

84th REGIMENT OF FOOT
2nd BATTALION
ROYAL HIGHLAND EMIGRANTS
1775-1783

The original Royal Highland Emigrants were raised during the summer and fall of 1775 as a Provincial Corp for service against the Rebels in America. It consisted of two battalions. The first was commanded by Lt.-Col. Allan MacLean. It saw action at the defence of Quebec and was instrumental in holding Canada for Britain. The First Battalion was then scattered throughout the northwest to various frontier outposts for garrison duty, provided a small detachment to Burgoyne's army and fought at Saratoga.

The 84th was the first Highland Regiment to be raised outside of Scotland.

The 2nd Battalion was raised in the Maritimes, New York and the Carolinas. It was placed under the command of the Gaelic speaking Major John Small of Perthshire who had formerly served in the 42nd Regiment (Black Watch). The 2nd Battalion of the 84th was made up of veterans of the 42nd, 77th and 78th Highlanders who had settled in America after the Seven Years (French and Indian) War. It was also composed of American Loyalists and recent Immigrants and was the only Regiment of the British Army in America in which soldiers experienced to enemy fire predominated.

In 1778, in compliance with the conditions of the original warrant, they were placed on the British Establishment as the 84th Regiment of Foot, Royal Highland Emigrants.

A recruit had to be at least 17 years of age, but a Drummer Boy could be as young as ten, (they were harder targets to hit!). He had to be "...5 feet 3 inches in height, appear healthy, have all his limbs, no rupture, not be troubled by fits and have at least two teeth that met."

The 2nd Battalion was based in Nova Scotia and took part in the relief of Fort Cumberland and the chase of the Jonathan Eddy Rebels back to Maine. They provided garrison troops for Halifax, Sydney, Shelburne, Fort Sackville, Fort Howe on the Saint John River, Fort Anne and Fort Edward.

Ft. Edward's garrison was commanded by Capt. Allan MacDonald, husband of the famous Flora MacDonald who helped Bonnie Prince Charlie "over the sea to Skye" while on the run from the government forces following his defeat at Culloden in 1746. She eventually joined her husband and sons at Fort Edward upon release from house arrest in the Carolinas, where she was being held hostage by the Americans.

There was a detachment serving in Newfoundland, Antigua, and five companies were detached for service under Sir Henry Clinton in the Southern Campaign. There they acquitted themselves well at the Battle of Eutaw Springs and other engagements.

Following the end of the hostilities in 1783, the 2nd Battalion was disbanded at Windsor, Nova Scotia, on October 10th, 1783. The Newfoundland/Antigua Detachment was disbanded the following April. Major Small was given the Township of Douglas in Hants County for his men, but many chose to settle elsewhere, chiefly in Pictou, Halifax, and Colchester Counties, as well as along the South Shore.

The 84th were to be "...cloathed and accoutered in like manner as the 42nd Regiment..." (Black Watch), but with these differences. They wore a blue torrie in their bonnets, they had a distinctive regimental lace, and retained their broadswords. Officers and serjeants may also have had sporrans made of raccoon skin. Many supply problems were encountered and a number of compromises often had to be made. On one occasion they were even forced to accept the castoff clothing of the 21st Regiment.

It is to the credit of the Regiment that while members were taken prisoner at Saratoga, Yorktown, and other actions, no man of either Battalion ever betrayed his personal honour and deserted to the enemy during battle.

The modern 84th is a volunteer, non-profit association devoted to the recreation of the everyday life of the Pipes, Drums, Infantry and Campfollowers of a Highland Regiment during the period of the American Revolution. They have participated in events in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, New England, Ontario and Quebec. While the men portray the lives of soldiers, the women and children specialize in recreating the camp life, crafts and day-to-day routine of the Revolution and Loyalist time period.

Military history is an unusual and intriguing hobby. It provides an understanding and appreciation for life as it was in another era. Re-enacting is interesting, varied, and provides opportunities for travel and making friends from all walks of life. It gives satisfaction in grasping skills from our past, developing them and passing them on to others. This is the philosophy behind living history.

The 84th is available for parades, lectures, encampments, demonstrations and battle re-enactments. We can portray some other units and time periods.

We are always interested in obtaining new members. Although we provide sources for patterns, arms, clothing and equipment; each member is responsible for the purchase and maintenance of their own uniform, clothing arms and equipment. As with the original 84th, the complete uniform can be acquired in stages, thereby spreading the cost out over a period of time. Most of the clothing and equipment can be made by hand, which results in personal satisfaction as well as a considerable financial saving. We strongly recommend this route.

We welcome attachments from members of other units who are now residing in Nova Scotia yet who may wish to retain their original Regimental affiliation. We also welcome artisans, sutlers, artificers and crafts people.

If you have any enquiries about the 84th Regiment, or if you are interested in becoming involved with it, apply to the recruiting tent or contact mnelso@ns.symptico.ca