

NEWSLETTER Spring 2012

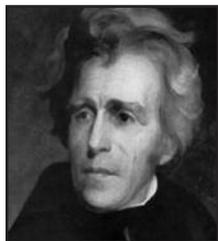
# THE SCOTCH-IRISH SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



## *The Hermitage – Nashville, Tennessee*

It has been a few years since I visited The *Hermitage*, home of another Scotch-Irish “Jackson,” President Andrew Jackson. (Last issue we highlighted the home of Stonewall Jackson in Lexington, Virginia.) I remember it being an easy day trip, just five miles from the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center where I was staying on business and only twenty minutes from downtown Nashville.

Andrew Jackson was born in 1767 near Camden, South Carolina. His parents emigrated from Ulster two years before he was born. Biographer James Parton described him this way: “Andrew Jackson, I am given to understand, was a patriot and a traitor. He was one of the greatest of generals, and wholly ignorant of the art of war. A writer brilliant, elegant, eloquent, without being able to compose a correct sentence, or spell words of four syllables. The first of statesmen, he never devised, he never framed a measure.



He was the most candid of men, and was capable of the profoundest dissimulation. A most law-defying, law-obeying citizen. A stickler for

discipline, he never hesitated to disobey his superior. A democratic autocrat. An urbane savage. An atrocious saint.”

## Letter from the President

You would think that a celebration of our Scotch-Irish culture would be seen by all as a positive expression of a great American heritage, but not everyone speaks kindly of us.

Kevin Myers, the renowned Irish columnist recently wrote “There’s no end to this nonsense of subdividing society, defining and redefining ‘identity’, or even worse, ‘culture’, like a coke-dealer fine-cutting a stash on a mirror. The outcome is a multiply-divided community, sects in the city, with almost everyone having their own mini-culture. Healthy societies don’t dwell on identity.” Although specifically referring to Ulster-Scots and a new BBC documentary about their unique cuisine, his diatribe could just as easily be applied to us. Comments from readers on the newspaper’s website were virtually unanimous in taking Mr. Myers to task.

In 2010, Harvard Law professor Noah Feldman wrote of our demise. “So, when discussing the white elite that exercised such disproportionate power in American history, we are talking about a subgroup, mostly of English or Scots-Irish origin, whose ancestors came to this land in the 17th and 18th centuries. Their forebears fought the American Revolution and wrote the Constitution, embedding in it a distinctive set of beliefs of Protestant origin, including inalienable rights and the separation of church and state.” He was commenting on the election of Elena Kagan to the US Supreme Court, and that Scotch-Irish influence in that great institution has now been reduced to zero. Of course not all Scotch-Irish are either Protestant or elite.

Even positive articles about the Scotch-Irish can contain tough love. Writing nearly forty years ago about the prominence of the Scotch-Irish heritage in the Ozarks, Fred DeArmond wrote “So we cannot deny that somewhere along their migratory route some of the Scotch-Irish acquired a singular aptness in moonshinin’, fightin’, and feudin’! while their women did the work. Thus they manifested their scorn for chivalry and all too often for the majesty of the law, whether personified by revenue agents or deputy sheriffs sworn to enforce other means of settling disputes than with rifles at a hundred paces.”

In this edition of our newsletter you will read a diverse expression of things Scotch-Irish as experienced in the world of today. Enjoy!!

*Bill McGimpsey*

Andrew Jackson's life and the story of The *Hermitage*, from frontier forest to the home of the President, from its preservation starting in the 1880s to the present is interesting to read about.

Better still, would be to visit for a day of "hands on" learning. At the Andrew Jackson Visitors Center there are exhibits and a film. The mansion has been restored to what it would have looked like when Andrew Jackson returned after finishing his second term as President in 1837. I enjoy "living history" and as you walk through the plantation house costumed interpreters share stories and answer your questions.

Just outside is the nineteenth century English flower garden with its showing of blooms and berries all year around. After digesting all the history, head there, find a bench, relax and enjoy the pleasing combinations of formality and informality that defined American gardens in the 1800s. Finally, you might stroll part of the 1,120 acres and explore some of the thirty-two buildings on the site.

Carole Smith

Open daily, 9:00–4:30 from October 16 to March 31  
and 8:30–5:00 from April 1 to October 15  
4580 Rachel's Lane, Nashville, Tennessee 37076.  
[www.thehermitage.com](http://www.thehermitage.com)

*As long as our government  
is administered for the good of  
the people, and is regulated by  
their will; as long as it secures  
to us the rights of persons and  
of property, liberty of conscience  
and of the press, it will be  
worth defending.*

Andrew Jackson

## Nineteenth Ulster-American Heritage Symposium in Omagh this summer.

This summer, June 27 – 30, why not join Members of the Society who will be traveling to Northern Ireland for the Centre for Migration Studies' Nineteenth Ulster-American Heritage Symposium (UAHS) at the Ulster-American Folk Park in Omagh? Hosting partners include the Ulster-American Folk Park (NMNI), Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ulster, Libraries NI, the Public Record Office (PRONI) and the Ulster Historical Foundation (UHF).

Since 1976 the UAHS has met every two years, alternating between Ulster and North America. Its purpose is to encourage scholarly study and public awareness of Scotch-Irish heritage and the historical connections between Ulster and North America. The Symposium's general theme encompasses transatlantic emigration and settlement, and links between England, Scotland, Ireland and North America. Its approach is inter-disciplinary, encouraging dialogue between those working in different fields including history, language, literature, geography, archaeology, anthropology, folklife, religion and music.

The particular theme this year will be "Ulster-American migration studies and public history," with the aim of presenting and exploring recent research that challenges habitual ways of thinking about the historical relationship between Ulster and North America over the last four hundred years. It will address the recent prominence given to Ulster-American themes in public history, including recent television programs such as Senator Jim Webb's *Born Fighting* and *So You Think You Are Related To An American President* and Fergal Keane's *A History of Ireland*.

On Wednesday, June 27, there will be an excursion by bus from Omagh to Derry visiting sites in counties Tyrone and Londonderry. Included will be stops at the site of the Campbell house in Plumbridge; the site of the Devine house in Park; various sites in Derry city, including two associated with the Mellon family and Derry Central Library; and the Wilson house in Strabane. Time is allowed in Derry for further exploration, including the possibility of crossing the new Peace Bridge and following the Ebrington Barracks heritage trail. Derry has been selected 2013 UK City of Culture.

Accommodation for the conference is available at a range of nearby hotels and guesthouses. The Conference Hotel is the Silver Birch, Omagh and it offers a special rate to those attending the Symposium.

For more information, visit

[http://www.qub.ac.uk/cms/events/UAHS\\_2012/UAHS\\_2012.html](http://www.qub.ac.uk/cms/events/UAHS_2012/UAHS_2012.html)

---

## MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Class of 2012 — Charles Blair, PhD, Richard K. MacMaster, PhD, Margaret Long, Frederick E. Stewart, Jr., Samuel Thomas

Class of 2013 — Geoffrey J. Alexander, Esq., William J. McGimpsey, E. Wayne Newell, Esq., Nina Ray, PhD, Carole Smith

Class of 2014 — Joyce M. Alexander, PhD, David Borland, Thomas N. Campbell, Michael Scoggins, Charles Snoddy

## Richard MacMaster, Nina Ray and Bill McGimpsey

### Commercial Networks in an Age of Revolution 1760-1800

*Richard K. MacMaster*

Eighteenth-century commercial networks linked British manufacturers, dry-goods merchants, and bankers with merchants in American port cities, backcountry storekeepers, producers and growers, facilitating the flow of credit in both directions and supplying a growing consumer demand at home and in the American Colonies. These networks also served as information channels passing ideas as well as reports of economic trends across the Atlantic.

These networks developed differently in different specialized trades. Whitehaven merchants, dealing primarily in coal and tobacco, had close ties with their counterparts in Dublin, northern Virginia and Maryland, and Amsterdam. The transatlantic flaxseed and linen trade involved the seasonal importation of American flaxseed to Ireland and Scotland and the shipment of finished linens to the American Colonies. Irish linen was primarily made in the northeastern counties of Ulster and naturally Belfast, Londonderry and Newry merchants played a major part in the trade. A large percentage of linen passed through the hands of Dublin merchants who were financed from London and commonly sent it to the Colonies through Liverpool to obtain a bounty that paid the cost of shipping it.

Richard MacMaster overviews the way these networks functioned, in the last four decades of the eighteenth century, in their primary purpose of forwarding the business interests of the firms they linked together and also as a means of sharing sometimes revolutionary concepts. It will focus on the way information and opinion passed between Britain and America from the troubled decade before the American

Revolution through the war and postwar years. MacMaster's presentation examines the decade of the 1790s in the specific cases of the Caldwell family firms trading between Londonderry and Philadelphia and the Belfast firms of Ewing and Brown and Oliver and Thompson who were linked to Baltimore.

### Dilution vs. Dancing: Scots-Irish and Basques in the American West

*Nina M. Ray and John Bieter*

Senator Jim Webb's book, *Born Fighting*, and the associated Smithsonian series, filmed in Scotland, Northern Ireland and America, explains that the Scots-Irish blended into the fabric of North America and are one of the few ethnic groups to not really identify themselves as an ethnic group, their identity is so diluted into the fabric of America. The "Scotch-Irish exhibit several distinctive, ideological grounded behaviors that have characterized their subculture since Colonial times. Paradoxically, many of these traits have become so naturalized over time that they have lost their ethnic label and are now viewed simply as American." Some of these traits are generally considered to be hard working, fiercely independent but loyal, having a pioneer spirit and "populist-style American democracy."

With very different time periods of migration the Scots-Irish and the Basque might not appear to have much in common. Basques did not share a common language with others upon arrival, as did the Scots-Irish. While Basques have certainly intermarried and been "diluted" to some extent, their identity is often very obvious and has been preserved through dancing, music, a unique language and food.

Both groups, however, have a long history of migration and exploration and

in the case of North America, often form a secondary migration (i.e., Scotland to Ulster to North America; Basques to Argentina to America). Both came to the new world often for opportunistic reasons (free or cheap land, the gold rush, etc.) and are known as hard workers. Their histories are based on democratic principles (i.e., Declaration of Arbroath in Scotland; parliamentary sessions at the tree of Gernika) whether their descendants became involved in politics or not. Both often faced repression and persecution at home. They were mostly the lower, not elite, classes. Both groups moved "west" although the definition of the American west has changed over the centuries.

Nina Ray and John Bieter trace the numerable similarities of the Basques and Scots-Irish in America and their contribution to the American West. They will explore some of the potential reasons for the contrast of "dilution versus dancing."

### Irish America and the Scotch-Irish in New York City – a Troubled Affair

*William J. McGimpsey*

New York City was a Calvinist enclave before the American Revolution and Scotch-Irish who preferred an urban business setting found it to be a welcoming destination. The lingering disdain for old world established church practices gave the Scotch-Irish dissenters an edge. However, the American Revolution changed all of that and immigrants from all over Ireland began arriving in increasing numbers.

At first relationships between the now prosperous Scotch-Irish and the newly arriving Irish was good, but as working class ghettos grew, so did the friction. It erupted into full scale riots in Greenwich Village in 1824. Robert Asbury's book in 1829, *The Gangs of New York* and the

movie in 2002 with same name, starring Liam Neeson, gives a glimpse of the turmoil, without the ethnic distinction. Friction was further exacerbated by the Nativists and Know Nothing Movement and various other anti-Irish organizations.

Relationships reached their lowest point in the Orange Riots of the 1870s. Between the total anarchy of the City's Draft Riots of 1863 and cataclysmic 9/11 disaster of 2001, the Orange Riot of 1871 was the worst insurrection in the City's history.

Turbulence would continue to fester for decades to come and modest improvements were frequently offset by events occurring elsewhere, such as the Irish Uprising in 1916 and its strong NYC connection. After the second World War things were a lot better until the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland erupted in 1969.

Bill McGimpsey's presentation traces the volatile relationship between the two Irish American communities from a pre-revolutionary beginning right up to the present day.

**also giving presentations at the UAHS are Society Members...**

**Katherine Brown** in a panel discussion—"Ulster-American Migration Studies and Public History: the case of *Born Fighting*"  
**Peter Gilmore**, "Gone to America: The Mellons and Pre-Famine Irish Migration"  
**Michael Montgomery**, "The Scotch-Irish Have Run Away: Linguistic Profiling in Eighteenth-Century America"  
**Mícheál D. Roe**, "Symbolic Ethnicity among Contemporary Scotch-Irish in the Northeastern United States"

**SOCIETY TIE**

*The Society offers its members a distinctive, custom-made tie designed expressly for us by the Ben Silver Corp. 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 The Scotch-Irish Society, PO Box 53, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.*

## What's an Ulster Scots-American to do?

By David Murdock

Another St. Patrick's Day has come and gone, and I'm faced with the same dilemma every year. In fact, I'm faced with the same dilemma three times a year — on St. Patrick's Day in March, on St. Andrews Day in November and on Burns Night in January: Exactly which holiday am I supposed to commemorate?

Of course, St. Patrick's Day has become very inclusive in America. They always say "everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day." I've looked into my family history quite a bit, and the first of my Murdocks in America I'm able to trace did, in fact, come here from Ulster (Northern Ireland) in 1768. There's a very clear record of their arrival, listing the port from which they sailed (Belfast), the ship on which they sailed (the *Lord Dungannon*) and the port which they entered (Charleston).

The record also lists one more important fact. The family of Hamilton and Mary Murdock got off the boat in Charleston and were listed as being "Protestants." Also, Murdock is a Scottish name. Those two facts taken together meant that they probably came to Ulster from Scotland. A family of Scots living in what is now Northern Ireland means that my family has an Ulster Scots background.

Around here, we generally use the term "Scots-Irish" to mean a mixture of Scottish and Irish heritage. That's not quite true. And I learned a long time ago not to use the term "Scotch." To a Scot, Scotch means whisky. In fact, the word "whiskey" is even spelled differently (without the "e") when referring to Scotch. A man I talked to at the first Highland Games I ever attended put it most memorably — "Scots is who we are; Scotch is what we drink."

Literally, "Scots-Irish" refers to a specific group. The Ulster Scots were mostly Protestants from the south and west of Scotland who were transplanted to Northern Ireland — the county known as Ulster — in the seventeenth century in an English effort to suppress the Roman Catholic Irish. The Scottish settlement in Northern Ireland became known as the Ulster Plantation, and what Americans call the Scots-Irish are more properly called Ulster Scots. To make this all more confusing, the original people in Scotland were the Picts; the Scots were an Irish tribe who settled on the west coast of Scotland in ancient times. So the Scots who went to Ireland were doing the same thing in reverse.

To confuse the matter even more, I've found out recently that my family was probably not part of the Ulster Plantation proper. They likely went over from Scotland to Ireland in the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement of 1606, a private venture led by James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery. A website by the Ulster Scots Agency devoted to the history of this settlement is bannered with "Not plantation, not conquest, not invasion. Settlement." According to the Ulster-Scots Agency, the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement was "the foundational event of the era, and the single most important event in Ulster-Scots history." (<http://www.hamiltonmontgomery1606.com>). This website is extensive and extremely well done, and I recommend it to anyone interested in Ulster Scots history.

There's been tension in Northern Ireland ever since the foundation of the Ulster Plantation, sometimes breaking out into violence. Many Ulster Scots left and came to America to avoid this violence. Their movement to

America pre-dated the great wave of Irish migration, occasioned by the Potato Famine in the 1840s. Many of these Ulster Scots settled in the Appalachian region that runs like a spine up the Eastern part of the United States, giving them access to many different cultural areas and experiences.

They brought with them many of the cultural elements we call Appalachian. For example, the bluegrass music I love so much sounds a lot like Scots and Irish popular ballads. Bluegrass has similar subject matter, too. In fact, the only major difference I can hear is the improvisational nature of bluegrass, which is similar to jazz music.

The Ulster Scots experience in America has been quite different from either the Irish-American experience or the Scottish-American experience. I'm often struck by that difference when watching movies or plays about the Irish in America. For example, the Irishness of the Tyrone family in Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" — recently produced by the Theater of Gadsden — sounds precious little like the stories of the Scots-Irish.

And there's a difference even in the Irish flag, which consists of a green field and an orange field separated by a white field. The green represents Irish Catholics and the orange represents Irish Protestants, with the white field symbolizing peace. This is why Ulster Scots are sometimes known as "Orangemen." Irish still observe the distinction. Many Ulster Scots fly either the Ulster Provincial flag, or an ad-hoc flag combining the Scottish national saltire flag with the "Red Hand of Ulster" of the Provincial flag. These ad-hoc flags are unofficial; thus, they often contain other elements incorporated by different designers.

So I never know quite which holiday to commemorate. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, and St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. The bigger celebrations of Scottish-ness are the poet Robert Burns' birthday and the various Highland Games around the country. Although I feel more at home with Scottish celebrations than Irish ones, I don't feel completely at home with purely Scottish holidays. Even with the significant crossover of the two cultures — many of the customs are almost exactly alike — there's a discernable difference.

So, what's an Ulster Scots-American to do? Well, I stress the American part. The Fourth of July is far more important to me as a holiday. However, I may just start wearing orange on St. Patrick's and St. Andrew's. Sometimes it's best to have all the options. Besides, I've also been to Mardi Gras and Oktoberfest, and I usually show up for Cinco De Mayo parties, too. That's one of the great things about America — we celebrate all the occasions.

*Editor's note:*

*A saltire, or Saint Andrew's Cross, is a heraldic symbol in the form of a diagonal cross × or letter x. Saint Andrew is said to have been martyred on such a cross. Scotland's national flag is a blue field with a white saltire.*

*The views expressed by David Murdock are his own and are not endorsed by the Society. They represent another point of view. David's article has been included in this issue to illustrate the complexities that arise with respect to nomenclature. His article was originally published in "The Gadsden Times," Alabama, March 20, 2012. It is reprinted here with his permission. David Murdock is an English Instructor at Gadsden State Community College.*

## Truth in Nomenclature

*Excerpt from a presentation by Michael Montgomery at the Scotch-Irish Identities Symposium held in 2011.*

So is it Scots-Irish or Scotch-Irish? Which is the more culturally correct title to use?

Michael Montgomery took this difficult question head on in a paper entitled, "Scotch-Irish or Scots-Irish: What's in a Name?" which has been published on the Ulster-Scots Language Society website, an organization formed to "promote the Ulster-Scots language, our own hamely tongue." This article can be read in its entirety on line at: <http://www.ulsterscotslanguage.com/en/texts/scotch-irish/scotch-irish-or-scots-irish/>

Dr. Montgomery states that "in the United States Scotch-Irish has been used for Ulster immigrants (mainly of Presbyterian heritage) for more than three centuries and well over one hundred years for their descendants. Why Scotch-Irish rather than Scots-Irish? Simply because, as we will see, people of Scottish background were known as Scotch in the eighteenth century, so that term was brought to America, where it took root and flourished. In the nineteenth century Scotch-Irish widened to encompass other Protestants (Anglicans, Quakers, etc.) and eventually some writers applied it to Ulster immigrants collectively because they were presumed all to have absorbed the Scottish-influenced culture of Presbyterians who had come to Ulster from Scotland in the seventeenth century."

Michael Montgomery shows that a recent preference by some for the term Scots-Irish is much more prevalent in the UK than here in America. He states that while both terms are now being used, by almost any criterion "Scotch-Irish has been more widely used in the United States for the last three hundred years, and it remains so today."

In his presentation at the Scotch-Irish Symposium of 2011, he took this investigation even further with expanded documentation of the historical use of both terms from 1573 until the present. Although his findings show that usage of the term Scots-Irish first occurs here as early as 1736 he emphasizes that "in the US Scotch-Irish has from the beginning been and continues to be more common than Scots-Irish.

# Success of the Scotch-Irish in Colonial New York City

*Excerpt from a presentation by Bill McGimpsey at the Scotch-Irish Identities Symposium held in 2011.*

The great flight from Ulster to North America between 1717 and 1775 has been estimated at between 3,500 and 5,000 per year. In the sparsely populated colonies, this was a substantial influx from one small concentrated part of the world and resulted in Ulster having an undue impact on how the new country would evolve.

Being financially at the low end of the immigrant stream and with past experience of living in a volatile society, they were both willing and suitably prepared to accept the risks of moving to the frontier, where bargains in land were to be found and the rewards were at their highest.

There were some Ulstermen who came for whom the frontier was not a preference and for these folk New York City was a particularly attractive lure. For while the colonies were under the control of the English Crown and it was the Crown, for the most part, that was at the root of the Scotch-Irish flight to America, New York City was the one place where dissenters were in control. The Dutch and French Calvinists made it clear that no established church would hold sway in their City. English military force would change that law, but not the spirit.

Bill McGimpsey documented that the Irish influence recorded in Colonial New York City refers to the Scotch-Irish. The Catholic Irish were not able to make their presence known in the City until it opened up to all immigrants, which occurred after the revolution.

## **Book Launching at the UAHS**

### **ULSTER-SCOTS AND AMERICA**

Diaspora literature, history and migration, 1750-2000

Frank Ferguson & Richard MacMaster, editors

This collection of essays examines the contribution made by the Ulster-Scots diaspora upon the writing of North America. The book interprets writing in a broad sense and charts the impact of this diaspora upon literary, historical, political, religious, and personal discourses. The collection will suggest that various manifestations of Ulster-Scottish, Scots-Irish and Irish-American textual relationships existed and continue to exist. Themes covered by this collection will include: literary constructions of colonial and post colonial American identity; the linguistic and literary impact of Scots vernacular verse, and Robert Burns in particular, in the United States; polemical writings by Ulster-Scots émigrés on slavery; Presbyterianism and transatlantic politics; life histories of Ulster emigration; the inter-relation between Irish poets such as Seamus Heaney and American writing; and contemporary explorations of emigrant narratives in Ulster writing.

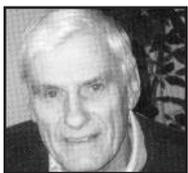
*Frank Ferguson is a research associate at the Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies at the University of Ulster, Magee. Richard MacMaster is co-editor of the Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies and co-director of the Centre for Scotch-Irish Studies. The publisher is Four Courts Press of Dublin.*

*Society Member Dr. Michael Montgomery has an essay included in this book. Other authors are rising younger scholars from the British Isles and North America. Among them is Professor Joseph Moore who had a paper at our recent symposium in York, South Carolina.*

## **NEW MEMBERS 2012**

**Michael E. Belcher, Texas**

**Lowry Rush Watkins, Jr., Kentucky**



## **MEET OUR NEW COUNCIL MEMBER**

**Dave Borland** was born in Monongahela, Pennsylvania, raised in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, PA and graduated from West Virginia University. His working career was in two distinct areas: sales as a stockbroker in Pittsburgh and in the second half of his career as a financial administrator for transplantation at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and the University of Miami School of Medicine. After retiring, he and his wife Charlotte, who worked in banking during her career, returned to their hometown of Pittsburgh. Dave writes novels and poetry while volunteering where he worked at the Starzl Transplant Center at the University of Pittsburgh and at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh.

Dave traces his Scotch-Irish family back to Tamney, Donegal which he visited in 2009 (Newsletter, Fall 2009). While his ancestors were flax farmers, the current Borlands, who live in that same beautiful and hilly area, are sheep and cattler farmers. His grandfather, Moses Howard Borland, emigrated to Pittsburgh from Donegal in 1825 and resided in what is now Pittsburgh's North Side. He is proud of the fact that Scotch-Irish immigrants were critical in the creation of Pittsburgh as an industrial center of the United States and the world in the nineteenth century. Their legacy still resides in a great percentage of the population of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. Dave lives five miles from where the Monongahela and Allegheny meet to form the Ohio, where Moses Borland landed 187 years ago to begin his new life in the New World.

## THE OTHER IRISH:

### The Scots-Irish Rascals Who Made America

Karen F. McCarthy, Sterling. 333 pages. \$24.95



Comprehensive works on the Scotch-Irish are few and far between. Since James Leyburn's milestone "Social History," published way back in 1962, there have been few notable exhibits. It is now eight years since Senator James Webb introduced his colorful version of the Scotch-Irish story, *Born Fighting*, a completely different narrative style from the Leyburn landmark, but covering the same cross Atlantic timeline.

Now we have another recently released version of the Scotch-Irish story by a Karen F. McCarthy, which she calls *The Other Irish*. (Both McCarthy and Webb prefer Scots-Irish terminology.)

McCarthy's book is a surprise for a number of reasons. First, she herself is not from the American Scotch-Irish heartland (she was born in Ireland). Second, she is not a north of Ireland product but a graduate from UCD in Dublin and the London School of Journalism. Third, she is not a historian. Finally, she is from the mainline Irish community, who has traditionally written less favorably about the Scotch-Irish.

Karen McCarthy is an accomplished non-fiction filmmaker, journalist and author. Although technically an outsider, she has studied her subject well, spending considerable time in America and interviewing many of her Scotch-Irish subjects in their home setting. Her keen and inquisitive journalistic eye and her skillful interpretation of political events add a considerable richness to the presentation. Sure, there are flaws and weaknesses in places, but they are overwhelmed by the overall quality of the body of work.

How did it all happen for her. In her own words she tells us that her search for "this lost chapter of the Irish Diaspora took me from Dublin to Belfast and into some of the remotest regions of the South. It was a journey on which I discovered the extraordinary contribution these intrepid migrants made to American culture and character.

"I learned why they produced America legends like Davy Crockett, Edgar Allen Poe and Stephen King, why they became Second Amendment traditionalists, politically conservative and devoutly Christian. I discovered what led them to invent country music and America's biggest spectator sport. I also learned what few Europeans understand: why no presidential hopeful seems to be able to win the White House without some help from their Southern enclaves."

It is not all sugar though. She has sections on slavery, moonshiners, the Klan, and the ugly indentured servants business, but there is no finger pointing. Her documentation of the Scotch-Irish contribution to southern culture, everything from music to auto racing, is impressive. If you are looking for the twenty-first century edition of Leyburn, forget about it. This book has its own style and its own major contribution to the Scotch-Irish experience.

Bill McGimpsey

## MEMBERS' CORNER



In the last Newsletter we included an excerpt from Society Member **Don Leslie's** presentation at the Symposium in York, South Carolina on the founding of Upper Long Cane Cemetery in South Carolina. On November 27, 2011, a ceremony was held at the cemetery to celebrate it being named to the "National Registry of Historic Places." The local mayor, board member of the Long Cane Cemetery Association, Leslie family members and many prominent town citizens were present. Don sent a picture of the marker that will be a permanent fixture in the cemetery.



Would you like to set up a Scotch-Irish tent at the Highland Games?

### Society Member John Steadman explains how.

First, contact your local Highland Games representative and register a couple of months in advance for tent space. The average cost is \$25-\$35 for a 10' x 10' spot. This fee includes two free tickets for each day of the games. The first big expense, the tent, will set you back about \$200. I purchased mine at Sam's Club. The next big expense will be a banner. I decided to use the words 'Ulster Scots - Scotch Irish' with the red hand in the center. The number of colors and the size will determine the price. Anything custom will cost you more.

Bring card tables and a couple of nice table cloths as well as two to three chairs. You want your tent to be inviting to your guests. Snacks are a good idea, I usually bring cookies. You'll want to have a nice selection of books and pamphlets to hand out. Try and judge who truly has an interest in the Scotch-Irish before handing out pamphlets or most of them will end up in the trash can.

In my tent, I put up many flags of interest: flags you would see in Northern Ireland; many American historical flags such as the Betsy Ross and several flags from the War Between the States; the Saint Andrews flag (aka Scotland) and my Scottish tartan flag which is Henderson. (I also will wear a Henderson tartan kilt.) I love flags but you don't have to use flags. Your tent should be a reflection of your interests and your personality.

It's very easy to make a frame for your banner out of PVC which can include holders for two flags on top. Some events do not allow you to use stakes in the ground so you might want to make weights to hold it down ahead of time. Invest in a bunch

Scotch-Irish booth continued on page 12.



## Roots and Rhythms

### The Scotch-Irish Influence on Early Country Music—Part 2

Mike Scoggins

Along with ballad singing and instrumental dance music, the Scotch-Irish also brought a third musical tradition with them: the religious or sacred music of the early Protestant churches, which played a very important part in the development of country music. The music sung in these early worship services left a lasting impact on country and bluegrass.

In *Country Music: The Poetry*, Carole Offen asserts, “Protestant religion is as interwoven into the fabric of country music as it is in rural life. With the rural South’s long history of deprivation...religion offered the only hope of a better life, a chance to find real joy, or a way to understand its absence. ...It was fundamentalist, believed in sin and the Devil, but also in redemption and personal one-to-one relationship with a merciful, approachable God. In isolated Southern towns...the church was more than the religious center. It was also the cultural and political focal point, whose influence was the cornerstone of a basic Southern upbringing. Almost every area of Southern music, from classic gospel to honky-tonk secular, shows its influence. Country singers grew up on this music, and often sang their first public notes in church. They heard the inspirational songs that emerged from the evangelical crusades designed to spread the Word. The songs—of redemption, of celebration—belonged to everyone, whether you were a Southern Baptist, Methodist, or Holy Roller.”

This sacred music incorporated both accompanied and unaccompanied traditions, and was especially important in laying the groundwork for the unique vocal harmonies of modern country and bluegrass music. Religious singing took two main forms: one was the singing of the Davidic Psalms that was common to most eighteenth century Protestant churches (*psalmody*); and the other was singing of non-Biblical hymns (*hymnody*) that was practiced only in the Anglican, Lutheran and other more “liberal” churches.

The Scotch-Irish immigrants were predominantly Presbyterian. The Church of Scotland used the *Scottish Metrical Psalter* of 1650 that enabled Presbyterian congregations to sing the one hundred and fifty biblical psalms to a few basic tunes that everyone could manage. This type of singing was simple ensemble singing and did

not employ complex harmony or musical accompaniment. The Presbyterian settlers brought the *Scottish Metrical Psalter* with them and it was the dominant songbook in these churches for almost two hundred years. In fact, the early Presbyterians barred any other kind of music from their worship services, and they particularly abhorred the popular eighteenth century hymns written by Anglican clergymen.

The strict adherence to the *Scottish Metrical Psalter*, and the exclusion of all other types of singing, continued well into the twentieth century in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregations of the southern states and it is still maintained by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Free Church of Scotland (the “Free Kirk”), the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and a few other Reformed churches.

Following the “Second Great Awakening” or “Great Revival” of the early nineteenth century (the first “Great Awakening” took place in the mid-eighteenth century), many families joined the Baptist and Methodist churches. The Methodists and mainstream Baptists were much more likely to embrace the singing of hymns and the use of musical accompaniment. Among the Baptists, however, a reform movement arose that avoided formal, ritualized “high church” worship and sought to return to the Bible-based “primitive church” of early Christianity. They forbade musical instruments and hymnbooks in church, preferring to sing unaccompanied hymns learned by ear, much like the original Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.

During the period of the Second Awakening, a new type of unaccompanied, harmony-based church singing arose in the eastern United States. Known as “shape-note singing” or “sacred harp singing,” it spread rapidly during the nineteenth century, and it was especially popular among both white and black congregations in the rural South. Not surprisingly, shape-note singing has survived longest in those areas of the South that are the strongholds of Scotch-Irish heritage. Shape-note singing was designed for people who could not read music. Simple geometric shapes represented the vocal scale. The earliest method was a four-shape system based on the “fa-sol-la-mi” scale. A right triangle represents fa, a circle represents sol, a square represents la, and a diamond represents mi. The system is not tied to any particular musical scale; instead, fa is always the tonic or root note of the key, regardless of which key the piece is arranged in.

The use of syllables (*solmization*) to teach music goes back to the eleventh century in Europe, and the four syllable “fa-sol-la-mi” system was developed in

England during Elizabethan times. The American four-shape system is generally credited to John Connelly (or Conly), a Philadelphia merchant of Scottish ancestry, who developed the system around 1790. Shape-note singing is not simply a cappella hymn music. It has a unique harmony and a rhythmic, astringent quality that is a far cry from the polished arrangements of modern church music.

Instead of putting the melody in the top or soprano voice, typical in modern three- and four-part harmony, shape-note harmonies are placed between the soprano and the bass lines. In nineteenth-century shape-note arrangements, the tenor carries the melody. The man who did the most to popularize shape-note singing in the South was William Walker, who was born in 1809 in South Carolina. According to musical historian George Pullen Jackson, “Walker was of Welsh descent, his father emigrating from Wales in the eighteenth century.” His mother was Susannah Jackson, of the same Scotch-Irish family that gave birth to General Stonewall Jackson.

When he was seventeen, the Walker family moved near Spartanburg, South Carolina where they joined the Cedar Springs Baptist Church. William Walker studied music and became a Baptist song leader and music teacher. He then traveled all over the South conducting singing schools, and it was during this period that he became well-versed in shape-note music. He worked for several years compiling traditional hymns and folk tunes from a variety of sources, both published and unpublished. In September 1835 he produced *The Southern Harmony, and Musical Companion*, a hymnal arranged in the four-shape system, although most of the songs are in three-part harmony.

In an era without mass advertising, Walker’s book became “the all-time best seller of tunebooks.” It was reprinted twice during his lifetime and ultimately sold over 600,000 copies. It has been reprinted several more times in the twentieth century, and the extent of its influence is shown by the fact that a southern rock group, the *Black Crowes* from Atlanta, Georgia, borrowed the title for their 1992 album of the same name. It is perhaps the most popular tunebook ever printed. Its longevity is also remarkable: it is still being used and sung from with loving care over one hundred and fifty years after its first edition.

According to local tradition, Walker compiled *The Southern Companion* with his brother-in-law, Benjamin Franklin White, also a native of Union County. Walker then took the manuscript north to be published. Once it was published, however, only Walker’s name appeared as author,

creating lasting bitterness in the family. In a case of poetic justice, White published his own shape-note songbook in 1844 with the cooperation of Georgia native Elisha J. King, under the title *Sacred Harp*. The title uses “harp” as a metaphor for the human voice; it is not a book of harp music. White’s tunebook became so popular in the South that the title is now synonymous with shape-note singing, and many people today refer to this style of music as “Sacred Harp singing.”

In 1866 William Walker, who was by now known throughout the South as “Singing Billy,” published a new hymnbook called *Christian Harmony*, which incorporated many of the tunes from his earlier hymnal. This time, however, he replaced the four-shape system with a seven-shape system based on the “do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti” scale that most of us are familiar with. The seven-shape notation was invented and patented by Jesse B. Aiken, who popularized it in his hymnbook *Christian Minstrel* in 1846. Walker, however, came up with his own shapes for the extra three notes: an inverted keystone for do, a quarter moon for re, and an isosceles triangle for ti. Marcus Lafayette Swan, who had earlier published a four-shape songbook called *The Harp of Columbia*, also created his own version of the seven-shape system, which he published in Knoxville, Tennessee as *New Harp of Columbia* in 1867. Both books are still in use today, and Swan’s system is particularly popular in eastern Tennessee.

Although the original 1835 edition of *Southern Harmony* utilized a four-tone shape-note scale, William Walker later revised this scale to include the seven shapes depicted here.

William Walker’s *Southern Harmony* is justifiably famous for a number of reasons, but perhaps the most compelling is that it was the first publication of the John Newton hymn “Amazing Grace” set to the tune with which it is universally associated today. “Amazing Grace” had been published in several earlier hymnbooks, but each time to different tunes. Walker’s publication of the hymn married it for all time to a folk tune that he called “New Britain,” which is how the hymn is titled in his book. “New Britain” has an interesting life of its own which clearly demonstrates the Scotch-Irish influence on early American religious music.

It was commonplace for hymnists and tunebook compilers in the early nineteenth century to set their hymns



## Six Generations: The family of George Magee

*Excerpts from a presentation by Thomas Daniel Knight at the Symposium in June 2011.*

“Antedating the first major Scotch-Irish migration to America by a generation, George Magee lived among a small group of Scotch-Irish families on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Magee arrived in Somerset County, Maryland in 1682 as an indentured servant. Like most servants, he would have been contracted to work for a specified period in exchange for his transportation to the colony and, like most servants in the region, Magee probably worked in the tobacco fields of a prosperous local landowner for a number of years before attaining his freedom. He may also, however, have possessed experience weaving, for James Leyburn notes in his study of the Scotch-Irish in early America the presence, by the end of the seventeenth-century, of a small colony of Scotch-Irish weavers and traders from Ulster living on the Eastern Shore. Knight continued, “There is no evidence that George Magee arrived as part of a group migration of related families. Rather, his arrival as an indentured servant suggests that, like most servants in the Chesapeake, he was young, single, fairly poor, upwardly mobile, and without close ties to any other local settlers. Thus Magee through his own actions – economically, religiously, culturally – played an important role in creating his family’s identity and assimilating himself into the local community.”

Mr. Knight shared Leyburn’s comments on the Scotch-Irish who settled on each side of the Chesapeake Bay that divided Maryland geographically. Leyburn notes that settlers on the western side of the bay “came primarily as indentured servants, most of them arriving during the last two decades of the Great Migration.” Knight added, “These settlers were part of the backcountry migration that peopled the Shenandoah Valley between 1730 and 1770.” Leyburn also said that the Scotch-Irish settlers (which would have included the George Magee Family) living on the Eastern Shore “were early arrivals and were among the very first to intermingle with settlers of different origin and background.”

“With the exception of the offspring of John Magee’s son David, most of the male descendants of George Magee would remain in northern Maryland and southern Delaware until the Civil War era, farming land within a forty-mile radius of the immigrant George’s original home in Wicomico Hundred. They owned small farms, mostly smaller than fifty acres, and few slaves. They also continued to intermarry with a group of related families with which the Maryland Magees had associated since the 1680s, bequeathing descendants a gene pool that included

*Mark S. McGee (1829-1861) was the sixth generation descendant of George Magee. His father John began using the McGee spelling when he moved to western Georgia, where he became a large-scale cotton planter, in the 1830s. Mark McGee, who was clerk of Bethany Baptist Church and a local Justice of the Peace, enlisted in Company H, 17th Georgia Infantry, Army of Northern Virginia, in August 1861; he died four months later of typhoid fever in Richmond, Virginia, leaving behind him a widow and two young children.*



not only Scotch-Irish but English and French families as well. By the early nineteenth-century, they were part of a regional network of interrelated families that dated back to the earliest settlements on the Eastern Shore.”

“The American Revolution, however, and its attendant social changes worked to undermine the cultural identity of the early Magees. Several Eastern Shore families began to move from Maryland to Georgia in the 1770s, settling among English and German families who had come to Georgia from other colonies. Arriving in Georgia in the years between 1773 and 1792, the Maryland Magees and their kin lost their physical connection to the Eastern Shore and to their heritage there.” Knight added, “In terms of economic and marriage networks, after reaching Georgia the Magees showed only a modest tendency, one that declined with each successive generation, to associate with other Scotch-Irish families from the Eastern Shore. While they did continue to associate on a limited basis with families they had known in Maryland, they also mixed among Georgia’s diverse population, marrying into families of different ethnic and cultural traditions.”

Mr. Knight observed, “By the middle of the nineteenth-century, the descendants of George Magee exhibited few of the characteristics traditionally associated with the Scotch-Irish, probably because of their early migration and their long association with different, non-Scotch-Irish cultural groups. They had converted from the Presbyterian faith in the Revolutionary era and had become ardent Baptists by the early nineteenth-century.” He continued, “Yet descendants of this family, today scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast, have consistently continued to identify themselves as Scotch-Irish throughout the twentieth-century, perhaps signifying the rhetorical power of ethnic identity across generations despite constantly evolving cultural traditions.” Knight concluded that the Scotch-Irish “may by the early nineteenth-century have co-existed alongside a number of other designations – Southern, slave-owner, Baptist, planter, revolutionary. Strikingly, the ethnic designation has continued into the modern era while the others have lost their resonance. Descendants of George Magee living today from Pennsylvania to Oregon continue to identify themselves as Scotch-Irish despite the atypical pattern of Magee migration and activities when compared with the later Scotch-Irish migrations and to the descendants of those families who have continued, often into modern times, to reside in communities powerfully shaped by Scotch-Irish culture and traditions. This identification raises questions for the meaning

*Six Generations continued on next page.*

*We have arrived at a new time. Let us realize it. And with that new time strange methods, huge forces, large combinations – a Titanic world – have sprung up around us.* Winston Churchill, May 23, 1909

Northern Ireland will be the destination for Members who will be attending the UAHS in June. Before or after the symposium, a visit to **Titanic Belfast**, which opened March 31, will be a “must see” on many attendee’s itinerary. The opening of the museum marks the hundredth anniversary of the launching of the *Titanic* in 1912. The “unsinkable” ship sailed out of Belfast for Southampton, Cherbourg, Queenstown and eventually, New York City. Thirteen days later it hit an iceberg and sank taking 1,517 passengers with it. If you visit *Titanic Belfast* this summer we would like to hear about your experience and share your observations with Members of the Society in our next Newsletter.



### *Not planning a visit to Northern Ireland?*

*Titanic Museum* is located in **Indian Orchard, Massachusetts**. It is the home of The Titanic Historical Society (THS) and their collection. [www.titanic1.org](http://www.titanic1.org). *Titanic The Experience* is located in **Orlando, Florida**. It is an interactive museum with full-scale recreations of Titanic rooms with trained actors in period costumes sharing stories of passengers and crew. [www.titanictheexperience.com](http://www.titanictheexperience.com). *Titanic Museum Attraction* is located in **Branson, Montana** and **Pigeon Forge, Tennessee**. John Joslyn retrieved artifacts and filmed the Titanic wreckage site. He co-produced the TV documentary “Return to Titanic... Live” and established the two museums. [www.titanicattraction.com](http://www.titanicattraction.com).

---

### *Six Generations continued from page 11.*

of personal identity, suggesting that continuing rhetorical traditions may in some ways be as powerful as cultural folkways in determining identity.”

**Dan Knight** is Associate Professor of History at The University of Texas – Pan American in Edinburg, Texas. He specializes in colonial American history with an emphasis on the Chesapeake region and family history. He is presently working on a book-length study of the George Magee family.

---

### *Scotch-Irish Tent continued from page 7.*

of bungee cords. I like the four inch with the balls on the end.

You will want to try to keep things compact so that you can load everything in the bed of your truck. A long weekend at an event can get you very tired and you might have to carry your own tent and supplies back to your vehicle.



Having a tent at the highland games is very enjoyable, especially when you can help people connect the dots of their heritage. I especially enjoy meeting people from Northern Ireland. You meet many people who represent clans and associations and also Scottish vendors selling Scottish products. After a few games, you feel part of a community and you look forward to seeing everyone again. I am always counting the days until the next highland games!

---

### *Roots and Rhythms continued from page 10.*

USA melody.” Postmodern revisionism notwithstanding, it appears likely that William Walker, a Welsh and Scotch-Irish hymnist from Spartanburg, South Carolina, combined two old Scottish or British folk tunes, gave the resulting melody the name of a Welsh settlement in Pennsylvania, and married it to a popular English hymn. In so doing, Walker transformed “Amazing Grace” into the most recognizable and beloved hymn in the English language. “Amazing Grace” is now part of the repertoire of almost every gospel, country and bluegrass musician in America, not to mention singers and musicians from many other countries and genres as well. In a case of a tune returning to its roots, “Amazing Grace,” or rather its instrumental melody “New Britain,” is also regularly performed on the Scottish bagpipes, particularly at funerals, and there is certainly little doubt that the tune is ideally suited for this ancient instrument.

The illustrations are from *The Southern Harmony, and Musical Companion* (Philadelphia, 1854).

**Mike Scoggins** is historian in residence at the McCelvey Center, in York, South Carolina, which hosted the Symposium in June 2011. Excerpts from his presentation have been used for this issue of *Roots and Rhythms*.

---

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

#### **President**

William McGimpsey  
845-628-9103

#### **Vice-Presidents**

Geoffrey Alexander  
Michael Scoggins

#### **Secretary**

Carole Smith  
[scotchirish@verizon.net](mailto:scotchirish@verizon.net)

#### **Treasurer**

Thomas Campbell

### STRATEGIC

### PLANNING

### COMMITTEE

Thomas Campbell – Chair

Geoffrey Alexander

Bill McGimpsey

Wayne Newell

Mike Scoggins

Carole Smith

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Carole Smith

[scotchirish@verizon.net](mailto:scotchirish@verizon.net)

*Get involved! Stay in touch!*

[www.scotch-irishsocietyusa.org](http://www.scotch-irishsocietyusa.org)  
[scotchirish@verizon.net](mailto:scotchirish@verizon.net)

The Scotch-Irish Society of the USA  
PO Box 53, Media, PA 19063