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Abstract: From the small nation of Scotland has come a world of cultural ideas and preservation—some historically based and others fictional and romanticized. The historical and romanticized ideas of what Scottish culture is have come together to form the Scottish Heritage organizations and celebrations so common in the modern world, specifically the American west. The pinnacle moments of the Battle of Culloden Moor in 1746 to the end of the Acts of Proscription in the latter part of the 18th century stand as a basis for the need to preserve culture. Studying the history of dress, music, dance, and clans the importance of the events of the 18th century to modern heritage events becomes paramount. Although a great deal of the Scottish culture practiced today comes from a fabricated and stitched together history, it offers a place of cultural oneness and community to the people that continue its celebration.

Red, White, and Blue Tartan: Modern Scottish Cultural Preservation in the American West

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Bagpipes calling out over green glens and purple heather, the tattoo beat of the drums, and the quickstep of a Highland Fling all bring to mind the stout-hearted Scot, clad in a kilt with sword in hand. This is the imagery of Scotland portrayed so often in modern Scottish heritage celebrations. The apparent history of Scotland is poignant and resonates strongly in the minds and hearts of Scotland's people—whether or not they have ever lived in the plaid haven. Scottish culture is practiced by many people that identify as “Scottish” throughout the world and particularly in the American West. Highland Games have been held in the American West since the late nineteenth century. These games include competition events in piping, drumming, dancing, strong man games, and occasionally herding dog events. Always popular at the games are the clans and vendors, equipped with tokens and legends hearkening back to the days of agrarian prosperity in Scotland.<sup>i</sup> These popular attractions at the games are evidence of a legacy of selecting heritage markers that began in the eighteenth century. The consequence of this continued practice gives reason for Scottish cultural preservation in the American West to be the mismatched and patchworked operation that it is. Some of these chosen markers include recognizable aspects such as Highland dress, bagpipes, Highland dance, and clan lineage. Originating from a muddled history pieced together by a people trying to hold onto something measurably “Scottish,” these markers serve the greater purpose of providing community and human connection. Modern Scottish cultural preservation is essentially a reclaiming of specific pieces of Scottish history stitched together into a tapestry of fabricated cultural identity.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As with any region or nation-state, Scotland has a long and complicated history. Because of poorly documented historical events and domineering English control, Scottish history has been largely lost or rewritten to the point that clear sources and recollections essentially no

longer exist. Most of the search for Scottish cultural history comes from anti-English sentiment and finding the Scottish roots beyond English colonization. John Barclay, leader of the Utah Pipe Band, identifies two pinnacle moments that portray this idea. The first is the Battle of Culloden Moor in 1746, when English forces slaughtered hundreds of Scottish clan members that opposed English rule and advocated for the crowning of Charles Edward Stuart as the King of the United Kingdom.<sup>ii</sup> The second is the Acts of Proscription, passed into law just a few months after the Battle of Culloden in order to subdue Scottish cultural practices. Coming away from these two prominent historical events, the Scottish Enlightenment plays a significant role in the education and religious changes of the Scottish people and their subsequent emigration and spread of these new ideas around the globe. Despite very few sources for Scotland before the eighteenth century, there was enough tradition and folklore for the people of the eighteenth century onward to piece together the best parts of Scottish history and legend to create a “new” Scotland that would become transnational.

The Battle of Culloden Moor on April 16, 1746 has become an important moment in Scottish cultural identity because it was the last, and most notable, time that a majority of the Highland clans came together to fight against English oppression and for Scottish autonomy. Losing epically to the forces of the Duke of Cumberland, this effectively ended the final and greatest Jacobite uprising which sought to put a Stuart (Charles Edward Stuart or “Bonnie Prince Charlie”) on the throne and give more freedom to Scotland. John and Margaret Gold explore the impact of the battle by pinpointing this loss as a moment for museums and “prosthetic memory.”<sup>iii</sup> In other words, people of the present feel a connection to the Highlanders in the Battle of Culloden because the spirit of the battle resonates with their own beliefs of liberty. This is especially true for people of the America that thrive on a heritage of revolution and fighting

for independence. Despite the historical discrepancies and romanticization of a “battle for freedom,” Culloden Moor has become a sacred ground in Scottish minds and hearts and has come to represent far more than one moment in history—launching a cultural revolution. This revolution exploded into existence in no small part because the battle led to the passing of the Acts of Proscription.

The Acts of Proscription are arguably one of the most poignant aspects of Scottish cultural reformation. In the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden the English felt a need to suppress anything too *Scottish*. By enacting the Acts of Proscription, the English sought to assimilate the Highlanders into English society to end their will to revolt. The clan system was effectively suppressed, speaking Gaelic was outlawed, Highland dress was restricted, and the use of bagpipes or other inherently “Scottish” things were banned.<sup>iv</sup> The one thing that remained of Scottish culture and was capitalized on by the English, was a respect for the military prowess of the Scottish people—thus exacerbating one of the main false identities Scottish descendants would come to embrace in historic memory.<sup>v</sup> The Acts of Proscription and their end in 1782 would become a major turning point for the Scottish cultural movement in the end of the eighteenth century. Having the opposite effect than the English intended, even elements of Scottish history that had seemed unimportant to many Scots before that time became pinnacle features of culture because they represented something uniquely Scottish and distinctly non-English. Around this same time there was a major intellectual movement within Scotland, often called the “Scottish Enlightenment,” which equally affected the Scottish cultural revolution.

The Scottish Enlightenment spanned much of the eighteenth century and focused on the “Scottish Literati” contributions which were mainly from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen.<sup>vi</sup> The Scottish Enlightenment and Scottish immigration of this period are connected historical

events because Scotland's beautiful, mystical, Celtic land could not support all of her people due to low quality soil and multiple micro-climates that made agriculture poor. The agricultural problem demanded that many Scots to become good chemists and geologists to create good fertilizers, bleaches, and dyes.<sup>vii</sup> It also forced a need for different types of trade such as medicine, academia, politics, and other professions that would necessitate the movement of the Scottish people to new lands for better opportunities.<sup>viii</sup> Because of these influences, two main things happened. First, great intellectuals took Scottish cultural roots to the world, such as David Hume and Adam Smith. They did not break with their Calvinist and Humanist traditions, therefore taking a part of Scotland to America.<sup>ix</sup> The second thing is as David McCrone states, a cultural stagnation began with the migration of the Scottish intellectuals to other nations.<sup>x</sup> Although Scottish culture was spreading, it also remained static in the eighteenth century when the largest diasporic movement of Scots began. The Scottish Enlightenment included a religious element that would be the cause for immigration to the American West in the mid-nineteenth century, either straight from Scotland or of Scottish immigrants that had first gone to the American East.

Specific family accounts and papers give the most information of individual reasons for leaving the mother country for the American West and account for the continued practice of Scottish culture. This cultural practice did not change much from the important heritage markers selected post Culloden and Acts of Proscription, which continued the illusion of eighteenth century culture even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scholar Polly Aird shares the story of her Scottish born great-great uncle Peter McAuslan who moved to the American West after he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>xi</sup> Peter McAuslan is an example of thousands of immigrants that originally came pursuing

religion, became disenchanted, then remained in the American West continuing to preserve Scottish culture by organizing Highland Games, hosting Burns Festivals, and continuing Scottish traditions in their homes.<sup>xii</sup> From my own family history, the account of Elizabeth Miller, first generation child of Scottish immigrants John and Janet Miller, is another great example of this continued practice. Elizabeth “liked to go with her mother and grandparents to Bate Hall . . . to celebrate the birthday of Robert Burns, the beloved poet of Scotland. There she watched the Scotchmen dance the Sword dance and the Highland Fling and joined with the . . . rest of the clans in singing “Scots Wha’ Ha’ Ha’ Wallace Bled”, “Auld Lang Syne” and other favorites.”<sup>xiii</sup> Elizabeth’s family is another example of many Scots that moved out west for the purpose of religion. An even later example is Fredrick Stewart Buchanan who immigrated to Utah, USA in 1949. He then served a Mormon mission to convert more potential immigrants while continuing the cultural practices of piping as it had been done since the eighteenth century.

Because of the mass immigration of Scots in the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries there was a stable basis for Scottish cultural interest in the United States. This time period of high immigration is paramount to understanding the stagnation of the period of preservation. The most recent and pervasive historical memory for many of these immigrants was the Battle of Culloden and the Acts of Proscription, or the end of the Acts and the reclaiming of traditional aspects of culture. Overall, one of the most important takeaways from these historical events is how they impacted a cultural revolution and subsequent preservation in the American West. This was done mainly through claiming easily identifiable parts of culture that had material manifestation. The four primary features of material preservation from this period can be found in Highland dress, music, dancing, and clan lineage. Each of these four features, although rooted

in aspects of history, represent the fictionalized Scotland that American Westerners have come to love and identify as their own.

## HERITAGE MARKERS

### *Dress*

Victoria Hinderks explains that the Highland dress inventions of the eighteenth century are only loosely based on the ancient dress of the Highlanders.<sup>xiv</sup> The original word for kilt was *plaid*, which means “blanket” in Gaelic. This alone gives evidence that the use of the “ancient,” or more accurately “historical,” kilt was functional rather than style based.<sup>xv</sup> The more modern version of the kilt is the *philibeg* (*feilidh beag*) the “little wrap” or “little kilt.”<sup>xvi</sup> John Telfer-Dunbar argues that the kilt has at least some historical basis in Scotland, or there would have been no need for the English to ban the *philibeg* with such a heavy hand during the Acts of Proscription.<sup>xvii</sup> Lowlanders saw this restriction of kilt and tartan as a loss of culture and were fearful of the social and political climate. They needed to band with their Highland brothers and thus clamored to claim tartans for themselves as well.<sup>xviii</sup> They were hoping to keep a piece of heritage for themselves, no matter how recently concocted. In modern practice a kilt and tartan can be created for any group—the Utah Pipe Band, for example, wears the “ancient Barclay hunting tartan” which may be old but is not “ancient” and was likely claimed as “Barclay” post Battle of Culloden. The dancers associated with the Utah Pipe Band wear the tartan created for the Christian missionaries that taught the Barclay family in the nineteenth century, which led to their move to the American West. This modern use of tartan and kilt gives space for identity and community in a hectic modern world, despite having little or no ancient roots in actual Scottish history. Another unique modern Scottish heritage marker that is as easily recognizable as the kilt is the bagpipes.



## *Bagpipe*

The first official recording of a bagpipe used during battle is at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547, but is not mentioned consistently as a musical instrument in Gaelic sources until the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>xix</sup> Piping schools are recorded in the MacLeod clan as early as the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>xx</sup> Other piping dynasties rose as well within the MacDonald, MacAurthur, and MacCrimmon clans—along with several others. The MacGregors were known as the *Sgeulaiche* or “story tellers” with their piping talents. Joshua Dickson describes how bards and piping were connected through the Gaelic language, which caused many piping revivals as the language was altered over time.<sup>xxi</sup> Many familiar tunes heard at Highland Games and in piping competitions tell stories such as in “Lord Lovat’s Lament,” written in memory of the Battle of Culloden. Other more modern stories are told through songs such as “The Bells of Dunblane,” written to honor the children killed in the shooting of Dunblane primary school. Familiar tunes are often associated with Scottish patriotism such as “The Flower of Scotland”, “Scotland the Brave”, “Highland Cathedral”, and on a more religious note, “Amazing Grace”. Though storytelling is the purpose of piping, it is highly regulated by piping boards around the world. This regimented system for pipe bands stems from the military practice of bagpipes in the eighteenth century and is the reason for so many fire departments and police stations having their own pipe bands in the American West today. These military roots are cause for some stereotyping of the Scottish people as militant fighters, which is also reflected in Highland dance.

## *Dance*

Traditionally, as it is told to every young dancer, the dances would have been danced mostly by military men even though they are now danced primarily by women. Because of this

military history, the dances are highly regulated and regimented. Each dance has a particular set of steps that are determined by the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing, created in 1955.<sup>xxii</sup> Dr. Norman Hay Forbes describes the dances as “recounting war-like deeds and heroic action” as a way to celebrate “martial fervour of Gaelic tribes.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Certain dances, such as the famous “Sword Dance,” danced around two broadswords placed in a cross on the ground, recalls Scottish folklore going back as far as Malcolm Canmore in the eleventh century.<sup>xxiv</sup> Each dance has a story to tell, and although it is most likely a recollection similar to the Arthurian legend, the dances provide mythos for Scottish cultural practice. The “Flora MacDonald’s Fancy” is a dance that celebrates the woman that helped “Bonnie Prince Charlie” escape to the Isle of Skye after the Battle of Culloden. Never intended as a historically practiced dance, it does indeed celebrate the historical aspect of one of the most pivotal moments of Scottish history in the minds of Scottish descendants. The “Seann Triubhas” (meaning “old trews” or “old trousers”) is a dance that celebrates the ending of the Acts of Proscription, casting off the English trousers, and the putting on of the kilt once again by the Highlander. This reclamation of culture is reflected in the celebrations of clans in the modern American West as well.

### *Clans*

Scholars such as F. Clifford-Vaughan, Julian Goodare, and John L. Roberts discuss the formation of the clans in the fifth and six centuries, which began through familial and kinship ties. Because of the different invasions of Scotland by the Norse and Normans and intermarriage of the cultural groups, political ideology had to become the basis for “kith and kin” and clans became more about political connections.<sup>xxv</sup> Clan chieftains acted as the “father” figure over their clans, forming a small nation of people that worked together for protection and sustenance. Chiefs were originally selected through elections but eventually were influenced by the English

and began practicing primogeniture.<sup>xxvi</sup> This, along with the constant infighting among clans, weakened the clan system long before the Battle of Culloden and the Acts of Proscription. The modern practice of clan lineage is another example of a historical memory cultivated following the Acts of Proscription to reclaim a far distant past. Clans still cling to long past heritage markers such as the MacLeods and MacDonald's piping traditions for cultural verification. These are not unfounded practices but represent a past so distant it is mostly forgotten or cannot be represented accurately. However, the point of clan celebration in modern times represents a much larger topic of cultural identification and community.

#### CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

Lineage does not need to be proven to compete in dancing, piping, drumming, or strong man competitions because it is a way to share Scottish heritage with people in the world. Particularly in the American West, the mission of sharing Scottish culture with any group of people is so important that pipe bands regularly participate in parades, Scottish and non-Scottish festivals, and funeral services. Thus, the cultural identity of the Scottish in the American West remains anchored in a Scotland long past that most likely never existed, or at least did not exist with all aspects at one time. The Battle of Culloden and Acts of Proscription add to this as a time of cultural oppression and then of cultural revival and reformation. Many Scottish immigrants left during the mid eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century because of the Scottish Enlightenment—including religious pioneers. This mass emigration essentially froze the historic memory of Scotland in the mid to late eighteenth century for the Scottish diasporic nation. When their culture was oppressed and restricted it became extremely important to the Scottish people to preserve it, even if that meant fabricating a never existent Scotland from remnants of historic ideals.

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