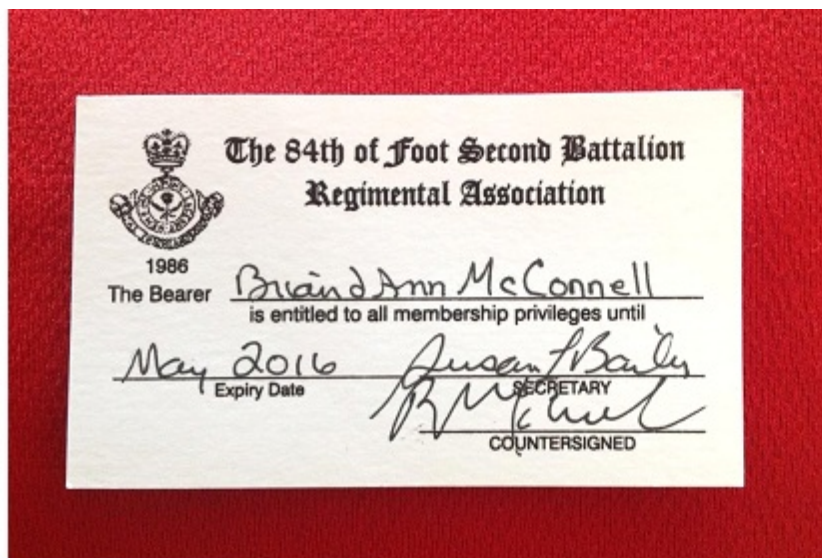
*2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment*

\* Source: See William L. Clements Library, Sir Henry Clinton Papers, Vol 106, folio 16. Also see Public Archives of Nova Scotia, MG12, Vol. 6 (Reel # 258) (8)

On May 3, 2015 my wife and I attended our first General Meeting of the 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Regimental Association. It was at Head of St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia. At the meeting the business of the Association was reviewed for the past year as well as plans for the upcoming summer. We look forward to attending as many of the events as we can.

**Schedule of Events for 2015**  
84<sup>th</sup> of Foot 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Regimental Association

May 22 - 23, Windsor, NS  
June 26 - 28, Liverpool, NS (Kings Orange Rangers Event)  
July 16 - 19, Shelburne, NS ( 3<sup>rd</sup> New Jersey Volunteers Event)  
July 24 - 26 Campbelltown, NB / Louisbourg, NS  
July 31 - August 2, - Fort Anne, Annapolis Royal, NS  
August 14 - 16, Sherbrooke, NS  
Aug. 28 -30, School of the Loyalist, River Edge, New Jersey  
September 18 - 20 - Citadel, Halifax, NS (Parks Canada Event)



## NOTES

\* This article was prepared by Brian McConnell on May 9, 2015 based on his experience, research, and information kindly provided by Kerry Delorey, President, 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Regimental Association. To contact Brian McConnell please email: [brianm564@gmail.com](mailto:brianm564@gmail.com)

(1) A fourth Re-enactment group in Nova Scotia are the Kings Orange Rangers based in Liverpool. The 3<sup>rd</sup> New Jersey Volunteers are in Shelburne. The Royal Artillery and the 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion which appear in different locations have members from around the province.

(2) See: Duncanson, John Victor, *“Rawdon and Douglas: Two Loyalist Townships in Nova Scotia”*, Mika Publishing Company, Belleville, ON, 1989. Author lists the officers of the 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and also provides information on where members settled after the American Revolution. Also see: Logan, G. Murray, *“Scottish Highlanders and the American Revolution”*, McCurdy Printing Co., Ltd., Halifax, 1976.

(3) Thomas Gage Papers, Vol. 133, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan., USA.

(4) See newspaper article *“Former Town Crier Helps Re-enact 18<sup>th</sup> Century Life”* published in Truro Daily News, August 22, 2011.

(5) See By-laws of the 84<sup>th</sup> of Foot, Second Battalion, Regimental Association as repealed and completely amended 2008.

(6) For more on uniform and equipment see *“84<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, Royal Highland Emigrants, Young Royal Highlanders, 1775-1784”*, researched by Kim R. Stacy, 1987.

(7) Details on exploits of 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion appear in *“Letter-Book of Captain Alexander McDonald”*, a copy of which is in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. It is very readable and includes an index. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia also contains correspondence of other officers in the 84<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, assorted papers, enlistment and discharge papers. The Malcolm Fraser Papers, MG 23 K1, in the National Archives of Canada also contain information on military discipline and returns from the 84<sup>th</sup> from 1776 - 1784.

(8) Thomas Gage Papers, Vol. 106, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan., USA, and Nova Scotia Public Archives, MG Vol 6.