



The Cromartie Reunion News

August 14, 2010

The Editor's notes

Greetings from Virginia!

Another year has passed and lots of Cromartie news to report. First and most important, our President Kelly Ricketts, has had good results from her treatment for oral cancer. She's working full time, doing well, and taking a much needed vacation this week.

Our lead article this year takes a different turn from previous years, focusing more attention on our ancestors' life and times. We'd like to do more of that in the future. Can you share a short story about an ancestor with us? We'd all appreciate it and it would add to our family's history collection.

Our affiliation with Clan Urquhart has opened up an opportunity to delve more deeply into our Scottish past. Be sure to check out the article and flyer concerning the planned tour to Scotland. RSVP by Sept. 11, 2010.

Highlights from the 80th Reunion include: great attendance - 84, that's rewarding for our officers' hard work. Pictures in Snapfish show the dear old church was pretty full. Four old Bibles were on display - William's, two of his sons - Alexander and John's and a grandson's - George. More good news on the Bibles was received this week from Dr. Sam Cromartie III. He rediscovered a ledger that had passed down to him from his grandfather Dr. Robert Samuel Cromartie, Sr. His grandfather had recognized the fragile condition of the William, John and William James Bibles and had thoughtfully recorded the Family Records in the ledger, providing information that is now missing from William's Bible. We were honored to have our Clan Chief with us, Kenneth Urquhart and his wife Mary Virginia, and learn more about the Urquhart Clan and its activities. Bob Jenkins was our speaker and enchanted us with his stories about the early settlement and economic development of the Cape Fear Region.

"Cederville," (Alexander's home, the Ham House) was purchased by Don & Nyda Sutton of Clinton. They attended the Reunion and told us of their plans to restore it. That was exciting and welcome news. We visited there over the fourth of July and it's been moved, looks great and it's obvious someone loves it.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Reunion, Sunday, Oct. 10th 10:30 a.m. registration.

Tom Lennon

Reunion Plans 2010-Sun Oct 10th

The program for the 81th Reunion will be about the Revolutionary Battle at Moores Creek Bridge on the morning of Feb. 11, 1778. **Our speaker is Dr. Chris Fonvielle**, Associate Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. Chris is writing a book on this battle and we will gain insights about the opposing sides and the role the battle played in our struggle for independence. Chris is also asking for our help - see the "Help Wanted" article below.

This is a continuation of our program focus upon our ancestors and the things that shaped their lives and ours to this day.

Following the program, we will celebrate with a catered lunch on the grounds and catch up on family talk.

The Bladen County Historical Society has again been invited to have their books available at the Reunion for purchase.

The Reunion post card reminders will be sent out about three weeks prior to the Reunion date. We will ask for an RSVP so we can get a good estimate of our catered lunch needs. Please RSVP to our Hospitality Committee by Thursday, October 7th. RSVP by phone to Ann at 910-395-9326 - by email to Sara at dhoneycutt1@ec.rr.com Thanks Ann and Sara for setting this up.

Duncan Cromartie and Family, the Subject of our Cromartie Expedition



Cromartie Expedition 2010 - Duncan Cromartie

Our “Cromartie Expedition” this year explores the life and times of William of Orkney’s grandson, Duncan Cromartie. Previous newsletter articles have touched on aspects of Duncan’s life but he was chosen this year for a more detailed discussion because his life and those of his children reflect much about the times of North Carolina in the 19th and early 20th century and the nature of Cromartie family involvement in those times.

Duncan was born July 18, 1818 to Alexander and Elizabeth DeVane Cromartie in Bladen County, North Carolina. He was the ninth of ten children and the sixth son to reside in “Cederville,” the subject of our program and house tour at our 2008 Reunion. Duncan’s siblings were Elizabeth Ann, William, George, Alexander, John Alexander, James, Catherine Caroline, Mary Jane and Miriam Newell.

When he was just four years old, he experienced the terrible tragedy of having his mother and two of his younger sisters die within two weeks of each other in August 1822. There are two stories associated with this tragedy, one is that the two children were poisoned by a servant and the mother died of a broken heart, and the second is that all three died of one of the prevalent diseases of those times - typhoid fever. His mother was 40 years old and his sisters Catherine Caroline and Mary Jane, were eight and six years old when they died.

Nine months later, Duncan would have a new mom, twenty seven year old Elizabeth Kerr, and within two years, Daniel Washington and Patrick Lafayette, twin brothers, would join the household at Cederville.

Having toured “Cederville” and knowing it only had four rooms at this time, one wonders how all these children were accommodated. From our study of “Cederville” we know their home wasn’t expanded until around 1845, about the time Duncan left home to establish his own family.

Alexander, Duncan’s father, managed a substantial plantation along the South River, was a slaveholder and undoubtedly had interests in other enterprises as well. A grist mill on his land and a turpentine still at what is now the intersection of US 701 and SR 210 (Hickory Grove) would indicate such. Living in that type of situation molded Duncan into the lifestyle and entrepreneurship that he would display during his adult life. The US Census records tell the story of just how industrious he was.

From 1860 US Census records, Duncan, at 42 years of age, had accumulated considerable wealth and certainly was among the wealthy class of Bladen County, listing his personal estate at \$54,362 and his real estate at \$27,941.

That was an increase in real estate value of \$19,000 from the 1850 census. His 1860 personal estate included 59 slaves occupying 14 slave houses.

We have yet to determine all the activities he was involved in or the extent of his and his wife’s inherited wealth but undoubtedly the expanding markets for naval stores and cotton, coupled with the invention of an efficient cotton gin, and his management skills were factors in his prosperity.

On December 12, 1843, Duncan, 25, married Mary Ann McKay, 19, and set up their family just outside of Elizabethtown, North Carolina. According to Duncan’s daughter, Mrs. Emmie Cromartie Covington, her father built them a “new” home in 1848-49. In the old Scot tradition of naming such things, he named it “Brompton.” The story behind the name and the materials for this home is quite interesting and has been the subject of at least two newspaper articles noting its North Carolina historical significance.

According to these newspaper accounts, Gabriel Johnson, Royal Governor of North Carolina from 1729 to 1775, intended to build his palace just up river from Elizabethtown near the Cape Fear River. He built a couple of homes there as quarters while his palace was being constructed. Bricks were brought from England, a 90 foot deep well was dug and foundations laid for the grand palace. But it seems the Governor’s wife had other ideas. Spring flooding of the low lying lands produced hordes of mosquitoes and malaria and she convinced the governor that this was no place to build their palace - the plans were abandoned and the property sold. Years later, the land and remaining structures were purchased by Duncan. He built a mill pond and grist mill on the property but he, seeing the wisdom of the Governor’s wife, disassembled the remaining house and restored it back from the River, four miles above Elizabethtown on the Lumberton Highway. He gave it the name intended for the Governor’s palace “Brompton.” In an article by the Rev. Nash A. Odom dated Nov 18, 1971, Odom describes the home as “still standing in a decaying condition near Dublin, N.C.” However, that is no longer the case. Lynn King and his son Lynn Grey took a liking to the old place. With much labor and love, they moved it westward on the Elizabethtown Highway 87 Bypass and restored its former beauty. During their labors they noted the axe hewn timbers were marked with Roman numerals to aid Duncan’s workmen in reassembling the home the first time it was moved and recycled.

The Presbyterian Church was the traditional church of the Cromarties but during the first half of the 19th century Methodism was on the rise in this area of North Carolina because of visits by the famous Methodist preacher Francis

Duncan (Continued)

Asbury and other prominent itinerant preachers. This led to the founding of the Elizabethtown Methodist Church in 1834 and the purchase of a town lot for a church. A founding trustee of the church was Duncan's older brother George. The lot was purchased from Louis Sheridan, a free black, who had accumulated considerable property in Elizabethtown and who eventually went to Liberia to live out his life teaching and preaching. The initial structure on the lot was replaced around 1848 with the existing Trinity Methodist Church on East Broad Street. Duncan's slaves helped with its construction which would seem to have coincided with the re-building of his "Brompton" home. His daughter, Mrs. Emmie Cromartie Covington, would donate the beautiful curved pews for the church around 1916. Mrs. Covington would also become the first elected president of the Cromartie Reunion on August 29, 1929 and a leader in the project to place the William Cromartie Memorial marker at his home site on US 701.

The Cape Fear River and its tributaries played an important role in the settling and economic development of this region. Early on, the waterways were used to float rafts of logs and manpowered barges loaded with commodities to the markets in Wilmington that accessed the world. The coming of shallow draft steamboats in the mid 1800s saw a marked increase in the ease and volume of river traffic and business opportunities. Landings along the river became post offices and spawned small communities. Some plantations on the river would have their own landings and six miles above Elizabethtown was Cromarties Landing in the vicinity of Duncan's mill pond and grist mill. In 1852, Duncan joined with his brother, George and six other partners to form the Bladen Steamboat Company. Steamboats were fast and relatively comfortable but were notorious for catching on fire. In February 1886, the Company's boat, the Bladen, became the ignition source of the Great Fire of Wilmington that destroyed much of the town. The fire started in the Bladen's cotton cargo near the boiler, spread to the naval stores and fed by near gale force winds quickly set fire to nearby boats, wharves and structures along shore. Though the damage was great, no lives were lost aboard or on shore. Seven passengers on the Bladen were rescued by other boats coming to their aid. The extent of Duncan and George's involvement in the company at that time is not known.

The War of Northern Aggression was certainly the defining event in the lives of Duncan and his family. Like many Confederate families, Duncan saw his oldest son, Junius off to war. During actions around Fort Fisher, Junius was captured while performing courier duty and sent to the Union

POW camp at Fort Delaware on Pea Patch Island in the Delaware River. He died there on April 29, 1865, three days after Confederate *Gen.* Joseph Johnston surrendered to Gen. Sherman at the Bennett's farm house near Durham, effectively ending the War. He was buried in what is now the Finn's Point National Cemetery in New Jersey in a mass grave of 2,436 Confederate soldiers who died at this POW camp. A memorial marker was erected to him in his family's plot in the Trinity Methodist Church Cemetery and has been mistakenly identified as his final resting place by at least one newspaper article about his home, "Brompton." Volume 2 of the Bladen County Cemetery listings indicates Duncan served in the CSA Senior Reserves – units composed of older men between the ages of 45 and 60. However, we have not been able to find his official service records.

For the South, the conclusion of the War brought about the most horrendous reordering of the social, political and economic conditions ever experienced in this country. It is difficult to imagine what those times were like. One indication of conditions is found in the 1870 US Census where Duncan reported his real estate value as \$2,500 and his personal estate at \$1,000 compared to the 1860 report of \$27,941 and \$54,362 respectively. Reconstruction policies of the federal government disenfranchised all men who had supported the Confederacy, and scalawags and carpet baggers ruled. Knowing the States and Federal government were in the hands of the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln, it is instructive to observe that both Duncan and brother George reported identical values to their census takers – hmmm, that's an interesting coincidence.

Duncan would live out his life at "Brompton" and die Feb. 1, 1895 at the age of 76. Mary Ann McKay, his wife of 51 years would join him in death on Feb. 4, 1901 – they were both born on July 18th, lived 76 years and died in the first week of February. They were laid to rest at their beloved Trinity Methodist Church, leaving behind a legacy we are proud to celebrate.

Preserving and understanding Our History

One of the joys of being associated with the Cromartie Reunion is the discovery of how much is known and published about our family. When attending my first Reunion in 2004, Margaret Calhoun graciously gave me a copy of the "Green Book" that documented the work of Janet Black concerning our original immigrant ancestor, William Cromartie, whom we refer to as William of Orkney. I continue to be captivated by that history as I discover bits and pieces that fill out our knowledge of our family's past.

Our History (Continued)

Previous newsletters have featured available source materials such as family histories, Bible Family Records, photos, maps, newspaper clippings etc.

Another source we would like to highlight are the publications of the Bladen County Historical Society. For the past three years we have invited the Society to attend the Reunion and have their publications available for purchase. They will have their publications there again this year. Their publications list and publications are also available at The Bladen County Historical Society, P.O. Box 848, Elizabethtown, NC 28337. If you are in Elizabethtown, the publications may be purchased at Bladen Office Supply, 211 W. Broad Street, and at the Bladen County Public Library, 111 N. Cypress St.

If you have material you would like to contribute to our Cromartie files in the Wanda Campbell Room of the Bladen County Public Library, one of our history committee members would be pleased to help. (See Reunion Officers article for contact information). Thanks!

Welcome to new members We extend a warm welcome to those new members on our mailing lists. We look forward to seeing you at the Reunion and getting to know you. If you know of other Cromartie family members that would like to be involved, please let us know their email or snail mail address.

As with all membership lists, there is a continuing need to update addresses that don't work. A listing of our most recent rejects for both emails and snail mail will be sent out seeking your help. Thanks for any assistance you can give us.

Help Wanted. During our Reunion program we recognize Cromartie family members that have gone to their glory. Our family members are scattered across the U.S. and around the world so it is difficult for us to be knowledgeable about obituary notices. If you have such information please share it with Kelly. (See contact information in Officers article)

Help Wanted. Dr. Chris Fonvielle, our Reunion speaker, is researching a book on the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge, fought February 27, 1776. Because of our families association with this area he is seeking our

help. He reports "Information is scarce, as you can imagine. Comparatively few men fought in the battle (about 2,500 on both sides) and few letters and manuscripts have survived all these years ----perhaps some of your folks in that neck of the woods might have some material and stories they would be willing to share."

If you can help, please contact Chris at work - (910) 962-3449 or FONVIELLEC@uncw.edu. He would be delighted to hear from you.

Want to experience Scotland?

Chief Urquhart has extended a cordial invitation to our Cromartie family to join in the 2011 Clan Urquhart Gathering & Tour Honoring the 400th Anniversary of the Birth of the Great Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty (1611-1660). This is a wonderful opportunity to experience our Scottish heritage, learn about its history and step on Orkney Island, the land of our William's birth.

A separate flyer is attached to give you the details of the tour. **RSVP is requested by Sept. 11, 2010** to clanurquhart2@att.net or phone 504-835-1343

Our Snapfish Website

We now have 115 members signed on to The William Cromartie group room. New photos were recently added so check it out at <http://thewilliamcromartiefamily.snapfish.com/snapfish> room code: **1929reunion** Enjoy and share **your** photos-leave a message!

Cromartie Reunion Officers (2010)

President - Kelly Smith Ricketts
Vice President - Bob Cromartie
Recording Secretary - Taylor Cromartie
Corresponding Secretary-Tom Lennon
Treasurer - Len Clark

Standing Committees:

Catering - Ann Butler & Sarah Honeycutt
Genealogy - Amanda Cook

History - Jane Ross, Margaret Calhoun, Tom Lennon

If you have questions, comments or suggestions about Reunion activities contact Kelly at

kellysricketts@gmail.com or 919 801 4349

Please send email and postal address changes or additions to Tom at (703) 980-9296 or

tomdottye@covad.net Thanks.

Expedition Photo Album



“Little Brompton” the home of Lynn Grey and Shannon King. Beautifully restored by Lynn Grey and his father and moved to its present location of Highway 87 Bypass around Elizabethtown. It remains essentially the same design as when it was the home of Duncan Cromartie except for chimneys that were removed in the restoration. The wing to the left was the kitchen and servant quarters. It has a central hall with eight rooms, four up, four down and two deep.



The historic Trinity Methodist Church where Duncan, his slaves and his brother George labored to leave us a beautiful legacy. His family plot is to the left in this photograph and contains the memorial stone for his son Junius who died as a prisoner of war in Fort Delaware.



The beautiful curved pews in the old church were donated by Duncan’s daughter Emmie Cromartie Covington around 1916. She was a leader in the establishment of our Cromartie Reunion and the placement of the William Cromartie Memorial stone at his home site on US 701.



The William Cromartie Memorial reads “HOME SITE OF WILLIAM CROMARTIE 1731-1807, PIONEER FROM SCOTLAND, GRAVE HALF MILE EAST, ERECTED 1932” It is located on US 701, just north of its intersection with SR 210.



Cromartis, Junis P. Co. H, 36 NC Regt. Finn’s Point National Cemetery plaque marking the mass grave of 2,436 Confederate prisoners whose graves could not be individually identified.



“Cederville” moved, painted and full of workers. Looks great!

CLAN NEWS PAGE 6

Site of the Cromartie Reunions



80th Cromartie Family Reunion, October 11, 2009

The South River Presbyterian Church

Built in 1857

Located between Elizabethtown and Garland, North Carolina

*It is on the north side of State 210, approximately one and a half miles
southeast of the intersection of US 701 and State 210.*