

Celtic Guide

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A Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

You hold in your hands, or perhaps are viewing on your computer screen, what is the very first issue of the Celtic Guide. I have been enjoying Celtic culture for my entire life, being exposed from my very first year on Earth to Scottish and Irish music and family get-togethers. I've expanded this legacy to include writing many articles for Celtic-oriented magazines, books, web sites and newsletters. I have traveled to many Celtic lands, from Scotland, Ireland and Nova Scotia, to less-obvious places like the Alpine regions of Europe, the Caribbean islands, and across North America. And, I have performed Celtic music, on and off stage, for over four decades.

Along the way, I've met some wonderful people around the world - people who have always been ready to share, and to be as accepting as "family" because, in fact, we are all family if we carry even a hint of Celtic heritage in our blood, or simply in our minds.

I use the word "Celtic" in a very general sense, as I am well aware of the influx of many different cultures and nationalities into the history of traditionally Celtic nations. Just as "everyone is Irish" on St. Patrick's Day, so we are all Celtic when it comes to our love for this special history, art, music and culture.

I intend to publish this online magazine once a month for as long as it is accepted. It will always be free to the reader and I encourage you to print this convenient size to your printer and share it with anyone and everyone. I also would appreciate hearing from you through e-mail or even a letter to give me an idea of how many readers I might have.

Out of necessity, the first few issues will be authored almost exclusively by me, though I hope others will contribute their own thoughts. I will remain open to all suggestions and contributions. Thank you for taking the time to check out this very first issue.

Jim McQuiston, editor & publisher

Here's tae us!

*“Wha's like us?
Damn few and they're a' deid.”*

It only takes a quote like the one above, written by the great Scottish writer and historian Sir Walter Scott, or a few book titles like *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, by Thomas Cahill, and *The Mark of the Scots*, by Duncan Bruce, or perhaps even a few blockbuster movies like *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy*, to give folks the impression that the Celtic world holds itself in pretty high esteem.

Truth is, the amalgamation of races and cultures that have combined to form what many think of as being “Celtic” have had their share of ups and downs, as have many cultures across the face of the earth, and across time.

However, it is also true that much of the Renaissance period in European history was helped along by elements of Roman, Alpine Celtic, and Biblical traditions and histories that were kept alive in Ireland during the so-called Dark Ages. Manuscripts such as the *Book of Kells*, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, and other meticulous Celtic works still provide fodder for historical musing.

It is also true that many improvements to mankind's lot have come from Scottish innovators, not to mention that 70% of all U.S. presidents have had Scottish bloodlines, two-thirds of all Canadian prime ministers have had the same, and even 25% of all English prime ministers have surprisingly had some Scottish background. There is an endless list available of Scottish contributions to the

world of invention, finance and government. In fact, it is not a stretch to say that the Scots and their Irish counterparts have been instrumental in spreading the idea of personal freedom around the globe. Both carry the reputation of being willing to die for that freedom, and God knows many did.

It is not our purpose here to rehash the accomplishments outlined particularly in the first two books mentioned. They provide enough delightful reading, already. However, it would be helpful, at a higher level, to recount some basics of Celtic history.

It must first be said that Celtic “tribes” were often organized more by culture and perhaps language than by bloodlines. Some believe the first Celts to be descendant of the Tribes of Israel, more specifically from the lost tribe of Dan, and it is true that many ancient places in Ireland, Scotland and even Scandinavian countries have names rooted in the words Dan, Don or Dun, including Denmark, or “Dan Merk” - a merk being a measurement of land; thus “Dan's land”.



The Book of Kells and other Irish writings kept ancient records safe for centuries, until the world emerged from the Dark Ages.

On old maps of Ireland, drawn by the famous map maker, Ptolemy, we find “Dan Sower” (Dan’s Resting Place), and “Dan Sobairse” (Dan’s habitation).

Also, one translation for the famous Tuatha De Dannan tribe of ancient Irish history is “Tribe of Dan.” There are other translations, of course, just as there are other misty explanations of the origins of the Celts, themselves.

One Irish form of the name Donald is, in fact, the name Daniel. The expansive Scottish/Irish clan of McDonald/McDonnell, the Irish clan of O’Donnell, as well as the McDaniel, McDonough, and even the Donohue families could well have their origins ultimately in the name Daniel/Donald, more commonly known as Domhnaill in Gaelic. Without a doubt the Domhnaill name was used in the ancient histories of Ireland and Scotland long before one family officially became Clan Donald.

There seems to be at least a modicum of proof that the name Dan is prominent in the ancient histories of these northern lands, in both place names and surnames.

Some of the earliest writings describing the Celtic people consist of notes recorded by Josephus, an historian from A.D. 70, who writes in his “Antiquities of the Jews” that –

“...wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates until now (A.D. 70) and are an immense multitude...”

This author is speaking of the two lost tribes of the original twelve Israelite tribes. These were the tribes of Dan and Benjamin, and he locates them in Asia and Europe, as of A.D. 70.

The Hebrews are referred to, in the Bible, as the Heberites, in Numbers 25:45, being

descended from Heber, he being the great, great, grandson of Noah. In Spain, at the time of the Celtic presence there, we find the Iberians, and also, the islands between Ireland and Scotland – those first settled by the descendants of Tuatha De Dannan, and the ancestors of Clan Donald – are still today called the Hebrides (pronounced by some as Heber – dees).

There are other ancient documents that proclaim the same origins for the general population of Scotland and Ireland. Among those are Andrew Wyntown’s *Chronykil of Scotland*, from 1400 A.D. which was predated by at least three ancient Irish compilations alluding to this origin - *The Chronicles of Eri*, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, and *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*.



Written in 1320, the Declaration of Arbroath, shown above, implies that the Scots/Celts originated with the tribes of Israel.

April 6th has been set aside as “National Tartan Day” in America, by the U.S. Congress. It is recognized annually by the president, and by Scots from all over the world.

The following is some text taken from U.S. Senate Resolution Number 155:

“Whereas April 6 has a special significance to all Americans, and especially to those Americans of Scottish descent, because the Declaration of Arbroath, the Scottish Declaration of

Independence was signed on April 6, 1320, and the American Declaration of Independence was modeled on that inspirational document . . .”

There are many thoughts and actual phrases of the 1320 Arbroath Declaration which were used in the Declaration of Independence of the United States, so highly thought of was this venerable document. In this very ancient Scottish declaration the belief that the Scots descended from the Israelites is recounted to, of all people, the Pope.

This theory of the origin of the Scots, and therefore the Celts, as being traced back to the Israelites is written about in many modern works and may be indisputable, in the face of all the evidence.

There are two more common threads to be considered. One is the Irish harp, which is said to be patterned after the harp of the Biblical David. This theory is supported by much tradition and by archeological evidence.

Another thread is the “Stone of Destiny,” over which many an Irish, Scottish and English king or queen has been crowned, and which is said, in legend, to be the actual stone used as a pillow by Jacob in the Biblical story of his dream, and to have been brought to Ireland by Scota, daughter of the Pharaoh Cingrus.

Scota’s name is one source given for the word Scotland. The other, typically given, is Scotti, the Celtic word for ancient Irish raiders or voyagers. I think it is possible that the Scotti got their name from being voyagers, just like Scota and her people were, and later their Scotti name was transferred to Scotland when these Irish Celts made their way into the Hebrides and coastal areas of Scotland and their Scotti land became Scotland.

Thus we see it is possible that Scotland was named indirectly for Scota and the Hebrides were named for Heber - two names dating back to Biblical times and to the Middle East, also the original home of the bagpipes!



These crosses within circles, shown above, are ancient Celtic artifacts found near Zurich, Switzerland and displayed in the Swiss National Museum. On the Outer Hebrides stand the Callanish Stones, perhaps the most famous megalithic site in Scotland, which feature standing stones extending from a circle. All throughout Ireland it is common to see the Celtic Cross, with its cross within a circle, displayed at grave sites, in jewelry, and in architecture.

On a trip to Europe, in 2003, I found the wonderful Swiss National Museum in Zurich, Switzerland, whose early historical displays were dedicated almost exclusively to the Celts, due to a cache of Celtic artifacts found nearby.

In doing some follow-up research, I was to find that the Celts populated much of the Alpine region of Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland and France, including establishing three cities that I had visited – Munich, Milan, and Zurich.

In Zurich the use of the word Helvetica on store front signs was very prominent. This word was an early name of Celtic people. Not far from Zurich, one of the largest caches of ancient Celtic artwork, weapons and day-to-day objects was found, and much of it makes up the Celtic displays at the Zurich museum.

The Celts were eventually driven out of the Alps by Julius Caesar, who, by his own count, had exterminated 1,125,000 Celts. The Romans eventually chased the Celts all the way to Great Britain, where Hadrian's Wall was built to keep them contained in the Scottish Highlands.

As the legends go, the Celts left the Alpine region for Spain and then traveled on to Ireland, and eventually Scotland. In Spain there is an area known as Galacia, where forms of Celtic music and language can still be found.

In the early 1900s, the area surrounding what is now Krakow or Cracow, Poland, was in the hands of Austria as a "crownland" and was being called Galicia. It wasn't until 1914-18, and World War I, that the land of Galicia was split up again between Poland and the Ukraine.

The names Galicia and Galacia come from the original Celtic or Gaelic settlers of this land – the Galatians of the Bible, the Gauls of Western Europe, the Gaelic Celts of the Alps that had sacked Rome more than once – the same Gaels or Celts that settled Ireland, Scotland, Wales and possibly even parts of Brittany and Scandinavia.

The earliest intense concentration of Celtic and Gaelic culture in Great Britain can be said to have first been located in Ireland and Wales, with each area using a slightly different version of the Gaelic language. From Ireland, the Celts moved into Scotland to mix with the Picts, who may well have been a branch tribe of Celts.

Most of Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales was subjected to many raids by Scandinavian raiders known to history as the Vikings. Other Scandinavians mixed with the Celts, arriving as traders, rather than raiders. In addition, there was a heavy influence in lowland Scotland from the Anglo-Saxons and Normans.

What we would think of as the old Celtic countries are actually a considerable mix of ancient tribes, many still having links to the untamed tribes of Europe, and most likely to have some association with, or origin from what might be considered the earliest Celtic clans.

In Scotland and Ireland, the Celts, as an amalgamated race of people, remained principally Catholic until the Reformation. A number in Scotland eventually turned to the Presbyterian religion, spreading into Ulster.

Many conflicts developed over the centuries both in Scotland and Ireland between religious and political factions. When a deep study is made of these conflicts, it can often be determined that the common folk were subject to incredible horrors while unwittingly advancing the fortunes of the rich and powerful.

As these incidences are spoken of, in future issues of the Celtic Guide, it will never be our intention to take sides, or necessarily place blame, but rather only to attempt to sort out the historical record, with many stories to come.

From both Ireland and Scotland, and for that matter Wales, people with some sort of Celtic heritage, if not blood, made their way to new lands, from Canada (with a strong settlement in Nova Scotia), to the United States and the Caribbean, and to New Zealand and Australia.

How accurate the origin stories of the Celtic race are, it is at least accurate to say that they once populated much of Europe, they attacked Rome at its height of power, they left behind small settlements in Spain and near Poland that remained in recent times, they settled then principally in Ireland spreading into Scotland, they left from both Scotland and Ireland to find a new life in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, New Zealand, Australia and elsewhere, and that their culture is still alive.

The very ancient Celtic artifacts in the Zurich museum show some of the same artistic patterns of relics from later Ireland and Scotland. Rope knotted brooch pins and the famous Celtic knot are two prime examples.

Those of us who are Celtic, or wish to be Celtic, are weaved together in a Celtic knot of history, music, language, and culture – all of which we intend to celebrate in each issue of the Celtic Guide. If you enjoy our efforts, please do not hesitate to send us an e-mail to let us know.



Oh! Fiddle-dee-dee

Perhaps no musical instrument does a better job than the fiddle at connecting the ancient countries of Scotland and Ireland with the “New World.”

For centuries the fiddler served as a one-man-band for dance music in small communities from the northern British Isles to North America. Today, the fiddle is still typically the lead instrument at music sessions and Celtic concerts, and for one very good reason . . . it is loud! It is also an extremely soulful instrument.

The violin or fiddle first appeared in Italy in the 1500s. It slowly spread north and began filling a gap in Celtic music between the equally loud but limited bagpipes, and the softer sounding harp. By the 1700s the fiddle had spread into even the most remote corners of Scotland and Ireland.

The bagpipes have a short range of available notes. They made an incredible weapon of war and are the only instrument that has ever been outlawed as such. The harp, though popular as an accompaniment for singers, didn't have the volume or the ability to create a percussive rhythm to serve as a lead instrument for dancing purposes, or in leading a group of musicians.

When bagpipes were outlawed, many pipe tunes were converted to fiddle tunes. The fiddle reigned supreme and one could be found in nearly every Scottish or Irish household, until its popularity was temporarily subdued by a combination of sadness over emigration to America and an evangelism that swept these countries during the later half of the 1700s.

On the Isle of Skye, in 1805, a “veritable mountain of bagpipes and fiddles” was burned in response to the evangelistic spirit. However, this favored instrument would not die.

Not only was the fiddle found to be sufficiently loud, percussive when needed, and possessing a

wide range of available musical notes, it was also compact and easily manufactured. No wonder it was popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

The question is often asked about the difference between a violin and a fiddle. There is no difference – they are exactly the same instrument. However, there are differences in how they are played. One old saying tells us, “A fiddle is a violin with an attitude.”

Many rules that were followed by violinists were bent along the way, as players began using the fiddle for folk music. One simple example is the “double-stop” or the playing of two notes at the same time. This technique is seldom found in violin pieces but is quite common in so-called “Irish” playing.

There is a physical attribute that is sometimes given as the difference between a violin and a fiddle. In order to achieve smoother double-stops, fiddlers will sometimes flatten the bridge of a fiddle to allow the strings to lie a little more on the same plane with each other, thus making it easier to achieve the two-note sound.

Bluegrass and Appalachian styles of fiddling, based on old Ulster techniques, tend to use the double-stop more often than Irish or Cape Breton style players, though I have heard many a fiddler play these two-note “chords” on their instruments quite intentionally, and quite well, no matter the folk style. And, I have been lucky enough to hear some of the world's best.



I have attended two concerts by Cape Breton's great Natalie MacMaster, and spent time in her homeland listening to many other great Nova Scotian players. I also spent parts of a weekend with Scotland's fiddle ambassador, Alasdair Fraser, and am proud to say I have met and shaken the hand of these two fiddle geniuses.

Throughout Scotland and Ireland various fiddling styles developed, which were brought to America. Alasdair Fraser is one of the leading fiddlers in the world. I watched him demonstrate very specific styles found in America and relate them directly to the communities or locales in Scotland or Ireland where they developed.

I have also attended concerts by fiddle champs Jeremy Kittel and Melinda Crawford, and have had a host of fiddlers in my own family stretching back at least seven generations that we know of, and on both sides of the family.

In Charles Hanna's 1902 two-volume work on the Scotch-Irish there is one page of particular interest to me. He quotes from Reverend David McClure's diary, Pittsburgh, PA, 1772: "[December] 10th. Thursday, preached at Mr. James McQuiston's, near the head of Sewickley Creek, Mount Pleasant Township."

James, my direct ancestor, was a spy during the Revolutionary War for the Colonial Army. McClure continues: "It was a scene of wild and confused merriment. They were dancing to the music of a fiddle."

My great grandfather played the fiddle. My grandfather played the fiddle in beer parlors while his oldest daughter accompanied him on guitar. Even my father played a bit at dances.

Another old saying is that, "A violin sings, a fiddle dances!"

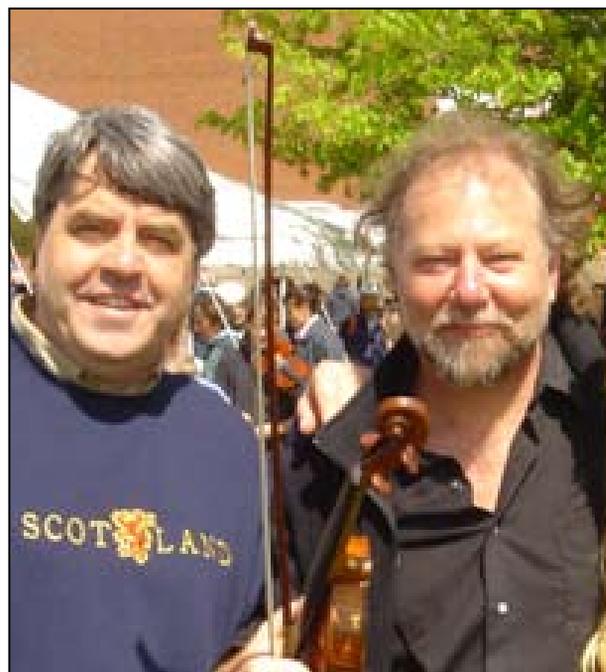
The fiddle has provided innumerable hours of dancing enjoyment over the centuries. This saying is also due, in part, to the percussive styles of fiddle playing not often found in violin pieces.

Fiddle music can be bold and exciting or mellow and haunting. It is a great joy to watch a seasoned player perform "tricks" with the bow,

bouncing here, drawing it long there, sawing away at the strings one minute, and then quietly creating vibrato on a single note. One especially wonderful description of the joy of listening to a fiddle is to be found in an article, in an 1887 issue of the Atlantic Monthly –

"Fiddle! He'd about break your heart with them tunes of his, or else set your heels flying up the floor in a jig, though you was minister o' the First Parish and all wound up for a funeral prayer. It used to seem to me summer nights, when I was comin' along the plains road, and he set by the window playin', as if there was a bewitched human creatur' in that old red fiddle o' his. He could make it sound just like a woman's voice tellin' somethin' over and over, as if folks could help her out o' her sorrows if she could only make 'em understand. How he would twirl off them jigs and dance tunes! He used to make somethin' han'some out of 'em in fall an' winter, playin' at huskins and dancin' parties. He'd got the gift, that's all you could say about it."

Perhaps that is all you can say about it!



The editor, Jim McQuiston, spending time with Alasdair Fraser at the Edinboro, PA, Highland Games.

The Maritime Minister

*The Mad World of
Norman MacLeod*

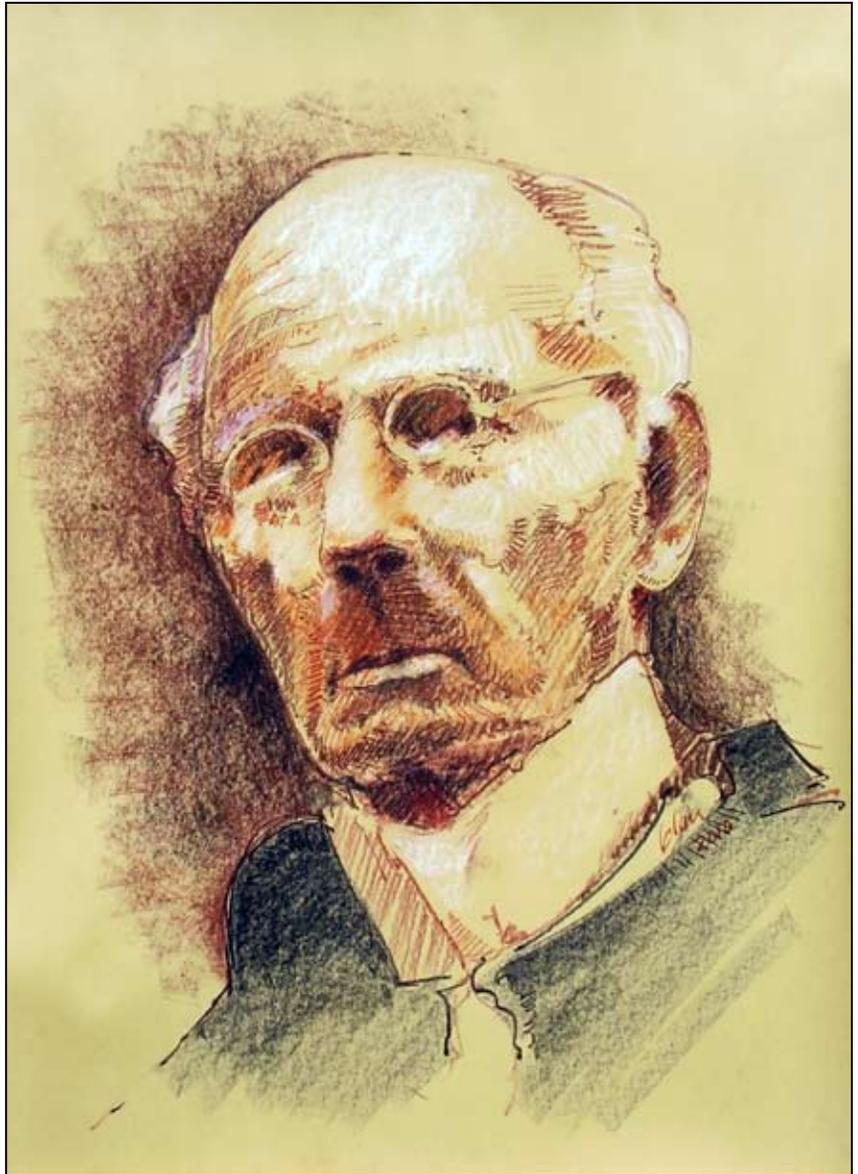
In the month of March, 1866, an the aging Reverend Norman MacLeod, self appointed preacher to the masses, lay dying in a New Zealand paradise; his last words – “Children, children, look to yourselves. The world is mad!”

From 1817, when he first set sail from Ullapool, Scotland, until his death in Waipu, New Zealand, the Reverend Norman MacLeod logged roughly 15,000 nautical miles, sailing from Scotland to Nova Scotia, and on past the dangerous Cape of Good Hope, Africa, on his way to Australia and New Zealand, forever searching for a heaven on earth for his flock. Along the way, MacLeod planted Scots settlers across a large portion of the globe. It is most likely that no single person has been more responsible for the worldwide dissemination of Scots than this single maritime minister.

Born in 1780, of crofter parents, along the rugged, unforgiving northwest coast of Scotland, Norman saw his share of sailing and planting, and perhaps enough of the harshness of life to justify calling the world “mad.”

His parents, Daniel and Margaret, were strict, religious Highlanders who expected Norman to finish his school studies in time to join in their life of farming

and fishing. But it was study, especially study of theology, that drove young Norman. Despite his meager beginnings, he managed to graduate with a Gold Medal from Kings College of Aberdeen, in 1812, and continued his studies at Edinburgh University.



This portrait was commissioned in 2011 by the Gaelic College of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. It shows Reverend Norman MacLeod and is the work of Blair Ferguson. This photograph of the painting was provided to the editor by Peggy MacAskill, Director of the Gaelic College, to accompany this article.

However, Norman could not shake his strict upbringing and soon rebelled against moderates in the Church of Scotland, renouncing his intended ministry in that faith, and returning to his old crofter trade at Ullapool.

Though a fisherman at trade, Norman continued to fish for the souls of humankind and developed a considerable following. Still, the established church looked down on his independent ways and did its best to marginalize him.

A strong desire to preach his Calvinistic beliefs led MacLeod to leave his wife Mary behind, in 1817, and sail in the barque "Frances Ann" bound for Pictou, Nova Scotia, and hopefully for fertile grounds to plant his followers and their fiery brand of religion. Norman's convincing method of preaching, and his courageous turn as skipper of the storm-tossed ship, built for him a reputation among his congregation of a ruling master, not always correct in his beliefs, but always in control of the future of this group of religious refugees.

The land of "New Scotland," despite MacLeod's valiant attempts, did not prove to be as fruitful as he had hoped for. Landing at the wild town of Pictou on peninsular Nova Scotia, Norman, and the many souls who followed him, found a town full of rugged lumbermen taking advantage of free-flowing rum from the West Indies, plenty of easy money, and few restrictions on morality. They also found little land available to settle on as a group. Norman's followers had to homestead on scattered plots around Pictou. Although he did his best to keep them together as a congregation, Reverend MacLeod feared the dissolution of his religious community in this "land for shameless and daring wickedness."

The Church of Scotland continued to haunt the independent preacher and after two years in Pictou, Norman left with the majority of his flock on an 18-ton schooner they, themselves, built. The ship was derisively dubbed as "The Ark" by the locals of Pictou. It is said that

MacLeod's original plan was to move on to Ohio, to minister to a group of Highlanders there. He would attempt to hug the New England coast, then travel overland to the Great Lakes and finally to Ohio.

As an experienced sailor in rough waters, MacLeod decided to first sail around the coast of Cape Breton to test his newly-constructed ship. It is possible that a storm drove the craft toward St. Ann's Bay, though it is said that the arrival of Norman's flock took place on a sunny September morning. A stop to fish in the bay led MacLeod, instead, to settled there.

The view at St. Ann's is equal to any in the world. The ocean, the mountains and dense forests, even the sunrise, are enough to make anyone want to stay. Norman did, and set aside a large tract of land for his own farm. On part of this land now stands the Gaelic College of Cape Breton.

MacLeod's congregation was able to acquire land deeds in close proximity to each other and to their beloved minister. MacLeod was joined by his wife in the New World, but the hard times would not leave him and his flock alone. St Ann's Bay suffered some very severe winters over the next few years, and access to the community was often blocked by sea ice, preventing the trade necessary to maintain such an isolated outpost.

When a potato blight hit in 1847-48, the hardships were just too much for most to bear. One of Norman's sons had sailed back to Scotland, and then on to Australia. He wrote letters to his father of the wonderful and warm life he had found, and so, at age 68, Norman decided to head out onto the ocean one more time.

One report states that "in the community most of the cattle and sheep had died and the few surviving livestock were in such a feeble state as to yield . . . little or no milk, and not likely to survive the season." Norman wrote, "There never has been anything like this in Cape Breton."

Despite it being a dangerous month to head out onto the deep blue ocean, October 28, 1851, saw MacLeod and 130 followers set off for the six-month journey to Australia, landing in April of the following year. Their boat was built in Cape Breton and christened the “Margaret,” after Norman’s mother. Scots families represented on the “Margaret” include Anderson, Campbell, Dingwall, Finlayson, Fraser, MacGregor, Matheson, McInnes, McKay, McHay, McRae, Ross, Sutherland, Watson and several MacLeod families.

The Gaelic-speaking flock referred to themselves as the “Eoin A Chuan” or “Seabirds.” Five more ships would follow in later months. The first stop for the Seabirds was at the Cape Verde Islands moving on to Cape Town, South Africa. From there they sailed to Adelaide, Australia, moving on to Melbourne.

Instead of a paradise the Cape Breton group found Australian land available only at high prices due to a gold rush in progress. They were forced to live in a tent city outside of Melbourne, in the midst of violence, crime and disease. Some died of typhoid including three of Norman’s own sons.

Ships were sold and parishioners found whatever work they could in Melbourne while their thoughts turned to New Zealand as the paradise they had been seeking. Norman MacLeod wrote to the governor of New Zealand who encouraged him to bring his group to that country. The first of the group to land in New Zealand arrived September 18, 1853. Amongst these people were represented the names McKenzie, MacKay, McLean, McDonald, and, of course, MacLeod.

Reverend MacLeod finally joined his congregation at Waipu, New Zealand, in January 1854. At last paradise seemed to be at hand. There was an abundance of open space, great fishing waters and farming lands, the Native groups were very friendly and the Gaelic community began to finally thrive as Norman had dreamed it would for so many years. In fact,

it grew internally and also through many new immigrants from Nova Scotia who had heard of the great life to be found there.

Norman MacLeod was loved by most, hated by a few, and respected by all. He once said, while trying to button his coat at the altar, “I am so full of the Holy Ghost, that my coat will not button on me!”

There are memorials dedicated to Norman McLeod’s memory in Clach toll near Lochinver, Scotland, and at St. Ann’s, Nova Scotia. The “House of Memories” in Waipu is a museum built in memory of all the Scots who went along the route taken by Rev Norman McLeod and his Normanites. A portion of MacLeod’s property at St. Ann’s Bay, Nova Scotia, has developed into the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts beginning in the 1930s. The Gaelic College remains the center of Gaelic education in North America.

Fanatical to a degree, certainly courageous and industrious, MacLeod left this world, at age 86, with one last admonition to his flock - “. . . look to yourselves. The world is mad!”

Note: The author visited Norman MacLeod’s land on Cape Breton and was aided in this story by Peggy MacAskill, director of the Gaelic College of Cape Breton. He also personally interviewed a McDonald gentleman who descends from this group of “Seabird” immigrants and who verified the Norman MacLeod tradition.



The Gaelic College of Cape Breton sits on the former property of Norman MacLeod. There is another Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye. The editor has visited both locations.

So, what's next?

What the coming months will bring is hard to say, however I hope to keep this idea alive at least until I see what interest there is "out there" in having an online clearing house for all things Celtic.

Next issue I am very excited to say that I will have a major article about Celtic influence along the Yukon River, in Alaska and Yukon.

Though I have already written quite a bit on this subject, I will be aided, in this article, by Rod Perry, one of the original Iditarod racers and one of the best authors on the subject, who has both Irish and Scottish heritage; and also by Ed and Star Jones, perhaps the premier researchers on both sides of the line of demarcation between the U.S. and Canada, in that northern clime.

The detail to which these author/researchers have delved into Yukon River history is enviable and they have agreed to provide me with fodder for this exciting article.

I also plan on a closer look at many subjects covered in this first issue, along with many new "old" stories.

Looking to the future, I hope to begin carrying news on Celtic oriented events, as well as information on merchants of Celtic products.

In addition, I think a photo contest would be in order - possibly with the winner gracing the cover of the Celtic Guide. If you have a photo you'd like to submit, please contact me!

I will be working towards these ends to create the February issue. Meanwhile, there is much to do.

Wishing a wonderful 2012 to all . . .

*Jim McQuiston,
Editor & Publisher
The Celtic Guide*