

A HISTORY OF THE ADIRONDACK PIPES AND DRUMS

In Honor of its Sixtieth Anniversary in 2009

BY DAVID JONES

Editor's Note: In February 2022, David offered me a copy of his “little history,” from 2008, of the Adirondack Pipes and Drums bagpipe band to add to our files in the Folklife Center at Crandall Public Library, saying “I’d like someone to be keeping this, especially now that the band is gone.” He added, “The band disbanded (or rather disintegrated) after Dr. Kirkpatrick died around 2014. Many of the former members (myself included) are now in the offshoot band that formed in ’85, the Galloway P & D. So really, there has been a continuous band since ’49.”



Boom

By 1949, the Baby Boom had begun. There was a “boom,” when China and Russia had only recently acquired the “A-bomb.” There was to be a boom in the economy, as the United States quickly emerged from the Depression and war into being a great superpower. There was a much smaller boom in Fort Edward, New York, as the first bass drummer of the Adirondack Bagpipe Band began to practice.

Earl Stott and Larry Cashion were working at GE in Schenectady. They went to see a performance of the Cleveland Caledonian Pipe Band in 1949, and got excited about playing the pipes. They worked with Bill Monroe from Schenectady and convinced him to come to Fort Edward to teach them.

Earl Stott and his friends began to take lessons. According to Larry Cashion, one early recruitment effort involved telephoning 100 people from the phone book who had Scottish last names! So, the word got out, and Bill Kirkpatrick showed up with Robert and John. Jack Donahue showed up, as did Bruce and Bob Waite. Wes Cox and Brad Wright were drummers, along with Frank and Mal Vaughn. There were a few more, including Fred Harris and Wayne Harris. According to Jack Donahue, without Earl Stott, there would have been no band. Earl had the commitment and the “dream,” to use Jack’s words.

Jack Donahue, band member from 1949 through 1997, reported that it was Bill Kirkpatrick who donated the first set of pipes to the band, a set that may have been in his family. In fact, the band only had one set of pipes to start—the pipers would trade off each week for who got to practice on the pipes!

It is recorded that the founders of the band wanted to pay tribute to the highlanders that fought in the area during the French and Indian War. The band sought permission from the appropriate officials of the British military in Canada to wear the Royal Stuart tartan for pipers and the Black Watch tartan for drummers. A charter was obtained for the organization from a local judge. Instruction in piping and drumming was arranged through members of the Schenectady Pipe Band. Marching

practice took place in a member’s pasture, where an onlooker commented that the beginning marchers looked like laborers lumbering off to work.

Wives and mothers of some of the members sewed kilts and uniforms, while other members sent to Scotland for their uniforms. A story is recounted in Fred Harris’ *Highland Echoes* of how they did not have material to serve as straps for the kilts, and they improvised with roller skate straps. Jack Donahue reported that Bob LaCross’ grandmother was a well-known, expert seamstress and that they gave her a borrowed kilt from which to copy the pattern. Eight or nine band members wore these homemade kilts for several years.

After a season of practice and preparation, the band played its first gig in Hudson Falls, New York, in the spring of 1950, at the “Thistle Day” parade. Jack Donahue reported that this was one of his proudest moments.

The band grew through the 1950s. Practices moved out to a member’s pasture in warm weather and into the A&P supermarket basement in Fort Edward. One story comes down that, while practicing in a pasture one evening, one, then two, then a whole group of cows approached the wailing bagpipes. The pipers kept playing as the bovine investigators approached to eventually stop and nearly surround the group. Apparently, they were just curious. Jack Donahue reported that piper Bob



1950 Band. Drum Major: Robert Waite. Pipers, *first row, left to right*: Fred Hamilton, Earl Stott, Bruce Waite, Larry Cashion. Pipers, *second row, left to right*: Jack Donahue, Robert Kirkpatrick, John Kirkpatrick, Fred Harris. Pipers, *third row, left to right*: Bradley Wright, Robert LaCross. Drummers: William Jones, John Callahan. Drummers: William Kirkpatrick, Frank Vaughn, Wayne Harris. *All photos courtesy of the Adirondack Pipes & Drums Archives, The Folklife Center at Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, New York.*

Dixon from the Schenectady band, who played with the Seaforth Highlanders during the First World War, really “snapped the band into shape.” The core group from 1950 remained the principal players in the band for over a decade to come.

Banquet

On the evening of February 2, 1963, a member would have attended the annual band banquet. The band would have

bought you one drink during the cocktail hour from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and you would have enjoyed an invocation by Jim Palmer before dinner at 7:30 p.m. Jim was a local artist and band member for many years, serving as Band Manager in 1963. Jim did the artwork for the covers of the programs for the Adirondack Scottish Games for many years.

After a *piobaireachd* solo by Pipe Major Hugh McInnis, you would have enjoyed a

harmony pipe duet by Jerry Cashion and Tom Kirkpatrick. Perhaps, you would have won one of the door prizes. Mr. and Mrs. Edward Galloway and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Waite would have shown you some steps in Scottish country dancing. You and your colleagues at the table may have discussed last year’s successful band banquet. The annual evening’s program was once again decorated with caricatures of the band officers expertly drawn by Jim Palmer.

Through the 1960s, the band had grown in membership, in musical expertise, and income. Annual events at that time included the Schroon Lake July Fourth parade, and events in Ticonderoga and Lake George. In the mid-1960s, the band played from time to time at Fort William Henry in Lake George. The band settled on a “constitution” in 1965, stipulating, among other things, that members had to be male and that the band was to consist of components of a Scottish military bagpipe band. By its 1970 season, the band earned \$2,025, which, when adjusted for inflation, equates to around \$11,000, in 2008 dollars. Back in those days, the members divided the money between them at the end of a season.

“Come on Lads and Lassies, Help Us Celebrate our Ochter Mod”

Such ran a phrase on the program for the Adirondack Bagpipe Band 25th anniversary banquet in 1975. (They were counting from 1950.) Jim Palmer was master of ceremonies. After dinner, you would have heard a bagpipe trio of Jerry Cashion, Dr. Kirkpatrick, and his brother Thomas Kirkpatrick. A “Bandsmen of the Year” award was given, and Jerry Cashion

accompanied the Highland Dancers. Tom Harrington printed up a fine brochure. Pipe Major Jack Donahue would have entertained the audience with a piping solo before the dinner broke off into Scottish country dancing with Betty and Ed Galloway. Band banquets and celebrations go back to the early days of the organization. The band is a social organization that benefits from the positive society of its members.

During the 1970s, pipers Hugh McInnis, Hamilton Workman, and David Moir were principals in the group. *Adirondack Life* magazine featured the band in an article in 1973.

“Let the Games Begin!”

At the annual meeting in the autumn of 1971, you would have heard the treasurer’s report. You could have been impressed with the earnings, growth in membership, and activities. In 1969, the band teamed up with the Lake George Chamber of Commerce to host the “Lake George Scottish Games” at the Lake George Athletic Field. Visitors could get in for a buck and enjoy a Highland Dancing exhibition and Pipe Band competition. The program reads that it was to be the “first annual” such event and, indeed, the band and/or the Glens

Falls Institute of Gaelic Arts resumed similar events in the area from 1975 through 1991. Jim Palmer drew many of the program covers, and band families all pitched in to organize piping and drumming competitions, parking, dancing events, concessions, venue, insurance, etc. By 1979, 17 bands from the Northeast competed at the games. The band that year consisted of 22 active members, with 10 piping and drumming students in training, and advertised opening classes in the program to promote additional membership.

Putting games together is a monumental task. The band was joined by other organizations whose membership often overlapped: the Adirondack Highlanders, a dance group organized by Judy Cubbins in 1972 (which by 1980, with 25 members, was as large as the band); the Glens Falls Institute (or “Academy”) of Gaelic Arts; the Adirondack St. Andrews Society (formed in 1980); and Friends of the Adirondack Pipes and Drums. Games were held in several local venues, including the Washington County Fairgrounds, Queensbury High School Fields, and Crandall Park in Glens Falls.

At the 1980 games, 89 registered piping and drumming soloists competed;



2008 Band. *Back row, from left:* Stacia Burns, Nick Kirkpatrick, Peter Pofahl, David Jones, Jerry Cashion, Jeff Duxbury Jr., Larry Jeffords, Kilian Smith, Dick Merrill. *Front row, from left:* Jeff Duxbury Sr., Gary Conrick, Mitchell Smith, Mary Merrill, Andrew Harrington, Ethan Burns, Cameron Hood, Anna Burns, Sharon Conrick, Tom Harrington, Josh Harrington, Andrew Moore, Jim Hood, Nate Duxbury.



Performance during Brigadoon, 1951.

and bands competed in grades II, III, and IV. There were 110 dancing competitors registered! These annual events featured not only Scottish music and dance, but also Irish dancing and traditional music. In July 1981, the *Post-Star* reported, “Rain dampened the Gaelic festival several times Saturday, but it didn’t dampen the spirits of several thousand people at East Field.”

Dr. Kirkpatrick reported that the games made money only one year. The 1983 Games was competing ground for only 45 solo competitors in piping/drumming and 74 dancers. By 1987, the games themselves faced tough competition from other events, a sagging economy, and smaller numbers at the admissions gate. Only 36 dancers registered to compete that year, 35 solo pipers (a third of whom were in the band), and 13 drummers. The last Adirondack Highland Games was held in 1991. In a 1984 festival program, Dr. Kirkpatrick credited the Adirondack St. Andrews Society as having played a very key role in promoting the games. However, it is common knowledge that Dr. Kirkpatrick played a vital role himself. Dr. Kirkpatrick served as games chairman for many years and was

always instrumental in coordinating the events, including providing financial backing, when necessary, from his own pockets.

“No Kids, No Women, and No Doctors!”

Even after 20 years and even after most of the people involved in the event are no longer participants in either band, there is still a discomfort addressing the division in the band in the mid-1980s. Nearly identical versions of the story come to this writer from four sources: Dr. Kirkpatrick, Tom Harrington, Rich Leibold, and Jerry Cashion.

Tensions grew among musicians in the band, arising from a variety of conflicts of interest, especially the goals and focus of the group. Pipe band competition is a highly developed and important part of highland bagpiping, while parades provide income, advertise the band more publicly to promote additional jobs and recruitment, and include every musician in the band possessing basic proficiency. Presented as incompatible goals, there was a series of disputes and a number of the band members resigned. At one point, one

of the men who were leaving the band announced his resignation and the creation of a new band. He growled that the new band would have “no kids, no women, and no doctors!”

In 1985, the split-off group gathered together some former members of the band and created another band, named the Galloway Gaelic Pipes and Drums, in honor of the late Ed Galloway, who passed away in 1984. They received a grant of \$5,000 as start-up money from the Sandy Hill Corporation. The Galloway band still performs in the area and has improved greatly since their start. Over the past decade, the Adirondack Pipes and Drums band has been unsuccessful in arranging collaboration with the Galloway band, though relations between the two remains cordial.

1990s

The band was very active, perhaps at its most active, in the 1990s. In 1996, the band appeared at 18 performances (not including competitions). The competition band was performing in grade IV. The band was featured periodically in local newspapers and maintained a strong public presence.

Minutes from meetings in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s indicate “spirited discussion” over a number of issues. The introduction of black jackets into the uniform seems to have been a bone of contention. It is during this period that the military uniform gave way to a simpler, civilian style of dress. (The last time military uniforms were worn seems to have been the 1989 Joy Store Holiday Parade in South Glens Falls, though a note in Fred Harris’ scrapbook indicates it had been a long time since they were worn.) Another source of discussion seems to have been, once again, the degree of focus on competition. In an entry in the minutes in 1996, a motion to establish the band as a purely competition band was tabled and appears to have not been revisited. In 1997, a separate competition band entity functioned in the band, and there was discussion of a name for this group. According to band minutes, they settled on the name, “North County

Highlanders,” although it is unknown whether they competed under that name.

The Pros

An interview with the writer Sharon Conrick brought two important points to light about this band. First, it has a very long tradition as being a strongly family-oriented band. Whole families followed into the group: the Kirkpatricks, the Halls, the Durlers, the Conricks, the Thorpes, the Schiavonis, the Merrills, and Harringtons, to name a few.

A second point Sharon brings to mind is that the band was the training ground for some truly excellent pipers and drummers. Brian Green (1980s–1990s) is a grade I piper serving as Pipe Major of the award-winning Manchester Pipe Band in Connecticut. Erin McCarthy (1990s) and Keegan Sheehan (early 2000s) are now professional grade pipers. Peter Hall (1980s) is a master piper playing with the City of

Washington pipe band. Andrew Moore (2000s) is currently a grade II drummer who has played with the Mohawk Valley’s Frasers and the Toronto Police Pipe Band. This strongly family-oriented organization has been responsible for the start of some truly excellent musicians’ careers. There is no doubt that more names have escaped this writer’s research, and apologies are offered for any left out.

21st Century

The first decade of the 21st century found the band experiencing one of its periodic contractions, as one group of students reached college age and inevitably moved away, while a younger group getting training was just coming up.

The band moved its practice to the Park Street Theater from the Nelson Street Grange around 2004. The Park Street Theater was destined for demolition in 1984, when Dr. Kirkpatrick purchased it to save


it from the wrecking ball and restore it as a performing arts center. The theater’s grand opening was held in April 2006, and it has been host to many events. Dr. Kirkpatrick donates use of the Park Theater to the band.

The band became a New York State not-for-profit corporation, organized under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c)(3), in 2007. The pros and cons of incorporating were discussed for some time before going through the process. Among the advantages of incorporation are access to grant funding for nonprofits, reduced non-profit rates on postage and other services, exemption from paying tax, and legal and financial protections.

The band organized Celtic Arts Recitals in 2007–2008, with plans through 2009. These recitals continue the tradition set in the games of decades past, when we partnered with other Celtic folk music and dance artists, though on a smaller scale.



Postcard, Mt. Hope, 1957.



ADIRONDACK PIPE BAND *Annual Banquet*

January 20, 1962
6:30 P. M.

HOWARD JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT
South Glens Falls

6:30 - 7:30 COCKTAIL HOUR
(The Band will buy everyone
two drinks at this time)

INVOCATION - Jim Palmer

7:30 - 8:30 DINNER -
Tenderized Scottish Steer - Chopped Heather -
Highland Potatoes - Bannockburn Broccoli

8:30 - 9:00 - Robert Waite - Master of Ceremonies
Introduction of Guests and New Members
(During this time the band will buy one
drink for everyone)

9:00 - 9:15 - Wm. Kirkpatrick -
"Purpose of the Band"


9:15 - 9:30 - John Kirkpatrick -
"Plans for the Coming Year"

9:30 - 9:45 - PIPE SELECTIONS -
Hugh McInnes and others

9:45 - 10:00 - DOOR PRIZES -
Robert Davis

10:00 - Dancing and Massed Pipes and Drums

*Pipers are requested to tune pipes
before dinner only.



ADIRONDACK PIPE BAND *Annual Banquet*

FEB. 2, 1963

Menu - - -
Choice of Steak, Ham or Beef,
Juice Cocktail, Individual Tossed
Salad, Assorted Relishes, Potatoes,
2 Hot Vegetables, Butter Rolls,
Coffee, Tea, Dessert

6:30 - 7:30 - COCKTAIL HOUR
(One drink courtesy of the Band)

SET BY
G. WEST COX

INVOCATION - Jim E. Palmer

7:30 - 8:30 - DINNER

8:30 - 9:15 - Drum Major Bob Waite - Master of Ceremonies
Introduction of Guests and new members
(During this time the band will buy a drink)

POEM - "Credit where Credit is due"

- Band Mgr. - Jim Palmer - "Elans for 1963 Season"

- M. C. Bob Waite - Presentation of Gifts and
Enthusiasm Speel

- Pipe Major Hugh McInnes - Picobaireachd Solo

- Door Prizes - Pipe Sargent John Kirkpatrick


- Harmony Pipe Duet - Jerry Cashion, Tom Kirkpatrick

- Dancing - Scottish & American -
Mr. and Mrs. Galloway, and Mr. and Mrs. R. Waite

*Please pay all additional banquet money to Ed Galloway

*Pipers are requested to tune pipes before dinner



3



THIRD ANNUAL ADIRONDACK SCOTTISH GAMES

Washington County Fairgrounds
JULY 19, 1980
GREENWICH, N. Y.

EUSPBA SANCTIONED GAMES


1st ANNUAL LAKE GEORGE SCOTTISH GAMES

SATURDAY, AUG. 16, 1969

LAKE GEORGE ATHLETIC FIELD Games to Start
Promptly at 11:30 A.M.

FIELD EVENTS	THROWING THE HAMMER	TOSsing THE CABER
Highland Dancing Exhibition	Pipe Band Competition	
Highland Fling Sailors Hornpipe	Strathspey and Reel O'Tullach	Sword Dance Seann Tribhas
SLOW MARCH	INDIVIDUAL DRUMMING	
DRUM MAJOR CONTEST		
OPEN SOLO PIPING COMPETITION March, Strathspey, Reel (Combined)		
Adm. \$1.00 — Child \$.50		
Sponsored By LAKE GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE and ADIRONDACK BAGPIPE BAND		

Annual banquet programs and games posters.

ANNUAL BANQUET

The Adirondack Pipe Band would like to honor and thank two good drummers and two great guys, Joe Aiken & Bill Kirkpatrick

Cocktail hour - 6:30 - 7:30
(Two tickets for drinks furnished by the band)

MENU - - Roast Beef, Juice Cocktail, Individual Tossed Salad, Assorted Relishes, Potatoes, 2 Hot Vegetables, Butter Rolls - Coffee, Tea, Dessert

INVOCATION - Jim E. Palmer
7:30 - 8:30 - DINNER
8:30 - 9:15 - Drum Major Robert Waite - Master of Ceremonies
Introduction of Guests, Officers and New Members

9:15 - INTRODUCTION of V.S.P.'s
Manager - Bob Davis
Pipe Major - John Kirkpatrick
9:30 - DOOR PRIZES - Jim Palmer
9:35 - HUGH MCINNES - Pipe Solo
9:40 - DANCING - Scottish & American -
Ed Galloway in Charge

Originally, recitals were seen as fulfilling a need to give students a reason to practice in winter when there were no parades or games for which to prepare. The recitals take the form of a variety show, in which piping, dancing, and other instruments are featured. The band holds some of these events at the Park Theater. Our partner in these ventures has been the Wild Irish Acres Dancers.

The band continues the tradition of Burns Night celebrations that date back to 1979, though they now take the form of more music and dance recitals than the full suppers of the past. As in the decades past, families form an important part of the organization. They donate their time and services, and the group is very grateful: accounting, printing, graphic design, and marketing—the list goes on. That year, the band started holding summer practice in City Park, in front of the construction site that is now Crandall Public Library.

The band continues the tradition of competition, though in 2008, the group did

if only to offer the opportunity to those musicians in the group who are interested and proficient. The band could lose out on some great musicians if it does not compete, and competition can bring out the best in a musician. On the other hand, there is insufficient population in the area to field a competition-only band. Furthermore, parades and other public performances bring in revenue, wider public exposure, and potential new recruits. In addition, in a band of mixed musical proficiency, public performances are open to the participation of just about everyone in the band, whereas competition would be limited to those few who reached certain levels of skill. In the procedures currently agreed upon, a separate competition band exists within the band. There is a process to approve participants based on musical skill level. Extra practices are required, and it was decided not to use substitutes, so if the whole “team” could not make a scheduled game, the whole band did not go. Our regular Tuesday night practice is dedicated

not have enough musicians to qualify to field a band. The reader will notice a history of conflict between competition and the “street band.” It was recognized that this conflict was a threat to the stability of the group, so in the new bylaws in 2007, the band took steps to balance the focus of the group once and for all. Competition is important, and it is part of highland piping. To be a successful band, we need to field a competition band

to parade and performance tunes, and the competition set is addressed only on a limited basis at those rehearsals.

Another significant change in the bylaws of 2007 pertained to membership. Membership had always been based on participation and musical proficiency. Traditionally, members were either “active” (meaning they met the attendance test of 50 percent of performances) or “honorary.” Honorary members could not vote or hold office. New members were elected only by unanimous consent. The group experimented with taking attendance at practices and counting this toward membership, but that proved too complex a task. There arose a controversy with the nomination of a musician who did not achieve unanimous consent for membership. The bylaws of 2007 established the classification “members” and “associates.” Associates are students presumed to seek membership or are people who just help out the band. The “honorary” classification was dropped, and membership is maintained through participation in 50 percent of the events. Election of members is now by majority consent (instead of unanimity), while nominations can only come from the pipe major or drum sergeant.

In 2008–2009, the band has several projects. The band is working to increase the number of pipers by offering beginner lessons in a group format, as it has done frequently in the past. It has a marketing plan in place, thanks to Mr. Troy Burns and his expertise, and will have at its disposal a set of ready-made marketing materials, such as posters and brochures. Contact has been made with organizations like the village of Lake George and Fort William Henry, with a view to arranging concert-style performances by the band.

Drum sergeant Tom Harrington and pipe major David Jones collaborated to produce a list of band sets for the group to work on through the winter months. The tune list is long enough to fill a one-hour program, and Tom is teaching the group some new “tricks” to enhance our stage presence. An effort is also underway



The Adirondack Pipes and Drums, December 1989. *Front row, left to right:* Chris Bowen, Donna Schiavoni, Beth Merrill, Sharon Conrick, Joshua Gonyeau, Matt Conrick, Matt Hall. *Back row, left to right:* Fred Harris, Gary Conrick, Dick Merrill, Ben Conrick, Bob Schiavoni, Harold Kirkpatrick, Andrew Kirkpatrick, Peter Hall, Brian Green.

to write grants to fund things like recitals, instructors, and uniforms.

For over 30 years, more than half of the band has been composed of adolescents. A consequence of this is that the organization experiences periodic contractions and relies on instruction to continually feed new musicians into the process. Many of the adult musicians who have formed the core of the group for the past 20 years are reaching retirement age. To maintain the organization, it seems that well-organized instruction, combined with extensive advertising and outreach, will be more important than ever. In 2008, 57 percent of the principle pipe section is under 19 and another 28 percent are over 65.

David Jones and Jerry Cashion have worked to give piping instruction through 2007 and 2008. Tom Harrington has carried the drumming instruction. In addition, the band offers scholarships to young pipers and drummers to attend events like the Invermark Piping & Drumming Summer School.

The strength and longevity of an organization depends on the contributions and creative energies of its members. The group has been fortunate over the decades to have had the commitment of some very dedicated individuals. There is not space for all here, and no disrespect is intended to anyone left out. ▼



David Jones was a bagpiper with the *Adirondack Pipes and Drums of Glens Falls* from 2000 to 2009. He is currently a bagpiper with the Galloway Gaelic Pipes and Drums of Glens Falls, and also, plays fiddle and concertina in the band, *Hudson River Ceili*. Photo courtesy of the Adirondack Pipes & Drums Archives, The Folklife Center at Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, New York.