

THE SCOTS,  
ULSTER SCOTS  
and IRISH



DAVID CLAIRE JENNINGS

# The Scots, Ulster Scots and Irish

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*For all those who came before  
and made me who I am*

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## Introduction

As a preface to this let me say that the Scots, the Ulster Scots (Scots-Irish) and the Irish came to America separately and at different times in American history. All of them were definitively Celtic-Gaelic and vaguely related by genealogy in the complex mix of tribes and clans and movement of peoples in the British Isles. So they are different peoples, yet homogeneous as well. Once here and settled, they became significant in all places and statuses in American culture and society.

Indentured servants came very early to North America, to the Caribbean and British mercantile colonies. Poor English and Irish young adults were released into bondage from prisons and impoverished families. Who knows how many were Scots-Irish?

The Irish came again much later after their potato famine and just at the time of our Civil War. This was a well-defined larger group that arrived in Boston and New York in the 19th century. Many, without any financial means, were immediately conscripted to fight for the Union North against their southern brethren.

In sharp contrast, many notable Scots, like Andrew Carnegie, emigrated to America to make their fortunes throughout our history. Their courage was demonstrated in their enterprising and inventive spirit. The Scottish Enlightenment informed our Founding Fathers in subjects of philosophy, governance and economics.

But the Scots-Irish were a unique group that deserve further historical explanation. It begins with the long history of Scotland fighting for its freedom and independence. Perhaps it begins with the attempt by Rome to conquer them. Hadrian was stymied by the people to his north and had to build a wall to protect his Roman legions. He ceased his military efforts against the Scoti

people after that. Soon Rome left Britannia as its empire began to crumble.

The Scots had fought for their freedom and independence for centuries; beginning in AD 84 when the united tribes fought the Roman army in the battle of Mons Graupius and ending in 1882 at the Battle of the Braes against Britain.

They had fought off Scandinavian and Germanic invasions on their east coast and isles in the northwest. Much of this strife resulted in a merger of national, tribal and ethnic blood as a result of marriages of convenience. The Scottish blood became a composite diluted from these many sub-classes over the centuries.

But their longest standing enemy was England. Significant battles took place at Stirling Bridge in 1297, at Falkirk in 1298, at Bannockburn in 1314 and at Culloden in 1746 (which ended the Jacobite rebellion).

The Scottish clans slaughtered each other at Glencoe in 1692 when the Campbells, allied with the British government, massacred an entire village of MacDonalds who were rebellious to England.

England's Kings Edward I and II fought to advance the Norman conquest of Wales, Ireland and Scotland. William Wallace and finally Robert the Bruce fought back to unite an independent Scotland. As the Scots emerged from the Dark and Middle Ages, they fought continuous wars for independence from the English to their south.

King James I of England published his version of the Christian bible in 1611. At that same time he simultaneously asserted his power against Ireland to his west and Scotland to his north. There is more about this in The Wars and Migrations section of this book.



## Notes

1. James Webb, *Born Fighting - How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*, (Broadway books, New York, year unknown), 327 (e-book)

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- David Jennings