



# The Pipes of Christmas

15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1999 - 2013

*Proudly presented by the Clan Currie Society.*

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The Pipes of Christmas

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Celtic community, Thank You!

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The Clan Currie Society



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*The Clan Currie Society proudly presents*

The 15th Annual Production of  
**The Pipes of Christmas**

*Sponsored by*

Edinburgh Napier University  
Royal Bank of Canada Capital Markets  
The Grand Summit Hotel

**Saturday, December 14, 2013**  
Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church  
New York City

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**Sunday, December 15, 2013**  
Central Presbyterian Church  
Summit, NJ

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission.  
Please turn off all cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices.  
The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment is strictly prohibited.

*The 2013 edition of the Pipes of Christmas is lovingly dedicated  
to the memory of our dear friends*

Priscilla Campbell  
Paul Blandford  
Sandy MacPherson

*The Clan Currie Society gratefully acknowledges the generous support of*

Central Presbyterian Church  
Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church  
Celtic Life International Magazine  
The National Trust for Scotland – USA Foundation  
Mr. Glenorchy Campbell  
Deanne Torbert Dunning  
Beacon Hill Tavern  
J. McLaughlin  
Suburban Chamber of Commerce  
HomeTowne Television  
Classic Malts of Scotland  
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Walkers Shortbread

# Welcome Home to the Pipes of Christmas and the Celebration of our 15th Anniversary!

*On behalf of our Honorary Chairmen, our company of outstanding performers, and the members and friends of the Clan Currie Society, we wish you a warm Highland welcome and thank you for joining us. We especially welcome back our many loyal audience members who have come to celebrate with us over the years, many for over a decade now!*

In the midst of the holiday bustle, “The Pipes of Christmas” affords a rare opportunity to honor the sacred and celebrate the season in a reverent, joyful style that found its genesis among our Celtic ancestors. With music and poetry that reflects our cherished traditions, this year’s program includes perennial favorites as well and poignant new selections.

We are delighted to be presenting three world premiere compositions. “Lullaby for a Prince,” commissioned by the Clan Currie Society was written by our own Steve Gibb, originally from Inverness, Scotland. The song commemorates the birth of HRH Prince George of Cambridge to his parents TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Another new selection, appropriately titled, “The Pipes of Christmas” has been composed for our special anniversary by our music director, Jeff Rickard.

We are also delighted to be premiering a new composition written by a music student from Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland. The winning composition was yet to be selected at the time of this writing and we are anxiously awaiting the announcement of the contest winner. In our minds, all those who entered the competition and shared their wonderful talents are winners.

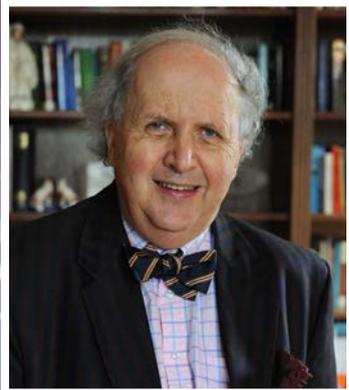
We wish to extend hearty thanks to our generous sponsors, especially Edinburgh Napier University, Royal Bank of Canada Capital Markets and the Grand Summit Hotel. An extra special note of thanks is in order to the editorial team at Celtic Life magazine for their generous assistance in producing this year’s handsome program book.

We are grateful for all our patrons, program advertisers and concert friends. These “angels” allow us to present our company in glorious settings, and to fund scholarships and educational programs that foster the study of Celtic music and culture at universities and colleges in the United States, Canada and Scotland.

Thank you for choosing to support “The Pipes of Christmas” with your presence here today.

From all of us to all of you, we wish you a blessed holiday season.

*Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna Mhath Ur!  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*



There may be the Atlantic Ocean between Scotland and the United States, but this is never more than a minor obstacle when it comes to the flow of ideas, fellowship, and good will between the two countries. One of the results of this exchange is these marvellous Christmas concerts in which Scottish music is heard in New York and New Jersey.

The Clan Currie Society has made an immense contribution to the appreciation and sharing of our musical heritage. There are historical reasons for this – while many Scottish clans have a history of military adventure, Clan Currie has chosen to plough a somewhat more peaceful furrow, providing Scotland over the years with many of her bards and musicians. This great tradition is now further cemented in the support that the Society has given to musical endeavour in Scotland, most recently in its support for the music department of an innovative university in Scotland's capital, Edinburgh Napier University.

I am honoured to be Co-Chairman of “The Pipes of Christmas” this year. It is a matter of regret that I have commitments in Scotland that prevent my being present at the concerts, but I can imagine just how enjoyable they will be. I have been happy to be able to set up a composition prize at Edinburgh Napier that will not only reward the winning student for the composing of a new piece of music, but will also allow that student to travel to the United States to attend the performance of his or her composition at the concerts.

Robert Currie, whose love and admiration for Scotland shines forth in “The Pipes of Christmas,” may be assured that this country reciprocates those generous sentiments, as it does to all at the concert who are minded tonight to think of Scotland.

***Alexander McCall Smith***  
Edinburgh, Scotland



Happy holidays and welcome to the 15th annual Clan Currie Society “Pipes of Christmas” Concert. It is truly a privilege to be named as one of your 2013 Honorary Chairs. On behalf of RBC Capital Markets, we are pleased to continue this tradition of music and partner with such a renowned organization that supports music and arts in New York and the surrounding area.

RBC is committed to giving back to the communities in which we live and work—and the arts is a cornerstone of this pledge. We believe in the power of art to enrich our lives and enhance our society. With over 3,000 RBC employees located in Manhattan, many of whom live in New York and New Jersey, aligning with “Pipes of Christmas” is a natural fit. Globally, we invest in talented emerging artists through the RBC Emerging Artists Project, which consists of sponsorships and donations with organizations whose programs bridge the gap from academic excellence to professional careers in all forms of art. We are proud to extend this partnership to the Clan Currie Society, which does so much for the Celtic culture and for New York.

It has often been said that New York has something for everyone, and “The Pipes of Christmas” is a fitting example of what makes this statement so true. Congratulations on another great program, and we look forward to many more in the decades to come.

Thank you to the Clan Currie Society. Please enjoy the show.

### ***Mark Standish***

Co-Group Head, RBC Capital Markets  
and RBC Investor & Treasury Services  
New York, NY



On behalf of the people of Scotland, I am delighted to congratulate you and everyone involved with the Clan Currie Society on the tremendous milestone of the 15th annual “Pipes of Christmas” concert.

Through your concert performances, generous scholarship funds, and other promotional activities, the Clan Currie Society has helped introduce many thousands of Americans to Scotland’s rich cultural and musical heritage. In the process, “Pipes of Christmas” has established itself as a key element of the holiday season and has been ‘instrumental’ in promoting the enduring bonds of kinship and friendship between the United States and Scotland. So congratulations and thank you from Scotland, for your continuing efforts to strengthen the long-standing relationship between our two nations.

I wish you and everyone who enjoys “Pipes of Christmas” 2013 all the very best for the holiday season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Yours of Scotland,

***The Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP MP***

The First Minister of Scotland



It is a pleasure to send greetings to everyone gathered at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church for “The Pipes of Christmas” 15th Anniversary Concert.

At this special time of year, it is a favorite tradition to experience the beautiful music of Christmas. This holiday gathering is a highly anticipated and popular event, and I am sure it will bring many from the Metropolitan area together for an afternoon of wonderful entertainment, Christmas spirit, and good cheer. Congratulations to this afternoon’s gracious hosts, the Clan Currie Society, on celebrating this milestone anniversary.

The holiday season is a time to enjoy the company of new friends and old, and to reflect on all the promise and opportunity that a brand new year will bring. On behalf of myself and my family, I wish you all an inspirational Christmas celebration and a New Year filled with love and laughter, good health and goodwill.

Warmest regards.  
Sincerely,

***Andrew M. Cuomo***  
Governor, State of New York



On behalf of the State of New Jersey, I am pleased to extend greetings to all those gathered for the 15th annual “Pipes of Christmas” concert produced by the Clan Currie Society.

As a not-for-profit organization, the Clan Currie Society has been dedicated to preserving and promoting Scottish-American culture through a variety of educational programs, games and festivals. Today’s concert presents an excellent opportunity for residents to come together and enjoy a day of exceptional holiday music. I applaud all those who participated in organizing this event for their commitment to the communities they serve and continuing this outstanding fifteen year tradition.

Best wishes to all for an enjoyable and memorable event. Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

***Chris Christie***

Governor, State of New Jersey



It is a great pleasure to welcome everyone to the Clan Currie Society's 15th anniversary "The Pipes of Christmas" concert.

For centuries, Scottish Americans have vitally shaped the character of our city and contributed to its civic, economic, and cultural life. And since 1959, the Clan Currie Society has preserved this community's rich heritage through Scottish Games, festivals, and signature events such as "The Pipes of Christmas." As tonight's concert delights attendees with a terrific selection of Celtic music while raising funds for the organization's music scholarship program, we also celebrate the holiday season and the spirit of unity and giving that it inspires.

On behalf of the City of New York, please accept my best wishes for a memorable evening and continued success.

Sincerely,

***Michael R. Bloomberg***

Mayor, City of New York



A warm congratulations to “Pipes of Christmas” on its 15th Anniversary season.

I know I speak for all Summit residents when I say how proud we are that the Clan Currie Society’s annual event started right here in our City.

Its growth to include not only all of the Central New Jersey area but also New York City speaks to the immeasurable contributions made by our Nation’s Scottish immigrants and serves as a constant reminder that our Nation’s strength is in its diversity. The support it provides for cultural heritage scholarships helps illuminate these important contributions.

Best wishes for an event filled with not only wonderful music but meaningful reflection on contributions of the past, present, and future.

Very truly yours,

***Ellen Dickson***

Mayor, City of Summit, NJ



# Jennifer Port

*In January 2013, at Burns Unbound at the National Museum of Scotland, Jennifer Port shared that before bagpipes or the fiddle existed, there was the clàrsach (Scottish harp), pointing to the instrument she had just been playing. Port explained that because the clàrsach died out during the mid-1700s, and did not make a revival until the mid-1900s, many are still unfamiliar with the instrument today.*

However, the multi-award winning harpist and singer is a driving force behind the clàrsach's resurgence as she performs all over Scotland and the world.

Originally from Golspie in the Scottish Highlands, Port's Primary 6 teacher Graham McCarthy introduced her to the clàrsach and her life as a musician was born. After high school, she completed her honours degree, specializing in clàrsach, composition and singing, at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama.

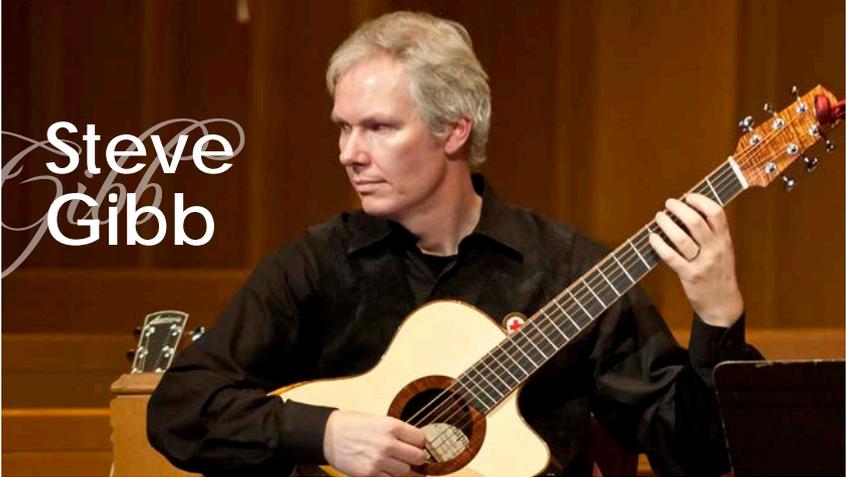
She has performed in many places, from the Cambridge Folk Festival, the Celtic Connections Festival and for Parliament and royalty, to numerous weddings (including Madonna and Guy Ritchie's) and for Live Music Now (a program that brings performances to disadvantaged and isolated populations).

For Port, however, "Pipes of Christmas" has stood out and remained "an annual performing highlight" since 2003. She loves how it allows her to collaborate with other musicians. "It is only at "Pipes of Christmas" that I work with such a large and talented cast," she says.

It's been especially momentous when Port's parents and loved ones have traveled from Scotland to attend. "In 2010, my boyfriend (now husband) joined me for his first trip to New York and first time seeing the show," Port recalls. "He's returned every year since and we were delighted that the producer of "Pipes of Christmas," Robert Currie, was able to join us on our wedding day in Glasgow."

Port looks forward to this year's event and many more to come. "Even after so many years playing in the show, "Pipes of Christmas" still fills me with festive spirit and truly signals the start of the Christmas season for me. I enjoy the camaraderie of the cast and it's like a family get-together at Christmas, coupled with great music from exceptional musicians from all over the Celtic world."

[www.jenniferport.co.uk](http://www.jenniferport.co.uk)

A photograph of Steve Gibb, a man with light-colored hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt, playing a light-colored acoustic guitar. He is looking down at the instrument. The background is a warm, wooden interior. The name "Steve Gibb" is overlaid in white text on the left side of the image.

# Steve Gibb

*Steve Gibb is no stranger to “The Pipes of Christmas.” The composer-performer—well known for his guitar chops—has played the holiday festival almost annually for more than six years.*

“For the last couple of years, I have been commissioned by the Clan Currie Society to compose new music for the event and that has been great fun and a great honor,” says Gibb. This year he, along with Sarah Hewitt-Roth on cello and Jennifer Port on clàrsach, will play his composition, “Lullaby For a Prince,” a piece that celebrates the birth of Prince George.

“Many people in America can trace their roots back to Scotland and Ireland and are extremely proud of that rich heritage,” says Gibb of the importance of “The Pipes of Christmas.” “It’s this bringing together of folks from distant lands who all share something in common which makes it a special event. But even people with no Celtic ancestry get something from the concert. It’s impossible not to be moved ...”

Gibb himself hails from “distant lands.” Born in Inverness, Scotland, at 18 he moved to Edinburgh to study classical guitar and bass at Napier College (today’s Edinburgh Napier University.) A few years later, he studied at the prestigious Royal Academy of Music in London.

Gibb’s multi-instrumental prowess continues to be highly sought after; artists from Theresa Sareo and Eartha Kitt to The London Sinfonietta and Meatloaf have collaborated with Gibb on recordings and performances. His numerous compositions have also been in high demand, featured on many television networks including HBO, PBS, NBC and National Geographic.

Now based in New Jersey, this is Gibb’s eighth season playing guitar on Broadway for Tony-Award-winning Jersey Boys. He’s also working on a new solo album along with numerous other projects. His career has spanned many musical genres, but putting his own spin on Celtic music holds a special place.

As he looks forward to this year’s “Pipes of Christmas,” Gibb recalls favorite memories, including Evan Cattanach’s readings in “auld Scots” and the traditional Highland Cathedral, which he says “gives you shivers down your spine.”

“The show is quite grand in scale and there is such a variety of musical styles and readings,” says Gibb. “It’s quite the Celtic celebration and there really is something for everyone.”

# *The Company*

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Susan Porterfield Currie

Local Hero

(Christopher Layer ~ Susie Petrov ~ Paul Woodiel)

Solid Brass

Jennifer Port

Steve Gibb

Sarah Hewitt-Roth

William Peek

James Robinson

Evan Thomson Cattanach

---

**AND**

---

## **The Kevin Ray Blandford Memorial Pipe Band**

Scott Larson, Pipe Major

Musical Director

Jeff Rickard

Executive Producer

Robert Currie

# Act One

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Highland Cathedral

Joy to the World

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Bha Buachaillean an Dùthaich Shear  
*(There Were Shepherds in an Eastern Country)*

Angels We Have Heard on High

Lullaby for a Prince

*(World Premiere)*

*To commemorate the birth of HRH Prince George of Cambridge*  
*Steve Gibb - Composer*

I Wonder As I Wander

Amazing Grace

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# Act Two

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The Pipes of Christmas

*(World Premiere)*

*In celebration of our 15th Anniversary Production*  
*Jeff Rickard - Composer and Arranger*

Pipe Band Medley

Hymn to the Saviour

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Oidhche Shàmhach

*(Silent Night)*

O Come All Ye Faithful

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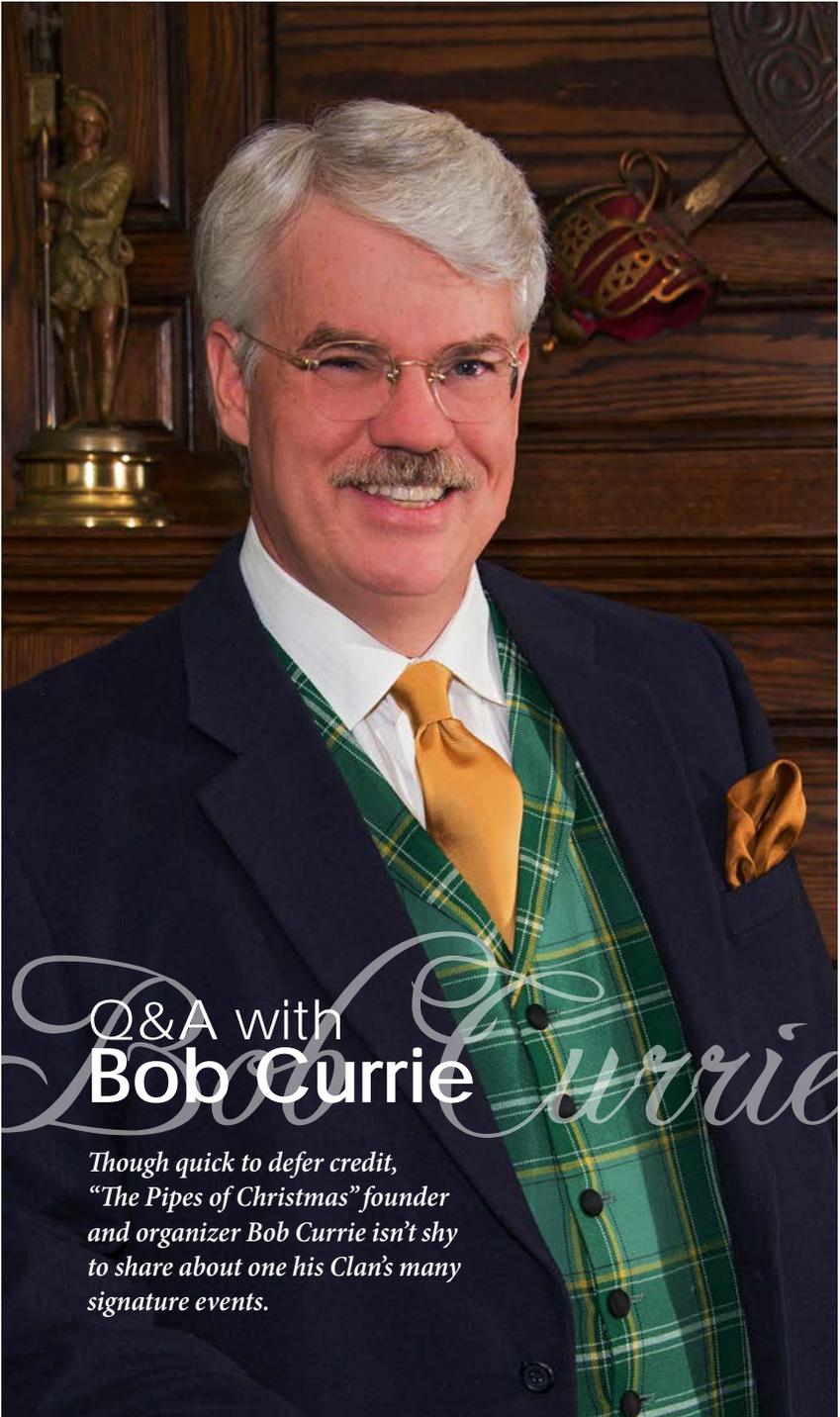
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Q&A with  
**Bob Currie**

*Though quick to defer credit, “The Pipes of Christmas” founder and organizer Bob Currie isn’t shy to share about one his Clan’s many signature events.*

### ***What is your own ethnicity/heritage?***

I am Scottish on my father's side and French Canadian on my mother's side. All my grandparents were born in Canada. I have had great success tracing my Currie ancestry back to the Isle of Arran off the coast of Scotland. My great-great-grandfather, Neill Currie immigrated to Aylmer, Quebec during the Arran Clearances in 1828. He left behind an invaluable and inspiring autobiography entitled, "The Religious Experience of Neill Currie," published in Bytown (Ottawa) in 1846. Before first setting foot in Scotland over 30 years ago, my childhood summers were spent camping in Ontario and Quebec in some wonderful Provincial Parks.

### ***What inspired you to create *The Pipes of Christmas*?***

The Clan Currie Society had been producing a very popular Kirking of the Tartans service for several years. In the early '90s when I discovered PM Kevin Blandford's beautiful CDs entitled, "The Pipes of Christmas" and "Amazing Grace," I immediately signed Blandford to bring his exceptional piping and arranging skills to our Kirking services. Over time, Blandford and I pondered what a live concert version of his Christmas CD might look and sound like. Building on that CD, we moved away from the annual Kirking service and debuted the re-imagined "live" "Pipes of Christmas" concert on December 11, 1999. I expanded Blandford's repertoire to go beyond just pipe, organ and brass and added clàrsach, fiddle, uilleann pipes, guitar and cello. The presentation was extremely well received. Our first concert attracted over 800 for a hall that could only seat 700. It was incredible!

### ***Are they the same reasons you continue to put it together each year?***

We are blessed with a very loyal audience that I suspect would be upset if we didn't bring the "Pipes" back every year. It truly has become part of their Christmas tradition and we take that endorsement very seriously. Christmas is a time of giving and in that spirit, we are fortunate to be able to use concert proceeds to bestow a number of annual music and history scholarships at many leading institutions including the Gaelic College in Nova Scotia, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the National Piping Centre, both in Glasgow, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye and Lyon College in Arkansas. We've also used the concert as a platform to showcase new composers and aim towards having at least one or two new compositions debut each year. We also use the concert as one of our many platforms to showcase the Gaelic language through some truly lovely Gaelic carols. We donate tickets to local charities so they can be used in their own fundraising efforts. To date we've supported over 20 deserving non-profits in this manner like the American Red Cross and the Children's Aid Society of New York.

### ***What are the challenges involved?***

Like any major annual arts event, I suspect we share some the same challenges as other large-scale programs. Securing sponsors can be a challenge during tough economic times and ticket prices alone don't provide all the funding we require. Over the years we've been blessed with some wonderful sponsors that have contributed greatly to our success while also ensuring that we can maintain our high production standards. This year, we are delighted to have as our Title Sponsors, Edinburgh Napier University, Royal Bank of Canada Capital Markets and the Grand Summit Hotel. We are so grateful for their support! We like to vary the program from year to year (while keeping our core intact). This means you'll likely find me listening to Christmas music starting in February each year. We're also always on the look for new artists and composers to showcase.

## *What are the rewards?*

The rewards are substantial and inspiring. The audience reaction to this program keeps me energized and engaged. For some, the concert becomes their Christmas celebration, opting to gather family and friends for “Pipes” before they travel back to their respective homes just a week later for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. One patron just purchased a block of 50 tickets for his entire family! There is a strong Sacred element to our concert. Hearing “O Come All Ye Faithful” performed on pipe, organ and brass is nothing short of majestic. Contrasted with “Silent Night” sung in Scots Gaelic accompanied by clàrsach, fiddle and guitar, is soul stirring. One patron described the concert as his vision for what the “finest Christmas Eve service would look and sound like at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh.” Bringing new music to life is extremely satisfying.

Last year, we were compelled to honor the life and Scottish ancestry of astronaut Neil Armstrong who had died in August. I retained a brilliant young Scottish composer named James Ross of Wick, to compose a new chamber piece entitled, “Sea of Tranquility.” The piece was beautiful. We had the honor of performing the work for Neil Armstrong’s daughter at our NY concert. It’s one of many “Pipes” moments I shall never forget. We also marked HM The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee last year with a lovely new tune by Inverness-born Steve Gibb entitled, “Balmoral Snow.” In years past, we’ve debuted other new works including, “Lament for the Lost,” which was composed by PM Kevin Blandford on September 11, 2001 as he watched the tragedies unfold in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC. Of course, the other great reward for me personally is the opportunity to work with some truly outstanding performers. In addition to the Kevin Ray Blandford Memorial Pipe Band from Redlands, CA, we also host Gaelic Mod champion clarsach performer Jennifer Port originally from Golspie, Scotland, guitarist/composer Steve Gibb (now on Broadway with “Jersey Boys”), concert violinist and three-time New England fiddle champion Paul Woodiel, uilleann piper Christopher Layer and one of the leading interpreters of Scottish Country Dance music, Susie Petrov as well as an entire company of top music industry professionals. I am honored and humbled to have this wonderful ensemble perform for our audiences year after year. The concert’s narration, masterfully written and delivered by Susan Porterfield Currie is the glue that connects the musical selections and brings insight into the holiday traditions of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, further enhanced by our outstanding Readers.”

Beyond that, I must admit that receiving a standing ovation for our debut concert in NYC (at the end of the first act, no less!) was especially rewarding. Before he passed away from cancer at the much too early age of 40 in 2003, Pipe Major Blandford and I had always wondered how the Big Apple would respond to the concert. Sadly, Kevin didn’t live to see this, but I’m certain he was there with us in spirit on that first NY performance. We’ve since been named as one of New York’s “Top Ten” holiday events.

## *What is the event’s core mandate, and who does it benefit?*

Our principal mandate is to produce a world-class concert event which honors our Celtic heritage and faith. Too many events with all the best intentions can fall victim to the doctrine of “good enough.” Quite the opposite, we constantly strive to be the best we can be. You never know who may be experiencing their Celtic heritage for the first time at “The Pipes of Christmas.” We have an obligation to strive for excellence in all that we do. If we don’t do all we can to protect and preserve our heritage, who will? So our audiences remain our primary responsibility. In addition to operating as a traditional clan society, the Clan Currie Society is also an international arts organization. We honor our clan’s Bardic roots. Clan Currie (or Clan MacMhuirich as they were known in Gaelic) was the pre-eminent Bardic Dynasty in Scotland for over 700 years. We

strive to keep our rich arts tradition alive in everything we do. Through programs like “The Pipes of Christmas,” we get to demonstrate that commitment and generate a financial base that supports all our programs, which are intended for the general public as well as for our clans-folk. In addition to the “Pipes” and the resulting scholarships, we also produce Tartan Day on Ellis Island (one of the anchor programs of NY Tartan Week,) an annual MacMhuirich Academic Symposium, and the Harp Glen at the Seaside Highland Games in Ventura, CA. We are the Title Sponsor for the Scottish Harp Society of America’s national championship and have just become the annual sponsor of the Young Writer’s Literature Gaelic Award.” at the Royal National Mod in Scotland. We keep pretty busy.

### ***Who attends the event?***

I’m always amazed to see where our audience hails from. When we first started in 1999, we generally drew from central New Jersey with occasional visitors from New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware - especially as the word got out. Since moving to Manhattan, we’ve added all five boroughs of NYC, along with Long Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Since NYC is an international travel destination, especially during the magical holiday season, we now play host to patrons from quite literally all around the world.

### ***What can audiences expect this year?***

For our 15th anniversary, we’re delighted to be debuting three new compositions as well as the return of many of our audience favorites. One of our anticipated premieres will be a new composition from a music student studying at Edinburgh Napier University. Through a generous gift, the university will award a cash prize to the winning composer for a new Christmas carol to be performed on the clàrsach. We’re hopeful the student will be with us for the concerts to hear their work performed before a live audience in New York City. We are also producing our first music CD which draws from concert recordings made over the last 14 years. At the time of this writing, we have listened to over 500 recordings and have completed the near impossible task of selecting and mastering 15 tracks that represent some of our best work. Better still, we have a wealth of outstanding material for another two CDs! Last but not least, we are delighted to have two wonderful Honorary Chairs representing both sides of the pond this year. From Scotland, we welcome renowned author Alexander McCall Smith and from Canada we welcome Mark Standish from the Royal Bank of Canada Capital Markets. Both gentlemen have illustrious careers and exceptional reputations for supporting important causes.

### ***Why is it an important event for the community?***

It’s become a holiday tradition for many, something special to look forward to year after year. That’s key to celebrating Christmas - gathering together to enjoy this lovely and inspiring program. It’s also a wonderful introduction to Celtic music performed on traditional instruments by top-notch performers.

### ***Along with attending, how else can people get involved?***

Experiencing the concert is - as the question suggests - the best way to become involved or engaged with The Pipes of Christmas. Many people tell me they buy a block of tickets to give out as holiday gifts. A great idea! Beyond that, we welcome individual and corporate sponsors with gifts of any size. Donors can be assured their gifts are being put to good use. The Clan Currie Society is a registered not-for-profit organization so all donations are tax deductible in the USA. We also always welcome sweat equity support and have brought on interns interested in concert management and Celtic heritage for some real hands-on experience. Give us a call!

Heartfelt congratulations to Robert Currie, President of the Clan Currie Society, who was recently awarded an honorary doctorate of arts for his efforts to promote Scottish heritage from Edinburgh Napier University!



& Congratulations to Bob & Suzanne, the Clan Currie, and all the creative and performing artists who make The Pipes of Christmas the most special celebration of the Yuletide in NYC & NJ!



With gratitude and best wishes from the family and friends of Glenorchy James Campbell



AMERICAN HISTORY PRESS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE PUBLICATION OF

# An American Journey of Hope

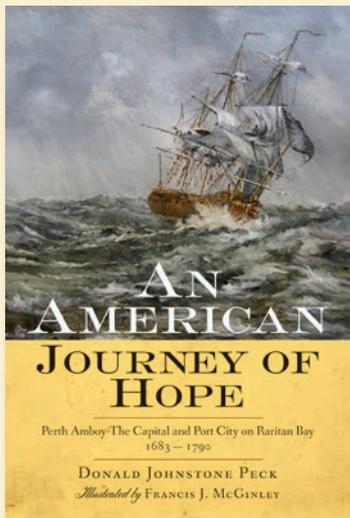
Perth Amboy-The Capital and Port City on Raritan Bay 1683 — 1790

BY DONALD JOHNSTONE PECK, ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCIS J. MCGINLEY

*An American Journey of Hope* is a vivid chronicle of how the original Scottish colonists of Perth Amboy, New Jersey transformed the city into a center of political and religious force that held forth the promise of a way of life that emphasized freedom, opportunity and plenty for all. The author details the events that accompanied these changes, and continues with a precise chronology of the incidents in the city that led up to the American Revolution. The story of the conflict between a stronghold of prominent Loyalists and their engagement with many of America's leading patriots in the struggle for American religious and political independence.

"The story of Perth Amboy provides a unique lens through which to observe the upheaval that overturned the old order and established the basis for the freedom that we enjoy today. *An American Journey of Hope* is a timely and thorough story written with intelligence, care and warmth."

- Helen G. Brudner, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Fairleigh Dickinson University



**Format:** 6" x 9" hardcover with dust jacket on acid-free white paper  
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# Celtic Holiday Traditions

*The origins of Christmas, so the longstanding theory says, stems from pagan winter festivals. One main reason early Christians were able to spread their religion across Europe so quickly stemmed from their willingness to embrace celebrations so prevalent among regional populations.*

*One such example is the Celtic 'Alban Arthuan,' a Druidic festival that took place around December 21st, the Winter Solstice. This traditional fire celebration served to celebrate the re-birth of the Sun.*

*Although a celebration of the Son's birth replaced that of the Sun's, still a number of Christmas-tide traditions - including those the ancient Celts practiced - remain today.*

*As we look at the Celtic nations, it is interesting to note some similarities among Christmas traditions that cross geographic boundaries. They include, for example: Holly (a symbol of rebirth among Pagan Celts, but also of hospitality—it was believed fairies sought shelter inside the evergreen leaves to escape the cold); Mistletoe (believed to have healing powers so strong that it warded off evil spirits, cured illnesses and even facilitated a truce between enemies); fire and light (most notably the Yule log or candles placed in windows to light the way for strangers and symbolically welcoming Mary and Joseph); and door-to-door processions, from wassailing to Wren Hunts.*

*Each of the seven nations possesses its own variations of Celtic Christmas customs, of course, and surrounding cultures and local identify shape their practices as well.*

## Scotland

Christmas was not officially recognized in Scotland for nearly four centuries. The Puritan English Parliament banned Christmas in 1647 and it did not become a recognized public holiday in Scotland until 1958.

However, according to Andrew Halliday, in his 1833 piece Christmas in Scotland, Scots were not discouraged. Halliday wrote,

“We remember it stated in a popular periodical, one Christmas season not long ago, that

Christmas-day was not kept at all in Scotland. Such is not the case; the Scots do keep Christmas-day, and in the same kindly Christian spirit that we do, though the Presbyterian austerity of their church does not acknowledge it as a religious festival.”

Halliday’s 19th century account went on to describe festive sowens (sweetened oat gruel) ceremonies, “beggars” (actually “strapping fellows”) singing yule song, dances and card parties and children teetotum games.

Despite Puritan rule, some long time Christmas traditions are preserved. These include burning the Cailleach (a piece of wood carved to look like an old woman’s face or the Spirit of Winter) to start the new year fresh; or on Christmas Eve burning rowan tree branches to signify the resolution of any disputes. The Celtic tradition of placing candles in windows was also done in Scotland to welcome ‘first footers’ (strangers, bearing a small gift) into the home.

Traditional dishes also continue to be featured at Christmas lunch and throughout the holidays, including Cock-a-Leekie soup, smoked salmon, beef or duck, Cloutie dumplings, black buns, sun cakes, Christmas pudding and Crannachan.

Because Christmas was not an official holiday until the late ‘50s, it is no surprise that today, for some Scots, Hogmanay (New Year’s Eve) is the most important event of the season. Arguably, locals ring in the new year with much more gusto than any other place on the planet.

## Ireland

A Fall clean-up was a common practice in Irish homes to prepare for Christmas. Women looked after cleaning the interior, while men took care of the outdoors, including whitewashing all exterior surfaces. Then holly, grown wild in Ireland, was spread throughout the house with cheer. Contemporary Ireland also highlights this clean-up ritual; once complete, fresh Christmas linens are taken out of storage.

Other customs include the Bloc na Nollaig or Christmas Block (the Irish version of the Yule log), candles in the window (perhaps one for each family member), and leading up to Christmas, “Calling the Waites,” where musicians would wake up townspeople through serenades and shouting out the morning hour.

Christmas Eve Mass is still a grand affair, a time for friends and family to reconnect. It is not uncommon for churchgoers to end up at the local pub after service to ring in Christmas morn. On Christmas Day, traditional dishes include roast goose or ham and sausages, potatoes (such as champ), vegetables (such as cabbage with bacon) and plum pudding, whiskey Christmas cake and barmbrack (currant loaf) for sweets.

Traditionally on December 26th, St. Stephen’s Day, Wren Boys with blackened faces, carrying a pole with the dead bird pierced at the top, tramped from house to house. Today the custom sometimes sees children carolling throughout the neighbourhood to raise money for charity. It is also quite common to go out visiting on this day.

One modern-day Irish tradition to note is gathering around the television to watch the “The Late Late Toy Show” in late November/early December, said to be the most watched program in Ireland.

## Wales

Dylan Thomas' story, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, is renowned around the world. An excerpt offers a glimpse of a traditional Welsh festive season:

"Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang 'Cherry Ripe,' and another uncle sang 'Drake's Drum'... Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steady falling night."

Music was and still is a major part of Welsh holidays. *Plygain* is a Christmas day church service, traditionally held between 3 and 6 a.m., featuring males singing a capella in three or four-part harmonies. While today this may be mainly practiced in rural areas, *Eisteddfodde* (caroling) is abundantly popular in homes, door-to-door and as part of annual song-writing competitions.

Other intriguing Welsh traditions include toffee making; drinking from a communal wassail bowl of fruit, spices, sugar and beer; children visiting homes on New Year's Day looking for their *Callenig* gift; and *Mary Lwyd* (Grey Mare) featuring wassail singers going door-to-door carrying a horse's skull and challenging residents to a contest of mocking rhymes.

## Isle of Man

Carolling also holds a special place in Manx Christmas celebrations, but traditionally an unconventional twist characterized it. On Christmas Eve, large numbers attended church for *Carval*. While the congregation sang, all of a sudden women would begin the traditional food fight, having peas on hand to throw at their male counterparts!

Accounts from the 1700 and 1800s describe 12 days of non-stop Christmas celebrations where every barn was filled with dancers accompanied by fiddlers the local parish hired. "On the twelfth day the fiddler lays his head on one of the women's laps, which posture they look upon as a kind of oracle," recorded Reverend John Entick (as published in 1774). "For one of the company coming up and naming every maiden in the company, asks the fiddler, who shall this or that girl marry? And whatever he answers it is absolutely depended on as an oracle."

As in Celtic fashion, Hunting the Wren processions occurred on the Isle of Man and today the practice is going through a revival, characterized by costumes, singing and dancing.

Other Manx customs include *Mollag Bands*, wearing eccentric clothing, swinging a *mollag* (fishing float) and demanding money (a practice since outlawed); the kissing bush (a more elaborate ornament than a sprig of mistletoe); and *Cammag*, a sport that originated on the Isle of Man traditionally played on December 26th and/or Easter Monday.

Finally, in older times, but even as recently as the early 20th century, Christmas decorations were not taken down until Pancake Tuesday (when they were burnt under the pancake pan). Now holiday décor tends to be packed away on Old Christmas (January 6th).

## Brittany

Brittany boasts a wealth of folklore and supernatural beliefs around Christmas time. Christmas Eve was known as a night of miraculous apparitions from fairies to *korrigans*, and at midnight,

for just a brief moment, waters in the wells would turn into the most sweet-tasting wine. It was also at midnight, when families were either at mass or in bed, that ghosts would surface; traditionally food was left out for deceased loved ones just in case they visited.

During the holidays, Christmas markets come alive in many Breton towns vending hand-made crafts and toys, baked cakes and bread and ingredients for Christmas dinner. You can also buy Galette des Rois at stalls, as well as bakeries, which is traditionally eaten on January 6th (Epiphany). A tiny figurine (the fève) is hidden inside the puff pastry cake; the person who finds the figurine in their piece gets to be king or queen for the day and wear a crown. Another special tradition through all of France is a meal after Christmas Eve's midnight mass, called Réveillon. Specifically in Brittany, the traditional dish for this occasion is buckwheat crêpes with cream.

## Cornwall

As a result of Oliver Cromwell's government banning Christmas, authentic holiday carols began to fade through much of Britain. However, throughout the 1800s, Cornish composers and collectors, sparked a revival of local Christmas song.

"Contrary to the effect Methodism might have had on the English carollers, in Cornwall its impact was to stimulate song," states the Cornwall Council (Cornish Christmas Carols – Or Curles, 2011). "In those areas where Methodism was strongest, music and signing had their greatest appeal, and notably so at Christmas. The singers would practice in chapels and school-rooms, some of them walking miles to be there."

Certain carols, well-known around the world, such as Hark the Herald Angels and While Shepherds, are credited to Cornish origins.

Today, Cornwall erupts in festivals, fairs and markets during the holidays. The Montol Festival in Penzance (named for Montol Eve on December 21st) is a six-day celebration highlighting many Cornish traditions. These include Mummers plays, lantern processions, Guise dancing (participants dressed in masks and costume, such as mock formal dress, to play music and dance).

Montol is also the time for burning the Mock (yule log). A stickman or woman is drawn on the block of wood with chalk. When the log burns, it symbolizes the death of the old year and birth of the year to come.

## Galicia

Galicia has its own, unique Christmas gift-bearer that predates Christianity. He is called Apalpador, a giant who lives in the mountains. For Christmas, he descends into the villages below to make sure each child has a full belly. He brings treats, such as chestnuts, and well wishes for a year full of delicious sustenance. While Apalpador may not be widely observed in Galicia, his legend is seeing a revival.

Food is very important during the Galician holidays featuring at least two feasts (on Christmas Eve and Day). Unsurprisingly, seafood is on the menu, such as lobster, prawns, shrimp, sea bass, and cod with garlic and paprika sauce. Other culinary delights include cured meat, cheese and bread, roast beef with vegetables and for dessert tarta de Santiago (almond cake), filloas (stuffed pancakes) and turrões (nougats).

Throughout all of Spain, including Galicia, children anticipate the coming of the Three Kings or Magis who fill their shoes, left out on Epiphany Eve (January 5th) with gifts. Many Galician municipalities also host a parade featuring the Kings on January 5th.

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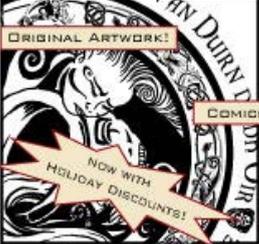
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