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## DIXIE GOES AHEAD

### Remembering Flora MacDonald

BY FREDERICK J. HASKIN



IF YOU say Flora MacDonald to a Highland Scotchman, wherever you find him, he will offer you a smoke and may even try to lend you money. For Flora MacDonald is to the Highland Scotch what Joan of Arc is to the French—a name that summons stirring memories, a personality that embodies the deathless ideals of a race. And a vastly more human and sympathetic figure than the inspired French heroine is the Highland Flora, who loved as well as fought and used her charm to win her way.

But if you press your Scotch friend for information about this immortal woman, you will probably not get much. He knows that she was one of the Scotch Jacobite sympathizers who tried to put Bonnie Prince Charlie back on the English throne, and failed; that she came to America and espoused the cause of King George, and lost again; and finally went back to Scotland to die. She was a champion of lost causes, a born leader and a romantic personality—that is evident—but just exactly what she did, especially in America, has never been a matter of detailed record.

Now there is a movement going forward here in the North Carolina hills, where Flora MacDonald lived and led her clansmen, to found a college in her memory, to piece out from countryside legend and local literature the whole of her story, and to make of this institution a center of Scottish culture in America, an archives of Scottish tradition, and incidentally a first class woman's college.

The nucleus of the institution already exists at Red Springs, a few miles from here. It is called the Presbyterian Woman's College, and is an up-to-date school with a fine location and a beautiful campus. Rev. C. G. Vardell, president of this institution, is the sponsor of the movement to make this the Flora MacDonald College, endowed by the Scotch in America and devoted to the preservation of their ideals and traditions. Already large sums have been subscribed, and Scotch societies all over the Country have endorsed the plan. Single contributions of \$10,000 have been promised. The Flora MacDonald College seems assured of a substantial endowment and a brilliant future.

Meantime Dr. Vardell has been devoting himself to the study of Flora MacDonald's career, especially in America, and from the lips of her descendants he has learned many interesting details of her life. He has located the site of her home, the graves of her children.

Perhaps the least known and most surprising historical fact brought out by his investigation is that the throne of America was offered by the Carolina Scotch men to the deposed Prince Charlie. If the prince had not been

a mental and physical wreck, what is now the United States might have been a kingdom ruled by an English-Stuart.

The whole story of Flora MacDonald outdoes the invention of Dumas in the quality of sheer romance. She was born on the Island of South Uist in the Hebrides, her mother was abducted by a man of a hostile clan and she was brought up by the chief as his own. When she was a young girl in 1746, the battle of Culloden was fought in which the Scotch received their most crushing defeat. Prince Charles Edward Stuart, King of Scotland by divine right and a fugitive with a price on his head by circumstance, sought refuge in Benbecula, where Flora lived. The island was held by the government but it was a hotbed of Jacobite sympathizers. All of them wanted to help the prince escape, but none of them dared—except the resolute and beautiful Flora. She obtained a passport for herself, a boat crew of six men, and Betty Burke, an Irish spinning maid. Prince Charlie donned the petticoats and hood of the Irish girl and was passed by the authorities. The party effected a landing on the continent and Prince Charlie escaped to Rome, where he ended his days in exile.

Flora was about to return to Benbecula when she was arrasted by royal command. One of her boatmen had revealed the method of the prince's escape to the authorities, and Flora was imprisoned in that dungeon where so many famous lives have ended—the Tower of London. There she was the object of all sorts of plots and attentions by Jacobite sympathizers. Among other things she was presented with a set of silver dishes (which must have been a great comfort to her in her prison)—and these are still in the possession of her descendants here in Moore County.

Had she been of a less magnetic and winning personality she might well have been forgotten and left to die; but she quickly won the favor of her goalers, and ultimately the ear of the King. He was so pleased with her address and appearance that he set her free and she appears to have become something of a favorite at court. Dr. Samuel Johnson reports having seen and been charmed by her. It is also said that she told the Duke of Cumberland, son of George III, that she had befriended Prince Charlie solely because he was hunted and unfortunate and would have done as much for the duke under the same circumstances. Evidently Flora was canny as well as brave.

Meantime she had married Hugh MacDonald of Armadale, and in 1773 they joined a large party of Scotchmen who came to America on the ship Baliol. Flora quickly became a leader. Her husband was a man of some means, and in North Carolina he obtained a tract of 550 acres where this village now stands, and built thereon what was probably one of the finest homes in North Carolina. The

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