

c/o Don MacAskill, Treasurer  
8 Huckleberry Lane ❖  
Hampton, NH 03842-1516 USA

**The MacAskill Sept Society**  
Adherents to the Chiefs of MacLeod of Harris  
and Great Swordsmen in Defense of that Clan



**CLANN NA ASKETILL**  
Descendants of Asketil

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**Join us for the 2008  
MacAskill Sept Society  
Gathering**

**Friday October 3 through  
Sunday October 5**

*Laurinburg, North Carolina is in  
an area of tremendous Scottish  
heritage, home to many of the  
MacAskill kith and kin. Enjoy  
the autumn weather, our  
informative program, and the  
company of old and new  
friends. More information  
inside this newsletter, and at  
<http://www.macaskillseptociety.org>*



# The MacAskill Sept Society

8 Huckleberry Lane  
Hampton, NH 03842 USA

On the web at <http://www.macaskillseptociety.org>

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**COPY DEADLINE FOR FALL ISSUE: September 30, 2008**

# The MacAskill Sept Society

## An ancient sept of MacLeod of Harris

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FORM

Please print or type

Member name:			
Address:			
Town or city:			
State or Province:		Postal code:	
Country:		Phone:	
E-mail:			

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Annual dues are \$25.00 (in US funds) and should be paid annually on July 1st.**

Your dues cover the costs of this newsletter and preparation for our Gatherings. Please send your membership form and a check or money order to:

The MacAskill Sept Society  
c/o Don MacAskill  
8 Huckleberry Lane  
Hampton NH 03842-1516

### OPTIONAL:

What is your connection with the name "MacAskill" (or McCaskill, etc.)?	
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Should we contact you for the names of any others who might be interested in joining the MacAskill Sept Society?  YES  NO

since Bonnie Prince Charlie (he had mostly French and Polish ancestry).

Now, Victorians loved orderly clutter; they liked everything neatly pigeonholed --never mind whether things were in the correct slots. Adam wrote a couple of appallingly inaccurate books. The Victorians also believed that the printing press would reject anything not absolutely true, so anything one saw in print had to be so. Other want-to-be "authorities" did their research in Adam's books, ergo the perpetuation of the errors. I'm told that several other Clans have the same sort of problem.

And then, much later, some of us discussed this in the presence of a Dr. MacDonald (sorry, I can't remember his first name) of the Cape Breton University, and he commented that the Victorians also were vague about geography, and simply lumped the Isles of Lewis and Harris together and called them "the long island".

This as I understand it, explains our misnomer.



Ruin of Dunsgaith Castle, near Tokavaig, on the Isle of Skye. Photo copyright Photoecosse (see Barbara's other fabulous Skye photos at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/babsphotoecosse/>)



## MacAskill Sept Gathering October 3-5, 2008

by the Gathering 2008 Committee

The 2008 Gathering will be held on October 3, 4, and 5 in Laurinburg, Scotland county (!), North Carolina. Laurinburg is a city of about 15,000 people in southeastern North Carolina, near the South Carolina border. The closest major airports are Charlotte Douglas International Airport in Charlotte, and the Raleigh Durham Airport in Raleigh, each about two hours away from Laurinburg by car.



We will be based in the Comfort Inn in Laurinburg, where a block of rooms have been reserved for about \$90.00 each.



Photos of Comfort Inn from <http://www.comfortinn.com>

The format of the 2008 Gathering will be about the same as last year, with a reception on Friday night, our Annual General Meeting on Saturday morning, and workshops on Saturday afternoon. The workshops will likely feature an invited speaker as well as a "chalk talk" session on DNA analysis and genealogy. There will be a Sept and friends dinner on Saturday night with entertainment, and a Kirking of the tartan on Sunday morning at the Red Springs Presbyterian Church.

**MORE INFORMATION** is available in the program insert in the newsletter. See you there!

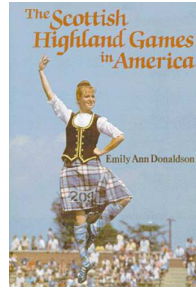


## A great MacAskill Bagpiper

by Emily Ann Donaldson

Reprinted from [The Scottish Highland Games in America](#)  
Pelican Publishing Company, Gretna 1986

Duncan McCaskill, Sr., grew up in a small coal mining village in Scotland. When he began playing the pipes at age nine, he had to walk three or four miles to the home of his instructor, John Douglas, for lessons. McCaskill loved the pipes and was being primed as a solo player. (In Scotland, unlike the U.S., most solo pipers do not play in bands). But, as McCaskill recalled in an interview, the lure of the band was too great. "You know how kids are. They see a band playing and want to get into that. I never let up on him (Douglas) 'til I finally got into a band. I played in 1921, 1923, 1924, and 1925 at Cowal." (Note from Olive McCaskill Bell: this would have been the World Pipeband Championships.)



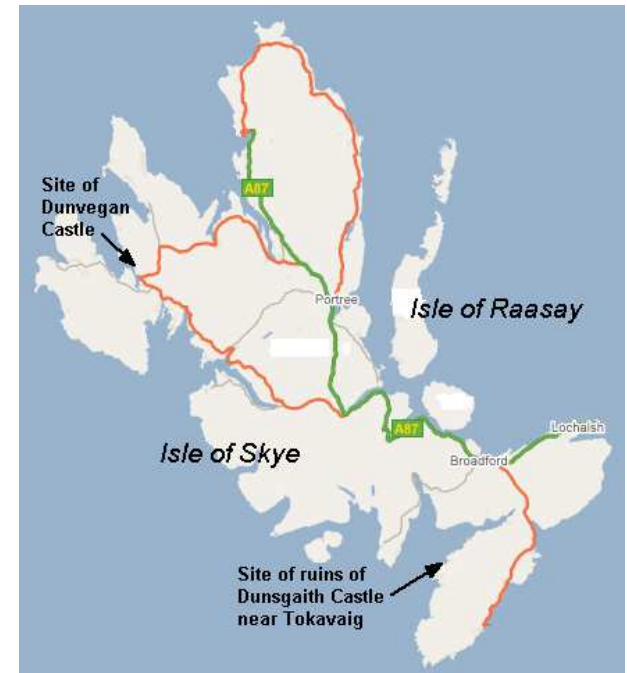
When McCaskill was 18 years old his family moved to the United States. For five years before he left Scotland he was receiving piping instruction seven nights a week. The last few months before coming to his new home in New Jersey he was taught by George Yardley, who had won the gold medal at Oban in 1911. "He was mad as a hornet when he found out that I was leaving for America," said McCaskill. "He wanted me to stay with him for a couple of years and study." But McCaskill had a job waiting for him with Standard Oil Co., and his first allegiance was to his family. His Father chose to come to America to establish a new life for his family and to give his sons a future other than the coal mines. McCaskill knew that his father would be needing his financial help. So Standard Oil's small pipe band became McCaskill's only opportunity to practice piping. Piping instructors were scarce in the U.S. in the 1920s, so he never had another piping lesson.

He began competing in 1926 in a few Games in his area. The competitors in those days were few, and the judging was in name only: "I could figure on my ten fingers just who I had

Then I discovered the MacLeod Society, USA. At Parliament 1978, I met Peter MacAskill, who then lived at his birthplace, the croft which later became the Three Chimneys restaurant. He took us to see the old burial ground at Borland, in Glen Eynort. He said our ancestors came from Mann, a Norse kingdom at that time, and held the legendary old Dunsgaith Castle, on an almost inaccessible headland on Sleat peninsula, "first for the Norse kings of Mann, later for the MacLeods". In the following generations, of course, they became henchmen to the Dunvegan Chiefs, and "Lieutenants of the Coast, by land and by sea".

So, why the Lewis label? Nothing wrong with being from the Lewis Clan, of course, but we like to feel that our records are accurate.

I am in debt to two different Doctors MacDonald, one in Scotland, the other in Sidney, Nova Scotia, for the explanation. The first was Dr. Michael MacDonald, who with a Captain Davidson organized the original Scottish Tartan Society, and set up the original Tartan Museum in Camrie, Perthshire, where I met him in '78. He explained that a Victorian named Frank Adam jumped on the bandwagon, so to speak, when Victoria moved into the Castle Prince Albert built for her at Balmoral, and became more "Scotch" than anyone



Map background (c) 2008 Google,  
annotation by MacAskill Sept Newsletter

## The Mail Bag: corrections, praise, gripes, and humor

### If we MacAskills are a Sept of MacLeod of Harris, why do so many of those Clan and Tartan books say we are MacLeods of Lewis?

by Olive McCaskill Bell



*This has been a puzzlement to MacAskills for several generations. Even my copy of **Scots Kith and Kin**, which I bought in the 80s, says MacLeod of Lewis.*



When my husband and I spent five weeks touring Scotland in a rental car in 1976 (after our first brief trip on a tour in 1973 had convinced us that, with no language barriers, we didn't need a tour leader, and, having gained enough confidence --at least I did-- to hack the sitting-on-the-wrong-side-of-the-car syndrome, came on our own), I sought my roots all over Lewis. It is a desolate island, with a miserable climate --icy rain and sleet in late July-- and the majority of the people are Wee Frees. The "free" means that there is no rental fee on pews in the Kirk, not that the members enjoy any freedom. Our Bed-and-Breakfast landlady was not only a strict adherent, but did not hesitate to tell us we'd go to hell in a hand basket for traveling on the Sabbath. In addition to a dogma that deemed anything pleasurable a Sin, these people, three decades ago, had vivid memories of those local veterans of World War One having all been lost at sea on their way home --enough to make any one glum!<sup>1</sup>

But the only MacAskills I found assured me that they "belonged to Skye". Somewhere I'd heard that one should check out old cemeteries, but I found none with MacAskills going back more than a century or so.

<sup>1</sup> Dorna would respectfully like to add that while the mood on Lewis in 1976 may have been rather dour, today you will likely also find a fabulous (re)blossoming of politics, artisan crafts, entertainment, and small modern businesses. Don't hesitate to visit the ancient "Long Island" and explore it for yourself!

to watch out for in America in my day...Some judges were has beens; they never won anything in their lives. They could talk piping, but they really didn't know much about it".

His first breakthrough came when he won a gold medal in Boston, and from then on he did very well. At one Games in New Jersey, over a period of ten years, he received eighteen first prizes, two seconds, and a third. He also competed in Canada, and won a number of prizes. McCaskill was prouder of his Canadian successes because the competition was much stiffer than any he faced in America.

He became involved with other piping activities as well. Soon after his arrival, he joined the Lovat Pipe Band in New York City, one of the top competitive bands of the day. When it merged with the Cameron Pipe Band in Kearney, New Jersey, to



become the Lovat-Cameron Pipe Band, McCaskill became pipe major. He was piper to three clans and when he started teaching later, gave private lessons and worked with several school pipe bands. He also piped for Highland dancing for nearly 40 years.

McCaskill never learned piobaireachd, nor were there any piobaireachd competitions in America when he first came. But he won the slow air competitions every year and, as the MSR, hornpipes, jigs, and other small music, "I'd

beat the best of them." He took his son (Duncan McCaskill, Jr., one of the top drum majors in the East today) to Johnny Miller in Kearney, New Jersey, to study piobaireachd, and in 1961, when Duncan Jr. was 16 years old, his father took him to Cowal, Scotland to compete. The boy placed fourth in his division.

Though the years the Games slowly began to multiply. Several excellent pipers and drummers who were willing and eager to share their expertise with others emigrated to McCaskill's part of the United States. But the judging situation at the competitions still did not improve. When some of these top Scottish musicians took beatings here, McCaskill knew it was time for a change.

In 1964 representatives of several pipe bands met in Asbury Park, New Jersey, to form the United States Pipe Band Association, based on the Scottish Pipe Band Association, with McCaskill as the first president. The other organizers were Robert Gilchrist, James Kerr, George Bell, Maclean MacLeod, and James Cairns. These piping enthusiasts had the welfare of the competing pipe bands at heart and wanted fair, competently judged contests. The members of the group traveled at their own expense trying to arouse interest in the new organization. It was a slow process, but Games organizer eventually began to see the worth of such a parent group.

McCaskill went to Scotland in 1968 to become certified as a judge by the Scottish Pipe Band Association. What he thought would be merely a matter of taking a test turned out to be nearly three months of intensive instruction.

In 1972 the organization's name was changed to the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association to reflect its main geographical realm. Also, awareness of the PCPBA precluded the use of the former name. McCaskill turned over the presidency of the EUSPBA to Roddy MacDonald.



Information on this year's championships can be found on the website of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association at <http://www.rspba.org>.



## **The MacAskill Sept Society** **☺ Reconnect with your Scottish heritage –** **even explore your inner “Giant”! ☺**

HELP THE SOCIETY WITH THE COSTS OF NEWSLETTERS AND  
PLANNING OUR YEARLY GATHERINGS

*ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE YEARLY ON JULY 1*  
*We regret that – due to the cost of producing the newsletter --*  
*persons who do not pay their annual dues will receive*  
*only one additional issue of the magazine*  
*before being dropped from our mailing list.*

(See Membership Application at the back of this newsletter)

PLEASE SEND YOUR \$25.00 (in US FUNDS)  
CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

The MacAskill Sept Society  
c/o Don MacAskill, Treasurer  
8 Huckleberry Lane  
Hampton NH 03842-1516 USA

*If you know others who would be interested in receiving this newsletter and joining the society, please e-mail me and I will gladly contact them about membership. Prospective members will receive one free copy of our newsletter.*

Thank you

Don MacAskill, Treasurer, [Maccdn2002@yahoo.com](mailto:Maccdn2002@yahoo.com)

## **Clan Videos available on line**

There is a terrific set of six historical Clan videos available for free “streaming” on line. These were made in Scotland during 2007, the “Year of Highland Culture” (Fàilte Oirbh do Ghàidhealtachd) by BBC presenter and programme maker Paul Murton. MacLeods are one of the six subject clans. At the time this newsletter was being published, they could still be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/tv/home/documentary/feature/index.shtml>.

