# THE SCOTCH-IRISH SOCIETY SPRING 2008 OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA





# Donegal to Donegal

Mural Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Leaving the greater uncertainty of Ulster, carrying with them values of family, faith, choice, individuality, community, they went in search of land. From Donegal to Donegal, they came and helped forge a new nation.

Mural text and images © 2002

The mural pictured above was created by Wayne Fettro. For more information about the mural and the artist contact the Winters Heritage House. Elizabethtown, PA 717-367-4672 www.elizabethtownhistory.org

#### **EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

Scotch-Irish Society of the United States of America

Lee Ramsey – President lkramsey@comcast.net

Joyce Alexander – Secretary joycemalexander@aol.com

Thomas Campbell – Treasurer

### Letter from the new President

Lee Ramsey

In December 2007, Harold R. Alexander, the Scotch-Irish Society's past President, stepped down from his service to the Society after six years as President. Although his health was declining, he remained committed to continuing his tireless efforts as a Director of the Center for Scotch-Irish Studies and the Publisher of the Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies. In his last message to the Scotch-Irish Society (Fall 2007 Newsletter), Harold paid tribute to his Executive Officers, who are part of the Society's Council, acknowledging their commitment "to the well being of the Society." The well being of the Society was always first and foremost in the mind of Harold, and this current issue of the Scotch-Irish Society Newsletter is dedicated to the life and works of this Scotch-Irish man, who not only left an indelible mark of high achievement in all his endeavors, but also brought the Scotch-Irish Society of the USA back to its national prominence as a truly American organization.

Just over a month after his retirement as President of the Society, Harold R. Alexander passed away near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the city that championed America's independence and the first capital of his adopted country. As your newly elected Scotch-Irish Society President for the year 2008, it was an honor for me to receive the Scotch-Irish mantle from this honorable and dedicated man. Within this issue of the Society's Newsletter, a tribute to Harold R. Alexander has been contributed by his friend and colleague, Richard K. MacMaster.

As part of our challenge to preserve and promote our Scotch-Irish heritage and to promote the growth of the Society, an important objective is the expansion of the Society Newsletter, with articles of historical interest and informative news items, as well as future articles on Scotch-Irish research, book reviews and source material. The Society also looks forward to the launching of Richard K. MacMaster's long awaited new book, Flaxseed and Emigrants: Scotch-Irish Merchants in Eighteenth Century America, which will be released June 28th at the Ulster American Heritage Symposium to be held at the Centre for Migration Studies at Omagh, Northern Ireland. We are also pleased to announce that Peter Gilmore will be attending the symposium to present his paper, When Pittsburgh's 'Scotch-Irish' were 'Irish'. His research presentation is based on the Ulster Presbyterian migration to western Pennsylvania at the turn of the nineteenth century, and their organizing Pittsburgh's first Irish fraternal organizations. Peter's research findings suggest a somewhat counter-intuitive conclusion that the Irish self-designation was a step toward being Scotch-Irish. Peter Gilmore is a Member of the Society and currently an instructor at the Carnegie Mellon University in Doha, Qatar, teaching courses in early American history. He is working toward his PhD in social history. (continued on the next page)

### We welcome our New Members

DECEMBER 2007

John P. Clair Manassas Park, VA

Matthew D. Dupee, Esq., Gwynedd Valley, PA

David Hall

North Richland Hills, TX

Brian Hathaway

Yardley, PA

Ronda Rich Clermont, GA

David R. Siler Corona, CA

MARCH 2008

Nancy A. Haley Woodbury, MN

Sam Thomas Athens, GA

Janet Tunick

Santa Monica, CA

#### President's message continued

I am also glad to report that a number of other Members of the Society are presenting papers at the UAHS this year. I noted that Dr. Katharine Brown, Dr. Michael Montgomery, Dr. Nina Ray, Dr. Micheal Roe, Dr. Richard MacMaster and Dr. Joyce Alexander are also on the program. A number of the presenters will be familiar names to readers of the Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies and to attendees at the Scotch-Irish Identity Symposia in Philadelphia. There are usually some additional Society Members present at UAHS and we try to get together at some point for a group photograph. For those interested in attending the Ulster American Heritage Symposium or learning more about the Ulster American Folk Park and the Centre for Migration Studies, please refer to the article to the right.

Lee K. Ramsey President

### The Seventeenth Ulster-American Heritage Symposium

June 25 - 28, 2008

The Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh will host the Seventeenth Ulster-American Heritage Symposium in partnership with the University of Ulster, Queen's University Belfast, the National Museums, the Library Service of Northern Ireland and the Ulster Historical Foundation.

Meeting every two years since 1976, the Ulster-American Heritage Symposium alternates between co-sponsoring universities and museums in Ulster and North America. Its purpose is to encourage scholarly study and public awareness of the historical connections between Ulster and North America including Scotch-Irish or Ulster-Scots heritage. The Symposium's general theme is the process of transatlantic emigration and settlement and the links between England, Scotland, Ireland and North America. Its approach is multi-disciplinary, encouraging dialogue between those working in different fields, including history, language, literature, geography, archaeology, anthropology, religion, folklife and music.

The theme this year will be *Changing Perspectives*, 1607–2007. The goal is to present and explore recent research that challenges habitual ways of thinking about the historical relationship between Ulster and North America over the last four hundred years.

### Keynote Speaker:

Professor David Cannadine

Director of the Institute of Historical Research in the University of London Author of *Mellon: An American Life* (2006)

#### Excursion:

To Ramelton and Rathmullan in County Donegal on Wednesday, June 25th

### For more information:

www.qub.ac.uk/cms/events/UAHS\_2008.htm or visit www.folkpark.com

The Ulster American Folk Park is an open-air, living history museum in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. The museum tells the story of emigration from Ulster to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Established in 1976, as Northern Ireland's contribution to the American bicentenary, the Folk Park has been constructed around the original homestead of Thomas Mellon, who emigrated with his parents to western Pennsylvania when he was five. The Park has continued to grow over the past thirty years with the addition of a number of original exhibit buildings and now represents the broad spectrum of eighteenth and nineteenth century emigration from Ulster to America.

The Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) was established in 1998. It developed from the previous Centre for Emigration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park. An international institution for the study of human migration focusing on the peoples of Ireland worldwide, it focuses on the Library, the Irish Emigration Database Project and the Master's degree in Irish Migration Studies (QUB) which has been offered since 1996.

### A tribute by Richard K. MacMaster

# Harold R. Alexander 1930 – 2008



The Scotch-Irish Society has suffered a great loss in the death of Harold R. Alexander, who served as president of the Society for six years from December 2001 to December 2007. Before that, he was for many years an active member of the Council. Harry gave himself wholeheartedly to whatever he thought was

worth doing and the Scotch-Irish Society benefited from his tireless efforts.

Harold Alexander was born in Belfast in 1930 and earned advanced degrees in mathematics and engineering at Queen's University Belfast and Columbia University and liberal arts degrees at Trinity College Dublin. His work for the Society belonged to his retirement years, after a distinguished career in aeronautical engineering with Shorts in Northern Ireland and with Curtiss-Wright and Boeing in the United States. His expertise was in helicopter design and development of the Osprey, an airplane that behaved like a helicopter. During those years he published technical papers in professional journals. His reputation in his field was such that Queen's University Belfast, his alma mater, discussed a professorship with him after he retired in 1995.

Always a strategic thinker, Harry encouraged the Scotch-Irish Society to be proactive. As a Council Member, he saw the need for the century-old Society to evaluate its progress and to set long-range goals for the future. He assembled a committee and held them to the task. The members of the Long Range Planning Committee together made proposals for future action, which might well have remained proposals without his leadership and his personal financial support. The Center for Scotch-Irish Studies was part of this vision. In June 2000 the first number of the Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies was released with Harold R. Alexander as publisher. The following summer the first of the Scotch-Irish Identity Symposia was held in Philadelphia with Harold and Joyce as the committee of arrangements. Another goal was a presence for the Scotch-Irish Society on the internet. The result was www.Scotch-IrishCentral.org

Harold Alexander was a man of strong convictions and deep loyalties. He was always loyal to his Ulster heritage, to his adopted country, to his family and his friends. Regular

visits to Northern Ireland kept him close to the rhythms of life in Ulster and he enjoyed all of it, even an ear-splitting competition of Lambeg drums at a rural Orange Hall. His love for Ulster led him to pride in the achievements of the Scotch-Irish pioneers and patriots in America and to serious research on Ulster emigration and institutions in America which he presented at academic conferences.

As president of the Scotch-Irish Society, he was always concerned that the Society be "first and foremost American," keeping clear of any political issue in Northern Ireland and of the policies of British and Irish governments and free from any suggestion of sectarianism. He was concerned that the definition of "Scotch-Irish" in the Society's literature was too narrow and did not reflect the reality of the Ulster-American heritage.

Harry had no time for pretense or artificiality. He had a way of cutting through it with a twinkle and the black humor that Ulstermen understand and perhaps an aptly chosen Ulster-Scots expression. He enjoyed good company and never lacked friends, nor could anyone have wanted a better friend than Harold Alexander. A few months before he died, Harry and Joyce each presented papers at an academic conference in Valparaiso, Chile. He used the occasion to share with his sons and grandsons something of the experience of his own grandfather who had come to Valparaiso on a sailing ship. Harry's grandfather was a teenager when he left home and signed as a crewman on a clipper ship bound from Liverpool to Australia. Now halfway around the world, he found another ship to work his way to Valparaiso. There he felt the pull of home and sailed again for Liverpool. Harry shared that same openness to new worlds and that same pull of home. With no more new worlds to conquer, he has come safely home at last.



Harry, as new president, joined by other Members of the Society, presents the outgoing president's plaque to Richard K. MacMaster. The occasion was a UAHS event at historic Brattonsville, South Carolina in June 2002.

The Scotch-Irish Society's Strategic Planning Committee met in June 2007 and sketched out a plan to broaden the format of the Newsletter. Initial comments and suggestions were offered by participants at the June 2007 Center for Scotch-Irish Studies Symposium. Discussion through the months has resulted in this issue. We welcome your comments, suggestions and submissions in this endeavor.

#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Carole Smith artcsmith@earthlink.net

#### **CHIEF EDITORIAL ADVISOR**

Michael Montgomery

# STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thomas Campbell – Chair Geoffrey Alexander Wayne Newell Lee Ramsey Carole Smith

# Robert Bonner

### A SCOTCH-IRISH URBAN SUCCESS STORY

William McGimpsey

Much of the work on the Scotch-Irish legacy to date has involved tracing the migration of the immigrants from Ulster and studying their various places of settlement in the American backcountry. Less attention has been paid to the Scotch-Irish immigrants who chose to settle in the major American cities. The life and contributions of one such notable urban settler will be highlighted here.

The first organized effort to focus on the Scotch-Irish legacy occurred in the late nineteenth century. Formed as the



Scotch-Irish Society of America, it established chapters in various locations. In 1889 it held its first Congress in Columbia, Tennessee. The first president of this new organization, Robert Bonner, was himself a classic example of an urban Scotch-Irish success story. Born in 1824 near Londonderry in the north of Ireland, he was trained under the influence of the shorter Westminster Catechism of the Presbyterian Church.

At an early age Bonner immigrated with his family to America. Tradition states he was expelled from school because he came to the defense of a classmate that Bonner knew had been falsely accused of some charges. At the age of fifteen, Bonner apprenticed as a typesetter at the *Hartford Courant*, the leading Connecticut newspaper. His young, nimble fingers were said to be the fastest in the plant (1,700 ems per hour).

When Bonner turned twenty, he went to New York City and was able to get a low-paying job in Mayor Harper's paper, called the *American Republic*, but he soon switched to the *Evening Mirror*. While there, the owner of a small commercial

It is the intention of the Society to reach a broad range of readers. The Newsletter promotes and supports inquiry into Scotch-Irish history, heritage and culture. It communicates news of the Society, notices and reviews, meetings, cultural events, activities and contact information. As the Newsletter develops it can become a link, possibly through the world wide web, for further research into topics of interest to its readers.

### MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Class of 2008 – Joyce M. Alexander, PhD, Thomas N. Campbell, Lee K. Ramsey and Michael Scoggins

Class of 2009 - Richard K. MacMaster, PhD, James McCord, Michael Montgomery, PhD and Frederick E. Stewart, Jr.

Class of 2010 - Geoffrey J. Alexander, Esq., William McGimpsey, E. Wayne Newell, Esq. and Carole Smith

newssheet called the Merchant's Ledger took notice of Bonner's typesetting skills and hired him away from the Evening Mirror. Bonner wanted to write a few articles for the paper but the owner would not agree. So Bonner wrote a small article, which he attributed to a Dr. Chalmers as the author, and with the owner's approval he slipped it into a corner of the paper. Rarely did any material from a trade paper get a mention in the New York dailies, but the Dr. Chalmers article took off like wildfire and was picked up in papers all across the country. This experience taught Bonner a lesson he never forgot. It is how you present the product that really counts.

The frugal young man saved as much money as he could, and in 1851, when the small commercial weekly was on the verge of bankruptcy, Bonner withdrew his life savings and made a successful offer to buy it. He operated the paper in his own careful way. It was said he "never borrowed a dollar of money, never signed a note in his life, and now carries on his great business on strictly cash principles." He gradually changed the focus of the paper from its commercial emphasis into a family news outlet.

Bonner saw the value of a good columnist. He made a cash proposition to a young rising newspaper columnist, Fanny Fern. She declined all his offers,

but he kept raising the ante until she finally agreed, resulting in her becoming the highest paid columnist in America. He then took out full page advertisements in competing newspapers stating, "Fanny Fern writes

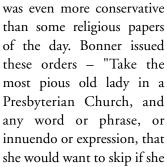
only for the *Ledger*." The *Ledger's* sales took off like a rocket.

Bonner became one of the first to recognize the power of advertising and soon the big boys began to take note. The Harper brothers announced they would produce a

competing high quality weekly newspaper that critics predicted would soon destroy the *Ledger*. *Harper's* boasted their new publication would never stoop to the *Ledger's* degrading advertising techniques.

On the week that *Harper's Weekly* was first published, large gaudy advertisements appeared in the *Ledger* and several of the largest New York daily newspapers. They blared out in large type "Buy *Harper's Weekly*." It was an incredible stunt, for the ads had been bought and placed not by *Harpers* but by Bonner. Even the Harper brothers appreciated the crazy Ulsterman's wild sense of humor, but it is said they remained mum when congratulations came in from newspaper owners across the country on their new aggressive advertising strategy.

The *New York Ledger's* success was not slowed by *Harper's Weekly*. It was soon to become "the most prominent and popular publication in the world." It featured many of the best writers in America on a regular basis. In style it



were reading a *Ledger* story to her grandchild, strike out." Nothing went into the *Ledger* that he did not first approve. The editor's column, usually written by himself, was always "sharp, crisp ... and often keen as a two-edged sword."

Bonner's incredible success allowed him to indulge in his one great passion – raising and racing racehorses. He would pay whatever it took to own the fastest steed in America, which he kept in his stables on 27th Street. If he wanted a horse, neither the Vanderbilts nor the Rockefellers could compete. Yet, while he lived comfortably, it was "without ostentation, in a plain brick house." He remained a trustee in the Scotch Presbyterian Church until he died and was widely praised for his many philanthropic ventures.



The "New York Ledger," first published by Robert Bonner in 1855, was one of the earliest and most successful storypapers. Storypapers, also called "six-cent weeklies," were weekly newspapers that featured an array of

serialized stories, poems, humor, fashion and current events intended for the entire family. These papers enjoyed enormous circulation. By 1870, the "New York Ledger" claimed an audience of 377,000 readers. With columns devoted to love, marriage and baby care, the "Ledger" catered to a predominantly female readership. Its serialized stories focussed heavily on romance (domestic and historical) and its illustrations included many images of women. The format was 8 pages, with a front-page illustration (sometimes signed by the artist and/or engraver) and additional images inside each issue. (taken from Wikepedia)

# The Scotch-Irish Spirit Lee Ramsey

I was en route to Pennsylvania last December to attend the Scotch-Irish Society Annual Meeting at Philadelphia. The first leg of my journey took me through northeast Georgia, the northwest sector of the South Carolina up-country and to Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. I was acquainted with the region's history, as I had made trips to Charlotte during the 1970s and 1980s to conduct family and local history research. As I approached Kings Mountain, South Carolina, I was reminded of the contribution made by the Scotch-Irish at this historic landmark, which became a turning point for the American patriots during the War Independence. The Battle of Kings Mountain was fought by the "over mountain men" from the Watauga settlement and by the frontier militias from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. The militia was made up of volunteers who transformed from settlers to soldiers, leaving their families and farms to engage the Redcoats who were commanded by Colonial Patrick Ferguson, who had threatened these settlers with "sword and fire." It was these backwoodsmen's knowledge of the landscape and their freedom fighting spirit that won the Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780.

Shortly after reaching North Carolina, I crossed the Catawba River, entering Mecklenburg County, where my Scotch-Irish ancestors had settled by 1769, several miles north of what was then "Charlotte Town." While still Anson County, North Carolina, that portion of the Catawba Valley, which became Mecklenburg County in 1763 was settled predominantly by the Scotch-Irish. It was in Charlotte in 1780 that a regiment of British soldiers

was repelled by the gallant bands of patriots led by Captain John Long of the Long Creek settlement. Thereafter, the British would refer to Charlotte as the "hornet's nest."

Although drive through my Charlotte was brief, there were still signs that turned my thoughts to local landmarks established by the Scotch-Irish. One such landmark is the Hopewell Church. Hopewell was one of some two dozen Presbyterian meeting houses established by the Scotch-Irish within the original boundaries of Mecklenburg County and its hinterlands. The Hopewell Church was organized about 1762, in the home of Richard Barry, who was a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration. Within the church cemetery rest many Scotch-Irish patriots, including John McKnitt Alexander, who came to Mecklenburg County from Maryland. John Alexander built his home near Watt's Branch and Clark's Creek, and his home place came to be known as "Independence Hill." As a delegate from the Hopewell District, he was a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775, and served as the secretary of the Convention which met at the log courthouse in Charlotte. Another signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration resting at Hopewell was Captain Mathew McClure, a native of Ireland, who was another well-known citizen and patriot from the Long Creek settlement.

Before leaving Mecklenburg County, my thoughts turned to two Scotch-Irish patriots, who had journeyed to Pennsylvania as representatives of America's cause for independence. The first was Captain James Jack, who was the bearer of the Mecklenburg Declaration to the Continental Congress in 1775. The second patriot was Colonel Thomas Polk. Polk and his cavalry had seen action at the Battle of Brandywine, which had left Philadelphia vulnerable to attack. Following the battle, Polk was assigned to evacuate the Liberty Bell from Philadelphia, to prevent the British from melting it down for cannon production. The bell was removed on September 18, 1777, and within seven days was safely escorted to the Zion Reformed Church at Allentown, where it remained until the close of the Revolution.

These patriots exemplify the pride, devotion, individualism and adaptability which have continued as one of the founding principles of the Scotch-Irish Society – the *esprit de corps* of the Scotch-Irish people. Our forebears have shown that the Scotch-Irish spirit is truly an American spirit, which continues to grow and expand among the many descendants of this rich heritage.

# Flaxseed and Emigrants: Scotch-Irish Merchants in Eighteenth Century America Richard K. MacMaster

Book launch will be on June 28th at the Ulster American Heritage Symposium

Published by the Ulster Historical Foundation

### CHAPTER NEWS

### South Carolina Chapter

The South Carolina Chapter had several activities planned for this spring. We had a table at the annual Tartan Fest at the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia on Saturday, April 5, 2008 from 10 am until 4 pm. This was our sixth year participating in the Tartan Fest. Members distributed literature about the Society, answered questions about Scotch-Irish history and heritage and presented an afternoon program on the Scotch-Irish for the general public.

We also worked with the Culture and Heritage Museums and several other local historical societies and museums to present a program at the McCelvey Center in York on Saturday, April 19, from 11:30 am until 1:30 pm on the "Kent Trilogy." This was a series of sociological studies done in York in the late 1940s that studied the town culture, mill culture and African-American culture. These studies were published by UNC Press in the 1950s and are being republished by USC Press this spring.

Several outings are planned for this summer and fall to visit sites of local and regional historical interest. For further information, contact Michael C. Scoggins, South Carolina Chapter secretary-treasurer at the McCelvey Center, 212 East Jefferson Street, York, SC 29745, 803-684-3948, micscoggins@chmuseums.org.

NEW South Carolina Chapter There has been discussion about the formation of a new chapter in Charleston, South Carolina. If interested, please email Baron Fain at BaronFain@msn.com

Form a NEW Chapter The Society welcomes the formation of regional chapters. If interested, please write or email the Secretary of the Society for information and a copy of our Chapter Guidelines.

### Coming Soon

### Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies 2008 Issue

The 2007 issue (Volume 2, No. 3) of the *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies* was published in November 2007. The 2008 issue (Volume 2, No 4)

will be published later this summer: this issue contains a number of interesting and readable papers. Copies of the 2007 issue are available from the Center for Scotch-Irish Studies. The 2008 issue should be available in August 2008. You can also obtain individual copies of



any of the earlier issues from the Center. You will find tables of contents for issues of the *Journal* at www.Scotch-IrishCentral.org.

### Special Offer – Volume Sets

### A 25% saving over individual copies.

Members can obtain Volume 1 (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003) of the *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies* for the special price of \$45.00 plus a shipping and handling charge of \$9.00. Non-Members can obtain this package for the special price of \$63.00 plus a shipping and handling charge of \$9.00. Volume 2 (2004, 2005, 2007, and 2008) will be available later this year at a similar price.

### Price Schedule

For copies of any issue of the *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies*, please write to the Center for Scotch-Irish Studies (state which issue(s) you require). All prices are in US dollars and checks should be made payable to the Center for Scotch-Irish Studies. For information and handling costs on shipping to other countries, please email us at cntrsis@aol.com.

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* Due to increases in postal rates, shipping and handling charges have been increased.

Center for Scotch-Irish Studies Post Office Box 71, Glenolden, PA 19036-0071 www.Scotch-IrishCentral.org

#### Dues

Please check the mailing label on this Newsletter. If your name is followed by (07), it means that we have not yet received your 2008 dues. We have included you in the mailing of this Newsletter so that you will know what is happening in your Society. However, we will be removing you from the active mailing list if we do not receive your dues soon. Annual dues continue to be \$20.00 and should be sent to the Scotch-Irish Society of the USA, PO Box 181, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

### Society Tie Still Available

The Society continues to offer its members a distinctive, custom-made tie designed expressly for us by the Ben Silver Corporation. The tie is entirely hand-sewn and made of the finest pure English silk. The design is recurring diagonal stripes of saffron bordered with stripes of green against a purple background. These colors are symbolic of Ulster and Scotland. To order, please send a check for \$43 (includes shipping and handling) to: Scotch-Irish Society (Ties), P. O. Box 181, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010. Also available are a limited number of bow ties for \$36.

THE SCOTCH-IRISH SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA Box Office Box 181 Bryn Mawr, PA 19010 Address Service Requested



#### **WANTED: ARTICLES**

The Scotch-Irish Society needs members to contribute articles for future issues of the Newsletter. Are you involved in any research that would be of interest to our members? Do you have a Scotch-Irish tale to tell or song to sing? Let us know!

#### WANTED: REGIONAL COLUMNISTS

We are looking for people to report on and publicize academic and cultural events around the country that would interest our members.

### WANTED: MEMBERS TO GET INVOLVED

We are looking for a few good people to get involved, help us build membership, work on projects and serve on the Council.

INTERESTED? Email the Editor, Carole Smith, or the Secretary of the Society, Joyce Alexander.

### The Scotch-Irish Society of the USA

Literature and membership application forms may be obtained by writing to:
PO Box 181, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
or, download from www.Scotch-IrishCentral.org