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# The Callisman



*American Clan Lockhart Society*

*The Only Official Clan Lockhart Organization for North America  
as recognized by Chief Ranald Lockhart of the Lee*

<https://americanclanlockhartsociety.org/>

**Interim President**

Richard J. Lockhart [L#075]  
12470 Clay Street  
Middlefield, OH 44062  
aclstalisman@gmail.com

**Treasurer**

Richard J. Lockhart [L#075]  
12470 Clay Street  
Middlefield, OH 44062  
aclstalisman@gmail.com

**Membership Secretary**

Karen Sallé [A#169]  
199 Deerwood Trail  
Mt City, TN 37683  
kksalle@aol.com

**Clan Genealogist**

Zane Walls [L#136]  
514 Brenton Street  
Shippensburg, PA 17257  
wallsz@comcast.net

**Web Page Designer**

Doug Rider [H]  
doug@riderworks.com

**Vice President**

Dennis Lockhart [L#202]  
1270 Baltimore Road  
Shippensburg, PA 17257  
lockhart\_dennis@hotmail.com

**Secretary**

Bill Lockhart [L#104]  
390 Hill Rd.  
Dummer, NH 03588  
blockhart46@gmail.com

**Historian****Clan Store**

Colleen Lockhart [L#075]  
12470 Clay Street  
Middlefield, OH 44062  
colleenlockhart52@gmail.com

**Newsletter Editor**

Jeffrey D Lockhart [A#194]  
102 Spruce Street  
Towanda, PA 18848  
lockhajt@gmail.com

Must see...

Braidwood Castle, also known as Hallbar Tower, is a 16th-century tower house. The castle is owned by the Lockharts of Lee. When traveling to Scotland, a stay is a must!

"It is gratifying to realize that this ancient Lockhart stronghold has been carefully preserved for future generations to enjoy."

Ranald Lockhart, Chief of Clan Lockhart

Any members wanting to stay in the castle should contact Ranald directly to arrange a discount.

Contact: [dawn@leeandcarnwathestates.co.uk](mailto:dawn@leeandcarnwathestates.co.uk)

# Keeping the Flame

Jeff Lockhart [A#194]

## *How Scottish Festivals and Games in America Preserve a Living Heritage*

Imagine a wide green meadow nestled against a backdrop of misty blue mountains. In one corner you hear the drone of bagpipes and roll of drums as the pipe and drum bands get their last practice in before competing. Men and women toss cabers, hay bales, and stones for bragging rights and to bring honor to their clans. Tartan clad dancers spin and leap with precision and elegance. And everywhere — on banners, on flags, on embroidered badges pinned to lapels — the crests and mottos of ancient Scottish clans proclaim that these families, though far from the glens of their ancestors, have not forgotten who they are.

There is a certain paradox at the heart of Scottish Highland Games and festivals in America. Highland culture — the tartans, the bagpipes, the clan gatherings — has in many ways been more visibly and enthusiastically celebrated on this side of the Atlantic than in parts of Scotland itself. Scottish Americans have built a thriving, passionate, and deeply personal cultural movement that grows stronger with every passing decade. These festivals are not museum pieces or tourist attractions. They are living, breathing expressions of identity — celebrations of survival, remembrance, and belonging that connect generations of the Scottish diaspora to the land and people they came from.

### **A Long Journey to the New World: The History of the Games**

To understand what Highland Games in America mean today, it helps to know where they came from and how they traveled across an ocean.

The origins of Highland Games in Scotland stretch back to the medieval period, when clan chieftains used athletic competitions as a practical means of identifying their strongest and most capable warriors. Events like the stone put and the caber toss were not mere entertainment — they were tests of the raw physical power needed in battle and in the rugged work of Highland life. Over centuries, these competitions evolved into community celebrations, held at clan gatherings and local fairs across the Scottish Highlands.

The modern shape of Highland Games owes much to the romantic enthusiasm of Queen Victoria, who fell deeply in love with Scotland after her first visit in 1842 and eventually made Balmoral Castle her beloved Highland retreat. Her patronage of the Braemar Gathering — still attended by the royal family every September in Royal Deeside — gave the Games a prestige and visibility that helped standardize and popularize them throughout the 19th century. It was the Victorian era that cemented many of the traditions we recognize today: the pipe bands, the Highland dancing competitions, the heavy athletic events performed in full Highland dress.



Scottish immigrants brought their traditions with them to America long before Queen Victoria ever set foot in Balmoral. Scots had been arriving on American shores since the colonial period, carrying their music, their faith, their customs, and their fierce sense of clan identity. But the organized Highland Games movement in America truly took

## KEEPING THE FLAME

shape in the mid-20th century, when Scottish-American societies began formalizing the gatherings that communities had been holding informally for generations.

The landmark moment came in 1956, when the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games were

established in Linville, North Carolina. Founded by Donald MacDonald, a Scottish immigrant with a passionate commitment to preserving his heritage, the Grandfather Mountain Games created a template that would be replicated across the country. Clan societies began sponsoring tents. Piping competitions drew competitors from across the continent. Athletes traveled hundreds of miles to throw the hammer and the stone on that mountain.

From that single gathering in the Carolina mountains, the Highland Games movement in America has grown into something remarkable: more than 200 festivals held annually in nearly every state in the Union, drawing hundreds of thousands of attendees each year, and representing one of the most successful cultural preservation movements in the American diaspora experience.

### What Happens at a Highland Games: The Heart of the Gathering

For the uninitiated, a Highland Games can be a joyfully overwhelming experience. There is simply so much to see, hear, and do. But beneath the festive surface, every element of a Highland Games carries historical weight and cultural meaning.



### The Heavy Events

The athletic competitions are the dramatic centerpiece of any Highland Games, and they have a way of stopping even the most distracted festival-goer in their tracks. The heavy events — so called because they involve throwing or lifting objects of considerable weight and size — are descended directly from those medieval tests of warrior strength, and they remain as impressive today as they must have been a thousand years ago.

The most iconic is the caber toss, in which a competitor hoists a tapered log — often 19 feet long and weighing close to 200 pounds — balances it vertically in their hands, runs forward, and attempts to flip it end over end so that it lands pointing directly away from the thrower in the 12 o'clock position. It is a feat of extraordinary strength, balance, and technique, and a perfectly executed caber toss draws gasps and cheers from the crowd every time.



Other heavy events include the stone put, the Scottish hammer throw, the weight over the bar, and the sheaf toss, in which a bundle of straw in a burlap bag is hurled over a raised bar using a pitchfork. Women's heavy events competitions have grown substantially in recent decades, and today female athletes are among the most accomplished and celebrated competitors on the circuit.

## *ACLS at the Highland Games in 2026*

So far this year there are two Highland games where the ACLS will be present:

The [Eugene Scottish Festival](#) on May 30th in Eugene, Oregon. Host: Christopher Wade.

The [Middle Tennessee Highland Games](#) on September 12-13 in Sanders Ferry Park in Henderson, TN. Hosts: Jessica and Rick Daniels

Stop by their tents and say hello if you happen to be at either of those games!

### **The Music**

If the heavy events are the visual heart of the Highland Games, the music is its soul. Pipe bands — anywhere from a handful of players to massive ensembles of 40 or more pipers and drummers — march and perform in formal competitions judged on musical precision, tone, ensemble coordination, and presentation. The bands are ranked in grades from the novice level up to Grade 1, the pinnacle of competitive piping, and a Grade 1 pipe band in full Highland dress, drums thundering and chanters wailing in unison, is one of the most stirring sights in any form of live music.

Solo piping and drumming competitions run alongside the band events, showcasing individual artistry in traditional and contemporary pieces. Beyond the competitive arena, Scottish fiddling, Celtic harping, and folk music stages provide a more intimate musical experience, with performers drawing on the rich tradition of Scottish song that stretches from ancient clan gatherings to the thriving contemporary Celtic music scene.

### **Highland Dancing**

Highland dancing is one of the oldest and most symbolically rich elements of Scottish culture. The Sword Dance — in which a dancer performs a precise series of steps between and around two crossed swords laid on the ground — is said to have originated as a pre-battle ritual. The Seann Triubhas, which translates roughly as 'old trousers,' is a dance whose lilting, restrained movements are said to represent the oppressive restrictions placed on Highland Scots after Culloden, including the banning of the kilt, while its joyful closing passages celebrate the eventual lifting of those restrictions.

At Highland Games across America, Highland dancing is dominated by young competitors — children and teenagers who have trained for years in the precise footwork and elegant carriage the dances demand. Watching a line of young dancers performing the Sword Dance with fierce concentration and natural grace is one of the most quietly moving experiences a Highland Games has to offer.

## KEEPING THE FLAME

### The Clan Tents

For many attendees, the clan tent area is the most personally significant part of the entire event. Major Highland Games host dozens of individual clan societies, each with their own tent or booth where members gather, genealogical resources are shared, and anyone bearing the clan surname — or descended from those who did — is welcomed as family.

Walking through the clan tent village, you will find clan historians ready to discuss family origins, maps showing the ancestral territories of Highland clans, displays of clan tartans and crests, and membership tables for those who want to formalize their connection to their heritage. For someone who has just discovered their Scottish roots through a genealogy website, stepping up to the clan tent bearing their family name and being greeted as a kinsman by a stranger can be an unexpectedly emotional experience.



### Why It Matters: The Cultural and Personal Significance

It would be easy to view Highland Games as a form of pleasant nostalgia — a chance to dress up, listen to bagpipes, and eat shortbread while romanticizing a past that was surely harder than the festival atmosphere suggests. But to leave the analysis there would be to profoundly underestimate

what these gatherings mean to the people who attend them.

For members of the Scottish diaspora — descendants of those who left Scotland through choice or through force, through the devastation of the Clearances or simply through the restless search for opportunity — Highland Games offer something genuinely rare: a physical, sensory, communal experience of cultural identity. You can read about your clan's history. You can trace your family tree back to a glen in Argyll or a village like Lanark. But standing in a field surrounded by your clanspeople, calling your family name during the gathering of the clans, watching a pipe band march past in the tartans your ancestors wore — that is something of an entirely different order.

Part of the reason you joined the ACLS was to learn more about our Lockhart heritage.

There is also a dimension to American Highland Games that carries significance beyond the diaspora community alone. Scottish Gaelic — the ancient language of the Highlands — is critically endangered, spoken natively by fewer than 60,000 people worldwide. ([Here is a great YouTube channel that teaches Scottish Gaelic.](#)) Many of the traditions preserved at American Highland Games represent genuine contributions to the preservation of a cultural heritage that is fragile in its homeland. The flame is being kept alive, in part, by the very people the Clearances were meant to scatter and silence.

## KEEPING THE FLAME

### Challenges and the Road Ahead

The Highland Games movement in America, for all its vitality, faces real challenges. The volunteer base that sustains most Games is aging, and recruiting younger organizers is a persistent concern for event committees across the country. Funding pressures create their own tensions, as the costs of running large events have grown and many Games have had to seek corporate sponsorships in ways that not everyone finds compatible with the cultural mission of the gatherings.

*"Every caber thrown, every reel danced, every pipe tune played is an act of cultural preservation."*

There are also deeper questions about authenticity and representation. The version of Scottish heritage celebrated at American Highland Games is itself a construct — shaped by Victorian romanticism, the Highland revival of the early 19th century, and the selective memory of diaspora communities. The clan tartan system was largely invented in the early 1800s. These are fair observations, and they deserve honest engagement. But they do not diminish the meaning of what happens at these gatherings. Culture is always, to some degree, constructed and reconstructed by the communities that claim it. The love that people feel for it is entirely authentic.

The most promising development for the future of Scottish-American cultural life may be the internet and social media, which have allowed clan societies and Highland Games organizations to build year-round communities of engagement that extend far beyond the summer festival

season. Clan Facebook groups, YouTube channels dedicated to piping and Highland athletics, genealogy forums, and online Gaelic language learning communities are connecting Scottish Americans to their heritage in ways that were simply not possible a generation ago.

### The Flame Burns On

More than 25 million Americans claim Scottish descent — a number that exceeds the entire population of Scotland several times over. They gather every summer on meadows and fairgrounds from North Carolina to California, carrying the tartans, the music, the dances, and the stories of the clans their ancestors belonged to. They teach their children the Sword Dance and the stone put and the proper way to wear a kilt. They sit in clan tents and discover that they are not alone — that they belong to something ancient and enduring.

Every Highland Games attended is an act of cultural preservation. Every pipe tune learned, every reel danced, every caber thrown in the Highland tradition is a declaration that the scattered clans of Scotland are still here, still together, still proud of who they are and where they came from.

The flame, lit in the Highland glens long before any of us were born, burns on. Come to the Games, and help keep it burning.

*(Author's note: Whether you host a clan tent or are merely interested in seeing what the Highland games are all about you should attend at least one in an area close to you.)*

# KEEPING THE FLAME

## Resources

To find a Highland Games near you, visit the Association of Scottish Games and Festivals at [asgf.org](http://asgf.org). To connect with your clan society, the Council of Scottish Clans and Associations at [cosca.scot](http://cosca.scot) maintains a comprehensive directory of recognized clan organizations across North America.

Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highland\\_games](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highland_games)

*Cuimhnichibh air na daoine bho'n d'thainig sibh*  
**Remember the people whom you come from**

## Scottish Customs

*Who Will She Be?*

Men had their own customs for determining whether a man would get married and to who. Three bowls were filled, one with clear water, one with water and soot, and one left empty. The lad was blindfolded and the bowls mixed up. The one he chose determined his fate. If the water in it was clear his bride would be a maiden; if sooty, a widow, and if empty he would remain a bachelor.

In the Highlands a man had to slip off unnoticed to a field which had been plowed. He had to enter it from the western side, ensuring that the farrows ran north to south. He had to cross eleven ridges to stand in the center of the twelfth, and listen intently. If he heard sobs or shrieks this foretold an early death, if music and dancing it indicated that he would soon marry.

From "Scottish Customs" by Sheila Livingstone

# The Fiddlers of Tomnahurich

*Tales From Scotland*



*It might be used as a cemetery today, but Tomnahurich Hill in the south-west of Inverness was once known to be home to the fairies.*



A long time ago, two traveling fiddle players roamed the Highlands to make some money. They had very little luck as they passed through towns until they arrived in Inverness. They hoped to find a well-paid

gig that evening, or they were going to end up on the streets.

They played on the street corners to drum up business, but most people ignored them. That is, all except one old man who seemed to enjoy their playing.

He made the musicians a proposition. He needed them to play for a remarkable group of people and he would pay double what they normally charged. All they had to do was meet him at Tomnahurich Hill at sunset.

It sounded too good to be true, but the pair had barely eaten for days, and so they accepted. Just as the sun was going down, they walked to Tomnahurich Hill to meet the old man.

He showed them a peculiar opening in the hillside with light, warmth, and the sound of laughter. An enormous hall stretched before them, full of people dressed in their finest clothes around a table groaning under the weight of so much food.

The crowd cheered as the two fiddlers

entered the hall. The old man told them not to rush, they had all the time in the world to enjoy the food and drink before playing.

After eating their fill, the fiddlers tuned their instruments and announced the first song. The party was wild and the dancing lasted for hours. The fiddlers had as much fun as their audience. They had never played that well before and felt they were earning their payment.



When the dances were finished, the old man paid the two fiddlers and ushered them back outside into the early dawn light. One turned to ask the old man if they needed them again, but the doorway had mysteriously disappeared.

The men walked back into Inverness, but everything had changed. There were new houses, pubs, and stores that hadn't been there the night before. Even the people were dressed differently.

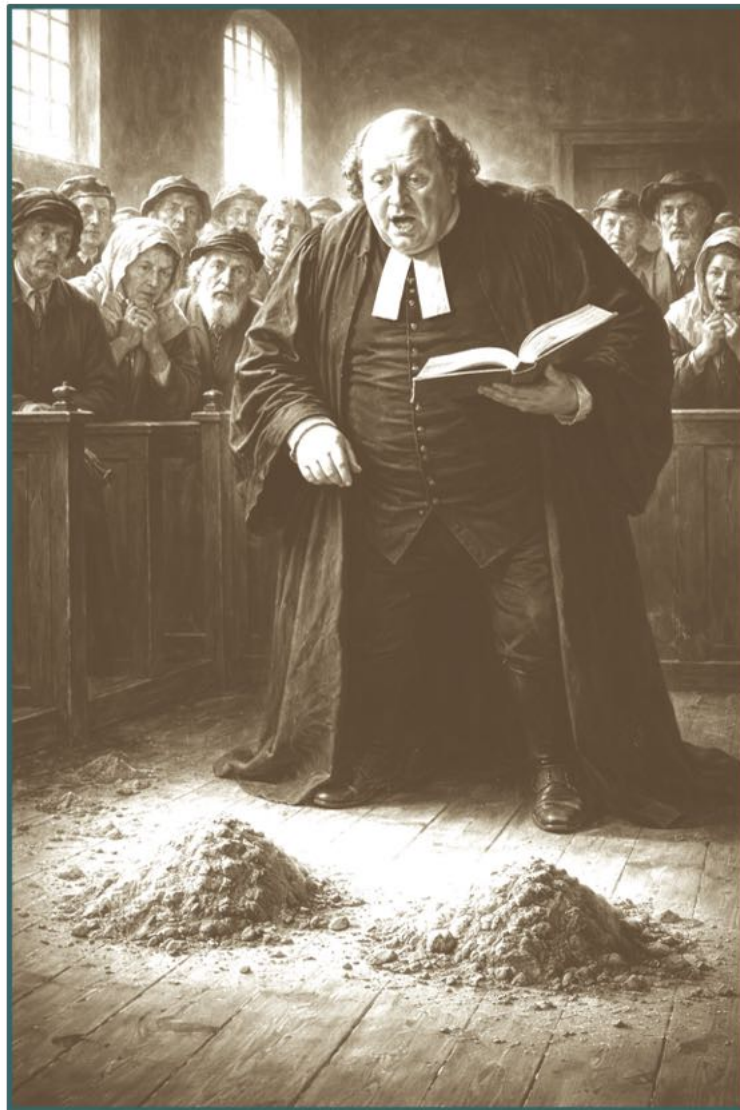
A church bell pealed, and the two fiddlers headed straight to the church hoping to make sense of what

happened. The minister started the sermon but as soon as he mentioned the Lord's name, the fiddlers of Tomnahurich crumbled into dust!

It turned out that they hadn't been playing under the hill for a single night. They had been inside Tomnahurich for 100 years. A fairy named Thomas the Rhymer had lured them in to play for the fairy's party.

They should have realized that if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

From "Scotland's Stories" by Graeme Johncock



# Happy Birthday!

April	May	June
Kimberly Brannen [A#216]	Laraine Lockhart Borman [A#237]	Carol Cichocki [L#39]
Shannon Decker [A#208]	Mike Deaton [A#239]	Joseph Connor [L#195]
Donald Gallo [A#225]	Paul Henkelman [A#205]	Julia Dey [A#217]
Brandy Hafner [A#234]	Elizabeth Howard Lewis [A#51]	Melanie Leigh Hornsby [A#183]
Chelsey Lockhart [A#254]	Gregory Johnson [L#187]	Brenda Henkelman [A#205]
Dorothy Fry Lockhart [A#121]	Sheena Johnson [L#187]	Steven Henley [A#232]
Janice Lockhart [A#243]	Steven Kotzer [A#251]	Richard Howard [L#79]
Steve Lockhart [A#244]	Deidre Lockhart [L#202]	Denise Lawson [A#180]
Tammy Lockhart [A#194]	Judy Lockhart-Hunter [A#197]	Kathy Lockhart [A#228]
Jeremy Daniel O'Boyle [L#41]	Madeleine Lockhart [L#48]	Kevin C. Lockhart, Sr. [L#160]
Ashlee Raven [A#188]	Megan Lockhart [L#69]	Penny Lockhart [A#173]
Cathie Ryder [L#10]	Paula Lockhart [L#198]	Steven Lockhart [A#254]
Kurt Shrum [L#129]	Dana Raven [A#188]	Suzanne Lynd [L#5]
Christopher Wade [A#167]	Charlotte Strickler [A#182]	Kevin McCall [L#225]
Douglas G. Waldron [I#86]	Winfred Walls [L#137]	David Salle [A#234]
		Laura Tinney [L#222]
		Soon Ok Waldron [L#86]
		Patricia Walls [L#137]

# Membership

New Annual	Member Renewal	New Lifetime
Steven Lockhart [A#254]	Lynn Hornsby [A#184]	
Gillian Robinson [A#253]	Mark Hornsby [A#186]	
Kathleen Schiller [A#252]		
Conor Whitelaw [A#255]		

# ACLS Store

Colleen Lockhart [L#075]

Welcome Clan Members!

ACLS Store Items are pictured below. The cost of shipping will be invoiced.

013 Pewter hat badge \$24

014 Pewter kilt pin \$24

024 Polo Shirt, white \$30, special order with Crest in youth thru XXXL.

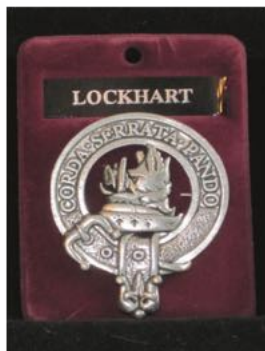
042 Red Lockhart Crest t-shirt adult small to XL \$15, adult XXL and XXXL \$18.

044 Tan Lockhart Crest t-shirt adult small to XL \$15, adult XXL and XXXL \$18.

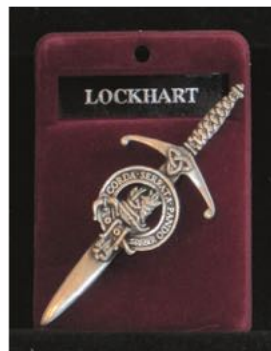
Clan-lockhart.org, the official site in Scotland, has several publications including Seven Centuries, To My Pocket, Genealogical Chart, and others.

To purchase the ACLS challenge coin, please contact William Lockhart directly at [blockhart46@gmail.com](mailto:blockhart46@gmail.com).

Contact Colleen Lockhart for questions at [colleenlockhart52@gmail.com](mailto:colleenlockhart52@gmail.com)



Pewter Hat  
Badge \$24



Pewter Hilt Pin  
\$24



Lockhart Clan Challenge Coin  
(Contact Bill Lockhart)



Red or Tan T-shirts  
adult small — adult XL \$15  
adult XXL — adult XXXL \$18



Polo Shirt with logo - \$30. Special  
order

# Final Thoughts

Jeff Lockhart [A#194]



For this newsletter issue, which includes Memorial Day, I asked our members if there were any in their family that they wanted to remember for having given their life for our country. The responses I received were for family who had been in the service, but died from natural causes. As important as remembering our kin who were veterans is, that isn't the true meaning of Memorial Day. And although losing a loved one is difficult enough as it is, I can't imagine losing a loved one in a war.

Memorial Day originated after the end of the American Civil War to honor the soldiers and sailors who died in battle to preserve the Union. It was originally called Decoration Day and celebrated every May 30, but many Southern states did not observe it. Remembering the Civil War was still too raw. In the aftermath of World War I, Armistice Day—later named Veterans Day—was proclaimed, further confusing the meaning of Decoration/Memorial Day. In 1950, Congress passed a joint resolution calling on the president to “issue a proclamation designating May 30 Memorial Day, as a day for a Nation-wide prayer for peace.” It was finally implemented by President Lyndon Johnson, and fixed as the last Monday of May in 1971.

*History teaches, reinforces what we believe in, what we stand for, and what we ought to be willing to stand up for. History is-or should be - the bedrock of patriotism, not the chest-pounding kind of patriotism but the real thing, love of country. - David McCullough "History Matters"*

Memorial Day services are still held and flags are put on veterans' graves, but I think the day has become more of one we look forward to as a three day weekend. We are more concerned with how good sales will be for mattresses and cars and whatever else. How many of us will be attending Memorial Day services in our communities? For that matter, how many communities are having services? I'm just as guilty. In 1996 a group of elementary school students were asked what Memorial Day meant. They said, “the day the pools open!” The National Moment of Remembrance law was passed in 2000, and encourages all Americans to pause for one minute at 3 p.m. local time to think about the sacrifices of fallen military personnel.

So, at 3 p.m. your local time this Memorial Day, please take at least one minute to remember and honor those servicemen and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for us, and future generations.

