

Brides' Ship

Pictou was settled by a number of Scottish immigrants and each has a fascinating story to tell. One story is that of Murray MacDonald, a young man who left his girlfriend behind in Scotland and settled in Pictou in the early 1800s.

Murray wanted his girlfriend to join him in Pictou, but could not afford to pay for her passage. Fortunately, the Government of England wanted to increase the population overseas so they agreed to pay the passage for girls who were willing to go to the new colonies. Murray thought that this was the perfect opportunity and wrote his girlfriend a letter and told her to apply for the passage through the government. The only thing he asked of her was to bring a bag of oats that she could use as a pillow on the journey, and that they could use for planting when she arrived in Nova Scotia.

Murray's girlfriend and a number of other women boarded a ship nicknamed The Brides' Ship, which would take them from Scotland to Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was a long journey and many passengers got sick – including Murray's girlfriend. She died about halfway across the waters and was buried at sea.

When The Brides' Ship arrived in Halifax, Murray was there to meet it and eager to see his girlfriend once again. But she would never come. Instead, he found a friend of hers and she showed him his letter and the bag of oats that he requested. The friend told Murray of the terrible tragedy.

Murray and this friend got along quite well while mourning their loss, and decided to get married right on the docks of Halifax. When they returned home to Halifax, they planted the bag of oats in the back garden as a memorial to his former girlfriend and her former friend, and the plant always seemed to flourish.