

# USA

## Londonderry, New Hampshire



Latitude: 71o 22' 26"  
Longitude: 42o 51' 54"  
Distance from Derry,  
Londonderry, NI, 2912 miles

In 1718 the Rev William Boyd of Macosquin was sent to America bearing a commission signed by nine ministers and 208 others to find out what encouragement would be given to them if they went to settle in New England.

In the spring of 1718 a group of 16 families left Aghadowey in county Londonderry, Northern Ireland to settle in British North America. They were led by their pastor, Rev. James McGregor, who the Encyclopaedia of Irish History called "the Moses of the Scotch Irish in America." They left the old world to find economic, political cultural and religious freedom in the new world. Presbyterians had been deprived of public office by the 1704 Test Act, a galling insult to the defenders of the city of Londonderry after the recent siege.

They were frozen out of political life. Another grievance was the imposition of tithes requiring them to pay money or goods in kind to the established church. Their tradition of hard work and frugality on the neat farms that were their pride gave them an independence of mind that would eventually find an outlet. The members of McGregors congregation were mainly weaver / farmers. From 1714 through 1718 there was a series of very bad harvests. Those years also saw a decline in the price of linen. After the siege of 1689, the British government had given the yeoman farmers very cheap rents in the Ulster Plantation. After 1710, there was a fear that the leaseholders would see their rents doubled, or worse. It was time to leave. But to where?

Generally, the records reveal that emigration was confined mostly to the northern districts of the county and within these were especially marked from two areas: the Bann valley north of Garvagh and Kilrea, comprising the parishes of Agahadowey, Macosquin, Kilrea, Dunboe and Ballywillin, which were the main feeders of the first wave; and to a lesser degree the Foyle valley, the Donegal and Tyrone sides north of Lifford and Strabane supplying as may emigrants as the part laying in county Derry. Research suggests that two separate streams of emigration were maintained in New England, the Bann company making for the frontiers of Maine and New Hampshire, the Foyle folk swelling the remote settlements of the Massachusetts colony. Between 1718 and 1775, saw the departure of almost a quarter of a million migrants from out northern shores.

Mc Gregor's final sermon before departure concluded with these biblical words:

*"Brethren, let us depart, for God has appointed a new country for us to dwell in. It is called New England. Let us be free of these Pharaohs, these rackers of rent and screwers of tithes, and let us go into the land of Canaan."*

