

The Tartan

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

- Dunollie Castle Conservation
- Message from Dunollie
- Grandfather Mountain 2020
- Ephraim McDowell

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Dunollie Castle Conservation	1
Message from Dunollie	3
From Our President	3
Our Grandfather Mountain Events for July 2020	4
Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771-1830	5

Dunollie Castle Conservation

The iconic landmark that Dunollie Castle is, defines Oban's skyline. The fort has defended the bay and the seaways since the building of the Tower House in the 15th Century, long before the town itself was established. It is easy to see how this position once provided a strategic vantage point for the Kings of Dalriada and the Lords of Lorn.

Today, the ruin still stands proudly to tell its internationally important story. It provides a wonderful experience for visitors and a place of belonging, peace and beauty for our local community. As the only scheduled monument in Oban, Dunollie Castle is significant in the heritage of the Argyll area and is enjoyed by many from international visitors tracing their ancestry to local school children learning about their heritage.

The last residents of the castle moved down the hill to Dunollie House in

1745. Since then the castle has been patched and repaired over the years, with major works in the 1920s and 1976. In 2013 access to the Castle had to be closed because it had become a danger to the public, with active masonry collapse and falling stones. Consolidation works began in Spring 2014 and have cost £650,000 to date.

Phase I of Castle works was completed in Spring 2014. This phase made the site safe for visitors to get up close to the castle behind safety fencing placed around vulnerable areas. The wall heads were stabilised to stop further deterioration and falling stones. By spring 2016, Phase II was underway which included repair and consolidation of the south east and south west walls allowing the safety fencing to be removed and the vaulted cellar made accessible to the visitors.



An archaeology dig on the west side of Dunollie Castle



MacDougall

Continued on page 4

Dunollie Castle Conservation (cont)

On 24th February 2020, the final phase (Phase III) of structural consolidation began. This will repair and point the north west and north east walls, making the whole structure safe and providing access to the upstairs of the tower. Once all four walls have been made safe, a second flight of ancient stairs hidden within the upper walls will be opened, leading visitors up to a new viewing platform at the second-floor level. Weather and other circumstances permitting, the Phase III works are anticipated to be completed by the end of April or the beginning of May 2020.

Dunollie has had an able professional team to help deliver this project; CP architects of Oban created a team including conservation architect Paul Barham of Barham Glen, Ben Adam of David Narro Conservation Engineers

and Tommy MacQuade of Morham and Brochie. Archaeologist Roddy Regan has been back to draw the original stonework before pointing and also to conduct a small dig on the first floor of the castle ruin to assess the condition and depth of the floor. Gary Simpson of Heritage Consolidation Ltd and his team of stone masons have been with us since Phase I of the works and are deeply familiar with the castle - it is only fitting they are with us for the final phase.

There are thoughts of future additional phases of works on the castle including the possibility of an engineered stairs taking visitors to the parapet and full consolidation of the outer walls of the enclosure and the cliff face, but for now the ruined tower itself is safe and can be enjoyed by all. For the next edition of The Tartan newsletter we hope to have news on the completion of the work, more pictures, and any findings from the archaeology digs.

The MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust would like to extend a huge thank you to the Clan MacDougall society of North America. These vital conservation efforts could not have moved forward without your support and generous contributions over the years.

Gillian Campbell
Marketing and Promotions Manager
MacDougall of Dunollie Preservation Trust



Every stone is carefully plotted



The First Floor of Dunollie Castle

Message from Dunollie

This comes to wish all our Clansfolk in North America good health and a Happy Easter. It is strange and trying times for us all with both losses and gains we were not expecting. We hope that you are free from the virus but our sympathy goes out to those who have experienced it. We wish you all better times before long, and good memories of all Clan Gatherings last year. Roll on to a Healthy Summer when hopefully Dunollie and the Castle may be able to open again. We are still remaining closed until the Corona virus disappears.

Morag MacDougall of MacDougall.

From Our President

Our times are unusually turbulent for now but our ancient clans have come through troubles before and we have thrived afterwards. Now, troubles have come again; this time in the form of a virus pandemic but we will overcome its temporary disruptions too. Our science, our medicine, and our modern society are better able to respond than ever before in our history; and our clans have a long history. However, in the meantime it is only prudent for each of us to take good care of our health and that of our family, friends, and neighbours by following the best advice.

There was a time when science and medical knowledge were far less advanced. In this issue we bring you an article about Ephraim McDowell, a frontier doctor. Despite lacking the funds to graduate from his Edinburgh medical school to become an accredited Doctor of Medicine, he continued to learn afterwards. He excelled in a time before anyone knew of bacteria, antiseptics, handwashing, anesthetic, x-rays, or electric light under which to operate. Yet under such conditions, which were normal to him 200 years ago, he advanced abdominal surgery to a new level. He was an extraordinary practitioner of medicine.

In the coming months the work of your Society in support of our clan activities will continue despite the cancellation of some of this season's Highland Games. Our Society Games page at <https://macdougall.org/games-calendar/> is continually being updated to keep you informed of the current status of each of our planned Highland Games events, including Grandfather Mountain. As you will read in our Castle Conservation report from Dunollie, our support of our Dunollie Castle heritage site is acknowledged as a key to the success of Phase III work. Our 2020 Scholarships will soon be awarded by our Scholarship Committee led by Sarah Hereford. Your Membership helps us to accomplish this. Together we will accomplish even more in the future.

Scott MacDougald

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MacDowall

Our Grandfather Mountain Events for July 2020

Since February we have experienced the cancellation of several Highland Games events in response to measures taken to counter the current virus pandemic affecting the world. Whenever we are notified that an event at which we were scheduled to participate is cancelled, we display that cancellation on our Games Calendar page <https://macdougall.org/games-calendar/> on our Society web site. Of course, many future events remain uncertain or still remain scheduled at this time.

The Grandfather Mountain Highland Games from July 9 to 12, 2020 is one example. Their web site at <http://www.gmhg.org/> currently shows no change in their intended schedule for July 2020 but we are monitoring it in case of any change. Currently our 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) is scheduled to be held there in the Chiefs Tent on the Games site at 3 pm on Saturday July 11, 2020. If this changes we will communicate this on our web site and in our eNewsletters.

If the proper authorities do permit the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games to go ahead and if social gatherings are permitted, we plan to hold a Family Gathering and Supper on Friday July 10, 2020 at Elevations Restaurant from 4:30 to 8:30 pm. However, at present their web site <https://www.elevationstavernandgrill.com/> shows that the restaurant is providing only takeout meals due to COVID 19 restrictions in North Carolina. Hence at this time we cannot be sure that any events will take place that weekend including our Friday Gathering.

Should the situation improve, our Family Gathering and Supper is planned to be an entertaining change from our traditional, more formal Friday dinner. You may choose to attend part or all of the evening's activities:

1. The Reception: An arrival, introduction, and social gathering period from 4:30 to 5:30 pm.
2. The Supper: A casual meal from 5:30 to approximately 6:30 pm. ordered from choices on a pre-selected menu. A meal reservation form will be provided in future eNewsletters and on our web site for you to make a reservation and to inform us of your entrée selections.

3. The Entertainment: A musical and entertainment period from approximately 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

We will communicate more about this when the situation becomes clear. At the moment the most important thing is to take care of one another and to follow the best advice available until the present COVID 19 situation improves.

Scott MacDougald

President



The Elevations Restaurant room for our Informal Gathering

Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771 - 1830

On July 2, 1864 Congress passed sec. 1814 of the Revised Statutes to provide that each State may donate two statues of its notable citizens to the National Statuary Hall Collection and

"... when so furnished the same shall be placed in the Old Hall of the House of Representatives, in the Capitol of the United States, which is set apart, or so much thereof as may be necessary, as a national statuary hall for the purpose herein indicated."



Postage stamp issued in 1959 in honor of Ephraim McDowell

In later years that law was amended so that the statues are now housed in prominent locations in designated areas and corridors of the Capitol. One of them is the bronze cast statue of Ephraim McDowell of Danville, KY. The painted plaster model which was used for this statue stands in the Kentucky State Capitol rotunda in Frankfort as one of five prominent Kentuckians.

They honor Ephraim McDowell for the innovative contributions he made to the knowledge of abdominal surgery, though he never graduated from the Medical School he attended and lived far from any major city.

McDowell is described as nearly six feet in height, erect, and inclined to corpulency, with a florid complexion and lustrous black eyes. The

eyes were so piercingly black as to have received a special mention upon various occasions. (Ephraim McDowell "Father of Ovariectomy" and Founder of Abdominal Surgery p. 213.)

One of his many accomplishments is told in the following story.

Mrs. Jane Todd Crawford

On December 13, 1809, Ephraim McDowell was called by two Doctors to travel from his medical practice in Danville, KY to a cabin nine miles SE of Greensburg, KY. There Mrs. Jane Todd Crawford, about age 46 and the wife of a prosperous wheat and tobacco planter, was thought to be pregnant and past due for delivery. He thought he would be assisting with the delivery of twins. However, upon arriving he diagnosed that instead of being pregnant, she had a large ovarian tumor. He later described her condition:

"I would observe that my patient was a woman of small stature; her abdomen had become so pendulous, as to reach almost to her knees."

He knew that her only hope was an operation then thought impossible which she would not likely survive. In those days before anesthesia, an operation on the body's major internal cavities such as the abdomen exposed the patient to agony and the risk



Bronze of Ephraim M. McDowell by Charles H. Niehaus in the Capitol Visitor Center Upper Level auditorium lobby. Given by the State of Kentucky in 1929



MacDougall

Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771 - 1830 (cont)

of shock which often led to death of the patient. These very high risks deterred surgeons from attempting operations such as this except in dire emergencies. In a modest report, he later described what next happened:

Having never seen so large a substance extracted nor heard of an attempt or success attending any operation such as this required, I gave to the unhappy woman information of her dangerous situation. She appeared willing to undergo an experiment, which I promised to perform if she would come to Danville (the town where I live), a distance of sixty miles from her place of residence. This appeared almost impracticable by any, even the most favorable conveyance, though she performed the journey in a few days on horseback. (Ephraim McDowell "Father of Ovariectomy" and Founder of Abdominal Surgery p. 86.)

The Experiment, Ovarian Surgery

What he was proposing to do was to remove her very large ovarian tumor in an attempt to alleviate her desperate condition before it caused a painful death. The highly risky surgery he proposed was so new and untried that he did not call it an operation; it was to be an "experiment" in ovariectomy. This untried abdominal surgical procedure had been considered and debated academically for a century but never yet performed. Jane Todd Crawford agreed to undergo his proposed "experiment" to be performed in Danville. To get from her cabin to Danville on horseback, she rested the tumor on the horn of the side saddle during her sixty mile ride. She arrived at his home "ready for the experiment" as she later expressed it. A local preacher had raised public opinion against performing such a dangerous operation but neither the surgeon nor the patient was deterred. It is understandable why she had such confidence in him. His demeanor has been described as kind and sincere, and:

In his movements he was deliberate and accurate, and the intensity of his concentration was marked by the degree with which he perspired when operating, even in wintry days. To his patients he was kind, sympathetic, and inspiring. (Ephraim McDowell "Father of Ovariectomy" and Founder of Abdominal Surgery p. 60.)



The restored bedroom. Photo used with permission of McDowell House Museum.

Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771 - 1830 (cont)

On Christmas morning, Saturday December 25, 1809, the surgical “experiment” proceeded undisturbed, though a myth later circulated for years about a fictitious mob being outside the house. He operated on Jane Todd Crawford in an upstairs bedroom without anesthesia. His nephew and business partner, Doctor James McDowell, assisted him while two witnesses were present. In his pocket during the surgery was a prayer that he had written out beforehand.

In about twenty-five minutes he removed twenty-two and a half pounds of ovarian cyst: “...but was so large that we could not take it away entire” so he tied off the base with silk thread. Five days later, he found her making her own bed and twenty five days later she returned home “in the depth of winter.” Jane Todd Crawford survived the “experiment” to live in good health for another thirty-two years and outlived her surgeon before dying in March 1842 in Graysville, Indiana at age 78.

The Ignored Breakthrough, Ovarian Surgery

This was the first ever ovariectomy (or technically an ovariectomy since some of the tumor’s base was intentionally left behind.) However, to consider just how special this operation was in 1809, one should remember the state of medicine then. Any necessary lighting was supplied by windows, candles or lamps. Few medical journals existed. It was over 50 years before Louis Pasteur’s advances in the study of bacteria germ theory led to Joseph’s Lister’s introduction of antiseptic and hand washing into surgical practice. Even the profession of trained nurses would not be established by Florence Nightingale until the 1850s. Patient notes were seldom made or kept. Without benefit of these future advances, Ephraim McDowell was pioneering new surgical procedures inside the abdomen. Unfortunately, he did not make timely surgical notes on the medical cases he was pioneering.

He actually performed a second ovariectomy in 1813 and a third in 1816. Finally, in 1816 he wrote a modest report of these first three ovarian surgery cases called “Three Cases of Extirpation of Diseased Ovaria.” He sent a copy to his former teacher in Scotland, Dr. John Bell, but he was absent in Italy so it sat for years. It was finally published in Scotland in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal of October, 1824 by being included as a minor section of a medical paper written by the Doctor serving as Bell’s replacement. In 1816 McDowell had also sent a copy to an American surgeon in Philadelphia requesting that “it be published if found worthy.” However, the surgeon ignored it likely because it seemed too impossible to be true or perhaps because McDowell had no medical degree.

His surgical breakthrough of 1809 remained unknown to the world of medicine for seven years afterwards. Finally, following the repeated urgings of friends and another nephew, Dr. William McDowell, he sent his report of his first three ovarian surgeries to a second American Doctor, Prof. Thomas James of the University of Pennsylvania who recognized its importance. Prof. James published McDowell’s report in 1817 within the United States in The Eclectic Repertory and Analytical Review.

The article drew some disbelief from some Doctors and received criticism for lacking more details. However, the value of his work was recognized by his admission to membership into the prestigious Medical Society of Philadelphia that same year. In September 1819 he provided the same journal with a follow up report concerning two more recent cases and, in response to subsequent criticisms of his published 1816 report, he added more details about the three earlier operations. Ephraim McDowell was not the first to operate on an ovarian growth in some manner but his operations were the most successful and most widely known to date. His successful procedures provided knowledge that removed the dread and mystery of abdominal surgery. These were the beneficial outcomes of his successful ovariectomy. They would lead other surgeons to pioneer many other abdominal surgeries.



MacDowall

Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771 - 1830 (cont)

In October 1824 the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal published his long neglected report which he had sent to Dr. Bell some eight years earlier. This report initially attracted strong criticism and disbelief. Now that his innovative ovarian tumor surgeries were publicized, his surgical successes were being doubted by some rather than being widely acclaimed by all. After reading McDowell's reports, some Doctors did not believe he had accomplished these breakthrough surgeries. To them, he was a country Doctor making unproven claims of great surgical successes achieved in the backwoods under impossible frontier conditions. However, these criticisms, some savage, also brought his previously unnoticed surgical breakthrough much needed attention from the medical profession in Europe and America.



Some surgeons had trouble replicating his successful new methods for years afterwards even though they had far better medical facilities than he did. Between 1821 and 1840 his ovariectomy procedure was attempted by at least eight other American surgeons but only some of them were successful.

European surgeons had similar experiences. Years of controversy would follow, even after his death in 1830, until the correctness of his innovative surgical breakthroughs was finally established. In his lifetime he performed the operation he had pioneered at least eleven times while losing only one of the patients. These successful advances paved the way for others to dare to perform future surgery of the liver and biliary system, the gastro-intestinal tract, the pelvis and appendix. It is for this reason that some call him the father of abdominal surgery.

Ephraim McDowell's origins

Ephraim McDowell's family roots have been traced back to the MacDowalls of Garthland in Galloway but his family were in nearby Ulster in northern Ireland in the 1600s. His namesake ancestor, Ephraim McDowell, as a young man had fought for the Protestant William of Orange in the siege of Londonderry in 1689 and at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. In the Ulster crop failure year of 1729 he was a recent widower of about age 62 after the death of his wife Margaret Irvine McDowell in 1728.

Like many others he uprooted himself to emigrate to North America. With the four of his children willing to come with him, he sailed on the George and Anne. The family first settled in the Pennsylvania Quaker colony before moving on to Virginia. Their descendant, Samuel McDowell, served in the French and Indian War and as a colonel in the American Revolution, distinguishing himself at Guilford Court House.

Samuel's son, Ephraim, was born in Rockbridge county, Virginia on November 11, 1771 as the ninth of eleven children. He came to Kentucky, then part of Virginia, with his family in 1783 when his father, Samuel, was appointed to survey the land and sort out disputes there. After coming to Kentucky, Samuel was also a judge and was president of the convention that framed the first constitution of Kentucky. He also attended the meeting that founded the Transylvania Seminary, which was to become Transylvania University in Lexington, KY. The story of Samuel and his McDowell ancestors is told in the book, The MacDowalls.

Ephraim's medical education and practice

Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771 - 1830 (cont)

Ephraim McDowell would have received some form of home schooling within the family or with educated family friends since there were no regular schools nearby at the time. As a teenager he studied medicine in Staunton, Virginia for two or three years with Dr. Humphreys, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh. Then Ephraim traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland which at that time was renowned for the quality of its medical knowledge. First, he attended lectures in chemistry, anatomy, surgery, medical practice and botany at the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh in 1793 and 1794. However, he did not take all of the university courses then required for a medical degree. He seems to have concentrated on the most practical courses, likely because he lacked the funds to do more. In the same period he studied privately under Dr. John Bell, a very able and energetic surgeon in Edinburgh, who espoused the importance of the then largely overlooked relationship between anatomy and surgery.

He returned to Danville, KY about 1795 to open a "shop", as a Doctor's medical practice was called in those days. He rode fifty to one hundred miles on horseback at all hours of the day in all kinds of weather in his Kentucky pioneer practice. In 1921, his biographer, August Schachner, M.D., himself writing before the discovery of antibiotics, described this pioneer Kentucky medical practice this way:

Some of these calls meant absence from home in the wilderness for a week or more; in others, a surgical operation was involved. When we consider that all of this was prior to the use of, anaesthetics and compare the dangers and difficulties, the crude simplicity and the absence of all trained help, that marked the surgery of his career, with the surgery of today, with all of its comforts, aids, safeguards, and its otherwise wonderful complexity of detail, we almost think of him as operating and practicing in the "stone age" of surgery.

(Ephraim McDowell "Father of Ovariectomy" and Founder of Abdominal Surgery p. 58.)

In 1802 he married Sarah Shelby, daughter of Kentucky's first Governor. The next year he purchased their frame house in Danville, KY which he remodeled and extended. As a frontier Doctor he did many things. He built his own Apothecary Shop next door which he ran until 1820. Because of his skill, training and brilliant innovations, his reputation grew. He passed on his knowledge and skill mainly to young men studying medicine in his shop.

He perfected the surgical technique of lithotomy, the removal of stones obstructing the bladder. He performed it most famously in 1812 when he operated on a young man who was to become his most famous patient. This was the future President, James K. Polk, who at the age of 17 had a urinary stone removed from his urinary bladder and a hernia repaired. He became a member of the Philadelphia Medical Society in 1817. He was considered to be the best surgeon west of Philadelphia even though he lived in a village of less than 1000 inhabitants and had not obtained a medical school diploma to practice. Finally in 1825, the University of Maryland conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine; it was the only degree he ever received. Like his father, he helped to found a college, Centre College in Danville, of which he was one of the founders and first trustees.

In June 1830 at age fifty eight Doctor Ephraim McDowell was seized with an acute attack diagnosed as inflammatory fever but it is possible that the father of abdominal surgery actually died of appendicitis. However, the controversy from some surgeons about his surgical successes continued to dog his memory until Kentucky Doctor Samuel D. Gross diligently researched the facts, interviewed his patients and those who worked with him. He documented it all in a carefully written report on surgery for the second annual meeting of the Kentucky State Medical Society held in Louisville in 1852. Over many years, as Ephraim McDowell's defender and biographer, he removed doubts and convinced many skeptics of the truth of his surgical accomplishments. In 1879 the Kentucky State Medical Society dedicated a monument in Danville to the memory of Dr. Ephraim McDowell.



MacDougall

Ephraim McDowell, Pioneer Surgeon, 1771 - 1830 (cont)

The McDowell House Museum

After his death in 1830 his house was sold. Later the entire area became run-down and the house deteriorated badly until Dr. August Schachner of Louisville led the efforts to buy the house for restoration after seeing its poor condition during a 1921 visit to the house. In 1935 the Kentucky Medical Association bought the house and deeded it to the State of Kentucky which had it restored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) by May 1939. In 1948, the State of Kentucky returned the property to the Kentucky Medical Association. In the late 1950s the Kentucky Pharmaceutical Society



McDowell House Museum is the restored and furnished former home and office of pioneering surgeon Dr. Ephraim McDowell with an historic pharmacy. Photo used with permission of McDowell House Museum

restored the Apothecary Shop with help from the Eli Lilly Foundation. They presented it to the Kentucky Medical Association on August 14, 1959. Now it is part of the beautifully restored McDowell House Museum at 125 South Second St. Danville, KY. Open to visitors and furnished to its early nineteenth century elegance, it tells the story of Dr. Ephraim McDowell. Its web site is <http://www.mcdowellhouse.com/>.

By Scott MacDougald

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MacDougall

Clan MacDougall Society of North America



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