

The Tartan

The Clan MacDougall Society of North America
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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Messages from the Chiefs
- My Personal Christmas Memory
- Christmas... or Yule?

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From Our President

Holiday season brings us new joys to add to the memories of this passing year. At the same time our holiday gatherings often bring memories of friends and of family times in days gone by. These are the memories that Burns was speaking of when he wrote the wonderful words we sing on New Year's Eve.

Auld Lang Syne
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days of auld lang syne!

We wish a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year full of happy memories to you and your family from all of our volunteers at your Clan MacDougall Society of North America.

Scott MacDougald
President

Kyle Jones
President-Elect



Merry Christmas



MacDougall

Messages from the Chiefs of Clan MacDougall and Clan MacDowall



We would like to wish our North American clansfolk a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. We have been very much aware of the extremes of weather you have been having over the last few months in certain areas and the disruption it must have caused to many families, we hope that none of you were affected, but if so, we hope you have received the best of help available and pray that 2018 will be a calmer year.

During 2017 we have enjoyed having a stream of MacDougall visitors at Dunollie many having travelled the long journey across the Atlantic, that has been so encouraging for us and our Museum project, in fact, we have had a 30% increase in visitor numbers this year. Some of you will have seen our newly published Booklets which came out this summer on both Dunollie Castle and the MacDougalls of Dunollie and their history, they are very well illustrated and full of information. The Hope MacDougall exhibition has now finished and its place will be taken next season by -- "Dear Papa"-- which is about children who lived in Dunollie in the 19th century.

We are delighted that the World Wide Clan portal is now up and running so that we can provide interesting information to people all over the world and raise funds for Dunollie as we go. You will have heard that our Clan Gathering in Oban will be in the summer of 2019 for a week and we hope that will give you plenty of time to plan your trip

With our Christmas Blessings,

Morag MacDougall of MacDougall
Dunollie



"We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, with love from Fergus and Sandy Macdowall of Garthland"

Chief Fergus Macdowall of Garthland with his grandson Garnett Macdowall, Regional Commissioner of British Columbia

My Personal Christmas Memory

By Charlotte McDowell Baker

As I get older memories of Christmas as a child mean the most to me. One I remember this year was the cold snowy Christmas when my Daddy's railroad was on a very long strike. Our family had made do for many months on strikers' pay. There was happiness for the holiday, and the knowing that our pockets were bare.

I believe I was 10 years old at the time Daddy had gone to walk the picket line again that day. Mamma turned to me, the eldest child in the house. She reached into her pocket and handed me 50 cents and said "Take Chuck with you, go buy us a tree to decorate before your father gets home." I remember thinking she is depending on me. You see, I had 3 older sisters they were all working to help the family while Daddy was on strike. I was the oldest child at home, and my brother Chuck was 5 years old, and baby sister was only 3 years old.



Chuck and I quickly put on our coats, went out the back door, got the red wagon, and started to walk toward our school where there was a Christmas tree lot. It was a dark Christmas Eve as we rolled the squeaky wagon along. Walking, I pondered would there be any trees left to buy? Why we had not gone out to cut one down as in years past? But now none of that mattered, I just had to get there before closing.

As we walked up to the lot the lights were still on and there did appear to be 2 trees left. I reached and felt the 2 quarters in my pocket and looked at the trees: One Small Scraggly one and one Big Beautiful one. Mr. Griffith came over. I asked him "How much is the small tree?"

He said "Oh you don't want that one, it has broken branches." I said "I only have 50 cents." He smiled and said "then you can afford the Big Tree." Chuck and I looked at each other with amazement. We gladly gave him the 50 cents.

He helped us load the big tree onto the red wagon, even tying it down for us. We started back home thinking we were conquering heroes. I just knew Mamma would be happy to see this Tree. Then like icing on the cake, half way home the snow started coming down to make it a White Christmas too!

When Mamma saw the Big Beautiful tree she cried, and wiped her face on her apron. "Ok children" she said, "let's get busy and have this tree all decorated when everyone comes home."

My sisters came in very soon after. They said it was the prettiest tree ever. The big tree lights were burning brightly when Daddy came in wiping his feet, and shaking off the cold. He did something I had never seen him do till

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MacDowall

My Personal Christmas Memory (cont)

that day. With tears coming down, Daddy declared we had just had our Christmas miracle. That year the spirit of Christmas filled our family home in a way I will always remember.

I will leave you with the words of my favorite Christmas poem.

A Christmas Prayer

*"Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds, and worship of the wise men.*

*Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.*

*Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and
teach us to be merry with clear hearts.*

*May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and
Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. AMEN."*

(Attributed to Robert Louis Stephenson)

This touching story about the spirit of Christmas first appeared in the Clan MacDowall newsletter Vincere Vel Mori. Its author, Charlotte McDowell Baker is our State Representative for Tennessee. We thank Charlotte for allowing us to print this Christmas memory from her childhood. The Editor



Scottish Settlers, The Blue Ridge, Christmas.... or Yule?

Ah ... “the best laid plans” ... now comes to mind as I think of how I began my search for unique Scottish Christmas traditions to be found in the Blue Ridge Mountains of north Georgia. Memories had come to mind of stories shared by my father and uncles about hardscrabble family Christmas celebrations carried out by the poor mountain folk that they most certainly were in the early 20th century. It is certain that their celebrations were quite similar to those of most Scots Irish immigrants who populated the vast area of the Appalachian Mountains from Canada to Alabama. After their centuries of intermingling in North America, the challenge to find something uniquely Scottish did prove difficult. Our own family link to Clan MacDougall was to be found in the person of my great, great grandmother who passed in 1857. I also encountered my own puzzled lack of clarity regarding Christmas celebrations in Scotland in general. I realized I had to start at the beginning.

What Happened to Christmas in Scotland

At the time of John Knox the Scottish Reformation brought a strong intolerant rejection of former religious holidays and ceremonies which had been celebrated by the Catholic Church in Scotland for a thousand years. After 1560 it was no longer possible, nor safe, to make merry and openly celebrate the annual progression of the old holidays. Christmas Day was just another working day for most Scots, though it appears that Christmas celebration remained a religious celebration of Catholic Scots. At that time and for many generations afterwards, the ban was strictly enforced by legal edict. Among the strictest were those enforced by the Scottish Covenanters who flourished after 1638 and whose strongest base was in Galloway. Similarly austere were those of the Puritans in England whose leader Oliver Cromwell ruled over Scotland in the decade of the 1650s until his dreary Commonwealth was overturned after his death.

After King Charles II returned to his three separate crowns as King of England, King of Scotland and King of Ireland, England returned to celebrations, making merry, and honoring the Yule season, but Scotland did not. Christmas wasn't an official public holiday in Scotland until 1958, and Scots still tend to celebrate New Year's even more than Christmas. The Scots seemed to have saved their rowdy celebrations for the Scottish New Year, Hogmanay, when music was played, drink flowed, feasts were devoured, and “Auld Lang Syne” was sung after it was composed in 1788. It was these New Year's traditions that the Scots from Scotland and Ireland brought with them to North America.

Emigration from Scotland

Beginning in 1608, many lowland Scots including several MacDowalls and other Galloway families began to flee from their poverty and crop failures to settle in nearby war-torn northeast Ireland in what became known as the Plantation of Ulster. Plantation was a term used in those times for colonization, as in the Jamestown Plantation in Virginia during the same period. In the inevitable retaliation upon the end of their harsh rule in 1660, the Covenanters and Puritans faced persecution. It fell hardest upon the unbending Covenanters in the land of Galloway, Scotland during “The Killing Times”



MacDougall

Scottish Settlers, The Blue Ridge, Christmas.... or Yule? (cont)

period and the flight of these Scots to Ireland increased. There, generations of their descendants, who now called themselves Irish instead of Scots, retained their strong Calvinist Scots traditions without Christmas Day observances. However, they remained discontented because Presbyterians were always an underclass in the social structure of Ireland. They were better off than the native Irish Catholic population but had fewer rights than members of the ruling Anglican state Church of Ireland.

After the separate crowns of Scotland and Ireland were united with crown of England after 1707, these Scots could at last flow into the colonies of England in North America to seek land and religious freedom. Between 1715 and 1775 at least 250,000 people of Scots descent sailed from Ireland to North America, many of them as indentured servants. Often they went to Quaker Pennsylvania where they were better tolerated and many were settled inland on the dangerous frontier by the land agents as buffers against the native Indians. Many simply called themselves Irish but others later termed themselves as Ulster Scots to distinguish themselves from the other Irish immigrants coming later. Among them were many MacDowalls who by now had changed their surname spellings to MacDowell with an "e", sometimes with a small "d" or only one "l", but the pronunciation remained the "Mock dool" of their Galloway homeland. During the same period the Gaelic clansmen of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, including the MacDougalls, had been barred from settling in the Plantation of Ireland but now that it was legal after 1707 these Highlanders began emigrating from Scotland directly to North America. Here they often settled together in Gaelic districts in New York, the Carolinas, and after 1759 in Quebec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island following the British defeat of the French in North America on the Plains of Abraham.

Christmas and New Years for the Scots Inland Pioneers

When our Scots ancestors came to North America from Scotland and Ireland they changed the New World and it changed them. This change is apparent in their Christmas and New Year's traditions. As Scots, Irish and Scots-Irish settled in North America, their old Scottish Hogmanay traditions mixed with other Christmas traditions, eventually incorporating German and Scandinavian traditions like the Christmas tree, and the Yule Christmas season. On the thinly populated frontier the observances of the holidays were an opportunity to gather together for good food and to socialize with music and dance. There is little doubt that the Scots brought their considerable skill of distilling with them to the "New World," and created the legendary backwoods copper stills that are often identified with life in Appalachia. Clearly the Scottish affinity for whisky, as it is spelled in Scotland, made its way into Appalachian, Smoky and Blue Ridge mountain traditions that were celebrated around the Christmas season. The men would gather around the communal fire to toast the holiday and the blessings that it brought to these hardy pioneers. The inclusion of a formal Christmas celebration, which had been denied back in Scotland, gave these immigrants another opportunity to socialize and to begin the old country Hogmanay festivities a week earlier.

Scottish Settlers, The Blue Ridge, Christmas.... or Yule? (cont)

The Foods of Hogmanay in Scotland and Ireland, and of New Years in Pioneer North America

In addition to the distillery arts, the Scots also introduced another Hogmanay delicacy to the newly burgeoning Christmas celebration, that being desserts: the delicious and Traditional Scottish Hogmanay / Christmas pudding.

"It is usually served, either with brandy butter, rum sauce, custard or fresh cream. Others might make the similar dish of Cloutie Dumpling. However, these are all 'heavy' desserts - lighter alternatives might be a trifle or Cran-nachan, made with raspberries, whisky, cream and oats." [1]

Often in Scotland, this dessert was set aflame and served to the family. However, this tradition wasn't as lasting among immigrants in the mountains and the backwoods. There the dessert selection slowly changed from "pudding" to our more North American Christmas-associated "fruitcake."

The sweet treats became more closely linked with these winter traditions and also began to include communal-made cookies, cakes and pies. At Christmastime and at our family gatherings, we often heard stories of homemade chocolate candies and mince pies being the highlight of such celebrations. Material goods such as toys were hard to come by, and clothing was more of a necessity than a gift-giving item.



Home Made Christmas Pudding

The Influence of Irish Christmas upon the Songs and Stories in Pioneer North America

Much more than food and drink made its way into the expanding pioneer traditions among this amalgam of Scottish and Irish settlers. Songs and old folk stories, a strong cultural gift from Celtic folk, came across to America and became part and parcel of the winter holidays. Many of them were Christmas songs from Ireland. Unlike the Scots, there was a rich tradition of Christmas celebrating in Ireland that included drink, food and much singing. Some of the specific Irish and English carols which made their way to the pioneers in the back country and became common traditional music among all settlers were: Nollaig Shona Duit which in Gaelic translates into Merry Christmas; Wexford Carol from Ireland, and God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen from England. [2] The Scots were lacking in Christmas tunes; but songs for Hogmanay or New Years were abundant. Nowadays the most famous was written as a poem in 1788 by Scotland's Robert Burns. Sung by millions in every corner of the world, "Auld Lang Syne" is sung at the beginning of a new year; it starts the festivities for all those gathered at New Years and Hogmanay parties. [3]

It was a hard life for so many who left their homes behind to seek a better future. Enduring the upheaval of emigration, they traveled to a wilderness land where they bonded to support each other. They brought the most important parts of their lives with them: their commitment to family, their love of life, a zest for socializing with drink and food, and a reverent religious spirit. They combined these values with old and new customs to create holiday celebrations which supported them and suited their Appalachian home in the New World. So much of what is good about the traditions of the Appalachian, Smoky and



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Scottish Settlers, The Blue Ridge, Christmas.... or Yule? (cont)

Blue Ridge mountains came from these people who for generations upon generations worked hard but took time to honor their faith and make memories with their families.

By Brent Rich

1 - <http://www.scotsman.com/heritage/people-places/christmas-and-new-year-traditions-in-scotland-1-3226062>

2 . <http://www.fantasy-ireland.com/irish-christmas-carols.html>

3 . <http://www.scotlands-enchanting-kingdom.com/traditional-scot>





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