

GRACE NOTES

Vol. 24. No. 12



December 2008

St. Andrew's Day Tea

Ok, I will be the first to admit, the idea of a tea with myself in attendance, just does not seem to be a good fit, but now that I have attended not once but twice, for the life of me, I can not see how or why any one can resist coming to such a delightful afternoon event that doesn't last too long and is full of so many delightfully Scottish treats. Not to mention the culinary treats that are always outstanding but the chance to hear some of Scotland's most endearing ballads and ditties that can literally take you back in time to when life was just a bit simpler and the days and nights were filled with the voices

of the people. One of the songs heard was one of Scotland's famous Bothy Ballads by Ian Middleton, titled "The Lispin' Leghorn" that tells the story of a man who buys a chicken but can not quite figure out, "is't a he or is't a she because it likes to cra' wi' a lisp, where the judge pronounces, "I'll be damned if I've a clue"...

Anyway if you will follow on down the inner sanctums of our beloved Grace Notes, you will find intact the lyrics to this delightful ditty from Caledonia.

If you were there, you would have also had a chance to hear Margaret

Zavodny sing the well known ballad by Dougie MacLean: "Caledonia" and Elaine Meece sing one of the numerous examples of songs that were seemingly made up on the spot that speak to a specific situation. (Now how 'bout the alliteration, in that last sentence?)

Ok, that is probably enough from the peanut gallery, bout the Tea, but do make you plans early next year to attend and have an afternoon with some of our fellow Scottish Society members and their guests.

Sammy Rich

Burns Nicht 2009 plans are underway

It's right around the corner, folks! Plans are underway for Burns' Nicht 2009 to be held on January 24, 2009, Woodland Hills in Cordova.

Make your plans now to attend MSSI's event of the year. 2009 is the 250th anniversary of the birth of the bard, Rabbie Burns, and we've got some great things in the works.

The \$50.00 (members' price) regular tickets provide entertainment by Planet Reel, men in kilts, women in tartan finery, a gourmet meal, pipes, drums, dancers, haggis, a silent auction, and odes, poems, and toasts galore. The \$70.00 patrons' tickets include all the above plus a taste-tempting reception with harp music, a whiskey

tasting, and time to mingle before the gala dinner begins. You know you want to go and you probably know several other people who want to go, so why don't you pick up your tickets and several extras for Christmas gifts—this could be your easiest Christmas shopping yet! *Continued on page 3*

Memphis Scottish Society, Inc. Board

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john.schultz@memphiscots.com

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maryann.lucas@memphiscots.com

SCOTTISH CONNECTION

When I first started this once-a-month column, someone suggested that I feature the common phrase “the whole nine yards”, since, as erudite all scotophiles know, this phrase refers to the full length of cloth necessary to make a proper Scottish kilt. I put this off for years, and I now wish I had put it off a few more. Because of all those pleats, there should be 9 full yards of tartan material – anything less is seen as not a proper kilt. So, “the whole nine yard” has a **Scottish Connection**, right?

Well, perhaps. That is, I can find some testimony in support of this belief, which I have long held. The rub is that I also faithfully follow the first law of journalism, “If your mother says she loves you, check it out.” So, I have been checking it out. And the news is not good, sports fans.

It turns out there are dozens of different explanations for the origins of this phrase, each defended vociferously by its proponents. Here are a few: aircraft bullets which come in strings of 27 feet, i.e. 9 yards; a B-52 bomb-bay 9 yards long (or sometimes, 9 square yards), so dropping all the bombs from that bay; **or length of one ammunition belt from a WWII belly-gunner’s machine gun.**

Not all the theories are so bellicose. Here are a few of them: contents of cement trucks, a full load being 9 cubic yards of cement; American football: going, on second down, the distance for another first down instead of slugging it out for a couple of yards at a time; amount of cloth on a standard bolt; in most of India, the everyday sari worn by women is made of material six yards in length, but for weddings and special occasions, saris of nine yards are used (hence, for these special occasions one goes “the whole...” yada yada).

But, wait! (as they say on TV commercials) there’s more! To whit:

It’s a nautical term: “yard,” meaning one of the horizontal poles that hold up the sails on a square-rigged sailing ship. A typical ship would have three masts with three yards apiece, or nine yards

in all. A captain who had sent up all the canvas he could in order to squeeze out max velocity would thus be said to be giving it “the whole nine yards.”

Coal trucks in New England originally had three sections that contained three cubic yards of coal apiece. If you anticipated a bitterly cold winter, naturally you asked for the whole nine yards.

A term that tailors used for denoting the extent that one wishes to invest in a custom-made suit. It takes exactly nine square yards of material to create a man’s three-piece suit.

Wedding veils: in olden days, any bride who really wanted to impress the neighbors (and whose father could foot the bill) simply had to have a veil nine yards in length. (BTW, the veil worn by Diana, Princess of Wales, was only 25 feet, i.e., 8 & 1/3 yards.)

Nine yards: The amount of fabric it took to make an authentic dress for a colonial lady and the amount of cloth an old-fashioned undertaker used to make a funeral shroud.

Difference between a proper burial and a pauper’s burial: if you were well-to-do, you could afford to have

“the whole nine (cubic) yards” of dirt removed for your grave, as opposed to the poor who couldn’t pay for such a large plot.

Some of these are laughably easy to refute, despite the fervor of their supporters, but here’s a real clunker: no use of the term “the whole nine yard” appears in print before the 1960. The encyclopedic Charles Earle Funk, who is generally renowned as the expert in the origins of English language words & phrases, doesn’t mention it in any of his works (probably because he died in 1957). That sort of nixes most of the theories above, including, sadly, the one about the kilt.

All we need is one proof source, one bit of documentation, proving the use of the phrase earlier than 1960 to throw doubt on the pundits. (Proof involving a kilt would be even better.) So, there’s your challenge: send me such an example, relating this phrase to kilts, & I’ll send it on to Evan Morris, the Word Detective (www.word-detective.com).

When you find it, we’ll be able to convince the world that “the whole nine years” has a **Scottish Connection**. Mary Ann Lucas

GRACE NOTES



Grace Notes is the official publication of the Memphis Scottish Society, Inc. It is published monthly. Like the Society itself, the credo of *Grace Notes* is “to foster education and promote understanding of things Scottish.”

If you have something of interest to readers of this newsletter, please submit a typewritten manuscript to the editorial staff. If the article or notice is very brief (30 words or fewer), e-mail or just use the telephone. *Grace Notes* will accept and publish good quality photographs.

The deadline for all submissions is the second week of each month preceding the month of publication. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope with each submission, if you want the material returned.

Editorial Staff

Mary Ann Lucas - maryann.lucas@memphiscots.com	Editor, (901-725-1879)
Sammy Rich - sammy.rich@memphiscots.com	Publisher, (901-272-7159)
Gavin Anderson - gavin.anderson@memphiscots.com	Circulation Editor, (901-682-5485)
Melissa Gibson - melissa.gibson@memphiscots.com	Line Editor, (901 299-3170)

Please address all correspondence to:

Grace Notes

The Memphis Scottish Society, Inc.
gracenotes@memphiscots.com
 P. O. Box 241934
 Memphis, TN 38124-1934

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 promote understanding of
 things Scottish



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Tickets will be available for sale at the December and January MSSI meetings.

We are now soliciting items for the silent auction. If you would like to ask for gift certificates or items from places you do business, or if you want to make a personal donation, please contact Sammy Rich with the information on these items.

Also, we will need help on the morning of the 24th (10:00 a.m. through 1:00 p.m.) to set up for the event. Please contact Melissa Gibson to volunteer.

Novels with Scottish Settings

At one of the meetings a month or so ago, several of our members brought samples of books that they had read and were recommending. Listed below are some of the ones mentioned in case you wish to add them to your collection.

Lillian Beckwith:

(Semi-autobiographical)

- 1.) *The Hills is Lonely* (1959)
- 2.) *The Sea for Breakfast* (1961)
- 3.) *The Loud Halo* (1964)
- 4.) *A Rope - In Case* (1968)
- 5.) *Lightly Poached* (1973)
- 6.) *Beautiful Just!* (1975)
- 7.) *Bruach Blend* (1978)

John Buchan:

- 1.) *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915)
- 2.) *Huntingtower* (1922)
- 3.) *The Three Hostages* (1924)
- 4.) *John McNab* (1925)
- 5.) *Castle Gay* (1930)
- 6.) *The House of the Four Winds* (1935)
- 7.) *The Island of the Sheep* (1936)

Dorothy L. Sayers:

Five Red Herrings (1931)

A Lord Peter Wimsey mystery.

THE LISPIN' LEGHORN - Ian Middleton

Noo, this is a tale, tho I say't myself, that'll gar ye cla yer heid
 It concerns a chuckin that eence wis hatched, a maist peculiar breed
 I chirsened it Meg fin it laid an egg, bit syne it caickilt an crew
 So I didna ken if it wis a hen or a cock-a-doodle-doo!

Chorus:

Oh, my, a whit a how-do-you-do
 For I didna ken if it wis a hen or a cock-a-doodle-doo!

Noo a normal cock o respectable stock
 has a cra that's clear an crisp
 Bit it seemed this freak, hid a feminine
 streak, for it likit tae cra wi a lisp
 It fluttert it's een, like a fairy queen fin
 the dominant male appeared
 An I seen surmised b' it pansied wyes, I
 wis landit wi something weird!



On a neeber's advice, I entered it twice
 at Keith an Turra an a'
 Bit I won nae prize, in spite o my tries,
 fin the judge he heard it cra
 He says "Is't a he, or is it a she, for I'm damned if I've a clue
 Bit we winna fa oot, we'll settle the doot, wi an independent view"

So we called in the vet t' eyne the debate, an speert gin he'd hae a look
 An wi ivery appliance o modern science, he explored each feathery neuk
 He hauled an howkit an probit and powkit, nae winner the crater scraiched
 Syne he fichert wi funnels for keekin up tunnels tae see gin its hat wis straicht

Weel, fitivver he sa ees heid got a cla an he says fin he'd gaithert ees braith
 "Ye wis winnerin whither twis een or the tither – as a matter o fact, it's baith
 Yer chuckin's a freak fae its bum til its beak, I ken b' its parson's nose
 The signs are clear, I'm ready t' swear, that it's definitely one of those."

Noo I hiv t' confide I canna abide this modern permissive trend
 An nae wye wid I aid its imminent spread wi a bird half roon the bend!
 I wis burnin wi shame an as seen's I won hame I raxed its neck wi an oath
 Bit in spite o' its flaas an effeminate cras, it made a fine potty o broth!



How Estonians sang their way to freedom

A new documentary tells story of how the national tradition of singing helped unite the masses against the Soviet occupation.

A look at the Estonia Song Festival, with thousands of choral singers and crowd participation. Walk around the verdant green amphitheater known as the Lauluvaljak, or song ground, here on the outskirts of Tallin, Estonia, and it's easy to imagine the air alive with music, reverberating up the grassy slopes from the half-domed, vaulted stage at the bottom of this natural theatrical setting.

But to grasp what it feels like to be amid an audience 300,000-strong, singing in Von Trapp family-like harmony with sub rosa political purpose, you'll just have to pick up the DVD of "The Singing Revolution," a passion project by documentarians Jim and Maureen Tusty. Released this week, it is the story of how a tiny country (population: 1 million) with a 5,000-year-old culture, perched on the western edge of the Russian giant, used its tradition of song to finally free itself of foreign occupation, in this case the Soviet state, in 1991.

This tale of how peaceful crowds managed to fend off Soviet tanks as they attempted to take over the local television station is operatic in its drama, says the married couple. "This is the story of the power of nonviolent resistance to succeed where guns and rock-throwing would have resulted in death and more political oppression," says Jim Tusty. The nation was trying to throw off the Soviet yoke, which ensnared it in 1939, when Hitler and Stalin secretly signed a pact to divide up the Baltic countries. But, says Jim Tusty, it is also the story of a relationship between art and politics.

"We wanted to tell this remarkable story ... before the generation that lived it is no longer around," he says. He adds that a number of the older Estonians he interviewed say they are grateful to have the narrative preserved. They see that

the next generation - a global, externally focused cohort in a nation that is now part of the European Union and NATO - has little awareness of the struggles of an earlier generation, he says.

The story began for the filmmakers when they taught a cinema class in Estonia during the summer of 1999 and began to hear about the song festival and the revolution it had inspired. In the festival, founded in 1869 and held every five years, choirs from all over the nation audition to be part of the 20,000 to 30,000-member chorus that takes the stage and leads the huge crowds that attend.

The music is a mix of modern and traditional folk songs, many of which have what the team calls the kind of oral traditions that are full of hidden, deeply patriotic meaning that sustained Estonians through centuries of oppression. As they investigated the festival itself, they discovered the role that the traditional songs played during the critical years leading up to the fall of the Soviet Union, 1987 through 1991. Rather than engage the Soviets directly, as Hungary, Latvia, and Lithuania did, all with disastrous results, the various political groups united in song.

"They never wanted to give the Soviets a reason to arrest or hurt anyone," says Maureen Tusty. Paraphrasing one of the Estonians who survived the brutal years of Soviet gulags, her husband adds, "Art used to be serious when real political participation was not possible," but now, with meaningful political activity allowed, the arts have become trivial and the next generation is not interested in the power of this culture to make a difference.

Beyond that, the filmmakers say the film has a role to play in a world that is getting increasingly violent, particularly a Russia with more aggressive foreign policies. They have assembled a three-disc educational

DVD version (available at www.singingrevolution.com), complete with maps and historical data. But, Jim Tusty hastens to add, they are not advocacy filmmakers. "We just believe in this story, which has its own message."

By Gloria Goodale | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor from the October 24, 2008 edition. Gloria Goodale toured the Tallinn festival grounds in 2007.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1024/p15s01-align.html>

I thought the preceding story may be of interest to some of our members. While it has nothing to do with Scotland per se, the interest lies in the power of music. It was brought to my attention by one of the members on Ballad-l a list I subscribe to online and is populated by simply the best ballad scholars in the world.

The Scots have been and still are renowned for the love of song in both their daily life whether it be at work, fulling cloth, spinning thread, or just out walking the countryside. In victory or defeat the Scots have sung songs to ease the pains of grievous losses for causes worthy of any human spirit and for playing when the time allowed. Singing is a way of life for many and the universal language for nearly all who allow themselves to be taken where the muses lead.

The introduction to "Songs of the Isles" on the following page is an excellent companion article to the story on this page. I hope that you may hear some of the songs from this collection in the coming year. In fact, we would love to teach some of these songs to you on Monday nights, we rehearse from 7:00 - 9:00 at Holy Communion Episcopal Church. Won't you consider singing a bit with us. the more the merrier. Cheers
- Sammy Rich

Songs of the Isles

Introduction

It may be said of the songs of a people that they constitute in a very special way the heart-history of a people. From folk songs such as these we may glean that kind of knowledge of a people which does not find its way into ordinary history books. And this is understandable, for, through singing the songs of a people, we identify ourselves with those people; we share their joys and their sorrow, their hopes, aspirations, their ceremonials, their customs, their turns of thought and their turns of speech; we sit, so to speak, at their hearths and on their hillsides, and become one with them. In issuing this collection of songs for the use of school-children everywhere, we had this though very much in mind.

Long years ago I heard a little girl singing a Highland Lullaby at a Winnipeg Festival. She sang it so sweetly and so natively that I was sure she must in herself be Highland. But she had never been near the Highlands. She was a wee girl whose parents were Poles, but she had in her that touch of nature which makes the whole song that, for the time being, she was over the hills and far away in a place she had never seen, and amongst a people she had never met. 'In sweet music is such art.'

The Songs of the Isles are eas-

ily within the ken and compass of English-speaking children. There are very few dialect words; for the Gaels rarely mix their English with dialect, whatever they may do in their Gaelic. And the tunes are fresh and attractive, although they may be stodgy enough things when sung without a lilt, that is, without a sense (and presence) of rhythm.

It ought to be said that the songs are not all Island songs, that is, if we take 'Island' as meaning those strips and clumps of land which have been splintered from the mainland of Scotland by the ceaseless wash of the Atlantic. As a matter of fact, we in Scotland are all, at one and the same time, islanders as well as mainlanders. It was a wee girl from Harris who, asked by a Glasgow school teacher-- 'What is an island?' replied shyly, 'Skye be and island, but not Harris'. And it was an old Skye minister who was wont to invoke the blessing of the Deity on 'The people of Skye, not forgetting the people of the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland'. So, you see, wheresoever we live is the mainland, and yet we are all islanders.

The songs, however, are mostly connected with one or other of our Western Isles, and they are mostly chorus songs, for the Gael dearly loves

to join in. Indeed, so fond of 'joining in' were the Gaels of old that most of their songs start (as well as finish) with a chorus, on the grounds perhaps that you cannot have too much of a good thing.

It was a Welsh poet who said—'No matter where this body is, the mind is free to go elsewhere'. So, while you are singing the songs, be it where you will, in England or Ireland or Wales or America, or Canada or Australia or New Zealand, or in Timbuctoo for that matter, you can, by a flight of the imagination, transport yourself to Skye or Barra or Lewis or Harris or Tiree or Uist or Isla of Moll or Iona, or any other isle you care to choose. Or you can be 'chasing the breeze' amidst the white breakers of the Hebridean seas, a song on your lips, and 'it's good-bye to care'. The point is this, if you are right in the heart of your song, depend upon it you will sooner or later find yourself right in the heart of the place and the people whence the song came. That's the idea! Not only is it the idea; it is the spirit in which these songs should be sung, indeed it is the spirit in which these songs should be sung, indeed it is the spirit in which all songs which come from the hearts of the people should be sung.

Hugh S. Roberton, Glasgow, 1950



Northeast Caledonia Pipes and Drums Burns Night

Tickets are now on sale for the first annual “Burns Night” dinner to be hosted by the Northeast Arkansas Caledonian Pipes and Drums -and- the First Presbyterian Church of Jonesboro.

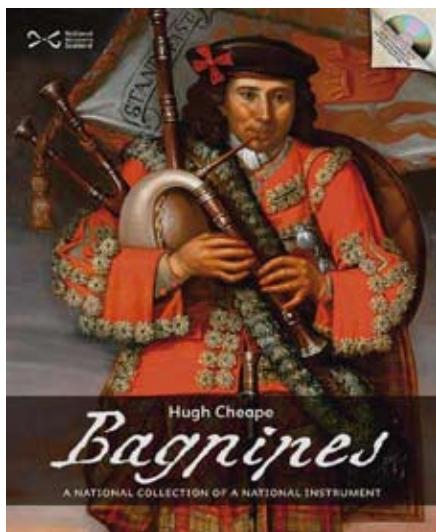
The event is a semi-formal to formal dress event, with a Scottish theme, celebrating the poet Robert (Robbie) Burns and will be held at the church on Southwest Drive in Jonesboro, Saturday, Jan 31st at 6pm.

The event will include traditional Scottish fare (meal), Pipes & Drums, and other entertainment.

The event is also a fundraiser for the band.

Tickets are \$20/person (\$10 / under 12) and may be purchased from any band member.

For more info, contact:
David Corbett; 901-233-2903
fireham@yahoo.com or
Danny Vaughn; 870-886-6583
arkansasbagpiper@yahoo.com
Or just go to the website:
www.necaledonians.com



Turn on Channel 10!
The programmers at WKNO, Channel 10 have certainly had our best in mind while laying out their schedule for December 2008.

Celtic Woman, that toothsome quintet of Irish lasses, are on no less than 7 times (not counting wee hours o’ the night repeats). Their new holiday concert “Celtic Woman: The Greatest Journey – Holiday Special” is aired on Monday, 12/1 @ 7 pm; Friday, 12/5 @ 7 pm; Sunday, 12/7 @ 8 pm; & Saturday, 12/13 @ 8 pm.* Their previous concert “Celtic Woman: A New Journey” is encored on Wednesday, 12/10 @ 7 pm; Friday, 12/12 @ 7 pm; & Sunday, 12/14 @ 6 pm.

Another show of interest to our members are “The Priests: Live at Armagh Cathedral”, aired on Sunday,

Turn on Channel 10 !

12/7 @ 3:30 am (sorry) and (more charitably) on Wednesday, 12/10 @ 9 pm. And finally, though it’s not *per se* Celtic or Scottish in nature, many will find “Downe in Yon Forrest: A Medieval Christmas”, described as “A Christmas concert, featuring background history of the songs”, very pleasing indeed; it airs on Christmas Day, Thursday, 12/25 @ 8:30 pm.

Three cheers for WKNO, Channel 10’s December line-up!

(*This concert (presumably without the “Holiday Special” part) will be performed live by the lovely & lively ladies on April 8 & 9, 2009, at the Orpheum. Call 901-325-6565 or 1-800-895-8810 for details.)

(*BTW, if you are a member of WKNO, Channel 10, please contact Mary Ann Lucas for a little conspiracy.*)

Silent Auction

to thank you and if you haven’t then this would be a good year to start.

OK. Last but not least, I am going to need at least two dedicated volunteers to help me round up the bid sheets and control the disbursement of the items that are being auctioned. I know this will take away some of the time you get to enjoy the evening but hey, it is for a good cause, our scholarship fund and I will try to make it fun for any of the volunteers that help me that evening. So please, consider raising your hand for a spell of time that evening to help make our Silent Auction the best ever.

Many thanks in advance for your cooperation and willing spirit to participate with us for this event.

Cheers: Sammy Rich

So if you have contributed in the past to our auction, let me be the first

Calendar of Events

Mondays

Caledonia Chorale 7 pm
Church of the Holy Communion,
Walnut Grove at Perkins,
272-7159

Thursdays

Sgt.W.K.Singleton Pipes & Drums

6:30-8:30 at Bethel Pentecostal Church, Stage Road in Bartlett; call 386-2052 for info.

Wolf River Pipes & Drums,

6:30-9:30 at St. Luke's Lutheran; Germantown Parkway. 753-9494

Fridays

Dancing: 7:30-10 pm, Idlewild Presbyterian; 1750 Union Ave, West Entrance - 274-1889
2nd, & 4th Friday:
Scottish Country Dancing.

Monday, December 8

MSSI Annual Christmas Party
Nashoba Unitarian Church
For directions call 757-4200 or
go to
memphiscelts.com.
6:00 pm Dinner
7:00 pm Program:
MSSI Annual Christmas Party

Thursday, December 18

Board Meeting at 5:45 at Perkins on Germantown Parkway

January 24

MSSI Burns' Nicht
Woodland Hills Country Club
contact: Melissa Gibson
299-3170

January 31

Northeast Arkansas
Caledonia Pipes and Drums and the First Presbyterian Church of Jonesboro, AR Burns Night
Contact: David Corbett
901-233-2903

Scottish/Celtic
RadioMusic
Sundays, 6-7 p.m.
"The Thistle and Shamrock"
WKNO-FM 91.1
Saturdays, 10 a.m.
-1.m. "Strands of the Celtic Knot" Robert Campbell, host
WEVL-FM 89.9
Sun and Mon 6 p.m. and
Fridays, 7 p.m.
"The Thistle & Shamrock,"
WMAV-FM 90.3



December 4: Roots Run Deep

Musical Communities coast-to-coast in the U.S. and Canada show their roots with great traditional fiddling, expressive singing, and ear-catching blends of American and Celtic music.

December 11: Ferintosh

We explore a distinctive blend of Celtic and Baroque music this week, largely sourced from 18th century collections of Scottish airs and dance tunes. It comes to us from studio guests Ferintosh (fiddler David Greenberg, cellist Abby Newton, and harper Kim Robertson) who chat about their musical inspirations and journeys.

December 18:

Season's Greetings from The Thistle & Shamrock

Join us around the hearth for our annual holiday gathering of seasonal music and greetings.

December 25: Midwinter Sun

Hear music that ushers the sun through the shortest days of the year and upholds the ancient spirit of Yule.





Balquhidder Glen is the place where Rob Roy MacGregor spent most of his life and where he and his family are buried.

This is another of the fine photographs provided by our correspondent Alistair Reid of Scotland. Many of his beautiful photographs are free. Check out his website at: www.incallander.co.uk

Next Monthly Meeting - Monday, December 8th
Nashoba Unitarian Church

Pot Luck Dinner at 6:00, Program @ 7:00 MSSI Annual Christmas Party
Board Meeting, Thursday, December 18th at 5:45, Perkins @ 1340 S. Germantown Rd.



The Memphis Scottish Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 241934
Memphis, TN 38124-1934

