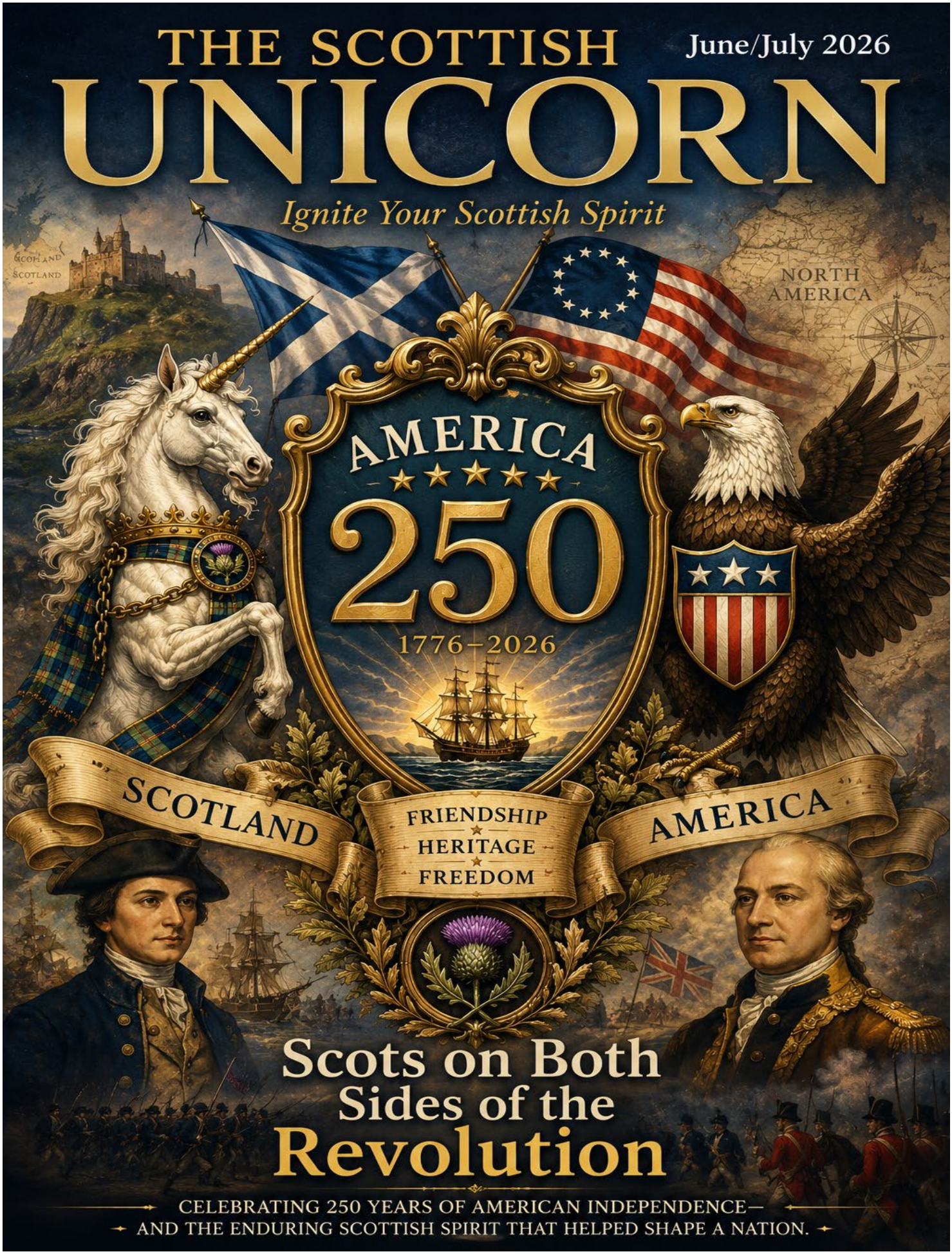
THE SCOTTISH
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Scots on Both Sides of the Revolution
CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE—
AND THE ENDURING SCOTTISH SPIRIT THAT HELPED SHAPE A NATION.

A Wee Note from the Editor

When we first began planning this issue to mark America's 250th anniversary, I thought I knew where the story would lead.

Like many people, I associated Scotland's role in America's founding with a handful of familiar names like Alexander Hamilton and John Paul Jones. What I didn't expect was to discover how deeply Scotland's story is woven into America's story—and how many surprising paths connect the two.

Those paths begin long before 1776. They originate with the Declaration of Arbroath, written more than four centuries before the American Revolution. They appear in the aftermath of Culloden, when Scots carried their hopes, loyalties, and ambitions across the Atlantic. They emerge again through the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment, the achievements of Scottish immigrants, such as Hamilton and Carnegie, and the work of organizations dedicated to preserving Scottish heritage today.

Some connections were familiar. Others came as a surprise – such as learning that Jacobite heroine Flora MacDonald fought for the British Crown in North Carolina. And that Lord Dunmore—often remembered simply as a villain of the Revolution—offered freedom to enslaved persons who joined the British cause in 1775. Perhaps the biggest surprise of all was connecting the Border Reivers of the Anglo-Scottish frontier directly to the American cowboy.

I would like to particularly thank Kevin Crossett, Director of Corporate Affairs at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and historical interpreter, David Catanese, for their wonderful collaboration and insights into one of the most controversial figures of the American Revolution; novelist and historian Maggie Foster for her fascinating perspectives on the Scottish heritage of the American cowboy; and photographer Gordon Ferrier, whose wonderful images continue to bring Scotland's history and heritage to life in our pages.

I hope you enjoy this journey through some of the people, ideas, and events that helped shape both Scotland and America – and that you find some interesting surprises of your own. Thank you for being part of *The Scottish Unicorn* community. And Happy 250, America!

Blyth Douglas

The Declaration of Arbroath

More Than 450 Years Before the Declaration of Independence

Long before the American colonies declared their independence in 1776, Scotland had already wrestled with questions of liberty, national identity, and the relationship between rulers and the people they governed. One of the most remarkable expressions of those ideas appeared in a letter written more than four centuries earlier.

In 1320, Scottish nobles sent a letter to Pope John XXII defending Scotland's independence. Known today as the Declaration of Arbroath, it remains one of the most celebrated documents in Scottish history.

Its purpose was straightforward: to persuade the Pope that Scotland was a free and independent kingdom and that Robert the Bruce was its rightful king. Yet the declaration expressed a principle that would resonate centuries later on both sides of the Atlantic—that rulers derive their authority from the people they govern.

The document famously declared that if a king failed to defend the freedom of the nation, the Scots would choose another. For medieval Europe, this was a remarkably bold idea.

Written only six years after Robert the Bruce's victory at Bannockburn, the Declaration of Arbroath formed part of Scotland's struggle to secure international recognition of its independence. While rooted in the politics of its own time, the document's language continues to attract attention because of its enduring themes: liberty, self-determination, and accountable leadership.

Historians continue to debate the extent to which the Declaration of Arbroath directly influenced America's founders. Some point to similarities between its language and later American documents, including the Declaration of Independence. Others argue that the connection is more symbolic than direct.

What is beyond dispute, however, is that the Declaration of Arbroath articulated ideas about liberty, self-determination, and accountable leadership that would echo through later centuries on both sides of the Atlantic.

More than four hundred years after it was written, Scottish-Americans successfully campaigned to have April 6—the date associated with the Declaration of Arbroath—recognized in the United States as National Tartan Day.

Today, the Declaration remains one of Scotland's most treasured historical documents. Written in a time of war and uncertainty, it continues to be remembered as a powerful statement of national identity, freedom, and the enduring belief that rulers ultimately serve the people—not the other way around.

From Culloden to the Colonies

How Scotland's Lost Cause Shaped the American Revolution

Thirty years before the American Revolution, another rebellion shook the world. This one ended in catastrophe on a cold, windswept moor in the Scottish Highlands known as Culloden. The date was April 16, 1746. The battle lasted less than an hour. By the end of the morning, thousands of Highland clansmen lay dead or dying.

What followed would change Scotland forever. And it would also change America.

What was it all about? Why did the Scots fight the British King in 1746, just as the Americans would do thirty years later in 1776? Their reasons differed - but their dreams were not so far apart. And the repercussions of the lost Scottish cause, known to history as the Jacobite uprising, shaped not only Scotland and Britain, it carried ramifications across the Atlantic with those who fled its aftermath.

Some sailed for North Carolina, as depicted in the popular television series, *Outlander*. Others settled in Nova Scotia, New York, and the Appalachian frontier. They carried with them memories of defeat, divided loyalties, fierce pride, and complicated feelings about the British Crown. And only a generation later, many would once again find themselves caught up in a revolution — this time in America.

At the center of the Jacobite uprising in Scotland stood the charismatic figure of Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. The rebellion he inspired did not emerge out of nowhere. Its roots stretched back through decades of dynastic struggle, religious conflict, civil war, and political upheaval that had divided Britain for more than 200 years.

To understand why so many Scots risked everything for Bonnie Prince Charlie, it is necessary to go back to the fall of another king – and even to Scotland's most famous queen.

The House of Stuart

When Queen Elizabeth I died childless in 1603, the English crown fell to the son of her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots. James VI of Scotland became James I of England, uniting the crowns of Scotland and England under a single monarch for the first time; the Scottish unicorn joined the English lion on the royal coat of arms.

James ruled over two kingdoms deeply divided by religion. Mary had been Catholic; in fact, she was executed by Elizabeth after being accused of involvement in Catholic plots to overthrow the Protestant queen. Though James himself was Protestant, the Stuart dynasty would increasingly become associated — fairly or not — with Catholic sympathies, strong royal authority, and resistance to the growing power of Parliament. Those tensions would erupt violently under James's son, Charles I of England, resulting in civil war.

Charles believed in the divine right of kings — the idea that monarchs answered to God, alone. Not to Parliament or the people of their nation. His opponents increasingly viewed Charles as arrogant, authoritarian, and dangerously out of step.

Religious disputes deepened the divide. Many feared the Stuart court was drifting too close to Catholicism and continental-style absolutism. A rebellion took shape –with fighting that stretched across England, Scotland and Ireland.

In 1649, after years of civil war, Charles I was tried for treason and publicly executed outside the Banqueting House in London — an almost unimaginable act in seventeenth-century Europe. For the first time, a reigning British monarch had been put to death by his own subjects.

Power passed to the fiercely Protestant Oliver Cromwell, who established a republic known as the Commonwealth. Cromwell viewed Scotland with deep suspicion, particularly after many Scots declared loyalty to Charles I's son, the scion of the Stuart dynasty and the future Charles II. Cromwell's military campaigns in Scotland were harsh and deeply resented, leaving scars that endured long after his death.

But Cromwell's republic proved short-lived. Following years of political instability, the monarchy was restored in 1660, and Charles II returned triumphantly to the throne.

The Restoration brought celebration and relief in some quarters. But it did not resolve the deeper questions dividing Britain. Religious tensions remained acute. Parliament had grown more powerful. And anxiety over Catholic influence continued to simmer beneath the surface of British politics. Those fears intensified when Charles II died without any legitimate heirs. The British crown passed to his younger brother, James Stuart, who ruled as James VII of Scotland and II of England. And here religious concerns sharpened further: James was openly Catholic.

James was a widower with no sons and two daughters, Mary and Anne. His eldest daughter, Mary, had married William of Orange, a staunch Protestant ruler from the Netherlands before James ascended the British throne. Along with her younger sister Anne, Mary was Protestant, helping reassure many in Britain that a Catholic Stuart monarch would be temporary at best, eventually giving way to Protestant successors on the British throne.

But those assumptions collapsed when James II remarried and had another child. His new bride was an Italian princess, Mary of Modena, also a Catholic. She bore him a son in 1688, stoking fears that Britain was now facing the prospect of a Catholic Stuart dynasty.

The reaction was swift. Parliament invited James's Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William, to seize the throne in what became known as the Glorious Revolution. They ruled as William and Mary, while James II, his Italian wife and son fled into exile in France.

The Jacobite Cause

Not everyone accepted the overthrow of James II.

To his supporters, James remained the rightful king, despite his exile in France. They became known as Jacobites, from *Jacobus*, the Latin form of James.

In Scotland, the movement drew support from a complicated mix of loyalties and motivations: belief in the Stuart dynasty, attachment to older clan structures, resistance to growing control from London, and, in some areas, continued Catholic or Episcopalian sympathies.

Culloden Battlefield Monument
Photo Credit: Gordon Ferrier

It is important to understand that the Jacobite cause was not simply "Scotland versus England." Many Scots strongly opposed the Stuarts and supported the Protestant succession. These divisions often ran through families, regions, and even clans themselves. But in parts of the Highlands especially, loyalty to the Stuarts became deeply intertwined with identity, tradition, and memory.

The struggle did not end with James II's exile. A series of Jacobite uprisings followed over the coming decades as supporters sought to restore the Stuart line to the throne. The movement survived the deaths of both William and Mary and later Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch to rule Britain.

When Anne died childless in 1714, the crown passed not to a Stuart descendant – who many, especially the Jacobites, considered the rightful heir to the British throne - but to a distant Protestant relative from Germany: George I of the House of Hanover. The transition ensured Protestant stability. But for the Jacobites, it represented the displacement of the "rightful" royal line by foreign rulers backed by Parliament rather than hereditary succession.

The new Hanoverian kings were viewed with suspicion in many parts of Scotland, particularly the Highlands. George I spoke little English when he arrived in Britain and appeared culturally distant from his subjects. To Jacobite supporters, the Hanoverians symbolized a political order increasingly centered in London and hostile to older Highland traditions and loyalties.

Jacobite rebellions broke out in both 1715 and 1719, but neither came close to restoring the Stuarts. Yet the cause refused to die. Exiled in continental Europe, the Stuart court continued to cultivate loyalty and hope amongst supporters in Scotland and abroad.

Bonnie Prince Charlie

In 1745, a young prince arrived on Scotland's western coast and transformed the Jacobite movement overnight.

Charles Edward Stuart was twenty-four years old when he landed in the Hebrides. He was the grandson of the exiled James II and son of James Francis Edward Stuart, the child born to James II and Mary of Modena.

Charles had grown up in continental Europe, surrounded by courtiers and supporters in Italy and France who instilled in him the enduring belief that the Stuart dynasty remained the rightful royal line.

Handsome, charismatic, and utterly convinced of his destiny, Charles believed he could reclaim the throne his family had lost nearly sixty years earlier.

Many thought the plan was reckless, even absurd. Charles arrived with little money, limited military support, and no guarantee the Highland clans would rise for him. But rise they did. Within weeks, clans rallied beneath the Stuart banner. Edinburgh fell to the Jacobites. British government forces suffered a stunning defeat at Prestonpans. The Jacobite army marched south into England. And panic spread in London. For a brief moment, it seemed possible that the Hanoverian monarchy itself might collapse.

But the momentum did not last. Support in England proved weaker than Charles had hoped, promised French assistance failed to materialize in meaningful force, and divisions emerged among Jacobite leaders themselves. The army eventually retreated northward into Scotland, pursued by British government troops led by the Duke of Cumberland, son of King George II.

The final confrontation came at Culloden Moor near Inverness on April 16, 1746. Exhausted, hungry, and outgunned, the Highland clansmen faced a disciplined government army equipped with superior artillery. The battle was devastatingly brief.

The Aftermath of Culloden

The Duke of Cumberland's forces showed little mercy in the aftermath. Wounded Jacobite soldiers were hunted down and killed, giving Cumberland a brutal nickname that endured for generations in Scotland: "Butcher Cumberland."

But the government response did not end on the battlefield. Determined to prevent another Highland uprising, the British state moved aggressively to dismantle the social and cultural structures that had sustained the Jacobite cause: The clan system was weakened. Weapons were confiscated. Traditional Highland dress, including tartan, was outlawed under the Dress Act except for soldiers serving in British regiments. Gaelic language and culture came under increasing pressure.

For many Highland families, the years that followed Culloden brought not only grief, but uncertainty about the future. Economic hardship deepened. Traditional ways of life began to erode. In response, Scots left their homeland and crossed the Atlantic in growing numbers.

They arrived in America with complicated feelings about the Jacobite uprising they'd just been through: Some were deeply loyal to the British Crown, believing rebellion had brought Scotland to ruin. Others came to sympathize with the growing American resistance to British authority. In the Revolution that erupted only thirty years later, Scots and their descendants would once again find themselves divided: Some would fight for independence. Others would fight for the king.

And at the heart of that conflict stood men and women whose lives had been shaped, directly or indirectly, by the legacy of Culloden. The story of the American Revolution cannot be fully understood without understanding the Scottish rebellion that came before it.

Flora MacDonald: Between Two Revolutions

Today, Flora MacDonald is most often remembered as the romantic young woman who helped Bonnie Prince Charlie escape Scotland after the Battle of Culloden.

Her portrait still appears on tins of Walker's Shortbread, and her daring voyage "over the sea to Skye" lives on in one of Scotland's best-loved songs. But Flora's life was not a legend — and it did not end with that dramatic escape across Hebridean waters.

It was a life shaped by upheaval, divided loyalties and reinvention that spanned two continents —and connected the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion to the birth of America. Most surprisingly of all, the woman forever associated with one of the most famous acts of defiance against the British government would later support Britain during the American Revolution.

The Betty Burke Deception

When Flora MacDonald agreed to help Charles Edward Stuart flee the Hebrides in the summer of 1746, she understood the danger perfectly. The Jacobite Rising had collapsed at Culloden only weeks earlier. The Highlands were under military occupation. British patrols searched relentlessly for the fugitive prince whose failed rebellion had left Scotland shattered and deeply divided.

Flora herself was not a battlefield rebel. She was a young Highland woman from a respectable family, raised in a world where loyalty, kinship, and survival often existed in uneasy balance. Yet when asked to help the desperate Prince escape, she agreed to take part in one of the most famous flights in Scottish history.

The plan depended on disguise, deception, and nerve. Charles would travel dressed as a woman's maid under the name "Betty Burke," while Flora carried government papers allowing her to move between the islands. Together they crossed the dangerous waters from Benbecula to Skye, moving through a landscape filled with soldiers, suspicion, and informers.

The image of the defeated prince disguised in women's clothing alongside the composed young Highland woman quickly became a beloved Scottish legend. More than a century later, *The Skye Boat Song* immortalized the escape with the words:

"Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing,
Onward! the sailors cry;
Carry the lad that's born to be king
Over the sea to Skye."

But at the time, there was nothing romantic about the journey. Discovery could have meant imprisonment — or death.

Flora was eventually arrested and taken to London, where her story spread rapidly through newspapers, drawing rooms, and political circles. Surprisingly, many who opposed the Jacobite cause admired her courage and composure.

She became something of a celebrity — a young Scottish woman whose loyalty and bravery captivated even parts of the British public. Yet the deeper irony of Flora MacDonald's life still lay ahead as she struggled to build a new life with a husband in the American colonies.

From Culloden to the Carolinas

Following her release from prison under the general amnesty granted after the Jacobite Rising, Flora returned to Scotland a figure of unusual fame. Poems were written about her. Portraits were painted. Her name became associated with loyalty, composure, and quiet bravery under pressure. But fame did not necessarily bring stability.

In 1750, Flora married Allan MacDonald, a member of a respected Highland family on the Isle of Skye. For a time, their lives appeared to settle into something resembling normalcy. Yet the Highlands that Flora returned to were changing rapidly. The old clan system had been weakened in the aftermath of Culloden. Economic pressures mounted. Opportunities were limited. Many Highland Scots increasingly looked across the Atlantic toward the American colonies in search of land, stability, and a future.

In 1774, nearly three decades after the dramatic escape of Bonnie Prince Charlie, Flora and Allan MacDonald joined that growing migration and sailed for the Carolinas. They were not young adventurers starting over; both were in their early fifties when they crossed the Atlantic. They settled in a large community of fellow Highland Scots near the Cape Fear River. The woman

who had become famous for helping a fugitive Jacobite prince evade British troops now found herself building a life inside Britain's American colonies.

It was, in many ways, an extraordinary turn of events. Flora and her husband arrived just as the fervor for American independence from Britain was beginning to spread through the colonies. Less than a year before she set foot on American soil, the Boston Tea Party had gripped the northeast and talk of rebellion soon travelled south to the Carolinas.

A Second Revolution

Like many Highland emigrants, Flora had complex feelings about rebellion, authority, and political upheaval. The memory of civil conflict in Scotland was not distant history for her; she had lived through its aftermath. She had faced prison and could have faced death. Stability mattered. Order mattered. Another revolution may have seemed less like liberation to Flora than the beginning of yet another cycle of uncertainty and loss.

When tensions erupted into war, many Highland Scots in North Carolina remained loyal to the Crown. Flora and Allan MacDonald were among them. And that decision would reshape the remainder of Flora's American experience.

Flora's husband, Allan, became deeply involved in organizing Loyalist Highland support in North Carolina, helping recruit Scottish settlers into military service for Britain. Many of these Highland emigrants had arrived only recently from Scotland and felt little connection to the revolutionary cause. Some still carried vivid memories of the chaos and reprisals that followed Culloden. Loyalty to established authority must have seemed a safer choice to many than another leap into rebellion.

In February of 1776, Loyalist Highland forces marched toward the coast under banners proclaiming “King George and Broadswords.” But the campaign ended in disaster at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge, where Patriot forces crushed the Loyalist advance. Allan MacDonald was captured and imprisoned.

For Flora, the consequences quickly became personal. The same woman who had once been celebrated even in some parts of London for defying the British Crown now found herself viewed with suspicion in revolutionary North Carolina. Her family’s property suffered damage and looting. Friends and neighbors were divided by war. At times, Flora reportedly moved from place to place for safety as the conflict intensified around her.

The upheaval must have carried haunting echoes of the Culloden aftermath she had known thirty years earlier. Once again, she found herself living amid the collapse of a cause she had supported. Once again, communities fractured under political conflict. Once again, uncertainty and displacement reshaped ordinary life.

Return to Skye

By 1779, exhausted by war and declining health, Flora left America and sailed back across the Atlantic. She spent a brief period in Nova Scotia, where Allan — released through a prisoner exchange and continuing his military service — was stationed with Loyalist Highland regiments. Eventually, Flora returned to the Isle of Skye, the landscape forever associated with the most famous episode of her youth.

She died there in 1790 and was buried at Kilmuir Cemetery beneath a simple memorial overlooking the rugged Highland scenery that had shaped her life.

Today, Flora MacDonald is remembered as a Jacobite heroine, a Loyalist exile, and one of the great romantic figures of Scottish history. But her life resists simple labels. She was neither wholly rebel nor wholly loyalist, neither entirely political nor entirely symbolic. Instead, she was a woman who lived through two revolutions and carried the consequences of both across an ocean and back again.

Flora MacDonald’s Grave on the Isle of Skye
Photo Credit: Gordon Ferrier

John Paul Jones: *How the Son of a Scottish Gardener Became the Father of the U.S. Navy*

When John Paul Jones was born on the southwest coast of Scotland in 1747 – one year after the battle of Culloden - few could have imagined that the son of a gardener would one day become one of the most celebrated naval heroes of the American Revolution.

Born John Paul (the "Jones" was added later) near the village of Kirkbean in Dumfriesshire, he grew up on the Arbigland estate overlooking the Solway Firth, a stretch of water long connected to Scotland's maritime world. Across the firth lay the bustling English port of Whitehaven, where merchant vessels crowded the harbor and ships departed regularly for the Caribbean and the American colonies.

It was a world filled with danger, opportunity and ambition.

His father worked as a gardener on the estate, and the family lived modestly. In eighteenth-century Scotland, class divisions were deeply entrenched, and few men born into such circumstances could realistically expect to rise very far in society. But the sea offered something different. On board a ship, skill, discipline and courage could matter as much as family connections, if not more.

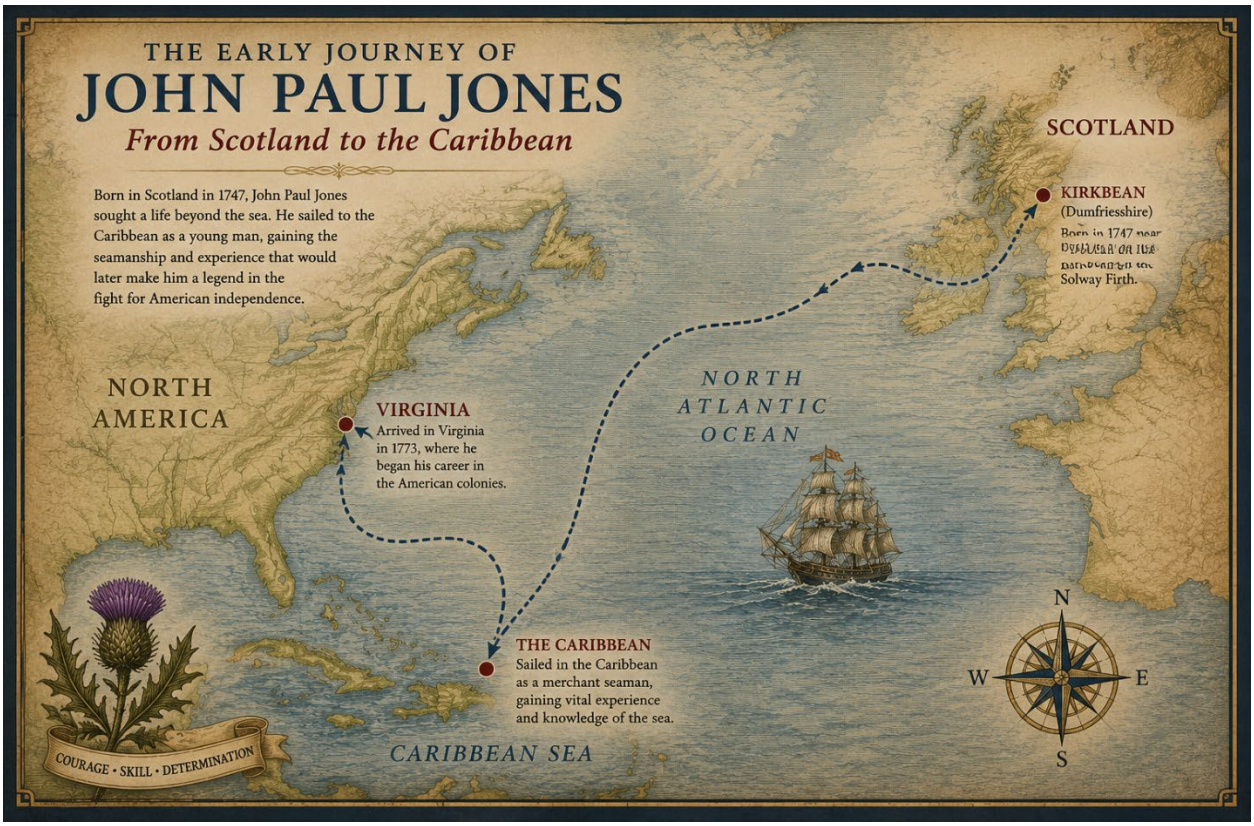
Like many ambitious young Scots of his generation, John Paul was drawn toward the Atlantic world at an early age. By his early teens he had gone to sea as an apprentice sailor, learning navigation, trade and the harsh realities of life aboard eighteenth-century ships. It was demanding and often brutal work. Storms, disease, shipwrecks and violence were constant dangers, while discipline at sea was notoriously severe.

Yet John Paul was talented and determined. Over time he worked his way steadily upward through the merchant marine and developed a reputation as an exceptionally capable seaman. By his early twenties, he was already commanding vessels engaged in Atlantic trade. But his rise would soon be overshadowed by controversy.

The Harsh Realities of the Atlantic Trading World

The Atlantic trading world of the eighteenth century was deeply tied to empire, war and slavery. And John Paul's early maritime career exposed him to all three. Like many sailors of the period, he worked aboard ships connected to the Caribbean trade, including voyages linked to the brutal slave economy that enriched Britain's Atlantic empire.

Life aboard ship could be unforgiving. Captains were expected to maintain strict discipline, and mutiny was treated as a deadly threat. During one voyage in 1770, John Paul killed a mutinous sailor in what he later claimed was self-defense. Although he appears to have avoided serious legal consequences in that case, another incident several years later proved far more damaging.



While commanding a vessel in Tobago, he ordered the flogging of a crew member accused of misconduct. The sailor later died, and although there was disagreement over whether the punishment itself caused the death, the incident triggered outrage and placed John Paul in serious legal and professional jeopardy.

Facing growing hostility and fearing prosecution, he left Britain's Atlantic world behind and sailed for Virginia in 1773. It was there, amid the tensions building between Britain and the American colonies, that he reinvented himself as "John Paul Jones."

The transformation was more than simply a change of name. Jones was ambitious, intelligent and intensely driven. And America's growing conflict with Britain offered opportunities that may never have existed for him in Scotland's rigid social hierarchy.

Choosing Revolution

When fighting broke out between Britain and the American colonies only two years after Jones' arrival, the rebels faced an enormous problem at sea. Britain possessed the most powerful navy in the world, while the Continental Navy barely existed. Jones immediately recognized both the danger and the opportunity.

With years of maritime experience already behind him, he quickly joined the revolutionary cause and received a commission as a naval officer in the newly created Continental Navy. Though still young, he brought professionalism, confidence and aggressive ambition to a force desperately short of experienced commanders.

Jones strongly believed that naval warfare could play a crucial role in the Revolution. Rather than merely defending American ports, he argued that the war should be carried directly to Britain itself. Striking British shipping and attacking coastal targets, he believed, could damage morale, disrupt trade and force Britain to divert military resources away from the colonies.

It was a bold strategy — and one that would soon make him famous on both sides of the Atlantic.

Jones first gained widespread attention while serving aboard the *Alfred*, one of the early warships of the Continental Navy.

Tradition holds that he had the honor of raising the first American naval flag aboard the vessel, a symbolic moment in the birth of the new nation's navy.

But it was his daring raids against Britain itself that transformed him into a legend.

Taking the War to Britain

In 1778, John Paul Jones carried the American Revolution directly to Britain's shores.

Sailing aboard the *Ranger*, he launched raids against British coastal targets in an effort to spread fear and demonstrate that Britain itself was vulnerable to attack. For many Britons, the idea that an American naval force could strike their own coastline was deeply unsettling.

One of Jones's most famous raids targeted Whitehaven — the very port he had known from childhood across the Solway Firth. Under cover of darkness, Jones and his men entered the harbor intending to set fire to ships anchored there. Although the attack caused less destruction than Jones had hoped, the symbolic impact was enormous. Newspapers across Britain reacted with shock and outrage that a Scottish-born American naval commander had brought the war home to British waters.

Jones also attempted to capture the Earl of Selkirk from his Scottish estate, hoping to exchange him for American prisoners held by Britain. The Earl was not at home at the time, though Jones's men seized silver plate from the residence. In a gesture that later helped shape his public image, Jones reportedly arranged for the family silver to be returned.

To the British public, he became a pirate and traitor. To American and French supporters of the Revolution, he became a fearless naval hero willing to challenge the might of the Royal Navy itself. His greatest battle, however, still lay ahead.

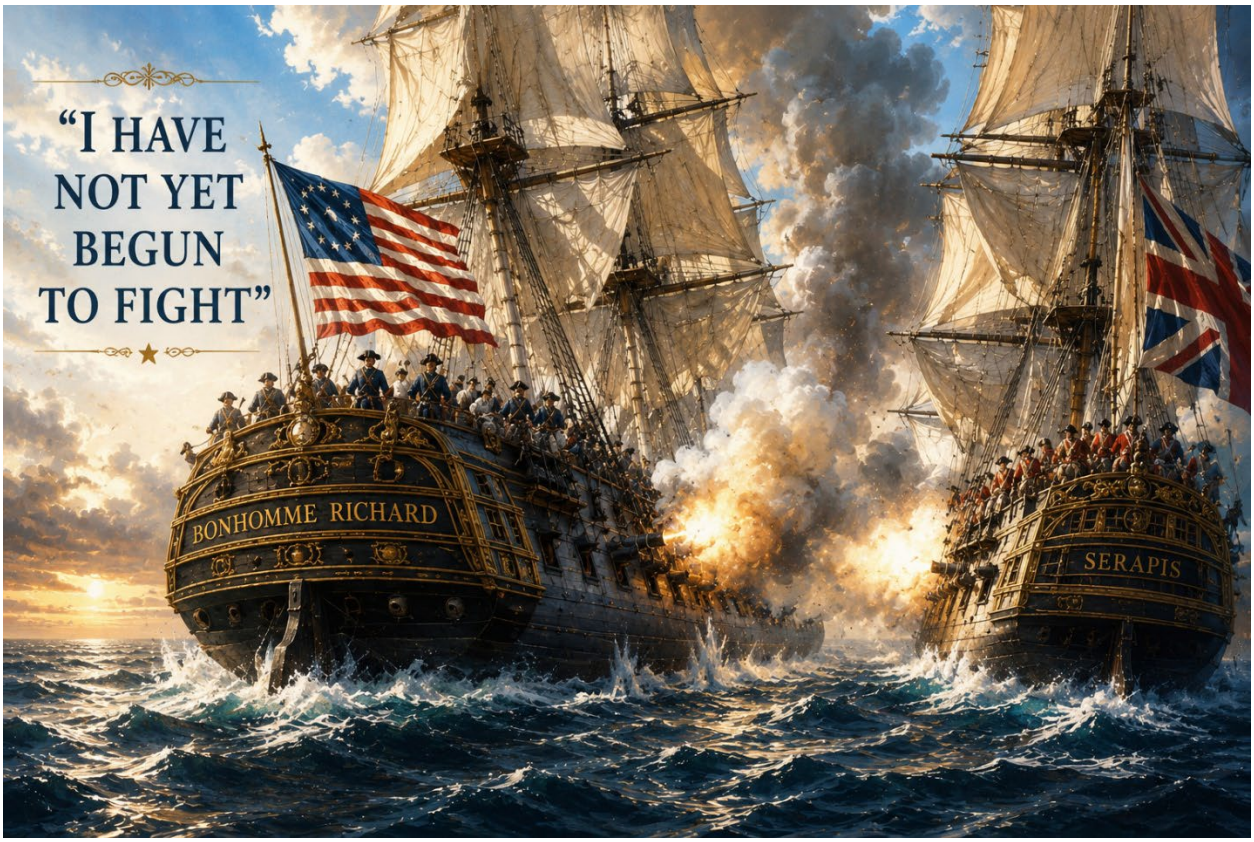
“I Have Not Yet Begun to Fight”

On September 23, 1779, John Paul Jones commanded the aging warship *Bonhomme Richard* during a fierce naval engagement against the British frigate HMS *Serapis* off the coast of England at Flamborough Head.

The battle quickly became one of the most famous naval encounters of the American Revolution.

The *Bonhomme Richard* was older, slower and heavily outgunned. Early in the battle, devastating explosions tore through Jones’s ship, leaving it badly damaged and taking a terrible toll on the crew. At one point, with the American vessel burning and apparently close to defeat, the British captain reportedly called out to ask whether Jones intended to surrender.

Jones answered with the words that would become legendary: “I have not yet begun to fight!”



What followed was a desperate and chaotic close-quarters battle fought amid smoke, cannon fire and flames. Jones maneuvered his damaged vessel alongside the *Serapis*, and the two ships became locked together. Sailors fought hand-to-hand while cannon blasted at near point-blank range. Against overwhelming odds, Jones and his crew eventually forced the British ship to surrender.

The victory electrified supporters of the American cause. Across Europe and America, Jones was celebrated as a daring and fearless commander who had defeated the Royal Navy in British waters themselves. Even though the *Bonhomme Richard* later sank from battle damage, Jones transferred to the captured *Serapis* in triumph.

The battle cemented his reputation as one of the great naval heroes of the Revolution.

A Scottish Hero of an American Revolution

By the end of the war, John Paul Jones had become an international celebrity.

He was admired in France, where support for the American Revolution was strong, and developed connections with important revolutionary figures including Benjamin Franklin, who recognized both his talent and his value as a symbol of American resistance.

Yet Jones's life after the Revolution proved restless and unsettled. Never entirely comfortable in one world or another, he later entered the service of Catherine the Great and commanded naval forces for Russia during wars against the Ottoman Empire. Despite his fame, his later years were marked by frustration, political conflict and declining fortunes. He died in Paris in 1792 at the age of just forty-five.

More than a century later, his remains were located and returned to the United States with great ceremony. Today he rests beneath the chapel at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Though his life was complicated and sometimes controversial, John Paul Jones's legacy endured. His aggressive vision of naval warfare, his determination to challenge British sea power and his role in shaping America's early navy earned him a lasting place in history as the "Father of the U.S. Navy."

And at the heart of that story remained a remarkable journey: the son of a Scottish gardener who crossed an ocean, reinvented himself in a revolution and helped create the navy of a new nation.

United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD

John Murray, Lord Dunmore: *The Last Royal Governor of Virginia*

When a Scottish aristocrat arrived in Virginia as royal governor in 1771, Britain's American colonies still appeared firmly tied to the British Empire. Virginia was wealthy, influential and deeply connected to British culture and trade. Great plantation houses lined the rivers of the Tidewater region, tobacco exports enriched powerful families, and loyalty to the British Crown remained widespread among much of the colonial elite.

John Murray, Lord Dunmore, could hardly have imagined that within only a few years, he would find himself at the center of one of the most explosive political crises in colonial America.

He would flee the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg under armed threat, wage war against rebellious colonists from British ships in the Chesapeake, and issue a proclamation that shocked Virginia society by offering freedom to enslaved men who joined the British cause. By the time he finally left Virginia for good, royal authority in Britain's largest American colony had effectively collapsed.

Today, Lord Dunmore is remembered as the last royal governor of Virginia — a symbol of the British Empire's unraveling on the eve of the American Revolution. Yet his story also reflects the enormous role Scots played throughout Britain's expanding Atlantic world during the eighteenth century — sometimes on the side of revolution, and sometimes in defense of empire.

A Scottish Aristocrat in Britain's Expanding Empire

Born into the powerful Murray family of Scotland in 1730, John Murray, later the 4th Earl of Dunmore, was only fifteen years old at the time of the Jacobite Rising of 1745. Members of the Murray family supported the Jacobite cause during the rebellion. While Dunmore's own role in the uprising—if any—remains debated by historians, the events of 1745 almost certainly left their mark on the young aristocrat. For the Murray family, the defeat at Culloden meant finding themselves on the losing side of one of the defining events in Scottish history. Barely into his teens, the future Lord Dunmore would have experienced firsthand the uncertainty and upheaval that followed.

Like many Scottish families in the aftermath of Culloden, the Murrays adapted to a changing world. As Dunmore matured, he came to view the expanding British Empire as a world of opportunity, where an ambitious young Scottish aristocrat could make his mark. After military service and political experience in Britain, he was appointed royal governor of New York in 1770 and soon afterward transferred to the more prestigious position of governor of Virginia.

For Dunmore, it was both a political opportunity and a position of enormous responsibility. Virginia was the largest and wealthiest of Britain's mainland American colonies and home to many of the most influential figures in colonial society.

At first, Dunmore proved energetic and relatively popular. He expanded western settlement, cultivated relationships with leading Virginians and projected confidence in royal authority.

But the political atmosphere in the colonies was changing rapidly. The crisis that would eventually consume his governorship was already beginning to take shape.

Virginia Before the Revolution

By the early 1770s, anger toward British imperial policies was spreading throughout the colonies. Disputes over taxation, parliamentary authority and colonial self-government increasingly strained relations between Britain and America. Virginia's political elite included some of the most outspoken critics of British policy, among them figures such as Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.

Dunmore found himself attempting to preserve British authority in a colony where revolutionary sentiment was steadily intensifying. As protests spread following measures such as the Tea Act and the Coercive Acts, Virginia's House of Burgesses became increasingly defiant. Dunmore repeatedly dissolved the assembly when its members challenged British policy or expressed solidarity with resistance movements in other colonies.

Yet dissolving the legislature did not restore stability. Instead, many Virginians simply continued meeting independently, helping create new revolutionary political networks outside royal authority altogether.

Gunpowder and Crisis

The situation finally exploded in the spring of 1775.

Fearing unrest after violence broke out at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, Dunmore ordered British marines to remove gunpowder from the Williamsburg magazine, the colony's main public weapons storehouse. To Dunmore, the move was a precaution designed to prevent an armed uprising in the Virginia colonies. To many Virginians, however, it appeared to confirm their worst fears about British intentions.

Rumors spread rapidly. Militia units mobilized. Armed volunteers began marching toward Williamsburg. Patrick Henry himself helped lead resistance forces demanding compensation and accountability from the royal government.

As tensions escalated, Dunmore increasingly feared for the safety of himself and his family. In June 1775, he and his household fled the Governor's Palace and took refuge aboard British warships in the Chesapeake Bay. The Scottish aristocrat who had arrived in Virginia representing the confidence and authority of the British Empire now governed from the deck of a ship while revolution spread across the colony around him. It was a dramatic symbol of Britain's weakening control in America.

The Dunmore Proclamation

Facing growing military weakness and desperate to regain the initiative, Dunmore made a decision that would transform the conflict in Virginia — and echo through American history. In November 1775, he issued what became known as the Dunmore Proclamation. The proclamation declared martial law and offered freedom to enslaved men belonging to Patriot masters if they escaped and joined British forces.

The reaction was immediate and explosive. For Virginia's planter class, the proclamation triggered fear and outrage. Many white colonists already suspected that Britain might attempt to encourage slave uprisings as a weapon against the Revolution. Dunmore's announcement appeared to confirm those fears.

Yet for many enslaved people, the proclamation represented something else entirely: a possible path to freedom. Hundreds — and eventually thousands — of enslaved men sought refuge with British forces during the Revolutionary war. Some joined what became known as Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment, whose uniforms reportedly bore the words "Liberty to Slaves."

The Dunmore Proclamation exposed one of the deepest contradictions at the heart of the American Revolution itself. Even as Patriot leaders spoke passionately about liberty and resistance to tyranny, slavery remained deeply embedded within colonial society.

Dunmore's motives were military and strategic rather than humanitarian. Yet his proclamation transformed the conflict in an unanticipated way, forcing Virginians to confront uncomfortable questions about freedom, power and slavery.

War in the Chesapeake

Dunmore abandoned hope of regaining control of Virginia by land when British and Loyalist forces suffered defeat at the Battle of Great Bridge in December, 1775. In the aftermath, Patriot forces steadily strengthened their hold over the colony while British authority collapsed further.

But Dunmore continued raids against Patriot settlements from British ships along the coast. In January 1776, Norfolk — then Virginia's largest port city — was heavily damaged by fire during fighting involving British naval bombardment and chaos onshore.

To many Virginians, Dunmore increasingly came to symbolize tyranny, violence and imperial overreach. Patriot propaganda portrayed him as a dangerous enemy willing to unleash both armed conflict and slave rebellion against the colony. Yet from Dunmore's perspective, the empire itself was under attack. Like many British officials, he likely believed that firm action was necessary to preserve royal authority and prevent imperial collapse. Instead, the conflict only deepened. By the summer of 1776, Dunmore had effectively lost Virginia.

Exile and Legacy

Dunmore eventually left America and never regained political influence. Yet his legacy remained deeply intertwined with the American Revolution. To Patriot Americans, he became one of the clearest symbols of British oppression and imperial failure. To historians, however, his story is far more complicated.

His tactics helped push many wavering Virginians toward the revolutionary cause. Yet his Dunmore Proclamation opened a path — however limited and imperfect — toward freedom for enslaved people willing to risk everything by escaping to the British lines.

In many ways, Dunmore stood at the intersection of several great historical forces at once: empire, revolution, slavery and the struggle over who would ultimately define liberty in America.

The Governor's Palace, Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia

Today, visitors to Colonial Williamsburg can walk through the restored streets of Virginia's colonial capital and visit the Governor's Palace where Lord Dunmore once lived as governor. And on some days, they may even encounter someone portraying Dunmore himself — bringing to life the Scotsman who played a dramatic, complex and controversial role in the story of the American Revolution.

Bringing Lord Dunmore to Life

An interview with Colonial Williamsburg interpreter David Catanese

For many Americans, Lord Dunmore is remembered simply as the last royal governor of Virginia — a controversial figure who stood firmly against the Patriot cause as revolution swept through the colonies. But at Colonial Williamsburg, visitors sometimes encounter a far more complicated man.

David Catanese, who portrays Dunmore as part of Colonial Williamsburg's living history programs, has spent years exploring the Scottish aristocrat behind the historical reputation. In this conversation with *The Scottish Unicorn*, he reflects on portraying one of the Revolution's most misunderstood figures — and on the challenge of bringing the complexities of the American Revolution to modern audiences.

Meeting the "Villain"

What first drew you to portraying a figure like Lord Dunmore, and how did you begin to understand him as a person rather than simply a historical figure?

What drew me to Dunmore initially was that he occupied this adversarial, almost villainous role. As the royal governor, he's often portrayed as the enemy of everything men like Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee were trying to achieve. Like many actors, I loved the idea of playing a strong villain.

But once I began researching him more deeply, I realized he was far more complicated than historical propaganda often suggests. He always believed he was doing the right thing. He was deeply loyal to the Crown, partly because of his family's Jacobite past and the fact that his father and uncle survived the 1745 rebellion. And he was also a devoted father who genuinely wanted to provide for his children and secure their future.

Lord Dunmore was not a paint-by-number tyrannical villain. He was a loving father, a determined British aristocrat and a man who believed firmly in law, order and duty. Once he made up his mind, he rarely changed course. He always believed he was acting correctly — even when that ultimately led to disaster.

Lord Dunmore is such a complicated and controversial figure. How do you portray someone who doesn't fit neatly into "hero" or "villain"?

The only way you can portray someone like that is honestly.

Many visitors arrive with very strong preconceived ideas about Dunmore. They expect him to be "the bad guy." So much of my work involves encouraging people to think more deeply and examine what was actually happening at the time.

By the letter of the law, Dunmore believed he was acting correctly. But many Virginians increasingly rejected that system and viewed his actions very differently. My approach is to present him as a complete human being — polite, intelligent, approachable and capable of friendship — rather than a one-dimensional villain.

People are often surprised to learn that Dunmore had genuine friendships with families such as the Washingtons and the Randolphs.

He was not universally hated at the beginning of his governorship. Part of my role is helping visitors understand why some Virginians initially liked and respected him.

The Dunmore Proclamation

How do audiences react when they learn about the Dunmore Proclamation and its offer of freedom to enslaved men who joined the British cause?

Most visitors are genuinely surprised that it was the British — not the Americans — who first offered freedom in this context. Many have never heard of the proclamation at all.

Guests also become uncomfortable when they begin thinking about slavery in a more personal way. People often try to distance themselves from the institution by saying, "Well, I would never have owned anyone." But part of what we do at Colonial Williamsburg is encourage people to confront these difficult realities honestly.

The proclamation also changes how some visitors think about the Revolution itself. It forces people to recognize that for some colonists, the conflict was deeply tied to protecting wealth and property, including enslaved labor. That doesn't mean everyone was motivated by that, but for some Virginians, Dunmore's proclamation became the point of no return in supporting independence.

Those are difficult conversations — but important ones.

Challenging Revolutionary Myths

What surprises visitors most about Dunmore or about this period of history more broadly?

People are often surprised by how approachable, friendly and reasonable he can seem.

Visitors expect someone harsh or openly tyrannical, but Dunmore was a complex individual. One moment he might aggressively confront Patrick Henry politically, and the next he might be teaching children to dance. He was not a one-note villain.

Guests are also surprised to discover how deeply Dunmore believed in maintaining the law. From his perspective, it was many of Virginia's leading revolutionaries who were breaking established legal authority. Whether visitors ultimately agree with him or not, they begin to see that the situation was far more complicated than they expected.

Has portraying Dunmore changed your own understanding of the American Revolution?

Very much so. When I first arrived at Colonial Williamsburg, I had a fairly traditional "Rah-Rah America!" understanding of the Revolution. But portraying Dunmore and other Loyalist figures forced me to confront how much grey area exists in the conflict.

There are no completely clear-cut heroes or villains. Both sides believed they were acting loyally and patriotically. Both believed they were defending what was right. And neither side was especially willing to compromise.

Learning more about Dunmore — and about Loyalists generally — has dramatically broadened my understanding of the Revolution and the people who lived through it.

Dunmore's Scottish Identity

Dunmore's Scottish background also seems important to understanding him. Does that shape how audiences respond to him?

Absolutely.

I portray Dunmore with a Scottish dialect, which immediately signals to visitors that he is an outsider in Virginia society. That often leads to fascinating conversations because many modern audiences assume that being Scottish automatically meant opposing England. Popular culture has reinforced that idea through films like *Braveheart* and television series like *Outlander*.

Visitors are often surprised to learn how loyal many Scots remained to the British Crown during the Revolutionary era. Dunmore himself participated in the Jacobite Rising of 1745, but that rebellion was not about rejecting monarchy — it was about who the rightful monarch should be.

For many Scots of the eighteenth century, loyalty and oath-keeping mattered deeply. That sense of loyalty shaped Dunmore profoundly. In 1776, his loyalty was to King George III and the British Empire, just as many other Scots believed theirs should be.

Understanding that Scottish dimension is essential to understanding who Lord Dunmore really was.

About David Catanese

David Catanese is a Creative Lead with the Performing Arts Department at Colonial Williamsburg. Since joining the Foundation in 2013, he has portrayed a wide range of historical figures, with particular focus on Loyalist figures including Lord Dunmore and John Randolph. His work emphasizes bringing complex and often underserved histories to modern audiences.

Alexander Hamilton: *The Scottish Influence Behind America's Founding*

Today, millions of people around the world know Alexander Hamilton through the award-winning Broadway musical *Hamilton*, where the ambitious young immigrant who rose from poverty to become one of America's Founding Fathers is portrayed with extraordinary energy and intensity. The musical helped introduce a new generation to Hamilton's remarkable life story — a story filled with revolution, rivalry, scandal, political vision and tragedy.

But long before Hamilton became a Broadway phenomenon, he was already one of the most fascinating figures of the American Revolution. And although he was born in the Caribbean rather than Scotland itself, Scottish influence shaped his world from the very beginning.

Hamilton's father, James Hamilton, came from a Scottish family with roots in Ayrshire. Like many Scots of the eighteenth century, he was part of the growing Atlantic trading world that connected Scotland to the Caribbean and the American colonies. Scottish merchants, doctors, educators and businessmen played an increasingly important role throughout the British Atlantic Empire, carrying with them not only commercial ambitions but also many of the ideas emerging from the Scottish Enlightenment.

Into that world, Alexander Hamilton was born in either 1755 or 1757 on the island of Nevis in the British West Indies. His beginnings were far from privileged. Hamilton was born outside marriage, and much of his early life was marked by instability, financial hardship and loss.

Yet from an early age, he displayed extraordinary intelligence, discipline and ambition — qualities that would eventually help propel him from the margins of Caribbean society to the center of America's founding.

A Scottish Son in the Caribbean

Hamilton grew up in a harsh and unequal world shaped by trade, empire and slavery. The Caribbean islands of the eighteenth century were enormously wealthy, but that wealth depended upon plantation economies built on human suffering. Merchant ships moved constantly between the Caribbean, Britain and North America carrying sugar, rum and enslaved people across the Atlantic.

For an intelligent and observant young boy, it was an education in commerce, power and survival.

After his father abandoned the family and his mother later died when Hamilton was still a teenager, his prospects appeared bleak. Yet even amid personal hardship, Hamilton's abilities quickly became apparent. He found work as a clerk in a trading company on the island of St. Croix, where he gained firsthand experience in international trade, shipping and finance while still remarkably young.

Those experiences would profoundly shape his later understanding of economics and government.

Hamilton's employers and mentors also recognized something exceptional in the young clerk. He possessed not only intelligence, but also unusual drive and maturity. One local observer reportedly described him as "a youth of uncommon genius." That genius first attracted widespread attention when a disaster struck the Caribbean.

Hurricane and Opportunity

In August of 1772, a devastating hurricane tore through St. Croix, destroying buildings, ships and plantations across the island. Hamilton later wrote a vivid account of the storm describing "the roaring of the sea and wind" and the terrifying destruction unfolding around him. The piece displayed remarkable literary skill and emotional power for someone still in his teens. When the account was published in a local newspaper, readers were astonished by the young clerk's talent.

Local businessmen and community leaders quickly concluded that Hamilton deserved opportunities beyond the Caribbean. Funds were raised to send him to North America for an education — a turning point that would alter not only Hamilton's life, but ultimately the course of American history itself.

In 1773, Hamilton arrived in New York, a restless and rapidly growing colonial city already simmering with political tension. Within only a few years, the colonies would erupt into revolution.

Hamilton was ready.

A Revolutionary Mind

Hamilton enrolled at King's College — today's Columbia University — where he quickly immersed himself in the political debates transforming the colonies.

Though still very young, he proved himself a brilliant and passionate writer, publishing essays defending the revolutionary cause and criticizing British policies toward the colonies. At a time when many Americans still hesitated between reconciliation and independence, Hamilton emerged as a forceful advocate for resistance and rebellion.

When the revolution finally broke out in 1775, he moved quickly from words to action.

Hamilton helped organize a militia company in New York and soon attracted attention for both his leadership and military discipline. His intelligence and organizational abilities eventually brought him to the attention of George Washington, who appointed the young Hamilton as an aide-de-camp - a position that placed Hamilton at the very center of the Revolutionary War.

Washington's Right Hand

Serving alongside Washington gave Hamilton extraordinary insight into the enormous challenges facing the revolutionary cause.

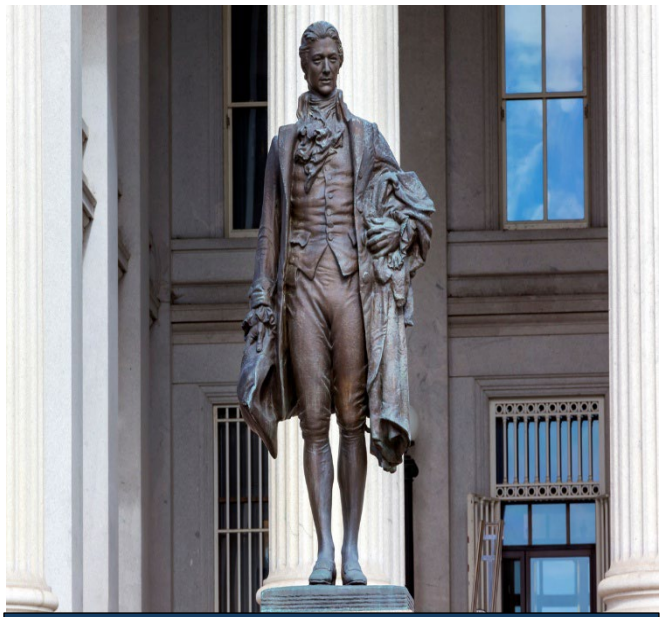
The Continental Army struggled constantly with shortages of money, food, supplies and trained soldiers. Communications were slow, political rivalries complicated decision-making, and the young nation often seemed close to collapse. Hamilton became one of Washington's most trusted officers, helping draft letters, manage military correspondence and coordinate strategy during some of the most difficult years of the war.

Yet Hamilton's ambition remained intense. He feared becoming trapped behind a desk and longed for battlefield glory as well as political influence. That opportunity finally came at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781.

During the climactic siege that effectively ended the Revolutionary War, Hamilton led a dramatic nighttime assault on British fortifications. The attack succeeded, helping secure one of the most important American victories of the war and cementing Hamilton's reputation as more than simply an intellectual or administrator.

But Hamilton's greatest impact on America still lay ahead.

Building a New Nation



Alexander Hamilton Statue
US Treasury Department, Washington, DC

When the Revolution ended, the United States faced enormous uncertainty.

The new nation was burdened by debt, weakened by political divisions and governed under the fragile Articles of Confederation, which gave the federal government limited authority. Hamilton believed the country's survival depended upon creating stronger national institutions.

In many ways, his thinking reflected the commercial and intellectual world shaped by the eighteenth-century Atlantic economy and the broader influence of Scottish Enlightenment ideas that emphasized practical government, commerce, education and national development.

Hamilton envisioned a modern nation built not simply on agriculture, but also on trade, manufacturing, finance and strong public institutions. He argued for a national banking system, federal assumption of state debts and policies designed to strengthen the authority and stability of the new American government.

To supporters, his ideas promised national unity and economic growth. To critics, they appeared dangerously centralized and overly favorable to wealthy commercial interests. The debates Hamilton helped ignite would shape American politics for generations.

Rivalries, Scandal and Tragedy

Hamilton's extraordinary rise also created powerful enemies.

His political rivalry with Thomas Jefferson became one of the defining conflicts of the early republic, reflecting competing visions for America's future. Hamilton favored strong federal authority and commercial development, while Jefferson championed a more agrarian and decentralized republic.

Hamilton's personal life also became increasingly turbulent. In 1797, he was rocked by public scandal after admitting to an affair with Maria Reynolds — one of the first major political sex scandals in American history.

Yet even scandal failed to erase Hamilton's political influence or restless ambition.

His long-running conflict with Aaron Burr eventually culminated in one of the most famous duels in American history. In July 1804, the two men met at Weehawken, New Jersey. Burr's shot mortally wounded Hamilton, who died the following day at the age of forty-nine.

A Compelling Legacy

More than two centuries later, Alexander Hamilton remains one of the most debated and compelling figures of America's founding era.

To admirers, he was a visionary whose ideas helped create the modern American economy and strengthen the young republic during its fragile early years. To critics, he represented elite financial power and centralized authority. Yet few historians doubt his enormous influence on the nation's development.

And in recent years, Hamilton's story has found an entirely new audience through the global success of the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, created by Lin-Manuel Miranda. By blending history with contemporary music and diverse casting, the production transformed Hamilton from a sometimes overlooked Founding Father into a modern cultural phenomenon.

Yet behind the music, drama and mythology remains the remarkable story of a young outsider shaped in part by Scotland's Atlantic world and ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment — a brilliant and ambitious immigrant whose ideas helped shape the United States itself.

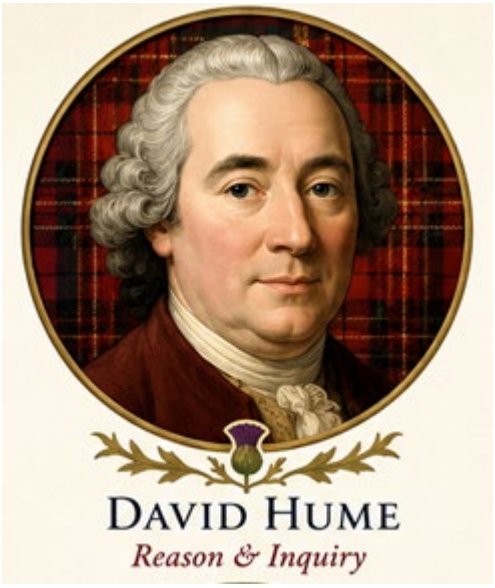
Hamilton was not simply a revolutionary soldier or statesman. Like many of America's founders, he was also the heir to a powerful intellectual tradition that had emerged in Scotland during the eighteenth century.

The Scottish Thinkers Behind a New Nation

When Americans declared independence in 1776, they were creating something new. Yet many of the ideas that shaped the emerging nation had been developing in Scotland for decades.

During the 18th century, Scotland experienced an extraordinary intellectual flowering known today as the Scottish Enlightenment. Thinkers gathered in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St Andrews to debate questions of government, economics, education, science, and human nature. Their books crossed the Atlantic, their ideas found eager readers in the American colonies, and their influence helped shape the intellectual foundations of the United States.

For a nation of little more than one million people, Scotland's impact was remarkable. These are some of the Scottish thinkers whose ideas helped shape the new nation.



David Hume (1711–1776)

The Power of Reason

One of the most influential philosophers in history, David Hume encouraged people to question assumptions, examine evidence, and rely on reason rather than blindly accepting tradition or authority. His writings helped shape the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment and influenced generations of thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic.

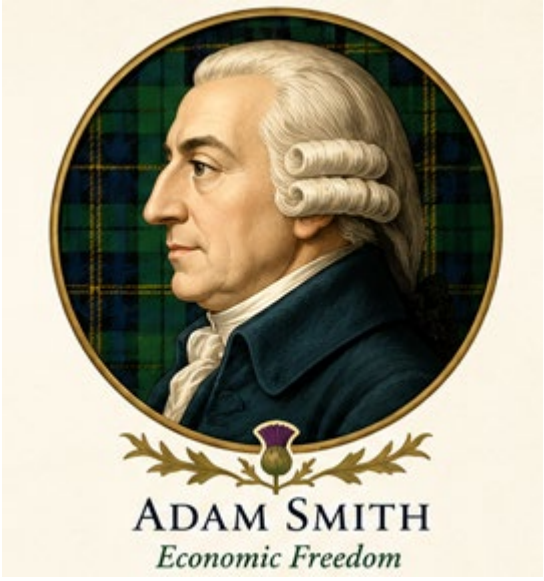
At a time when governments often justified their power through tradition, privilege, or divine right, Hume's emphasis on reason and inquiry represented a profound shift in thinking.

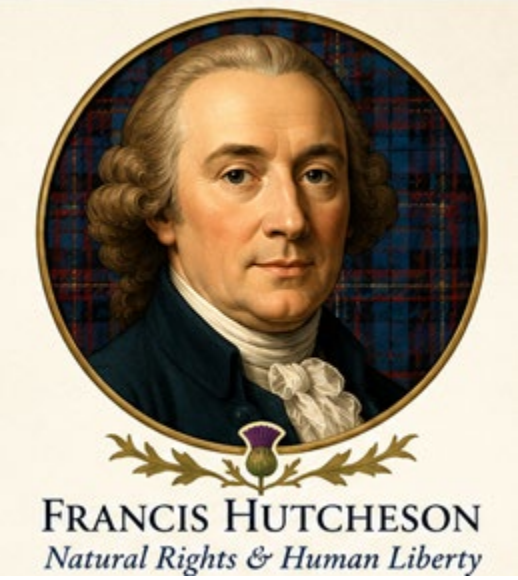
Adam Smith (1723–1790)

The Wealth of Nations

Born in Kirkcaldy, Adam Smith became the father of modern economics. In 1776, the same year America declared independence, he published *The Wealth of Nations*, arguing that prosperity flourishes when individuals are free to pursue opportunity, trade openly, and compete in markets.

Smith's ideas helped shape modern capitalism and influenced economic thinking throughout the English-speaking world, including the new United States.





Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746)

Natural Rights and Human Liberty

A professor at the University of Glasgow, Francis Hutcheson argued that all people possess natural rights and that governments exist to promote the welfare of society.

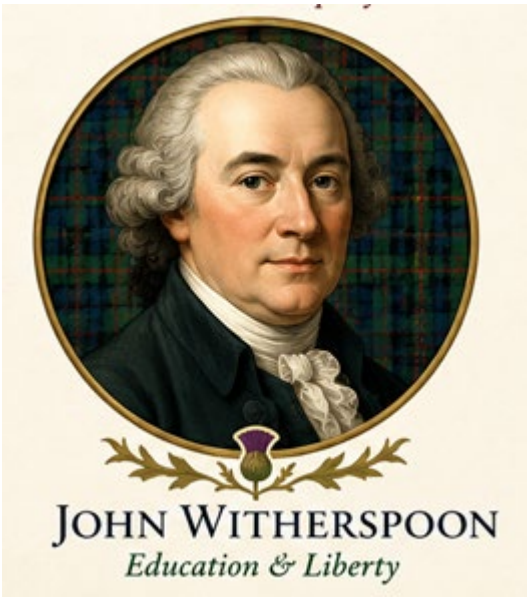
His writings influenced a generation of students and thinkers, including many who later shaped American political thought. Some historians have even traced echoes of Hutcheson's ideas in Thomas Jefferson's famous phrase about "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

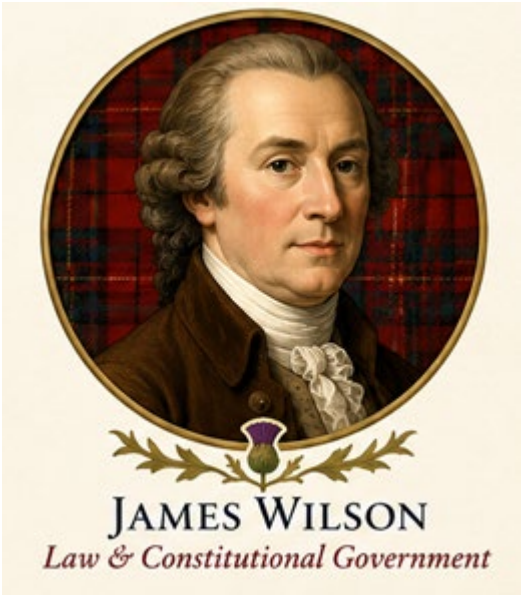
John Witherspoon (1723–1794)

Scotland's Founder in America

Born in Scotland, Witherspoon emigrated to America and became president of Princeton University. He remains the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Through his teaching, Scottish Enlightenment ideas found a direct path into American public life. Among his students was James Madison, later known as the "Father of the Constitution."



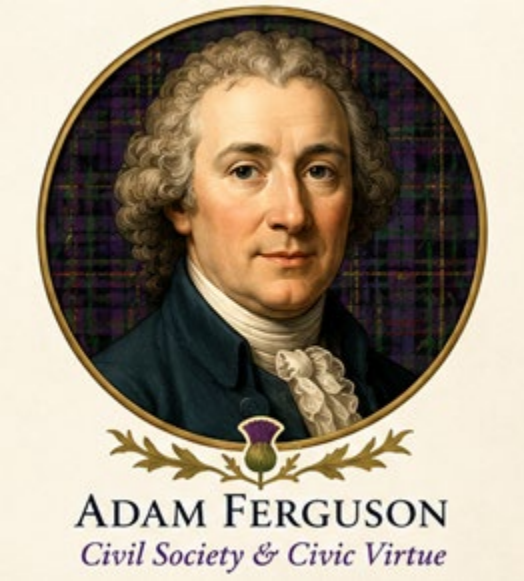


James Wilson (1742–1798)

A Scot at the Constitutional Convention

Born near St Andrews, James Wilson emigrated to America and became one of the most influential Founding Fathers. He signed both the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

Wilson played a key role in shaping the structure of the new American government and later became one of the first justices of the United States Supreme Court.



Adam Ferguson (1723–1816)

Understanding Civil Society

Historian, philosopher, and former army chaplain, Adam Ferguson explored how societies develop, how citizens participate in public life, and why civic engagement matters.

His ideas about republican government, citizenship, and public virtue influenced political thinkers throughout Britain and North America during the revolutionary era.

A Lasting Legacy

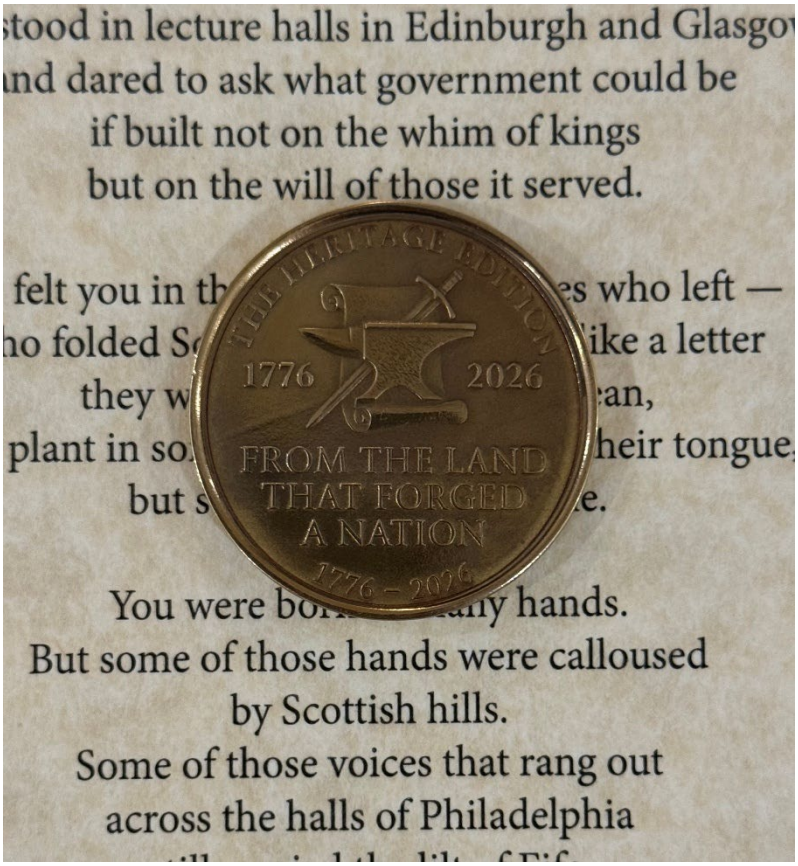
The story of Scotland's role in America's founding is not simply the story of soldiers, settlers, and statesmen. It is also the story of ideas.

From university lecture halls in Edinburgh and Glasgow to assembly rooms in Philadelphia, Scottish thinkers helped shape debates about liberty, education, commerce, citizenship, and self-government. Nearly 250 years after American independence, their influence remains woven into the intellectual foundations of the United States.

Designed in Scotland, Dedicated to America

A Scottish Perspective on America's Founding

There is a familiar story we tell about the founding of the United States—one rooted in revolution, independence, and the birth of a nation. But as we approach the 250th anniversary of that moment, there is another thread worth following—one that begins not in Philadelphia, but in the lecture halls of Edinburgh and Glasgow.



For Drue Bremner, founder of *The 1776 Collection*, the Scottish influence on America's founding isn't just about names or ancestry—it's about mindset. "There's a strong thread of self-determination, questioning authority, and a belief in personal responsibility," he says. "That way of thinking didn't appear out of nowhere. It was being shaped in Scotland during the Enlightenment."

Those ideas would travel across the Atlantic and take root in the American colonies, helping shape how a new nation began to see itself. As he puts it, "It's less about ticking off names and more about recognizing a shared way of thinking—one that values independence, resilience, and the right to shape your own path."

Scottish Identity Across the Atlantic

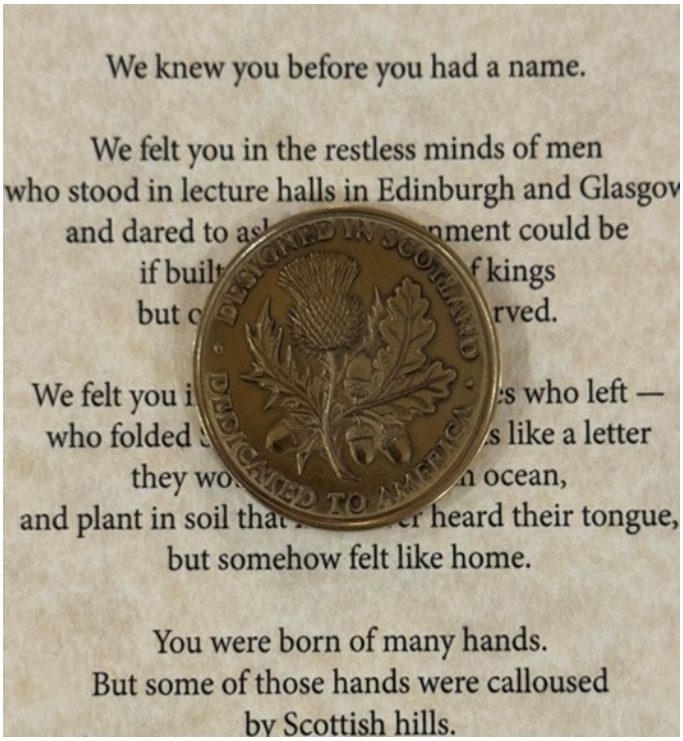
Bremner's understanding of that connection wasn't always so clear. "When I was younger, I could never understand why someone born in America or Canada would call themselves Scottish," he admits. "It didn't make sense at the time." That perspective changed as he began travelling and meeting members of the Scottish diaspora around the world. "I realized it wasn't about geography—it was about heritage and identity." Today, he sees that connection not as something distant, but something deeply felt—and actively maintained.

What stands out most to Bremner is the pride with which Scottish identity is carried beyond Scotland itself. “There’s a genuine effort to hold onto traditions, stories, and identity—even generations removed,” he says. “In some cases, it feels like that connection is even more consciously valued abroad than it is at home.” From Highland Games across North America to pipe bands and cultural societies, that identity continues to evolve while remaining rooted in something enduring.

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Bremner sees an opportunity—not to rewrite history, but to deepen it. “The American founding is often told in a very fixed way,” he says. “But there are threads within it, like the Scottish one, that add depth and context.” For millions of Americans with Scottish heritage, that added dimension makes the story more personal. “Sharing that doesn’t take anything away from the story,” he adds. “It strengthens it.”

The Thistle and the Oak

To bring that idea to life, Bremner created a series of coins designed in Scotland and dedicated to America, each reflecting themes of origin, journey, and legacy: *The 1776 Collection*.



One design in particular captures that connection with striking simplicity: a Scottish thistle alongside American oak. “The thistle represents the tenacity of the Scots—it survives, it endures,” he explains. “The oak represents strength and stability, something deeply associated with America.” Together, the symbols tell a shared story. “Tenacity combined with strength is a powerful idea. The aim wasn’t to overcomplicate it, but to create something people could immediately connect with.”

If there is one idea at the heart of Bremner’s work, it is this: that heritage is not something static, but something carried forward. “I’d hope people recognize that their connection to Scotland is real and valid,” he says, “and feel a sense of pride in it—not just as something in the past, but something that still has meaning today.” In that sense, the story of Scotland and America is not just one of history, but of continuity—a story not only remembered, but held. To learn more, visit: https://the1776collection.netlify.app/ .

About the Contributor

Drue Bremner is the founder of *The 1776 Collection*, a Scotland-based project inspired by the enduring connections between Scotland and America. Through thoughtful design and symbolism, his work brings elements of that shared history into the present day.

Images courtesy of The 1776 Collection

Keeping the Scottish American Story Alive

Scottish Heritage USA: Connecting the Past — and Future — of America 250

As America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, conversations about the nation's founding are taking place everywhere — in museums, historic sites, classrooms, documentaries, and family history research. Yet one important thread in the American story is often overlooked: the profound influence of Scotland and the Scottish diaspora on the birth and development of the United States.

Long before tartan became a symbol of heritage festivals and Highland Games, Scottish immigrants, soldiers, philosophers, merchants, ministers, and pioneers were helping shape the character of colonial America. The ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment influenced the thinking of the Founding Fathers. Scots and Scots-Irish settlers helped populate the frontier. Scottish traditions in music, craftsmanship, education, and community life became woven into the cultural fabric of North America itself.

For more than 60 years, Scottish Heritage USA (SHUSA) has worked to preserve and celebrate those connections through education, cultural programming, partnerships, and community engagement. Founded in 1965, the organization has become one of the leading voices promoting Scottish heritage in North America. Now, as America approaches this historic milestone, SHUSA is helping ensure that Scotland's contribution to the American story is not merely remembered, but actively explored and understood by a new generation.

Scotland's Ideas Helped Shape America

"Scottish beliefs and ideas helped shape the political DNA of the United States," explains Susan Bryant Thomas, Executive Director of Scottish Heritage USA.

Many of America's Founding Fathers were either Scottish-born or of Scottish descent. SHUSA points to figures such as John Witherspoon, James Wilson, and Alexander Hamilton — all influenced by the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment and thinkers like David Hume. Those ideas helped shape emerging American concepts of constitutional government, popular sovereignty, and the rule of law.

And these connections remain surprisingly personal within the organization itself: SHUSA's Board includes descendants of both James Wilson and Alexander Hamilton.

Bringing Heritage to Life

Scottish Heritage USA President Peter McC Wilson IV with the McIntosh family at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in 2025

While history and preservation remain central to SHUSA's mission, the organization is equally focused on bringing Scottish heritage to life for modern audiences. Across the United States — and increasingly in Canada as well — SHUSA sponsors and supports cultural programming designed to make Scottish traditions accessible, engaging, and relevant.

That includes involvement with National Tartan Day celebrations, educational initiatives, and programming at events such as the Scottish Cultural Village at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina — one of the largest and most beloved Highland Games gatherings in North America. Visitors encounter not only pipes and drums, but storytelling, music, dance, crafts, genealogy, and opportunities to explore their own Scottish roots in an atmosphere that feels both educational and celebratory.

SHUSA is also looking toward the future. The organization is launching a new leadership mentoring initiative designed to engage younger volunteers at Highland Games and Scottish events across North America. SHUSA is also planning to explore development of a Young Leaders Council to bring younger voices into SHUSA's strategic planning, programming, and outreach efforts.

Photo Credits: All images are courtesy of Susan Bryant Thomas, Executive Director, Scottish Heritage USA.
Logo: Scottish Heritage USA logo reproduced with permission.

A Vision for the Future: The Scottish Heritage Discovery Center

One of SHUSA's most ambitious initiatives is the proposed Scottish Heritage Discovery Center, currently in the feasibility stage. The vision is to create a dedicated center in the United States focused on the celebration, exploration, and study of Scottish contributions to America.

Notably, the Discovery Center is not envisioned as a traditional museum filled only with static displays. Instead, it would provide an interactive experience designed for adults, families, children, researchers, and heritage travelers alike — a place where visitors could discover not only Scottish history, but their own connections to it.

Plans include exhibits and programming focused on music, dance, crafts, legends, storytelling, the Great Wagon Road, Scottish golf traditions, and partnerships with organizations such as the National Trust for Scotland USA Foundation. "It will be a place for people to discover US based Scottish and Scots-Irish heritage and their own roots through engaging information, interactive exhibits, and programming," says Thomas. At a time when many people are searching for deeper cultural and community connections, the idea feels especially timely.

Why Scottish Heritage Still Resonates

Why does Scottish heritage continue to resonate so strongly in America generations after the first migrations? Thomas believes part of the answer lies in today's growing fascination with ancestry, identity, and cultural belonging.

From genealogy platforms and DNA testing to popular series such as *Outlander* and *Shetland*, interest in Scotland continues to expand well beyond the Scottish diaspora itself. "There is a thirst for positive community connections and joy in our culture," she says. "For some, exploring Scottish heritage and culture provides that connection."

That spirit is perhaps what makes organizations like SHUSA so important at this moment. As America reflects on its founding story during the 250th anniversary period, Scottish Heritage USA is helping ensure that the Scottish thread woven through that story remains visible — not simply as history, but as a living cultural tradition that continues to evolve today.

To learn more about Scottish Heritage USA, the Scottish Heritage Discovery Center, or SHUSA membership opportunities, visit Scottish Heritage USA | SHUSA.

From Tartan Week to America 250

The American Scottish Foundation: Strengthening Scottish-American Ties for Nearly 70 Years

Every April, thousands of people gather in New York City to celebrate Tartan Week. Pipes echo along Sixth Avenue, tartan fills the streets, and visitors from around the world come together to celebrate Scotland's enduring connection to America.

For many participants, Tartan Week has become a beloved annual tradition. Yet the story of the organization that helped make it all possible is less well known. As America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, the American Scottish Foundation (ASF) is continuing a mission that began nearly seventy years ago: strengthening the cultural, educational, and historic ties between Scotland and the United States.

Today, ASF is known for its leadership role in Tartan Week, educational programming, and cultural outreach. But the organization's origins trace back to one remarkable woman whose efforts helped unite Americans and Britons during one of history's darkest moments.

A Remarkable Beginning

The story begins with Natalie Wales Douglas-Hamilton, better known as Lady Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton.

Born in the United States, Lady Malcolm became one of the most influential advocates for Britain during the Second World War. In 1940, after witnessing the hardships facing Britain during the Blitz, she returned to America determined to help.

With little more than determination and a compelling vision, she launched *Bundles for Britain*, a relief effort that encouraged Americans to send clothing, supplies, and support to the British people. What began as a grassroots initiative quickly grew into a nationwide movement involving hundreds of thousands of volunteers and supporters.

The effort became one of the largest civilian aid campaigns of the war and helped strengthen public support for Britain long before the United States formally entered the conflict. In recognition of her extraordinary contributions, Lady Malcolm was later appointed an honorary Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

Following the war, she and her husband, Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton, turned their attention toward strengthening the long-term relationship between Scotland and the United States. In 1956, they founded the American Scottish Foundation in New York City, creating an organization dedicated to promoting Scottish culture, heritage, education, and friendship across the Atlantic.

Building Bridges Through Culture

Over the decades, ASF has become one of the leading Scottish-American organizations in the United States. Its programs have ranged from educational initiatives and scholarships to cultural exchanges, lectures, Burns Night celebrations, and partnerships with organizations throughout Scotland and North America.

Perhaps most visible has been the organization's role in helping develop and support Tartan Week celebrations that have become a highlight of New York's cultural calendar each spring. Tartan Week attracts visitors from across the United States, Canada, Scotland, and beyond, celebrating the many ways Scottish heritage continues to influence contemporary life.

But while the pipes, parades, and pageantry may capture public attention, ASF's mission has always extended beyond a single week of festivities.

Telling Scotland's American Story

One of ASF's most successful recent initiatives is its lecture series, *The Scots Who Built New York*. Created through ASF's participation in New York City's Landmarks60 Alliance, the series explores the lives and achievements of Scottish immigrants and Scottish-Americans whose contributions helped shape the city and the nation.

Among those featured have been architect Charles McKim, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, and architect John McComb Jr. Their stories reveal the extraordinary influence Scots have had on American architecture, philanthropy, politics, business, and civic life. The lectures encourage audiences to see familiar landmarks and institutions through a new lens, uncovering Scottish connections that often remain hidden in plain sight.

As ASF Chairman John Kinnear notes, Scottish contributions to the United States have been remarkably significant when measured against the size of Scotland itself. "It gives pleasure to be able to let Scots both here and in Scotland know what an important role we all have played in making the United States," he says.

Looking Ahead to America 250

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, ASF is expanding that storytelling mission with a new presentation: *The Scots Who Built the United States*.

The program builds on the success of the New York series by exploring the broader impact Scots have had on American history from the colonial era through the present day.

The timing is especially fitting. Scots have been part of the American story from the earliest settlements, contributing as soldiers, merchants, educators, architects, inventors, philanthropists, and political leaders. Their influence can be found in every chapter of the nation's development.

His Grace, The Duke of Hamilton, Patron of ASF and great-nephew of ASF founder, Lord Malcolm Douglas Hamilton, surrounded by 2025 Wallace Award Honorees - Wright Post Palmer, Chair of Beekman Estates, Dr Joseph Morrow, Lord Lyon, King of Arms - and 2025 Young Wallace Awardees – Scott Gilmour and Clare Mackenzie – with Camilla G Hellman, MBE, President , American Scottish Foundation.

Nearly seventy years after its founding, ASF continues the work envisioned by Lord and Lady Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton: building connections, celebrating heritage, and ensuring that the Scottish contribution to the American story remains visible for future generations. As America reflects on its first 250 years, the American Scottish Foundation is helping remind us that Scotland's story is woven deeply into the fabric of the nation itself.

To learn more about the American Scottish Foundation, its educational programs, Tartan Week activities and membership opportunities, visit the ASF website at: [American Scottish Foundation - Home](#).

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Andrew Carnegie
One of America's Most Famous Scots

Few Scottish immigrants have left a larger mark on the United States than Andrew Carnegie.

Born in Dunfermline in 1835, Carnegie arrived in America as a poor teenager with little more than ambition, determination, and a willingness to work.

Over the next half-century he would help build the American steel industry, become one of the wealthiest men in history, and then devote much of his fortune to libraries, education, and public institutions.

Today his name can still be found across America—from libraries and universities to one of New York City's most famous concert halls. His story remains one of the most remarkable examples of Scottish influence on the American experience.

From Scotland to America

Andrew Carnegie never forgot what it felt like to be poor.

Born in 1835 in Dunfermline, Scotland, Carnegie grew up in a family that knew insecurity intimately. His father was a handloom weaver—a skilled trade rendered increasingly obsolete by industrialization. As work disappeared, so did stability. The family lived close to the edge, reliant on shared resources and the kindness of neighbors.

When Carnegie was thirteen, his family made the difficult decision to leave Scotland behind and emigrate to the United States. They settled in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, part of the rapidly expanding industrial landscape of America. It was not a story of instant opportunity. It was a story of long hours, low wages, and relentless uncertainty.

An Industrial Empire

Carnegie's first job in America was as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory. He worked twelve-hour days for little more than a dollar a week. Later, he found employment as a telegraph messenger—a role that would quietly change the course of his life. Carnegie proved unusually attentive and quick to learn. He memorized addresses. He listened closely. He noticed how decisions were made.

Opportunity came not through inheritance or privilege, but through proximity—being near information, people, and possibility.

Over time, Carnegie rose through the ranks of America's growing industrial economy. He invested early in railroads, learned how capital flowed, and gradually moved into steel production—an industry poised to reshape cities, transportation, and commerce. By focusing relentlessly on efficiency, scale, and reinvestment, Carnegie built a steel enterprise that dominated its era.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie had become one of the wealthiest men in the world. Yet unlike many industrial titans of the age, he would become equally famous for what he did with his fortune after he earned it.

The Man Who Built Libraries

One of the experiences that shaped Carnegie most deeply was access to books.

As a young worker, he benefited from a local library made available to working people by a generous benefactor. Carnegie never forgot the opportunities that access to knowledge had created for him. He became convinced that education and self-improvement could transform lives just as surely as money could.

When he turned his attention to philanthropy, libraries became one of his greatest passions.

Carnegie believed that libraries offered something more valuable than charity: opportunity. A library could open doors for anyone willing to walk through them.

Over the course of his life, Carnegie helped establish more than 2,500 libraries across the United States, Britain, Canada, and beyond. Communities had to demonstrate local support and commit to maintaining the buildings. Carnegie would provide the funds to help make them possible.

His philanthropy extended far beyond libraries. He supported universities, scientific research, cultural institutions, and international peace initiatives. Yet libraries remained the clearest expression of his belief that knowledge should be accessible to everyone.

A Legacy That Endures

Carnegie's legacy is not without complexity. His industrial success was built during an era of intense labor disputes and rapid economic change. Historians continue to debate aspects of his business practices and the broader impact of industrial capitalism in the Gilded Age.

Yet there is little debate about the scale of his influence on American life.

When Carnegie died in 1919, he had given away the vast majority of his fortune. More importantly, he had helped create institutions that would outlive him by generations.

Carnegie Hall - New York City

Today, visitors can still find his legacy in libraries, universities, museums, concert halls, and public spaces across the United States. His journey—from a poor Scottish immigrant to one of America's most influential citizens—remains one of the great success stories of the immigrant experience.

For Americans celebrating the nation's 250th anniversary, Carnegie's life offers a reminder that the story of America has always been shaped by people who arrived from elsewhere carrying dreams, skills, and determination. Few left a larger mark than the young weaver's son from Dunfermline who crossed the Atlantic in search of opportunity and helped build a nation.

Scots, Cattle, and Cowboys

The Hidden Scottish Roots of Texas Ranching

When most people picture the American cowboy, they imagine a figure born on the Texas frontier — hat, horse, and cattle drive, forged under a blazing sun. Few would think to look for his origins in the misty, contested lands of the Scottish Borders. Yet the connection is real — and far more direct than most would expect.

Long before the first great cattle drives to Kansas railheads, men in the Anglo-Scottish Border country were already mastering the art of moving livestock across difficult terrain, often at speed and under pressure. These were the Border reivers — families who lived by raiding cattle across a lawless frontier, developing skills that would later prove remarkably suited to a very different landscape. According to novelist and historian Maggie Foster, the American cowboy did not emerge in isolation but inherited a tradition shaped over centuries.

“The deeper I went,” she explains, “the further back it went. Eventually I was looking at medieval Border reivers and asking how their world connected to the Chisholm Trail. The answer turned out to be more directly than anyone might have suspected.”

From Reivers to Ranchers: The Long Journey to Texas

The story of Texas ranching is not a sudden invention of the nineteenth century, but the latest chapter in a much longer history — one that stretches across continents and generations. At its heart is a transfer of knowledge: how to manage cattle in difficult conditions, how to move them across distance, and how to do so efficiently enough to build a livelihood.

A Timeline of Skill, Migration, and Opportunity

1350–1600 — The Border Reivers
In the lawless lands between Scotland and England, reiver families perfect the art of moving cattle across rough terrain under pressure, often at night and often pursued.

1603 — A Turning Point
With the accession of James VI and I, cattle raiding becomes a hanging offense. Many reivers adapt, becoming professional drovers.

1715–1745 — Displacement and Migration
The Jacobite Rebellions trigger upheaval and emigration. Scots — many from Border backgrounds — leave the country, carrying their skills with them to the American colonies.

Early 1800s — Arrival in Texas
Settlers of Scots and Scots-Irish descent begin arriving in Texas, bringing livestock traditions rooted in both the Borders and the Highlands.

1861–1865 — War and Opportunity
The American Civil War leaves Texas ranches largely abandoned. Cattle roam freely across the open range, multiplying into the millions.

1865 — The Rise of the Cattle Drives
Trails such as the Chisholm Trail emerge, creating urgent demand for skilled drovers capable of moving large herds across long distances.

1867 — The Market Opens
Railhead entrepreneur Joseph McCoy establishes Abilene, Kansas as a major market, making long-distance drives profitable.

1882 — Scottish Capital Shapes the Industry
The Matador Land and Cattle Company is established with Scottish financing and management, bringing structure and long-term discipline to large-scale ranching.

The Moment Texas Needed Them

The turning point came in the aftermath of the Civil War, when Texas faced both chaos and opportunity. Millions of cattle roamed untended across vast stretches of land, creating an urgent need for men who could gather, control, and drive them to market. What the region required was not invention, but experience — and that experience already existed.

“Moving livestock quickly, quietly, across rough country, under pressure, without losing animals — that is what reivers did,” Foster explains. “By the time Texas needed drovers, there were men ready whose families had been doing exactly that work for centuries.”

In this context, the great cattle drives appear less as a sudden innovation and more as the continuation of an established practice, adapted to a new scale and setting. Even the names associated with this era reflect that lineage: Jesse Chisholm, for whom the famous trail is named, was the son of a man of Scottish ancestry.

More Than Cowboys: A Scottish System

The Scottish contribution to Texas ranching extended well beyond horsemanship. It also encompassed capital, organization, and a disciplined approach to enterprise. The Matador Land and Cattle Company, established in 1882, stands as a clear example: a large-scale operation financed by Scottish investors and managed with a long-term commercial perspective.

This combination of practical skill and financial structure reflects a broader Scottish imprint on the industry. It was not simply a matter of working cattle, but of building systems that could sustain and expand that work over time.

An Invisible Inheritance

If Scottish influence was so significant in Texas, why has it remained largely unrecognized? The answer lies in how thoroughly it was absorbed into everyday life. Large numbers of early settlers were of Scottish or Scots-Irish descent, and their customs and working methods blended seamlessly into the developing culture of Texas.

“The Scots never thought of themselves as an ethnic group,” Foster observes. “They were the dominant culture.”

As a result, what began as a distinct inheritance gradually became simply “the way things were done.” Yet traces remain visible for those who look closely — in cattle culture, in music and language, and in traditions that continue without always being consciously understood.

Rethinking the Cowboy

The image of the cowboy as a uniquely American creation remains powerful, but it is also incomplete. When viewed through a longer historical lens, the cowboy emerges as the inheritor of a much older body of knowledge, shaped over generations and carried across continents.

The techniques that defined the great American cattle drives were not invented overnight; they were refined over centuries in another landscape entirely. Texas provided the setting in which those skills could flourish on a grand scale, but part of their story begins far earlier — in the borderlands of Scotland.

About the Contributor

Maggie Foster is a novelist and historian whose research into Scottish history informs both her fiction and her wider historical writing. She is a 7th generation Texan of Scottish descent and the author of the award-winning Loch Lonach mystery series. You can learn more about Maggie and purchase her books on Amazon: https://shorturl.at/TCJ0I

Coming Soon……..

As we close this issue celebrating the Scottish influence on America 250, we look ahead to the stories waiting to be told. We hope you'll visit our website (www.scottishunicornnetwork.org) to download Special Issues, read our blog posts and subscribe - or email our editor: blyth@scottishunicornnetwork.org to do so. **Scots are famously thrifty, so don't worry – they're all free!**

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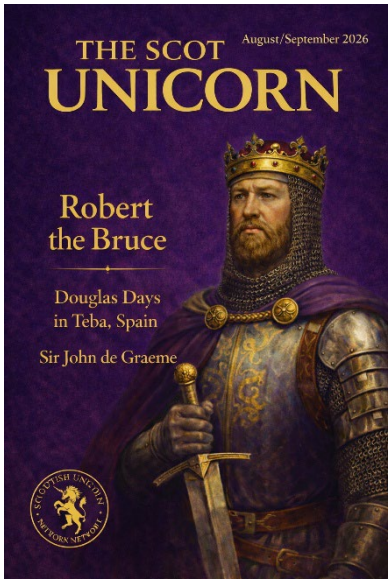
August/September Issue: Robert the Bruce



More than seven centuries after his death, Robert the Bruce remains one of Scotland's most enduring national heroes. King, warrior, outlaw and nation-builder, Bruce's story is one of resilience, determination and leadership in the face of overwhelming odds.

In this issue, we explore the man behind the legend: his rise to the Scottish throne, the long struggle for independence, the victory at Bannockburn and the legacy he left to future generations. We'll also meet the women closest to him, including his queen, Elizabeth de Burgh, and his daughter, Marjorie Bruce, whose descendants would go on to rule Scotland and eventually unite the crowns of Scotland and England.

Along the way, we'll meet some of the loyal companions who helped shape Scotland's destiny, including the legendary Sir James Douglas and Sir John de Graeme.

The Scottish Unicorn's Field Guide to the Highland Games

From caber tosses and pipe bands to Highland dancing and clan gatherings, the Highland Games are among Scotland's most colorful and beloved traditions. But for newcomers, they can sometimes feel a little overwhelming.

Our newest Field Guide serves as a friendly companion. We'll explain the origins of the Games, introduce the famous heavy events, explore the music, dancing and pageantry, and share tips for getting the most from your visit. Whether you're attending your first Games or your 50th, this Special Issue celebrates the strength, skill and spirit that continue to bring Scottish communities together around the world.

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