

ROBERTSON'S RANT

The Newsletter of the Clan Donnachaidh Society—Mid-Atlantic Branch



ALEXANDRIA SCOTTISH CHRISTMAS WALK REPORT

by Jim Fargo

On December 6th, the City of Alexandria Virginia hosted its annual Christmas Walk parade through the streets of Old Town. Arriving around 8 AM, **Robert Knight**, my son **Andrew** and I parked underneath Market Square and headed for the Subway shop across from the Square for breakfast where we were joined by **Norman** and **Chris Dunkinson** and **Sam Kistler**. After waiting for the temperature to warm up a bit, we headed down to the parade location assigned to our clan where we met **Jim** and **Jamie Robertson** where their antique Austen Healey was parked. Additional clanfolk soon began to arrive. **Tom Due**, our branch Vice President came for the first time from western Pennsylvania while most everyone else has been attending this event for years.

The parade's first unit starts off sharply at 11:00am. Being just 22 units ahead of Santa Claus at the rear of the parade, we began moving about 11:45am. We were led by **Steve Hoffman** carrying our wolf head totem followed by our banners and tartan flags. In what in the past has been a leisurely sedate walk along the 1.25-mile parade route, turned into a hurried marathon race with our younger clanfolk keeping up with Steve, while we older clanfolk straggled behind followed by Sam and driver Jim Robertson in the clan car.

As we approached the Reviewing Stand, we gave our clan war cry "Fierce When Roused" twice and were then asked by the announcer to roar it a third time! We sounded great!

After the parade many of us adjourned to the Fishmarket restaurant at the foot of King Street for our traditional clan luncheon while the rest headed to Murphy's Pub. This year, as in past years, we were joined by five members of my wife's clan MacPherson at the luncheon which brought our attendance to 28. This was the first time this year that we had all three branch officers together at the same event: President Sam, V.P. Tom and Secretary/Treasurer Norman to

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Branch Officers

President:

Sam Kistler

Vice President:

Tom Due

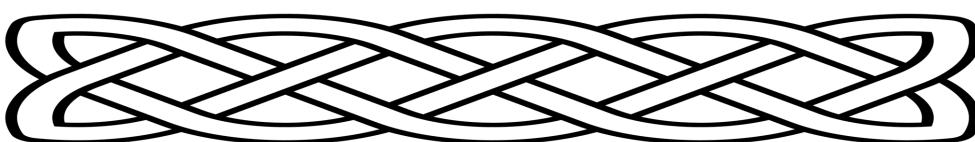
Secretary/Treasurer:

Norman Dunkinson



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ALEXANDRIA SCOTTISH CHRISTMAS WALK REPORT (CONTINUED)

discuss upcoming clan activities for 2026.

I'd like to encourage all of our local clanfolk to turn out next year and join us. Not only to participate in this wonderful clan event but also to get an early start on your Christmas shopping.



Clan Donnachaidh at the Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk. December 6, 2025.



BONUS ARMY—1932

by James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

During the summer of 1932, during the depths of the Great Depression, thousands of World War I veterans descended upon Washington D.C. from all over the country to demand their cash bonus promised to them eight years earlier by the Government for their wartime service. Known as the Bonus Army, contingents from most states arrived by the good graces of the general public as most of the veterans rode in empty boxcars from one state to the next on their migration to D.C. Clothed and fed along the way by a grateful public, the veterans arrived and set up camps or shantytowns (known then as Hoovervilles) and rallied peacefully to petition Congress to pass the bills necessary to pay the promised bonus. Successful in the House of Representatives, the Senate defeated the bill. President Hoover, fearing the veterans would turn violent and were controlled by Communists, ordered Army chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur to remove the veterans from their encampments around Washington. On July 28, 1932, going beyond his presidential orders, MacArthur's troops drove the veterans out of the city using tear gas, bayonet-tipped rifles and tanks.

This background brings us to Navy veteran Royal W. Robertson, who organized and led a California bonus brigade from Los Angeles. He was a rail-thin minor Hollywood actor, but was a skilled flamboyant speaker who wore a "cagelike back and neck brace" because of a war related serious spinal injury.



Royal Robertson at the march. From <https://revolutionsnewsstand.com/2023/05/03/the-bonus-army-by-felix-morrow-from-the-new-masses-vol-8-no-2-august-1932/>.

Leaving Los Angeles on June 10th, with 2,600 veterans with a motorcade parade and a send-off by the mayor. When his brigade reached Tucson Arizona about 1,500 veterans dropped out as they had empty gas tanks. His California brigade had shrunk to 450 when it arrived on July 12 in Washington and set up camp on Capitol Hill. Robertson announced that they would stay there until Congress adjourned. If not paid by then, they would return home and work to defeat anti-bonus politicians in the upcoming November elections.

Robertson and the overall leader of the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF), Walter Waters did not get along as Waters had no intention of leaving until the bonus was paid. Robertson chose to not move his men to the BEF encampment in Anacostia, and when informed by the Capital Police that they had to keep moving, took advantage of this order by splitting his men into two groups having his men march back and forth around the Capital in single file in a slow solemn shuffle that became known as the "Death March" while the

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BONUS ARMY—1932 (CONTINUED)

other group rested. This played well with the local media. Thomas Henry of the 'Evening Star' newspaper wrote that Robertson was "one of those natural-born leaders with a confidence inspiring positiveness who arise suddenly out of obscurity in times of crisis and whom men will follow to the death."

At dawn on Saturday July 16, the death march was temporarily suspended so that the full Bonus Army could assemble in front of the Capitol for the adjournment of Congress. Robertson told his men that "if that is the case our work is done." On July 22 eviction notice was given the veterans that they had to decamp from their living spaces and go home now that Congress had adjourned. Robertson decided that it was time for his Californians to leave, but they decided to stay. Robertson waved goodbye, got into his car and headed home.

Presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt stated that this forced eviction won him the presidency.

"This will elect me.", he told his staff before beating the incumbent President Hoover in the November election. Yet when the Bonus Bill was brought up by Congress during the first three years of his presidency, Roosevelt also vetoed it each time. After Roosevelt's third veto on May 22, 1935, Royal Robertson returned to Washington on June 22 leading a thousand veterans to a rally in an empty lot on Pennsylvania Avenue. It wasn't until 1936, after his fourth veto that Congress overruled the President and finally allowed the bonus payment to the veterans.

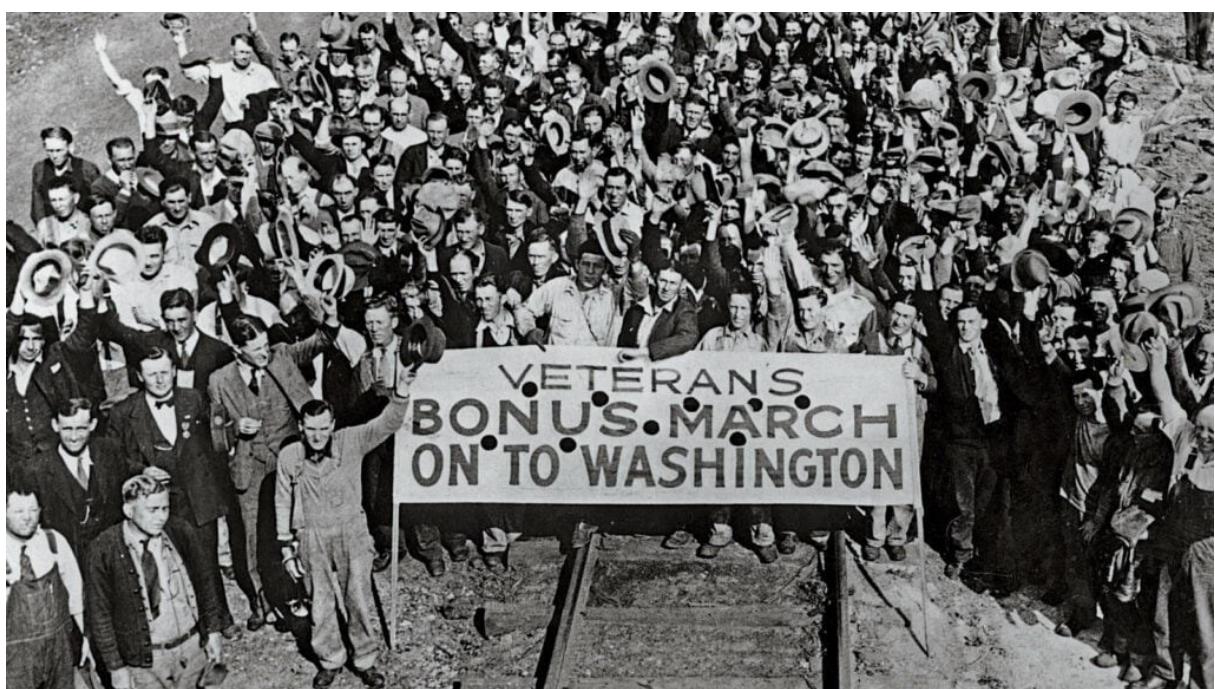
Robertson died in the Los Angeles Cedars of Lebanon Hospital on January 10, 1938 at 46 years of age.

Postscript: The efforts of the Bonus Army did bear fruit, as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the G.I Bill) was passed and signed into law by President Roosevelt to aid World War II veterans as they adjusted back to civilian life.

References:

Dickson, Paul & Allen, Thomas B., "The Bonus Army, An American Epic", Walker & Company, New York, 2004, pp. 101, 145-147, 150, 158, Multiple Wikipedia searches.

Veterans Bonus
March On To
Washington. From
<https://fantasticfacts.net/es/8149/>.



LORD MURRAY'S MARCH INTO ATHOLL—1746

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Note: this article was originally published in “Robertson’s Rant” in 1996. It is now 30 years later and the 280th anniversary of that battle. It is retyped and printed in this issue as most of our branch membership has joined since this part of our clan’s martial history was first published.

Most of the emphasis on this year’s 250th anniversary of the Battle on Culloden Moor is focused on the battle itself. While much has been written about the Jacobite army’s leadership and their military decisions, it is worth remembering that only one month before that fateful day, one Jacobite leader, Lord George Murray, was able to organize and lead a guerilla force into enemy territory and successfully operate against vastly superior forces. This is the story of that expedition.

Reports had reached Lord George that the Duke of Cumberland had garrisoned Atholl with a strong force of troops consisting of the 21st battalion of the Scotch Fusiliers, Sir Andrew Agnew’s regiment and a battalion of the much-loved Campbell militia commanded by Colin Campbell of Glenure. The Hanoverian army had established their headquarters at Blair Castle and had garrisoned small detachments of men in about thirty military posts throughout Atholl. These posts consisted mostly of some the well-fortified private houses of some of the gentlemen under Lord George’s command – James Robertson of Blairfetty, James Robertson of Lude and George Robertson of Faskally among others.

Lord George considered it of the utmost importance to deliver his home district from the pillaging and oppressions resulting from the quartering of this invasion force. Although Prince Charles had been taken ill and was recovering at Elgin, the highland army was encamped at Inverness and in no immediate danger from the Duke of Cumberland’s army which was in winter quarters at Aberdeen. Lord George felt reasonably sure he could undertake the expedition and be back before any need for his services arose.

Therefore, on 16 March 1746, Lord George Murray ordered a battalion of his Atholl Brigade



Lord George Murray. From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lord_George_Murray_\(general\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lord_George_Murray_(general).jpg).

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LORD MURRAY'S MARCH INTO ATHOLL—1746 (CONTINUED)

commanded by Lord Nairn to form up and in the twilight commenced his march through Dalwhinnie toward Atholl. Passing through Badenoch on his way south, his forces soon grew to 700 strong when 300 MacPhersons under their clan chief, Cluny Macpherson, joined the battalion. Arriving on the northern outskirts of Atholl at Dalnaspidel, opposite Loch Garry, prior to 3 am, he divided his men into small parties each led by the gentlemen whose houses were to be attacked and whose enemy garrisons were to be captured. After accomplishing their mission, they were directed to return to the Bridge of Bruar before daybreak.

In the meantime, word of a group of armed highlanders being in the vicinity reaches Sir Andrew Agnew, governor of Blair Castle and in command of the Atholl garrison. Sir Agnew sallied forth from Blair Castle at the head of 500 men and proceeded east in the direction of Bruar, only two miles distant. Lord George was waiting at his rendezvous point with only about 25 men and a few elderly gentlemen from the area when he received news of Sir Agnew's approach. Some of his friends recommended that they retreat from the area since resistance would be impossible against so large a force. Lord George is reported to have said that "No, if we leave the place of rendezvous, our parties, as they return in detail from discharging the duty entrusted to them will be liable to be surprised by the enemy. This must not be. I will rather try what can be done to impose upon Sir Andrew Agnew's caution by a fictitious display of strength."



Blair Castle. From <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/perth-kinross/402378/siege-of-blair-castle-features-in-major-new-exhibition/>.

LORD MURRAY'S MARCH INTO ATHOLL—1746 (CONTINUED)

Lord George's plan was rapidly devised and put into execution. He placed his followers in a continuous line behind a turf dyke to give the appearance of an extended and formidable front. Fortunately, all the pipers from the Atholl battalion and Clan Macpherson were still with him and these he ordered to strike up a lively pibroch and the colors to be elevated as soon as the Government forces came into view. As Sir Agnew and his men approached Bruar just prior to dawn, the bagpipers began to play and the men brandished their broadswords and yelled out orders for their non-existent men to form up for an immediate attack. The ruse worked and Sir Agnew, believing that he was about to be attacked by a superior force and apprehensive that another force of highlanders might also be attacking the castle while he was gone, promptly turned his men and marched back to defend Blair Castle. Lord George continued to await the return of his detachments, all of whom returned reporting success.

As soon as he had collected three to four hundred of his men, Lord George was determined to follow up his initial success by laying siege to Blair Castle, and capture it before succor could arrive from the Duke of Cumberland, encamped at Aberdeen. With this goal in mind, he established a blockade around the castle and ordered his men to fire on any person showing himself on the battlements or in the windows.

The younger officers under Sir Agnew's command enjoyed playing jokes upon their stiff old commander. Stuffing one of Sir Agnew's old coats with straw and placing it in a turret window of the castle with a spyglass in hand, it soon became a target for the best deerstalkers in Atholl and Badenoch. At some point, Sir Agnew became curious as to why that particular turret was drawing so constant a fire from the besiegers. He soon discovered the trick that was being played on him and being insensible to a jest of any kind, ranted and raved, then threatened arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators once he found them out.

Another rather amusing anecdote concerning the siege is related in the memoirs of ensign Melville, who served under Sir Agnew during the siege. Lord George sent a summons to the castle requiring the garrison to surrender. The errand was undertaken for Lord George by a young maid named Molly from M'Glashan's Inn in Blair where Sir Agnew's younger officers were frequently to be found in attendance. Being admitted to the castle, she insisted that the summons be given directly to Sir Agnew. Finally, a timid lieutenant was prevailed upon to deliver the summons and Sir Agnew exploded with rage on reading it. After a volley of epithets against Lord George, he threatened to shoot through the head any other messenger bringing such a message to him. Molly, the serving maid, retreated in safety to the old church at Blair where she recounted her story to Lord George, Cluny, Lord Nairn and some other Robertson chieftains and they were "highly diverted by her report".

The siege of Blair Castle lasted until 31 March. By that time the garrison was on the point of surrendering due to lack of supplies when the Earl of Crawford, at the head of a large body of Hessian troops approached. Lord George Murray was compelled to raise the siege and make good his retreat to Inverness to rejoin the Jacobite army. A week later, the Duke of Cumberland broke camp and leaving Aberdeen marched his army toward Inverness and his rendezvous with destiny.

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CEUD MILE FAILTE—100,000 WELCOMES!

We'd like to welcome the following new and returning members who joined or renewed since the last report:

Donald E. Behe	Ronald E. Bentz	Catherine Birger	Sara J. Boehm
Justin B. Dobson	Fernanda D. Fisher	Karen S. Layne	Carol A. Lucian
Heather R. Proffitt	J. Mott Robertson Jr.	Kelly L. Robertson	Steven H. Wheeler

SCOTS HUMOR

Split Meal

An elderly Scottish couple goes into a fast food restaurant and orders one burger and fries. They carefully split the burger in two.

A visiting English tourist watches this, and taking pity on them he comes over to their table and offers to buy the wife her own burger.

"Tis all right," says Jock. "We share everything."

Several minutes later, the Englishman sees that the wife hasn't taken a bite and knowing how thrifty Scots are walks over again. "I really would like to buy her a burger," he insists to Jock.

"She'll eat," Jock assures him. "We share everything."

Still unconvinced, the Englishman asks the wife, "Why aren't you eating?"

The annoyed wife replies, "Because I'm waiting for the teeth."

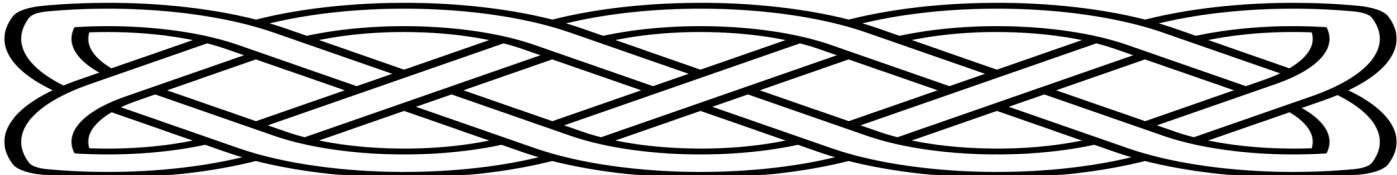
Hospital Admittance

A Scotsman named Andrew Duncan was being admitted to the hospital for minor surgery. The bonnie nurse asked him who should be notified in case of an emergency.

"You mean if I'm dying?" the Scotsman asked.

"It's just in case we need to notify someone," she explained.

"Well, I'd hope you would call my doctor," was Duncan's reply.



ALEXANDER DUNCAN (C. 1655—1733)

By James E. Fargo, FSA Scot

Alexander Duncan was the son of William and Janet (nee MacArthur) Duncan. William was the minister of New Kilpatrick in Dunbartonshire. Duncan attended the University of Glasgow and graduated in 1675. He became the minister of Kilbirnie in Ayrshire in 1680. At that time the established church of Scotland was Episcopalian.

Taking advantage of unrest in England over King James's policies, active resistance to the prospect of a Catholic dynasty began following the birth of his son, Prince James Francis Edward, in June 1688. When the 'Glorious Revolution' deposed King James II and VII in November 1688 and Parliament installed his protestant daughter and her husband (his nephew) as Queen Mary II and King William III of Orange, things changed.

News of King James' flight to France led to celebrations and anti-Catholic riots in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In March, elections were held for a Scottish Convention. This was also a contest between Presbyterians and Episcopalian for control of the Kirk. The 1689-90 Jacobite Rising forced King William to make concessions to the Presbyterians and the episcopalian structure of the Church of Scotland was abolished by Act of the Scottish Parliament. When Queen Mary died in 1694, King William ruled the kingdom in his own right until his death in 1702. Queen Anne, sister of the deposed King James, and last Stuart monarch, then ruled until her death in 1714. George, the Elector of Hanover, became King George I of the newly created Kingdom of Great Britain in October 1714. He was James's second cousin and closest Protestant relative to Queen Anne. Queen Anne's death, without an heir, brought about the political movement to restore the exiled James III or his descendants from the Royal House of Stuart to the throne.

Duncan and his family were thrown out of his parish by a mob of religious opponents in 1698. To remain in office, clergy were required to swear allegiance to the ruling monarch. Those that refused to take the oath were called "Non-Jurant" (not swearing an oath), and this led to the Scottish Episcopalian Act of 1711, which created a separate Scottish Episcopal Church.

Duncan arrived back in Glasgow in 1713 and founded an Episcopalian congregation in Glasgow in 1715. During this period, congregations met in private homes as meeting houses and chapels were not safe. Church appointments were submitted to Prince James Francis Edward Stuart (the Old Pretender) for approval and in 1724 Duncan was approved as a "college bishop", meaning a bishop without a diocese. He was consecrated in Edinburgh by Bishop John Fullarton. At this time, Episcopal clergy could only be licensed officially if they swore an oath and agreed to pray for the monarchs who had replaced King James II and VII. Duncan refused to do this and believed that the Episcopal Church structure would be reestablished and the Stuart dynasty restored.

Some of Duncan's congregation fought for the Jacobite Pretender at Sheriffmuir on 13 November 1715 under the Earl of Mar. Our 13th chief, Alexander, led a force of 500 clansmen to Sheriffmuir to fight the government forces led by the Duke of Argyll. That battle was inconclusive with both sides claiming they won, but Mar's army retreated to Perth. Our chief was temporarily captured during the battle but was rescued by his kinsman Robert Robertson of Invervack. At the same time, the Battle of Preston took place in Lincolnshire and the Scottish forces were forced to surrender to the English. Lacking a clear victory, that was the end of the Rising of 1715. Our chief fled to France, while Duncan, as a clergyman, was allowed to remain in Scotland.

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ALEXANDER DUNCAN (C. 1655—1733) (CONTINUED)

In 1728, a new Episcopal meeting house was opened in Glasgow's High Street, but because Duncan had not taken the necessary oaths, the magistrates closed it. He continued to preach to a small congregation that met in his own home. In 1731, the other Scottish bishops appointed Bishop Duncan to the Diocese of Glasgow. Bishop Alexander Duncan died in January 1733 in Glasgow and was survived by his son Robert and daughter Grizzell.

References:

Lewis, Brenda Ralph, "Kings and Queens of England", Amber Books Ltd., New York, 2005, pp. 175-179.

Robertson, James, "Chiefs of Clan Donnachaidh 1275-1749", Perth, 1929, p. 58.

Multiple Wikipedia searches.

HENRY BLANTON DUNCAN (1827-1902)

by Jim Fargo

Henry Blanton Duncan was born on July 2, 1827 to William Garnett and Pattie Duncan in Louisville, Kentucky. His father was a U.S. Congressman (1847-1849). Blanton attended college at Jefferson College and the University of Louisiana. He inherited money, land and slaves in Kentucky and Mississippi. Blanton married heiress Mary T. Atkinson in 1853 and they had five daughters.

Blanton Duncan was a planter, lawyer and member of the Kentucky legislature before the war. He campaigned for Millard Fillmore and the American Party ticket in the election of 1856 and John Bell and the Constitutional Union ticket in 1860.

With Lincoln's election win, Duncan recruited, raised and appointed himself the colonel of the 1st Kentucky Infantry Battalion in the Confederate army. His battalion occupied the Maryland Heights at Harper's Ferry but numerous quar-



\$20 Confederate Bill. From <https://uncommonwealth.lva.virginia.gov/blog/2025/05/05/colonel-blanton-duncan/>.

HENRY BLANTON DUNCAN (1827—1902) (CONTINUED)

rels with other Confederate officers over the conduct of his military rabble led to his battalion soon being disbanded and returned to Kentucky while Duncan resigned his “colonel” commission in July 1861.

The Confederate government engaged numerous printers and engravers to satisfy the demand for paper money in the Confederacy. In January 1862, Duncan arrived in Richmond, Virginia with twelve lithographic printing presses and assorted equipment. He received a contract with Confederate Secretary of the Treasury Memminger and began working as an engraver and printer of Confederate currency. His firm produced \$5, \$10 and \$20 bills and \$1,000 Confederate bonds. With the southern defeat in the Peninsula Campaign, much of the Confederate bureaucracy was forced to evacuate Richmond. As the Union Army approached, Duncan moved to Columbia, South Carolina.

He lost his printing contracts with the Confederacy in April 1863. He profited from blockade running with the steamer CSS Robert E. Lee before it was captured by the Union and became the USS Fort Donelson. In February 1864 as the Union Army approached Columbia, Duncan fled the city along with the Confederate cavalry. Major General William Tecumseh Sherman took Duncan’s house for his headquarters. Sherman watched the burning of Columbia on February 17, 1865 from Duncan’s bedroom window.

After the war, Duncan spent some time in Europe, then returned to live in Texas and in 1892 moved to California. Duncan died from diabetes on April 8, 1902 in Los Angeles County, California. He was buried in Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky. He was survived by one daughter.

Postscript: Duncan’s name is synonymous with Confederate currency and examples of his currency are highly valued today.

References:

Meirs, Earl Schenck, “The General Who Marched to Hell”, Dorset Press, 1990, pp. 306-307.

Multiple Wikipedia searches.

[Clan Donnachaidh at the Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk. December 6, 2025.](#)





**CLAN DONNACHAIDH SOCIETY
MID-ATLANTIC BRANCH**

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The Clan Donnachaidh Society is a world-wide organization dedicated to the preservation of our Highland heritage. Membership is open to those persons bearing recognized sept surnames and their descendants and spouses.

Membership in the parent Clan Donnachaidh Society in Scotland includes a subscription to the Clan Donnachaidh Annual.

Membership in the Mid-Atlantic Branch of the Clan Donnachaidh Society includes a subscription to the Branch newsletter, Robertson's Rant, published quarterly and containing listings of Highland Games and Celtic Festivals throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, Game and Festival reports, historical and biographical articles, and news items of interest to Donnachaidhs everywhere. Membership also includes an open invitation to join your fellow society members at the Clan Donnachaidh Tent and Diner at numerous Games and Festivals, and at other activities including the annual Scottish Christmas Walk and Clan Donnachaidh luncheon in the Old Town section of Alexandria, Virginia, in early December.

Parent Society membership dues are \$25.00 per year (individual) and \$35.00 per year (family = two persons/same address).

Mid-Atlantic Branch membership dues are \$20.00 per year (individual).

UPCOMING CELTIC EVENTS & GAMES—2026

<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>
Tartan Day Celebration	Bethel Park, PA	Apr 11th
Dills Celtic Festival	Dillsburg, PA	Apr 17th
Southern Maryland Celtic Festival	St. Leonard, MD	Apr 25th
Colonial Highland Gathering	Fair Hill, MD	May 16th
Garrett County Celtic Festival	Friendsville, MD	Jun 6th
Carroll County Celtic Festival	Westminster, MD	Jun 13th-14th
Wild & Wonderful Celtic Festival	Beverly, WV	Jun 19th-20th
Celtic Fling & Highland Games	Manheim, PA	Jun 27th-28th