

**The Development of Competitive Piping
in Southern Ontario**

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I, Fraser Clark, hereby declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and is therefore my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree of professional qualification.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the historical development of the Great Highland Bagpipe in southern Ontario prior to 1987. In 1987, the 78th Fraser Highlanders of Toronto won the World Pipe Band Championships; they were the first band from Canada - and indeed, from beyond Scotland - to achieve such distinction in global competition. However, the story of the bagpipe in Canada, and Ontario in particular, is dramatic; it runs deep in the lore of Canadian history. Who were these pipers? Where did they come from? What were the historical circumstances that gave rise to such fruitful competitive piping conditions in the latter 20th century? This thesis attempts to shed light on these issues as well as to examine within a wider framework the cultural transmission of emigrant traditions in Canada. The development of piping traditions in Ontario, though similar to the Scottish experience, differs because it took place in a different geographical, social and cultural context.

Several themes emerge in this history: Scottish emigration to Ontario plays a significant (and obvious) role in the artistic development of piping. Large scale Scottish immigration served to construct conditions whereby Celtic symbols (kilts and bagpipes) would be embraced not only by the transplanted Scots themselves but also by the largely British resident culture. These residents would encourage and support the promotion and development of piping.

Other historical avenues explored in the study are the roles the British and Canadian armies played in the evolution of the pipe band; the increasing participation of the most respected solo pipers in post-World War Two highland games (in Ontario and Scotland) and how their performance practices set ever-increasing performance standards for Ontario pipers; and finally, the story of the Scottish World Festival 1972-1981 and its impact on the Ontario band scene.

This thesis is approached from various interpretive perspectives. Its data gathering methodology comprises a compilation of archival, oral, published and unpublished material in order to provide the broadest and most balanced account of the story of southern Ontario piping traditions. This study also takes a biographical approach. Individual personalities and their lives are explored in detail throughout the text without whom it would have been impossible to write such a treatise on the piping traditions of central Canada.

This thesis complements other works in the field of bagpipe literature, particularly that of John Gibson and his 1998 study of Cape Breton piping traditions. In Cape Breton, ear learned non-competitive ceildh performance thrived, arguably, as late as the 1950s. In Ontario, the situation was (and continues to be) a mimicking of the Scottish standard. To this day, Ontario competitive piping mirrors the Scottish art form and thus the pattern of the Ontario experience differs from the Cape Breton tradition.

Although this study represents the first attempt to research southern Ontario piping traditions, there is much additional work to be done to provide us with the fullest and most accurate account of our predecessors, not only around the Great Lakes region, but in central, eastern and northern Ontario. These stories remain to be told.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis began as a result of my personal interest in the history of the bagpipes in Canada. As a boy piper who learned to play amongst the “great guns” of the Canadian military pipe band scene, the 48th Highlanders of Canada, I was surrounded by pipers and drummers who took not only their musicianship seriously but also the history of their regiment. From this well-spring of musical and historical knowledge, poured the history of regimental piping in the Toronto area from those members whose memories spanned several generations, some even preceding the Second World War.

Along the way, the pipes provided an income for me that supported three university degrees, and now a career in the Canadian Forces. The pipes continue to carry me across the globe. In the past, this involved Services of Remembrance at dozens of Canadian Military Cemeteries, usually with veterans from the Second World War and on rare occasions, veterans from the Great War. In the present, I witness and marvel at the work carried out by Canadian Forces personnel across Canada and overseas with respect to our international commitments to NATO and the United Nations. For these experiences, which contributed to my interest in the research and writing of this thesis, I am beyond grateful to a host of people. They have, in no small measure, influenced this work and are listed here in random order:

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To my adopted Scottish family, the *Broons* (Rick and Angela Brown) who were responsible for those numerous rowdy weekends in the West Highlands – may our good times continue long into the future, both in Scotland and Canada, proving once again, the Auld Alliance between our two people shall never fade as long as we’re able to sip a dram!

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Lastly (and with fond memories of my grandfather, Private Jack Kirk of the 75th Battalion Canadian Infantry) to all of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and women, who went before and to whose memory I perform *The Flowers of the Forest* every November 11th

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Great Highland Bagpipe in Ontario entered a golden age. Indeed, the music of the Scottish Highlands has been part of the cultural fabric of Ontario since the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists from the Thirteen Colonies in the late eighteenth century. The bagpipes in the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War, are perhaps more popular than ever, thrusting pipers onto the global competitive stage. Since the late 1960s, the standard of musicianship with which Ontarians perform not only rivals international counterparts from such diverse colonial diaspora nations as Australia and New Zealand, but also vies with that of the traditional patrons of the instrument, the Scots. Why has this phenomenon occurred in the southern Ontario region in and around the city of Toronto? After all, many former British colonies, even other Canadian provinces, were populated by large bodies of transplanted Scots who emigrated with their distinctive cultural practices. Why are Ontarians considered by many global piping peers to be leading experts in the field of bagpipe performance? Why was William Gilmour from Toronto the first Canadian to win, in 1953, the Braemar Gold Medal for pipers under the age of 18? Why was Pipe Major William Livingstone the first Canadian to win the coveted Gold Medal at Inverness in 1977? And, why did the 78th Fraser Highlanders, a group from Toronto, capture the World Pipe Band Championship at Bellahouston Park, Glasgow, in 1987 - the first band

from outside Scotland awarded the distinguished honor? What were the historical circumstances that gave rise to increasing standards of musicianship in Ontario piping? This study endeavours to explore these questions. Although Scottish immigration was a catalyst aiding the phenomenon, numerous other historical themes demonstrate how this group of provincial musicians have achieved victory over the Scots, on numerous occasions, in bagpipe competition in the later twentieth century. Some of these themes include: the supporting role of the Canadian Army to the art of piping in the 20th century; the emigration of Pipe Major John Wilson; the rise of competitive civilian pipe bands during the 1950s and 1960s; the staging of the Canadian National Exhibition's Scottish World Festival in Toronto between 1972 and 1981; and the efforts of Ontario pipers participating in Scottish Highland games between 1965 and 1987. Each theme will explore the nature of piping in its chronological context and chart the evolution of the art prior to the First World War to 1987 when the 78th Fraser Highlanders captured its first World Pipe Band Championship.

1.1 - Definitions/Glossary of Terminology

In order not to confound various meanings throughout the text, a clarification of terminology is required. I have noticed through various interviews that many Ontario pipers unconsciously referred to themselves as distinctly *Canadian* pipers. The Ontarians, it may be argued, have bestowed upon themselves a tier of national exclusivity. When one considers that piping communities have existed in Nova Scotia as early as the eighteenth century - pre-dating those in Ontario - this reference

is simply not an accurate representation of the national phenomenon, yet it speaks volumes of the Ontarians and their nationalism. Looking back from the early 21st century, we can see that Ontario pipers maintained a confident and nationalistic sense of self during their competitive forays to Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s. They labelled themselves nationally because they were the sole representatives from Canada. Over time the nomenclature became entrenched in the vernacular of Ontario pipers. In order to reflect the Ontario pipers' sense of identity and to maintain consistency for the sake of the reader, I have not changed the interviewees' word choice.

When employing the term 'Piping', I refer to the music played on the Great Highland Bagpipe which pipers and pipe bands perform in a competitive setting: marches, strathspeys, reels, hornpipes, jigs, polkas, slow airs and piobaireachd (the classical music of the bagpipes) in addition to the newer contemporary non-traditional suites and other unconventional pieces. *Piping* will also subsume the manifestation of the pipe band (inclusive of the percussive element) where the music is performed by a group of pipers and drummers at numerous venues such as Highland games or on a concert platform. Thus, Piping, as referred to throughout the text, will represent solo and group performance, encompassing the various elements of traditional and non-traditional bagpipe music, on and off the competition platform.

"Traditional" versus "non-traditional": these terms take on alternative meanings for various individuals in the Celtic music community, particularly when referring to piping from our 21st century perspective. For writer and scholar John

Gibson, traditional piping refers to the class of music that was ear-learned (oral transmission), non-competitive and functional.¹ In other words, this is the music he suspects pre-dated the high era of competitive pipe performance - beginning with the Pipe Majors Willie Ross, G.S. MacLennan, Robert Reid, J.B. Robertson, John Wilson et. al. – and was embedded in the west-Highland communities of Scotland rather than on the competition platform of a Scottish highland games. Non-traditional literate piping (or “modern piping” as Gibson labels it) evolved with the onset and proliferation of these games. My use of the ‘non-traditional’ label differs from Gibson. I refer to non-traditional music as that found on the concert platform as developed by the 78th Fraser Highlanders and utilized by other such notable competitive pipe bands as Simon Fraser University and the Field Marshall Montgomery band. Appropriately, I have applied the term *traditional* to the music pipers perform at a highland games venue.

In the early to mid-twentieth century, piping found a supportive environment in Canada’s Army Reserve, officially codified in government documents as the Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada. Consequently, army pipers and army pipe bands figure prominently throughout the text. When I refer to Canadian army regiments (‘Units’ in army vernacular), I refer to the regiments established on the Order of Battle in the Canadian Army. Regimental pipe bands such as the Irish Regiment of Canada, the Toronto Scottish Regiment, and the Canadian Scottish Regiment were units in the Non-Permanent Active Militia (“militia” in early 21st century parlance). Pipe bands in the Canadian Regular Army did not officially exist

¹ John Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Piping 1745-1945*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998.

before the establishment of the 27th Infantry Brigade (the Canadian Highland Battalion Pipes and Drums) in 1951. Before this date, one regular army unit encouraged the formation of an unofficial pipe band - the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) (see Figure 4 at Appendix Six pg. 350). Prior to 1914, the PPCLI Band was the City of Edmonton Pipe Band who, on the declaration of war, enlisted en masse in this new regular army unit.² Accordingly, it was not an operational requirement to detach the band from the battalion training syndicate for musical instruction. Thus, the PPCLI were the recipients of an instant regimental pipe band, which had several years of performance experience prior to their formation. When the PPCLI were retained on the regular army rolls after 1918, the diminution of the pipes and drums was hastened no doubt by the demobilization of the Canadian Corps. However, a small cadre of the pipes and drums were re-raised in Esquimalt, British Columbia - B Company's base during the 1930s (it is assumed the band ceased to exist after the post World War II period; no evidence of their

² The Pipe Major of the PPCLI was an Inverness Gold Medalist and former piper to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, William Campbell. Campbell was born in Glen Urquhart, Scotland, in 1872, and was a pupil of Pipe Major Ronald Mackenzie, 78th Highlanders (see below). He was appointed 2nd Sovereign's piper in 1891 (his uncle, James C. Campbell, was First Piper) serving the Queen until her death in 1901. In 1897, Campbell entered the piping competitions at the Northern Meeting, Inverness and was awarded the Gold Medal with the piobaireachd "The Blue Ribbon." In 1913, Campbell emigrated to Canada and settled in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. In 1914, he enlisted with the Canadian Corps and was assigned to the 13th Battalion C.E.F. (The 5th Royal Highlanders of Montreal) later transferring to the PPCLI. He fought with this unit in France and Flanders. According to the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, Campbell "was always in top playing form and was a most formidable contender in open competition. Whenever and wherever he was 'on the boards' the entire colony of piping enthusiasts was certain to be close at hand, for he excelled in every facet of competitive playing. In 1928 at the International Highland Gathering in Banff, Alberta, where the cream of Canadian pipers were in attendance, he was declared Canadian champion piper. As a momento [sic] of that honor, he was presented with an oil painting of himself by the Canadian National Railway, sponsor of those meets in the famous mountain resort." Before Campbell passed away, he was appointed honorary president of the British Columbia Pipers' Association. The *Piper and Dance Bulletin* recorded that "this was the greatest acknowledgement of respect and admiration which the Association could bestow upon a man who all his life was not only a most distinguished exponent of the piping art, but was also one who contributed in every way to the fostering of the instrument we hold so dearly." Campbell died in Maple Ridge, British Columbia in 1960. *Piper and*

activity is recorded).³ Nonetheless, a precedent had been established in the formation of a regular army pipe band that would serve to further pipe music in The Regiment of Canadian Guards (2nd and 4th Battalions) and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment of Canada) during the Cold War period. The Non-Permanent Active Militia regiments in Ontario (not unlike the rest of Canada) embraced their pipe bands regardless, and must assume their rightful place in piping lore for having catalyzed the pre-eminent standards which Ontario pipers enjoy today.

For a broader discussion of the historical development of the Canadian army, see Chapter 2 *Historical Background - A Brief History of the Canadian Army*.

1.2 - Geography

The Province of Ontario, a large landmass of approximately 1.1 million square kilometres,⁴ is located between the provinces of Quebec and Manitoba (See Figure 12 at Appendix Six pg. 357). Ontario piping has thrived in the central and southern regions of the province, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe sector on the southwestern shore of Lake Ontario. Some of the liveliest communities are found in the urban settings from which Toronto and Hamilton have benefited immensely compared to their rural neighbours. This is not to say that areas such as Windsor/Detroit, Cambridge/Galt, Timmins/Sault Saint Marie and Ottawa/Glengarry

Dancer Bulletin, November 1960, p 8.

³ Carl Ian Walker, *Pipe Bands in British Columbia*, Published by the Western Academy of Pipe Music, 1992, pp. 140-141.

⁴ Susan Girvan, Editor and Publisher, *The Canadian Global Almanac*, MacMillan of Canada, Toronto, 2000, p 27.

are devoid of piping.⁵ Rather, I chose to employ the province's name to encompass the geographical area between Hamilton and Oshawa with Toronto cast as the *de facto* hub of this musical phenomenon. Although the southwestern and northwestern regions of Ontario and beyond were (and are) dynamic music communities in and of themselves, I have relegated them to the periphery. These areas have lengthy piping traditions, which cannot be dealt with adequately in the present circumstance.

1.3 - Placement of Study - Literature Review Part I: Piping Scholarship

The present study stands as an original contribution within the available body of material (i.e. the history of highland piping). Although several scholars have published material in the field of bagpiping traditions in Scotland, scant attention to the instrument and its patrons have taken place in a New World context. A brief literature review follows examining some recent publications on the history of the highland bagpipe.⁶

Iain MacInnes's 1988 unpublished master's degree thesis entitled *The*

⁵ Many pipers in Ontario consider Montreal, Quebec a peripheral Ontario piping community. The Montreal Pipe Band Community is not a mutually exclusive entity unto itself; many Montreal pipers and drummers are active members of the Pipers Society of Ontario and participate in the various highland games endorsed by the Society. In fact, this contemporary trend was well established by the mid-twentieth century as pipers and pipe bands from Montreal equalled their Ontario counterparts on the competitive scene during the 1940s and 1950s. This cultural manifestation arose by force of circumstance immediately following the American Revolution with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists who settled the area. Many Loyalists, and succeeding immigrants from the British Isles, created their livelihoods in the commercial metropolis of Montreal. Hence, British cultural endeavours thrived on the island city, which gave rise to a dynamic piping community. Piping outwith the Montreal area, however, is virtually non-existent.

⁶ While this discussion concentrates on relatively recent contributions to piping literature, longer-standing 'standard' texts remain of great importance. Roderick Cannon's output, especially his *The Highland Bagpipe and its Music*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1988 (and later editions), and his *A Bibliography of Bagpipe Music*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1980, should still be considered as key texts. Hugh Cheape's *The Book of the Bagpipe*, Belfast, Appletree Press, 1999 provides a succinct and highly useful overview of the history and development of the instrument. Taken together, the work of

Highland Bagpipe: The Impact of the Highland Societies of London and Scotland

1781-1844 provides us with an exceptionally detailed account of the development of the highland bagpipe in its competitive context shortly after the lifting of the Act of Proscription. MacInnes has painstakingly explored a wealth of sources seeking to unearth the pivotal role played in the development of the art by the Highland Societies of London and Scotland. A convincing case is made by MacInnes that the modern highland games we enjoy today (in both Scotland and Canada) were established and passionately supported by these branches of the Highland Society, most deliberately asserted in the piping competitions at Falkirk and Edinburgh. It is here in the early 1780s that these societies wielded their considerable influence on the art not only in the presentation and interpretation of the music performed but also on the bearing and deportment of the performer. The Highland Societies' exacting influences were such that they insisted the solo performer (the competitive piper) should wear the kilt, submit a list of tunes to an adjudicators' panel and, as MacInnes himself notes "occasionally expect to be judged by a man of questionable musical calibre - these are all facets of an ethos of competitive piping established during the great Edinburgh competitions"⁷ (a fact which MacInnes notes, is still prevalent in modern day competition). MacInnes has extracted a great number of historical facts from all of his sources, and he provides tables with results and prize money awarded to the competitors during that period. Piping, in the modern competitive sense, was born during this period and MacInnes has provided an invaluable research tool with

these scholars has largely superseded that of earlier writers such as Collinson, especially *The Bagpipe: the History of a Musical Instrument*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

⁷ Iain I. MacInnes, *The Highland Bagpipe: The Impact of the Highland and Scottish Societies of London and Scotland, 1781-1844*, M.Litt. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1988, p 309.

which to understand the broader context of the art which is undertaken by great numbers across the globe today while simultaneously providing a foundation for pursuing the historical record of the instrument in Scotland during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

David Murray's *The Music of the Scottish Regiments*, first published in 1994, provides readers with exacting detail, a broad history of the peculiar traditions of military music in the Scottish regiments and in doing so redresses the balance between the musical traditions of the Scottish regiments and those regiments which have been detailed previously for the public record. Murray's work begins by charting the origins of military music on the European continent and how the German and Swedish traditions extended their influences to the music of the British army. Murray leads us to his discussion on a typical soldier's day and how that would determine a musician's day. The raising of the highland regiments is discussed which, by extension, leads to the discussion of regimental music in those regiments.⁸

Murray's handling of the music of the military piper is both deft and engaging. Significant dates in the evolution of pipe music are discussed (ie. the first recorded performance of pipers and drummers; and the first instances of pipers composing marches for the express purpose of providing music during military exercises) and there is no shortage of detail here. Further detail follows in the equipping of the pipers (at the expense of the officers) as well as the zenith period of the band of pipes and drums (around the turn of the 20th century and ceasing around

⁸ David Murray, *The Music of the Scottish Regiments*, Edinburgh: Pentland Press, 1994.

the period of the conclusion of National Service). Murray parallels the high water mark of British military music around the time of the Cold War and laments its passing with downsizing of the Ministry of Defence budget in the early 1990s. As Murray notes, “the bands of infantry battalions have been abolished, in the never ending search for the leaner, meaner army, to be replaced by division bands...and the link between the regiment and its band, and hence its music, will be broken.”⁹ These reductions naturally affected the operational role of the pipes and drums (in their musical and soldierly roles) which, curiously, resulted in improvements in the pipe bands in some Scottish units while others devolved into musical oblivion. The latter is more typical than the former. This aspect of Murray’s work could have been explored to a greater degree. Rather than link a downward spiral in military piping with the introduction and the proliferation of their melodies to brass/reed arrangements (a convenient but unconvincing argument), Murray might have considered digging deeper into the root causes of the continuing dilemma facing the pipes and drums of the British army today. Time will reveal how much longer these traditional musicians and their music will remain in a military force that seizes quickly upon the technologies offered in the evolution of military science. History instructs us that their days are numbered: numerous military reformers in Britain have perceived the cultural practices of the Scottish regiments and their pipe bands as inconsistent with the ‘*raison d’être*’ of the army. No doubt, these sentiments will continue to dog the existence of all regimental bands in the British army and not just those of the Scottish regiments.

⁹ Murray, 1994, p 310.

Written with prose resonating deep scholarly vigour, William Donaldson's *The Scottish Bagpipe and Highland Society 1750-1950* is a history that might become "one of piping's more valuable and influential academic works" in the broad field of piping literature, in the words of one observer.¹⁰ This is no understatement; Donaldson's work is perhaps the most comprehensive published history of piping in its Scottish context. At over 500 pages, this tome stands as a highly developed thesis concerning the evolution of bagpiping traditions in post 1750 Scotland and how the bagpiping community, whose repertory (particularly piobaireachd) was based solely upon oral transmission, was bombarded into extinction by the triumph and accession of the printed musical score introduced in the 19th century. Alas though, this narrowing of the musical gene pool was not only executed by bagpipe music publishers. Numerous societies (but perhaps most notoriously The Piobaireachd Society formed in 1903) were responsible for this devolution of musical interpretation and performer technique as they quickly wielded their influence in the sponsorship of the Argyllshire gathering at Oban and eventually at the great Northern Meeting of Inverness. The Piobaireachd Society forced competitive pipers to adhere to their printed scores whilst unbeknownst to them, one assumes, it streamlined the creative impulses of the art in addition to relegating unknown melodic variants (and technique) to the dustbin of history. Pipers either adhered to the Society's dubious standards of performance or found themselves wanting for prizes. As Lieutenant John MacLennan wrote in the *Oban Times* in 1920, "For many years now the pibroch has been played more as a comparatively meaningless jargon of notes than anything

¹⁰ Jim McGillivray, *The Scottish Bagpipe and Highland Society* reviewed in the *Piper and Drummer*,

else, void of form or melody, and much more so since the Piobaireachd Society came into existence...the piper [is now] simply a tracer or a copyist, and is not allowed to become an artiste.”¹¹ Or as Donaldson himself observes, “Players were forced to distort their own often considerable talent to bring it into conformity with the frequently ill-formed musical ideas of gentleman amateurs who enjoyed the privileges of regulation without responsibility and patronage without expense.” He then resoundingly submits that “the greatest danger to the classical music of the pipe was the Piobaireachd Society of Scotland.”¹² Despite Donaldson’s huge mandate to uncover the somewhat peculiar nature that forms modern day *piobaireachd* performance, his account of the evolution of bagpipe performance is virtually unmatched. His knowledge of the community covers a period of two centuries with scrutinizing detail that would leave the most ambitious historians in awe of his research capacity. No archival stone was left uncovered in the production of his text and this achievement we must acknowledge.

Published in 1998 by John Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945*¹³, another lengthy and detailed study of the history of west-Highland piping, establishes a dichotomy in bagpiping performance which draws the line of demarcation around ‘traditional’ ear-learned piping (utilized to accompany dancing and other ceildh related activities prior to the mid-nineteenth century) and ‘modern’ (that which developed sometime after the mid-nineteenth century), literate (i.e. requiring an ability to read music), and institutionalized versions of piping (i.e. the

May, 2000, p 47.

¹¹ William Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950*, Tuckwell Press, 2000, p.332.

¹² Ibid. p 334.

competitive form of the art under the auspices of a society of well regulated ‘watch-dogs’ *per se*). From the outset, Gibson suggests that piping did not completely vanish from the Highlands shortly after the battle of Culloden in 1746 (as is commonly held); rather, the art’s disappearance from the area was caused by the diaphora to the New World in the mid-nineteenth century. Somehow, the musical form managed to survive in areas virtually untouched by the rising tides of Anglicization. In Gibson’s case, this was - and remains - the rocky shores of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Alternatively, in other areas of the Scottish musical world, such as Glasgow and the rest of British North America where pipers played, the literate competitive pipers began to change the style of play of piobaireachd and light music. Unfortunately, there are no surviving recordings of how these individuals of the ‘old-school’ played and we are left to guess as to what that may have been. Perhaps Gibson provides the most accurate description of this type of performance when he states, “The speed and rhythms required are sufficiently different from the modern form to be remarkable. Often many variations on the same tune evolved and flourished, and those variations, along with the repertoire, contained material unpublished by the modern school.”¹⁴ Again, it is unfortunate that no recordings exist for us to examine and words do not accurately portray the sound experience. Nonetheless, Gibson’s work is a fascinating study of the cultural history of the pipe in the west Highlands and he easily establishes for us the bagpipe as a cultural icon in rural Cape Breton which serves as an ideal model examining culture transfer, and cultural evolution, thousands of miles from its geographic point of

¹³ John Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Piping 1745-1945*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998.

origin.

Another recent work of scholarship contributing significantly to the wider literature of piping is Joshua Dickson's *When Piping was Strong: Tradition, Change and the Bagpipe in South Uist* published in Edinburgh in 2006. Essentially, Dickson's work is about the history of piping in South Uist from the "internal Gaelic perspective." Certainly, consideration is given to the context of traditional Gaelic social culture throughout his text but Dickson is primarily concerned with how the ritual of patron piping (i.e. Clanranald's patronage of pipers) survived well into the 19th century while elsewhere in the Hebrides, these practices were swept away due to various social, religious and economic concerns. Dickson also takes into account the world of 20th century mainstream competitive piping and how that culture was enriched by the influences of the literately trained Piobaireachd Society after 1909. Dickson's book (based on his 2001 PhD thesis at the University of Edinburgh) is well researched and a significant amount of statistical data appears in the appendices reporting results of the various professional piping competitions at the annual games in South Uist through the 20th century. Again, here we have a work which charts the evolution of piping in a rural context, which at times resembles that of Gibson's research in Cape Breton. The visual account is equally significant as the written record; one complements the other to reveal the fullest exposition of the history.

Another researcher in the field of Scottish studies is Ruth Wolf, currently working on the phenomenon of the weekly summertime pipe band competitions in late 20th and early 21st century Scotland. Her work is eagerly anticipated and will

¹⁴ Gibson, 1998, p. 4.

provide further insight into the complexities of the piping tradition, not only within the Scottish context but from a North American perspective as well (Wolf is a native of Alberta, Canada).

1.4 - Literature Review Part II: The Literature of Emigrant Traditions

Much material has been published in recent memory on emigrant traditions and their wider social implications. Outwith John Gibson's work in rural Nova Scotia, the present work aims to fill a gap in the field of bagpipe history and the history of culture transfer to North America, particularly to Ontario. The following discussion is a brief review of some of the more applicable studies regarding Scottish emigrant traditions.

Between them, Jenni Calder and Marianne McLean provide an essential foundation upon which to build an understanding of the history and influence of Scottish settlement in Canada. Calder's 2003 study, *Scots in Canada*,¹⁵ represents a succinct but authoritative overview of the topic, while McLean's more detailed examination of a series of migrations into the Glengarry area, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820*¹⁶, provides a penetrating analysis of the Scottish west highland influence on this part of Ontario. Both of these works are referred to in more detail in Chapter Three (Section 3.4) below.

James Hunter's *A Dance Called America* examines the nature of Scottish links in the history of Canada and the United States. In no small way have the culture, politics, economics, and sociological make-up of the Scottish Highlander

¹⁵ Jenni Calder, *Scots in Canada*, Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2003.

(and Lowlander) contributed to North American society and Hunter constructs a convincing case for the Scots' combined contribution to this. Written in very readable prose, Hunter begins by exploring how old Highland attitudes (circa 18th century) motivated emigrant Scots to identify with either Patriot or Loyalist during the American Revolution and how both sides influenced the course of events that followed after the Declaration of Independence. From this period of history, Hunter reveals how the Scots emerged - during significant events in the history of the United States and Canada - to impress their visions upon the social, economic and political development of North America. Whether that was through charting a course to the Pacific Ocean or establishing trading posts in the western interior, "the Scottish Highlanders' impact on this continent is enduring" writes Hunter. "It is a long time since it started. But the dance they called America, I guess, continues."¹⁷ It is no wonder, in this context, why the enduring legacy of the bagpipes persists. By the mid nineteenth century, the sheer number of Scottish immigrants and their cultural practices would take hold in North America and capture the imagination of their descendants, who continue to practice the musical traditions of their forebears. Hunter leaves us to assess the greater impact of the Scots on our contemporary society. It is nothing short of far reaching.

Margaret Bennett's *Oatmeal and the Catechism: Scottish Gaelic Settlers in*

¹⁶ Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1991.

¹⁷ James Hunter, *A Dance Called America*, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh and London, 1994, p 252.

*Quebec*¹⁸ charts the lifestyles of the Scots who settled in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, and how their folk traditions evolved (and in some cases disappeared) through decades of flux. Much of Bennett's work focuses upon the language of these people - Gaelic - as well as the rituals of the Hebridean descendants. Numerous folk songs, poems, stories and other such traditional practices of this culture are collected and analysed in this anthology. Although there is little mention of bagpiping in this region of Quebec, what remains salient for our purposes is the tenacity with which the Gaels held to their folkways throughout the 20th century especially given their placement amidst a dominating French population. Eventually, they will succumb to this population majority, if they have not already.

In a similar study, Bennett looks at the survival of the Gaels in the Codroy Valley in south-west Newfoundland in *The Last Stronghold: The Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland*¹⁹. This tiny community began to settle there in the 1840s, having originally settled on Cape Breton island. This study is about cultural practices as she found them in the early 1970s. Her principal informant was Allan MacArthur, Gaelic speaker and piper, whose mother taught him a significant body of Gaelic songs. Bennett describes MacArthur as more than just a farmer and piper as he had been labelled within a local newspaper article. He was also a singer, accordionist, story-teller, historian and craftsman. For Bennett, MacArthur is the archetypal tradition bearer that ethnologists and folklorists rely so heavily upon in order to understand the phenomena of cultural retention. Bennett is keenly aware of

¹⁸ Margaret Bennett, *Oatmeal and the Catechism: Scottish Gaelic Settlers in Quebec*, Edinburgh and Montreal, 1998.

¹⁹ Margaret Bennett, *The Last Stronghold: The Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland*, Edinburgh, 1989.

this and that MacArthur was really the last of his community to enjoy such a status. Her ethnography is holistic in nature – she examines the song, music, customs, oral narrative and craft traditions of the community through heavy use of oral history recording, and takes care to set all of this within the context of the changing social and economic environment. For Bennett, the erosion of this culture is inevitable with the loss of the Gaelic language which was central to the maintenance of the traditions which it nurtured.

Bennett's context differs significantly from the present study largely, because Ontario piping traditions thrived in their Canadian environment. The bagpipe in Ontario did not depend on the Gaelic language for survival. As some musical traditions depend upon language as a vehicle for transmission, the bagpipe, in the Canadian context, relied upon musical subject-matter expertise and the mimicking of the Scottish standard. This was achieved through the constant influx of Scottish immigrants in the post-Confederation period. The music of the pipes also benefited from official government patronage initially through the British army. After the British abandoned their military obligations in Canada, Canadian soldiers sought to maintain the tradition of their forebears largely surpassing the success of their imperial antecedents. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

Nonetheless, Bennett's combined works stand as a significant contribution to the historical record articulating a microcosm of the greater world of emigrant traditions.

James MacDonald's 1992 University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis entitled *Cultural Retention and Adaptation among the Highland Scots of Carolina* focuses

upon transplanted emigrant traditions in Cape Fear, North Carolina, an area with strong Scottish Highland roots. Like Bennett, he is critical of the tendency within the historiography of Highland migration to ignore the issue of culture transfer, and so he adopts an ethnological approach that focuses upon cultural survival and adaptation of Gaelic-based traditions. The range of culture forms he draws upon is similar to that of Bennett – place names, language, religion, music, song, storytelling, social organization – and emphasises in particular the strong adherence to the Presbyterian observances of faith that continued to dominate in the settlement well after the language began to disappear. This is interesting, in that it shows that despite the importance of language to cultural survival, cultural forms can continue to exist and develop independently of it.

One of the best examples of the complementary use of documentary and oral sources in the study of emigrant tradition is that by Mike Kennedy and his seminal work *'Is Leis an Tighearna an talamh agus an Ian. The Earth and all that it contains belongs to God: The Scottish Gaelic Settlement History of Prince Edward Island.'*²⁰ His locus of research is Prince Edward Island, and in particular 18th and 19th century emigration patterns from the Scottish Highlands. He is highly critical of those scholars who have attempted to analyse the nature and results of this population movement without looking to either the oral tradition or the written Gaelic records. Bumstead (1982) is harshly criticized for he paints a misleading picture of emigrant Gaels within post-improvement (or rather 'improving') Scotland.

²⁰ Kennedy, Mike *'Is Leis an Tighearna an talamh' agus a Ian.'* *The Earth and all that it contains belongs to God: The Scottish Gaelic Settlement History of Prince Edward Island'* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995.

This, argues Kennedy, is the result of a fundamental misunderstanding of highland society on Bumsted's part. The song, narrative and poetry traditions of the emigrant Gaels should be viewed as valuable historical data (Bumstead rejects these), and they reveal that it was not rejection of modernity that provided the impetus for emigration, but rather a realization that their entire culture was threatened.

The Scottish Tradition in Canada, edited by W. Stanford Reid, is a work similar in principle to that of James Hunter's *A Dance Called America*. The principal difference in Reid's publication is his focus on the Scottish experience in Canadian history (the fur trade, religion, the military, the arts, education, politics and business) as presented by thirteen scholars, literary critics and others who attempt to exhibit the effect the Scot has made on the development of Canada and the Canadian identity. Reid has woven together thirteen well researched, easily read, analytically-driven essays provoking significant thought about this culture's contributions to Canada. As Reid observes, "To many who come to the country for the first time, one thing stands out. It is the Scottish influence, which, although metamorphosed by the Canadian geographical and social environment, still remains strongly Scottish in flavour."²¹

The Immigrant Experience: Proceedings of a Conference held at the University of Guelph, edited by Catherine Kerrigan, is a collection of eight scholarly papers addressing the various experiences of Scottish immigrants in Canada. We see in this collection the dominating theme of the migrant experience and as Kerrigan intimates, "the contributors clearly recognize that it is impossible to understand

²¹ W. Stanford Reid, editor, *The Scottish Tradition in Canada*, published by McClelland and Stewart

resettlement in a new country without addressing the question of how and why new settlers left their country of origin in the first place.”²² The diversity of the papers provides insights on various interpretive approaches to immigrant history but it is by no means comprehensive. An article addressing the musical culture of the Scots would have been valuable to the present study; however, Kerrigan’s collection includes an article by G. Ross Roy about 19th century Scottish-Canadian poets providing a fuller exposition of the social history of the immigrant experience.

*The Lochaber Emigrants to Glengarry*²³, edited by Rae Fleming, is another collection of scholarly works addressing the immigrant experiences of the Lochaber Scots in Glengarry, Ontario during the 19th and 20th centuries. In her introduction to the text, Marianne McLean points out that Lochaber emigrants formed part of the larger emigration movements from Europe to North America during the period under study. The Lochaber story is surveyed through the history of Scotland and through their migratory experience up to the present day. A broad range of themes are dealt with in Fleming’s book including: possibilities for genealogical research and ethnocultural analysis; the experiences of Glengarry Scots in the fur trading posts in Western North America; and, a series of folk-tales indicating the range of fates awaiting the fur trading Scots in the North-West. Fleming’s book is a fine collection of studies detailing within a narrow geographical framework, the lives of the Lochaber Scots, which, like much of the literature reviewed in this article, contribute

in association with the Multiculturalism Program, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada and the Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1976, p 302.

²² Catherine Kerrigan, *The Immigrant Experience: Proceedings of a Conference held at the University of Guelph 8-11 June 1989*, University of Guelph, 1992, p 7.

²³ Rae Fleming (ed) *The Lochaber Emigrants to Glengarry*, Toronto, 1994.

to our deeper understanding of their experiences in our shared historical past.

*Cargoes of Despair and Hope: Scottish Emigration to North America 1603-1803*²⁴ by Ian Adams and Meredyth Somerville records Scottish emigration to the New World between the 16th and 18th centuries. Adams and Somerville describe in lucid terms the tragic life facing the ordinary Scot in Scotland during this period: the radical transition from a feudal tribal society to a relatively modern unified state and how these circumstances gave rise to the abject poverty experienced by the general population. The authors describe how these conditions contributed to the general population movement out of the Highlands to three possible destinations: 1) North America; 2) Industrial towns in the south of Scotland; and, 3) New settlements established on the coast. The lifestyle previously enjoyed by the Highlanders was no longer acceptable to the government in London particularly after the 1745 rebellion which, as the authors state, saw “a rapid collapse of a social system, the ambiguous values which had sustained it and, tragically, the rich culture which had nourished it.”²⁵ So rapid was the population decline in the Highlands during the 1770s that Dr Samuel Johnson cogently noted an “epidemical fury of emigration” during his Highland tour of 1773. The authors note that these actions were the last desperate remedies taken by sufferers of an “incurable disease.”²⁶ However, Scotland’s loss was North America’s gain. We revisit the themes of several previously published works recording the exploits of the Scots in their new geopolitical environment; however, not all are resounding success stories. As Somerville and Adams note,

²⁴ Ian Adams and Meredyth Somerville, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope: Scottish Emigration to North America 1603-1803*, John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1993.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p 203.

some left Scotland only to “sell themselves into virtual slavery; the countless people, especially children whose death in dreadful conditions are so casually reported. But [the book] is also concerned with many individuals, some through greed, ignorance or ambition created the conditions which made emigration inevitable [and] some who helped organize it...conscientiously and intelligently.”²⁷ The authors go a long way to dispel the myth that North America was a land of opportunity in which the new settlers could get on without extreme travail and exertion; the opposite is confirmed here. The book includes numerous maps while emigration statistics, the composition of national stocks in the United States in 1790, the origins and destinations of the emigrants themselves, and such like, can be found in the appendices. Somerville and Adams have done a credible job compiling this work; perhaps a few prints scattered throughout the text would provide an even more human perspective to this rather clinical presentation.

These works inform my own research in my readiness to utilize oral testimony and my willingness to seek evidence in whatever form it presents itself, both documentary and oral source material. Also, the aforementioned ethnological writers tend to place the creative arts at the centre of their analysis (song, music and narrative) as I do. Like these writers, I am interested in investigating Ontario pipers’ perceptions of their past and of the development of their art – giving voice to the performers.

However, there are significant differences too. Most of these works deal with Gaelic traditions, whereby the language and the culture are seen as so symbiotic that

²⁶ Ibid. p 206.

they cannot be separated. In my research, however, language and culture had already been largely separated *before* the migration occurred, and piping was no longer reliant on the language within the emigrant context. Here, my research differs significantly from John Gibson. Also, styles and functions of piping had changed from their Gaelic roots before emigrating too – i.e. emphasis on written score, on competition, military patronage, etc. – so it was not a case of ‘traditional culture’ moving and then eroding. What emigrated in terms of piping was in itself ‘new’ – a product of modernity. And once it migrated it was not a case of its erosion or even mere survival – but of its development and ultimate success. This is a significant departure from the context of the aforementioned studies.

My research takes the methodologies and ethos of these numerous studies but applies them to the very different context of Ontario piping. It is recognized that the Ontarians were cognizant of, even imitating, what the ‘old’ or ‘mother’ culture was doing in terms of its music practices in the developmental period (pre and early post-Confederation Canada) but then saw a divergence thereafter, eventually emerging as a proud and confident tradition in its own right.

²⁷ Ibid. p 7.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

This chapter considers the methodology used for the present study. A detailed account of how my research was conducted and how the results are detailed is essential in order to demonstrate the validity of the facts presented here - the *modus operandi* as some would describe it. Additionally, it is imperative that the methodology is available for future researchers. This study should ease the degree to which they may find themselves at primary data gathering deadlocks given the absence of source material in public repositories. This dissertation did not explore the multitude of historical themes in the study of 20th century bagpiping communities in southern Ontario. It is hoped that historians wishing to use a similar or related approach to data gathering will look to this dissertation to ease the challenges awaiting them.

It must be stressed from the outset that the history of Canadian bagpiping in general, and southern Ontario piping traditions in particular, has attracted little scholarly attention. Systematic study has not been forthcoming in the academic community, thus leaving the field open for research. Historical interpretations in the foregoing subject matter remain wide open for consideration. It is hoped that the present study will motivate other scholars to delve into the field to reflect upon the social, historical, and musicological phenomena which bagpiping communities in southern Ontario have generated over the chronological period addressed in this research. Of course, the wider context of this thesis - the study of emigrant traditions

in a new world context - must be identified here, for without the transmission of culture through the flow of immigration to the New World, there would be no historical matters to discuss.

Oral and documentary sources have their own strengths and limitations; both can be used to complement each other. Much reflective academic writing has detailed the inadequacies of both.¹⁹ It is hoped in this study that the deficiencies accumulated in the data collection and subsequent analysis process are compensated for by the extensive investigation of documented source material, primarily though not exclusively through the publications of the Ontario Pipers and Pipe Band Society and other related journals produced by various formal and informal groups of pipers and drummers within and without Ontario.

In short, this methodology attempts to record the process by which events of the past are interpreted from the present circumstance in order to explain the history of the southern Ontario bagpiping community in the 20th century.

2.1 - Methodological Approaches: The Challenges and Advantages of an Insider's Perspective

I was born in Toronto in 1971 and began playing the pipes there in April 1980. My first teacher was George Walker, a native of Aberdeen and a member of the 48th Highlanders Pipes and Drums. This study was launched in the autumn of 1998, after 18 years spent performing, competing, studying, thinking and discussing various aspects of the bagpipes. At that time, this figure represented approximately

¹⁹ See, for example, Grele 1991; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Yow 1994.

66 per cent of my life.²⁰ Having accumulated a considerable amount of experience while competing and performing throughout southern Ontario and the eastern United States, I gradually gained a sense of the historical origin which the bagpipes can claim in various North American societies, particularly, the province of Ontario. During that period of performing, I had established significant relationships - both personal and professional - with numerous piping personalities whose cumulative ages spanned several generations. This fact was key in the research and writing process for several different reasons. At the very least, collecting a database of piping informants whose participation in the communities I moved easily in would provide a starting point for my enquiry into this history.

2.2 Conventional Research, Conventional History

First, conventional historians in the German tradition have focussed their research on political, economic and military events in their approach to the study of history with a deliberate reliance on documented sources.²¹ As such, social history

²⁰ I began studying the bagpipes in Toronto in April 1980.

²¹ Paul Thompson asserts that European historians during the 19th century were heavily influenced by Leopold von Ranke, professor of history at the University of Berlin (appointed 1825). Ranke ruthlessly rejected the works of such celebrated writers as Sir Walter Scott stating that their publications were factually unreliable. Ranke's beliefs may have been partially correct although writers like Scott published historical novels, not history. Ranke was unwilling to accept alternative approaches to historical writing other than the researcher's singular reliance on written primary source material. In turn, he demanded that his students produce scholarship based upon documentary evidence, indelibly influencing several generations of European historians in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thompson writes "Ranke resolved that in his own work he would stick severely to the facts...The development of an academic, historical profession in the nineteenth century brought with it a more precise and conscious social standing. It also required that historians, like other professionals, should have some form of distinctive training. And both the research doctorate and the systematic teaching of historical methodology are derived from Germany." A corollary to this (and with this, an increased sense of class distinction already salient in western European society during the 19th century) would dictate that historical research and writing would focus on the concerns of the clusters of power (the aristocratic classes for example), or in the words of oral historian and radio personality Studs Terkel, "The Movers and the Shakers." Inevitably, scholarship produced by succeeding

was often neglected in pre-1945 scholarly literature. Not only was this state of affairs in academic history a reality in Germany and continental Europe but also in the English-speaking world.²² By this time, with the advent of recording technology and through the influences of various scholars outside the narrow confines of the historical profession (cultural anthropology for example), the study of the people - those found outwith the political and military ruling classes - began to be considered as a valid subject area for investigation by historians.

In this context, history is not solely concerned with the statistically insignificant decision makers but rather, with society. History also concerns itself with the various quarters found in society and its role in shaping the contemporary world. To this end (and not surprising) the history of bagpiping in Canada has been left unstudied. And although a rich fund of written sources is left to researchers, the majority of these remain in private collections, un-archived and wanting in interpretation.

Second, having access to pipers within and without the competitive piping

generations of historians mistakenly focussed its research solely where historical reality was thought to have existed, which inevitably excluded the lives of the common people. Additionally, if documents did not exist, a Ranke-trained historian would not write. This produced a damning effect for the lower economic stratum in 19th century European society; it was uncommon for a peasant farmer to read and write with any degree of sophistication not only limiting their documentary correspondence but also fortuitously eliminating their inclusion in any systematic historical studies by their contemporaries or their successors. (See Thompson 1990, pp. 50-56).

²² In Canada, historical writing focussing on the common people assumed a radical, leftist tenor. Historian Jack Granatstein notes that the "new" history [American historians would term it "Revisionist" history] was written to counter that produced by a "small elite of educated white men to be read by others like themselves." These histories are produced through the lenses of the Marxists, feminists and postmodernists in order to balance what they claimed were the inequities of history. What these historians fail to take into account is that they too marginalised a genre of historical writing distorting the fullest exposition of the Canadian past. As Ranke himself did, Revisionists continue to influence our perspectives of history. See Granatstein's 1999 publication, *Who Killed Canadian History*.

community²³, I was afforded ample opportunity to conduct numerous interviews from both dynamic performing communities (competitive and non-competitive classes). Moreover, given the time under investigation, I was fortunate to gather opinions of the pre-1950s era when many piping communities in Ontario were relatively isolated from each other yet all experienced similar historical patterns in their evolution. Thus, my direct contact with this community eased my research burdens.

The issues of subjective/objective selection of informants, has been well documented by historians, ethnologists and other scholars engaged in humanities and social scientific research. As Thompson asserts, "Oral historians choose precisely whom to interview and what to ask about; interviewing provides means of discovering written documents and photographs which would not have otherwise been traced...the critical effect of this approach is to allow evidence from a new direction. Oral evidence allows for a more realistic reconstruction of the past. And,

²³ In 1982, I became a boy piper with the Pipes and Drums of the 48th Highlanders of Canada. The 48th - as they are referred to by Ontario pipers- are not a solely competitive pipe band. The band was raised in 1891 to musically support the activities of the infantry element of the regiment. Although the 48th Highlanders Pipes and Drums were not mandated to compete in 1891 - pipe band competitions did not exist at that time - their competitive exploits are well documented throughout the 20th century. In fact, the band's first pipe major, Robert Ireland, a noted soloist, was a Scottish champion piper. Perhaps it was the regiment's intention that the pipe band become the 'best' band in Canada and as such, set out to recruit the expert leadership required for the accomplishment of this mission (if that was the intention of the regiment in 1891). They set the mould for expert leadership of pipers and drummers for succeeding generations to emulate. Interestingly, the 48th are one of the last remaining military pipe bands raised shortly after Canadian Confederation who continue to blend their hectic performance schedule with that of an annual summertime competitive agenda. More recently, the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders were Grade 2 North American Champions in 1988 and 1993. By 1995, the band was promoted to the premiere grade in Ontario (Grade 1) where they vied for a season with some the best competitive pipe bands in the world (namely, the 78th Fraser Highlanders, the Metro Toronto Police and the Peel Regional Police). Since that time, the 48th combined with pipers and drummers of the Canadian Forces Base Borden Band to form a Grade 2 Band, *The Canadian Forces Composite Pipe Band*, and competed as such in 1996, 1997 and 1998. Since that time, the 48th have opted to accept added performance engagements across the continent precluding them from competing in Ontario.

a primary merit of oral history is that to a much greater extent than most sources, it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated.”²⁴ The range in ages of the informants I hoped to conduct interviews with - and subsequently did - produced the desired results in historical interpretation (it allowed for the inclusion of numerous explanations in history - the ‘multiplicity of standpoints’ - creating a balanced reconstruction of the past). Luckily, I recorded the interviews on digital audiocassette tapes (DAT) with respondents who lived during the 1930s and 40s; their reminiscences provided a valuable historical context to that era. To quote James Boswell, biographer of Samuel Johnson, “It was now full time to make such a collection, for many of the people who were there were dropping off.”²⁵ And yet some historians, Arnold Toynbee for instance, would disagree, or under-rate the value of these biographical reminiscences. In 1972, he stated “History does not concern itself with the recording of all the facts of human life...it hands over to biography the facts of individual lives...we can see at once that there are few individuals whose personal relations are of such interest and importance as to make them fit subjects for biography.”²⁶ Yet this study bases much of its evidence upon the discussions of individuals, all significant in their own way, all with their unique perspectives. And the study delivers much of this testimony through the biographical format. In this case, biography easily informs history.

Accessibility to the study group and the friendly relationships I had established with many informants raises numerous considerations when attempting to produce academically sound scholarship. “The insider knows the way round,” writes

²⁴ Thompson, 1990, pp 5-6.

Thompson, “can be less easily fooled, understands the nuances, and starts with far more useful contacts and, hopefully, is an established person of good faith. All this has to be learnt and constructed by the outsider, who may not originally know the language, ethnography or geography of the community.”²⁷ At no time during my research or during the interviews did I feel I was exploring unfamiliar territory. Moreover, interviews were welcomed by informants. I was welcomed as a participant in their community because I sprang from their community. My relationship to the Ontario piping community, however, presented several challenges to the study that several scholars have noted elsewhere.²⁸ The informant may tend to skew his account given the exceptional dynamic of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. These ‘self-other’ boundaries, in ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk’s words, may be blurred because of the researcher’s familiarity with his informants. This ‘self-other’ boundary has broad-reaching implications for the subjective interpretation of past events. Before discussing these matters, we must address Kisliuk’s ‘self-other’ boundary.

My performance background and the ease with which I was able to approach my *experimental* group,²⁹ significantly eased the oral data gathering process. As a result of my participation in the Ontario piping community, I may have compromised the candour I sought to draw from my informants. Kisliuk is not discouraged by this form of participant observation. “Our very being,” said Kisliuk, “merges with the

²⁵ Quoted in Thompson, 1990, p 30.

²⁶ Toynbee, 1972.

²⁷ Thompson, 1990 p 120.

²⁸ See, for example, Campbell 1998; Grele 1991; Kisliuk 1997; Thompson 1990; Yow 1994.

²⁹ Invoking a scientific term in humanities nomenclature does not readily lend itself to the prose; however, it suffices.

field through our bodies and voices and another self-boundary is dissolved... Fieldwork is often intensified life but, part of a life flow all the same and it is inseparable from who we are.”³⁰ Upon reflection on Kisliuk’s statement, I re-examined my interviews and questioned the authenticity of the oral testimony: ‘Are the data skewed?’ ‘Will my interpretations stand against the rigours of an academic community entrenched in a philosophy of analytical objectification?’ The foregoing question articulates the spirit of the Ranke-oriented scholars; their influence continues to cast its academic shadow over the scholarly community today. However, the likes of Kisliuk and others liberate us from the perceived limitations of the 19th century historiographical tradition. “Are there aspects of personal experience” she writes, “that might not be appropriate to an ethnography, and, how do we determine when to include or describe such matters? Since performance-oriented scholars have acknowledged that experience is central to both research and writing and have thereby dismantled the taboo against the ‘subjective,’ the floodgates of experience have opened.”³¹ In keeping with the Kisliuk perspective, my research design has deliberately focussed upon those individuals who I immediately recognized and to whom I related as a result of my participant observation. This philosophy was consistently applied during the initial stages of the study. A selection of informants whom I had no familiarity with were also sought out and interviewed in an attempt to yield a broader perspective of the Ontario piping tradition.

Given the role of the participant observer during an interview, one has to be

³⁰ Kisliuk, 1997, pp. 23- 24.

vigilant that these 'floodgates of subjectivity' do not skew the interpretations of the chronicle. This is particularly acute here because a significant percentage of my informants were selected based upon their achievements in the Ontario competitive community, perhaps giving way to the passions of the competitively-oriented (their perspectives challenge objective historical interpretation). However, as historian/radio-broadcaster Studs Terkel pointed out, "My God! How do you get rid of the passions of life in history? If you do, then you're distorting it... we [historians] try to be detached and as objective - whatever that may be - as possible but, we deal with passion."³² In fact, the passions of my competitive informants spoke as much about their inner musical drive and devotion to the art as their contemporaries in the non-competitive community. Moreover, the two distinct types of informants, competitor versus non-competitor, provided a colourful panorama of the entire community; neither operates as exclusive entities unto themselves. Rather, they influenced (and continue to influence) the evolution of each other's artistic community. One may thus choose to ascribe the two communities as being musically androgynous.

2.3 - Interpretation of Fact

With respect to historical interpretation, analysis, and the determination of fact, I have adopted, in part, the practice of the Ranke-trained historians. That is to say, where primary sources have been forthcoming, I have endeavoured to conduct a thorough examination of all available materials in order to produce a balanced,

³¹ Kisliuk, 1997, p 24.

historically accurate interpretation between written and oral data. This practice highlights the complex interplay between the two data sources - documentary and oral - as each impacts upon the dynamic of the other (for example, where competitive statistics were provided in documentary evidence, anecdotal testimony provided lively accounts contributing to an overall understanding of the historical circumstance enlivening what was a moribund statistical exercise). This is not to say that alternative aids to interpretative approaches were not utilized during the research process, such as sound recordings, photographs etcetera. These instruments of interpretation have been valuable tools of assessment.

By implication, the Rankian method of research and interpretation suggests the primacy of written sources over oral ones. Documentary source data, however, does not give the fullest account of past events given the availability of verbal data. In this regard, the research and collection of written sources interpreted in tandem with oral sources was ideally suited for this study: it afforded the broadest historical landscape. "The historical view itself," said Denis Tedlock "is the result simply of the access to that much more information. To hear someone telling about their direct experience, their private history, and to know because you've read books, or listened to other tapes of other interviews and so on, that there are other views, it is precisely that kind of comparativeness that makes a historical method and abstract historical ideas possible."³² I wish to restate that the historical method applauded by scholars such as Ranke was not the single means of interpretation; I did not discount the testimony of my musical peers, especially when many played a salient role in the

³² Terkel, 1991, p 86.

history of their community.

Perhaps the single most important factor in gaining access to the past was my connection to key competitive personalities in the piping community. These individuals - many who are leading contenders in piping competitions in Canada, the United States and Scotland - were exceptionally helpful in providing information about their own music careers. Also, these individuals were forthcoming in providing direction about other key respondents, written sources, recorded sources (a discography) and a plethora of ancillary information regarding the breadth and scope of the present study which would have been overlooked. Moreover, my insider's perspective on the piping community made my task easy when selecting informants for key bits of historical information. As Ron Grele deftly points out, "interviewees are selected, not because they represent some abstract statistical norm, but because they typify historical processes."³⁴ Knowing the leaders in the performance field allowed me to slip in and out of conversations on numerous occasions whether I was moving about the Ontario highland games circuit or attending band rehearsals during the winter months. I was not required to spend an inordinate amount of effort developing these friendly relationships in order to gain the confidence of my informants for interviewing purposes. This was accomplished through years of competing.

2.4 – Ethical Considerations and the Location of Documentary Source Data

Ethical considerations in studies based on oral documentation remain a contentious and much debated issue in scholarly literature. In this study, a wide

³³ Tedlock, 1991, p 92.

ranging series of ethical-related issues immediately came to the fore: interviewer/respondent bias, subjective versus objective interpretation, shoddy research practices, questionnaire bias; the list is virtually endless. By addressing these issues, I am first and foremost defending this study's validity. Secondly, there may be a few useful suggestions for researchers when engaging with these 'pitfalls' during their research.

Grele issued a most resounding indictment of his fellow scholars and their treatment of oral data sources when he said,

I can remember no review, which asked the pertinent questions about sources. Who did the interviews? Where are they held? Are they open and available to others interested in checking the validity of the information? Were the questions biased or intrusive? Were they quoted directly or were statements taken out of context? All of these are questions, which reviewers usually raise when dealing with manuscript sources and works based upon their use. Yet for some reason when it comes to interviews we find a high degree of willingness to suspend disbelief among trained historians. Most do not insist upon a review of the interviews or some guarantee from authors of even the existence of such interviews.³⁵

Grele's perspective is highly critical of his profession's laissez-faire attitude about oral sources. His, is easily empathized with: the temptation to re-direct and interpret oral source data for the selfish purposes of the researcher is powerful. As potent as this may be for some, I abided by my own personal ethics during the interview process and held to the following: 1) That my interviews would be accepted in the spirit delivered by the interviewee and not taken out of context; 2) The sources would be available for public access. I have endeavoured to record all interviews on a DAT recording machine and these are lodged in the archives of the School of

³⁴ Grele, 1991 p 138.

³⁵ Grele, 1991 p 199.

Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.

As oral data have the potential to become highly skewed given a respondent's agenda, I decided early in the study that whatever evidence was to be offered during the interview process had to be cross-referenced with written sources. Many of these sources are found in the publications of the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario (hereafter referred to as the PPBSO). These publications, though accurate and reliable in providing historical data, do not fill all the gaps found in oral testimony. Unofficial publications of the PPBSO were extant prior to and after the formation of the PPBSO in 1948. These publications provide alternative source data contributing to the accuracy of the facts, which profoundly affect the interpretations here. Other source data include official regimental histories with particular reference to the Gordon Highlanders (copies are housed at the United Services Museum, Edinburgh Castle); the 48th Highlanders of Canada (several volumes of its official history have been published over the 110 year history of the regiment. These volumes may be located with the assistance of the staff at the regimental museum, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ontario); and The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (whose regimental history can be located with the assistance of the regimental historical committee at the James Street Armoury in Hamilton, Ontario). Other source data supporting oral testimony may be found in journal publications for academic and laymen: *The Canadian Geographical Journal* and *The Piping Times*); monographs such as John Gibson's *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping* and other notable works published by authors such as William Donaldson (*The Highland*

Bagpipe and Scottish Society) and Seumas MacNeil³⁶; and primary source documentation available in public archives (such as official military records of noted regimental pipers like Charles Dunbar and James Fraser found in the Public Records Office at Kew Gardens, England. Other related documents regarding these individuals and their service records in the Canadian Forces are housed at the National Library in Ottawa, Canada.). Alternative archival sources on various aspects of the Canadian Forces (i.e. The Canadian Corps in World War 1) are located through the Department of National Defence's Directorate of History and Heritage in Ottawa. Source data related to the Scottish World Festival may be found at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) Archives located at Toronto Exhibition Park, where various newspaper articles relating to the 10-year run of the festival have been collated. As well, CNE archives have an extensive photographic archive with hundreds of photos relating to the military tattoo, the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships and the Pipers' Parade through downtown Toronto. Newspapers such as *The Telegram*, *The Toronto Globe* (now the *Globe and Mail*) and *The Hamilton Spectator* may be found in the microfiche collections at the Toronto Reference Library as well as the John P. Robarts Library at the University of Toronto. If the researcher is fortunate he will likely gain access to various photos, letters and other documentation found in private collections such as those of Archie Cairns, James Raffin, James MacGillivray and Sandy Jones. Primary source documentation is extensive and thus, it has been my practice to gather as much data outwith the oral interview repository ensuring that my conjectures do not clash with

³⁶ The annual *Proceedings of the Piobaireachd Society Conference* are located at the National Library

the factual 'telling of the tale.' Moreover, to rely solely on oral testimony would undoubtedly produce a work of significant controversy for its inaccuracies. As Grele points out "We have, at times, lost our perspective by assuming that because someone says something, it automatically contains a truth."³⁷ Cross-referencing oral testimony with written documentation thus meets Grele's concern. Any factual conflicts arising between oral and written sources i.e. where a fact may have been misconstrued or misinterpreted due to faded memory, were resolved through the reliance on written documentation.

The literature addressing oral interviews and the multiplicity of ethical considerations within a questionnaire has been written about extensively: there is much imprecision and fluidity upon which the interviewer can find himself placed during the interview process. One cannot dispute the excitement felt during an interview if a respondent is particularly engaging, dynamic, charismatic. During these interviews - and there were many throughout this study - I assiduously observed the objectives of my questionnaire as I did not wish to re-ignite painful memories (this was not the case with the William Livingstone interview – see page 47). However, my interviews sought full explanations of musical memories from my informants. As Grele points out,

We begin to ask questions which we know our respondents are going to want to answer...we avoid the hard questions and the unsettling answers. At times we become too much like journalists - compromised...we must remember that we are historians and we are interested in the fullest exposition of the passions of the past, not in gathering material which is acceptable to the present. The past we seek was formed without us; the past we collect should

in Edinburgh as well as the library at the Citadel National Historic Site, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

³⁷ Grele, 1991, p 200.

be equally free of our presence.³⁸

Of course, scholars such as Grele, Thompson, Yow *et.al.* force us to consider the accuracy and the innuendo of our questionnaires. As Yow admits, “the importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them where imagination, symbolism, desire break in.”

Furthermore,

The researcher can use the ‘definition of the situation’ by asking of the narrator’s self-serving account ‘How does he construct this view? Where do his concepts come from? Why does he build this persona and not another? What are the consequences for this individual?’³⁹

As the interview process unfolded, I was forced to depart from the constructs of the questionnaire on numerous occasions given the nature of the respondent. This was nowhere more evident than the interview I conducted with William Livingstone. It is widely believed by many pipers across North America that Livingstone is one of the living legends in the Ontario bagpiping community. A sample questionnaire is provided in Figure 2; I specifically designed this for my interview with Livingstone. Also, a standard questionnaire, which I used when interviewing all other informants, is provided in Figure 1. One cannot help but note the departure - in both theme and tone - from the standard questionnaire. Ed Neigh, Bruce Gandy and James MacGillivray also represented thematic departures where more direct questioning with respect to their competitive careers was more evident than say, discussions with Archie Cairns (although these were perhaps, to a lesser degree than the Livingstone interview). Nonetheless, there is a marked difference between these two classes of

³⁸ Grele, 1991, p 203.

³⁹ Yow, 1994, p 23.

individuals. Piping personalities like William Livingstone fulfill a 'public role' where their musicianship, musical opinions and the like are highly regarded within the global piping community (i.e. their competitive exploits have ascribed to them a particular place in the piping hierarchy thus commanding a respect not accorded to other pipers of lesser competitive stature). Although informants such as Livingstone and Gandy may provide valued data, scholars such as Thompson warn historians that such "informants are not merely unrepresentative but can often prove less reliable. The more people are accustomed to presenting a professional public image, the less likely their personal recollections are to be candid."⁴⁰ Our informants are not solely to blame for this phenomenon: numerous researchers possess an inherent attraction to informants who embody more influence over others in a particular community and this is a common theme numerous researchers address. One need only look as far as the editor of the *Piper and Drummer*, Andrew Berthoff. Berthoff admits to basing his published in-depth interviews exclusively upon the competitively successful piper or drummer. It is also assumed that competitive pipers who have achieved notable success in competition may possess superior informed opinions about their music and experiences in the piping community. Historian Saul Benison observed that historians are skewed to collecting the accounts of "the movers and shakers"; this inclination was paramount during my initial forays into the interviews perhaps to the detriment of my interpretations. As a counter to this assertion, Benison reminded us that as researchers we possess the potential to "preserve a part of our environment

⁴⁰ Thompson, 1990, p 129.

that historians a hundred years from now [will] bless us for.”⁴¹ Thompson issues the most convincing counsel in light of the previous arguments capturing the spirit and philosophy this study attempts to accomplish. “If oral history” Thompson wrote, “is to be effectively representative, at all social levels, it is not just the unusually articulate and overtly reflective who must be recorded. The ideal choice [of informant] is a broad one but firmly grounded in the centre.”⁴²

2.5 - Interview Technique

Beatrice Webb observed, “A spirit of adventure, a delight in watching human beings as human beings quite apart from what you can get out of their minds, an enjoyment of the play of your own personality with that of another, are gifts of rare value in the art of interviews.”⁴³ Webb’s words resonate throughout the course of this study. The ideal scenario, unrestricted conversation between interviewer and respondent (the free exchange of ideas) was desired and achieved (in most cases). In order to achieve this laissez-faire attitude, the preferred method of interview technique for the study was the friendly, informal conversational approach. As Thompson said, “good interviewers eventually develop a variation of the method which, for them brings the best results, and suits their personality.”⁴⁴ After many years of collecting and interpreting oral data, Thompson concludes that to yield the most “appropriate results from an interview the following criteria must be observed during the discussion between researcher and respondent: an interest and respect for

⁴¹ Benison, 1991, p 99.

⁴² Thompson, 1990, p 129.

⁴³ Perks & Thompson, 1998, p 104.

⁴⁴ Thompson, 1990, p 195.

people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view, and above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen.”⁴⁵ Within many interviews, I adopted a spontaneous questioning approach. This was particularly acute during my interviews with Ed Neigh. In fact, most of the questions detailed in Figure 1 were not addressed directly by me: Neigh, in some form or another, addressed all the desired themes listed in my questionnaire without any prompting by me (although, I returned for a second interview in order to address the issues neglected during my initial visit). Perks (1998) and Thompson (1990) and others have debated the merits of the researcher’s reliance on a questionnaire during an interview rather than relying on an unstructured, free-rein approach. I argue here that as long as a researcher has a significant grasp of the historical issues combined with a requisite confidence in his abilities to address these issues in a meaningful way, his probing knowledge will be forthcoming during the interview thereby appropriating the broadest perspective from the discussion in question. I found this scenario most advantageous allowing me to adopt the guise of both insider and outsider.⁴⁶

2.6 - Geography

Archival research and fieldwork for this study was conducted between 1998 and 2002 in the following locations: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fort George, Inverness, Scotland; London, England; Toronto, London, Ottawa, Newmarket, Wellesley and

⁴⁵ Thompson, 1990, p.196.

⁴⁶ For a thought provoking article examining the dynamics an interviewing researcher faces when adopting the insider/outsider role, see Accom Kikumura’s article on Japanese internment camps in the United States during the Second World War in Perks’ and Thomson’s *The Oral History Reader*,

Georgetown, Ontario; Halifax, Nova Scotia and Montreal, Quebec.

2.7 - Conclusion

The informants cited in this study are justly proud of their musical achievements. All of them, either implicitly or explicitly, wished to bequeath their legacy (in whatever shape or form that may be) for future generations to laud and uphold. They see the southern Ontario piping story as a dramatic tale. Consequently, many of these participants have looked to me as their platform for voicing their musical life-stories, opinions and concerns about their art.

To sum up the foregoing arguments, as oral historical researchers, we must concede the fact that oral history is predicated on the active human relationship between historians and their sources. This transforms the practice of history in several ways: 1) The narrator not only recalls the past but also asserts his or her interpretation of that past. 2) The interviewee can be an historian as well as a source. 3) The primary aim of some historical projects has been the empowerment of individuals or social groups through the process of remembering and reinterpreting the past, with an emphasis on the value of process as much as historical product.⁴⁷

It has been a great honour and privilege to record the tales of my predecessors as well as my contemporaries. It is hoped that future researchers will accumulate a like number of extraordinary learning experiences as I did throughout the research process. To uncover and learn about one's own past has been a most liberating experience and it is hoped that this research will be looked upon as the genesis for

University of Cambridge Press, 1998, pp 110-14.

future scholarly work in this field.

⁴⁷ R. Perks and A. Thompson, 1998.

2.8 The Standard Questionnaire

- 1) How long have you played the pipes?
- 2) Who were your teachers?
- 3) What pipe bands did you play in? Did the band compete? If yes, what grade level did your band compete? Do you recall the cultural composition of the band?
- 4) Who was your pipe major? Who taught him?
- 5) If you competed in solo competitions, at what level did you compete?
- 6) What prizes do you consider most important to your piping career?
- 7) Did you have any connection to Pipe Major John Wilson?
- 8) What pipe bands were competitively successful during your formative years as a competitor (solo/band)?
- 9) What are some of your musical highlights - outwith the competitive platform (i.e. parades, conventions, weddings, tattoos, and concerts etcetera)?
- 10) Do you think Scottish immigration to Ontario was a catalyst in raising the standards of piping in Ontario? If so, who do you think was responsible?
- 11) When you were piping, did you recall any military pipers and bands that were competitively significant?
- 12) How significant a role did the militia regiments play in the development of the art between the 1920s and 1950s? What civilian bands were prominent in terms of standards of musicianship?
- 13) If you are familiar with John Wilson, why do you think he was important to the development of Ontario piping?
- 14) Do you have any John Wilson anecdotes (humorous or otherwise)?
- 15) What drew you to learn the bagpipes in the first instance?

2.9 - The Scottish World Festival and Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships Questionnaire

- 1) Did you ever participate/attend the Scottish World Festival? What years?
- 2) What were your impressions of the Festival?
- 3) Did you attend/participate in the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships? What years? Which band (s) did you perform with?
- 4) How well, in your opinion, did the Canadian pipe bands fare in competition with their Scottish counterparts? Were you able to discern a demarcation in standards between the Canadians and the Scots?

2.10 - Figure 2 - The Bill Livingstone Questionnaire

- 1) Where and when were you born?
- 2) When did you learn the bagpipes?
- 3) Who was your first teacher?
- 4) Where did you attend school?
- 5) How did you come into contact with Pipe Major John Wilson?
- 6) Wilson's proclamation in the final chapter of his memoirs was exceptionally generous in his praising of your accomplishments. How did you receive this? How do you feel about this presently?
- 7) Did you - or do you - see yourself as a 'pioneering' piper from Ontario in the early 1970s? How did you feel you were received by the Scots when you competed during that era?
- 8) I don't mean to conjure painful memories but, what were your feelings about the adjudicators' committee revoking your 2nd place prize at the Gold Medal in 1974 Northern Meeting, Inverness?
- 9) What prompted your interest in bands? More specifically, what catalysed the formation of the 78th Fraser Highlanders? Did you have any inclination that you would be leading the band today?
- 10) What were your initial goals in piping? How did they change at ages 25, 35,45 and 55? What are your present musical goals?
- 11) How do you think your peers perceive you today?
- 12) What was it like to experience winning the World Pipe Band Championships?
- 13) So you were competing in Scotland in the 1970s. When you returned to Ontario, what were your impressions of the scene here? And, did you have a good feeling about what was going on here in a musical sense? Or, did it occur to you at that point?
- 14) Did you ever participate in the Scottish World Festival?
- 15) The Festival was staged here in Toronto and these great bands from Scotland came over. Was that your first exposure to these bands?
- 16) Reay MacKay has remarked that John Wilson was the most self-disciplined individual he had ever met (in his approach to the music in both mind and body preparation). Do you get that from John? Did you get the impression from John that he was incredibly self-disciplined?
- 17) Did you ever hear John Wilson when he returned to competitive piping in 1972?
- 18) Changes to the Ontario piping scene. What do you see as some of the biggest highlights and drawbacks in Ontario piping?
- 19) How would you, as a piper of incredible stature, make your knowledge available to people in the piping community?
- 20) Where do you see Ontario piping going? Do you see piping in Ontario retrograding, in terms of competitive standards of musicianship?
- 21) How do you see the piping scene throughout the North American continent?
- 22) Given the context of the Inter-continental Pipe Band championships at the CNE in the 1970s, would you go so far to say that this competition was our equivalent to the World's Championships?
- 23) Do you think Canadian pipers/pipe bands need to continue to validate themselves

at overseas competitions such as the World's Championships and the Northern Meeting?

24) Do you see the 78th Fraser Highlanders as leading the art in an avant-garde fashion? Do you consider yourself on the leading edge of the music?

25) If you were researching a study on the history of Ontario piping, which aspect would you like to explore?

CHAPTER THREE

Historical Background

Renaissance Europe, overflowing with bold intentions to colonize new uncharted lands, burst onto the global colonial scene in the 1500 and 1600s. European explorers, soldiers, entrepreneurs and settlers would soon chart and colonize what became Canada, the United States, Mexico and the other nation states that now make up North and South America. The Europeans brought their technology, laws, religion and culture to the lands of the new world. Their attempts were daring, to be sure, as they came to the Americas with the intent to secure a wealthy colony that would return the supposed riches that were thought to be embedded in the soil and the sea.

Prior to Canada becoming a colony under British control, the British and French empires, characteristic of the Old World rivals at the time, aggressively competed in what eventually became a bustling fur trade economy dominating the eastern woodlands of North America.

First contact between French explorers and Native Indians took place in 1534 when King Francis I commissioned Jacques Cartier to set sail for the New World with a dual mission: first, to find a passage to the illusory Cathay Pacific region; second, to establish and maintain a colony demonstrating French splendour with Portugal and Spain. English colonists began to settle the region around present day St. John's, Newfoundland, under explorer John Cabot, an Italian, in 1497.¹

Warfare punctuated colonial life for the French and British settlers. These

wars for the local economies did not just affect the colonists. Numerous native tribes up and down what is now the Eastern Seaboard of the United States, Eastern Canada, the Ohio Valley and Louisiana were caught in the middle of the debacle between the two rival empires. The natives either declared their allegiance for one or the other or just simply got in the way. Many North American Indian tribes found themselves caught up in the ensuing melee, while some native civilizations simply disappeared. The experiences of the Huron provides perhaps the most appalling and tragic example of the scourge, destruction and cultural displacement wrought by European expansionism in North America.²

Nonetheless, colonial life, in one form or another, continued to develop in North America. English, Spanish, Scottish, French, Irish and a host of other continental European populations immigrated to the colonies in their various geographical settlements. But the force and statecraft of the European powers would play themselves out on the North American landscape in ways that continue to affect the political reality today. Perhaps the single most important event in the history of Canada occurred when the French and British empires faced each other in a confrontation for control of the northern half of the continent. In this sense, the Seven Years War, 1756-1763 (otherwise known as the French and Indian War), decided once and for all, the fate of the *Habitants* (the French Canadians) on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, the English speaking colonists of America, and their impending relationship subsequent to the signing of the peace treaty at Paris ending the conflict.

¹ J.L. Finlay and D.N. Sprague *The Structure of Canadian History*, Prentice-Hall 1989, pp. 7-10.



The great contest between France and Britain in North America (traditional enemies for centuries) grew out of a series of confrontations between the settlers and the Indians for control over the St. Lawrence and Ohio River valleys. What sparked this series of events were actions taken by George Washington who, under the direction of the lieutenant-governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, attempted to construct a fort at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monogahela rivers in order to safeguard the region from French control. The French, already well established at Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh), attacked Washington at Fort Necessity forcing him to surrender in the summer of 1754. Washington was permitted to return home with his men from the Virginia militia but these series of incidents sparked a remarkable increase in British military activity in North America. The following year saw similar advances throughout the region while France and Britain formally declared war in 1756.³ Indeed, the ensuing battles fought throughout the eastern woodlands proved to be bloody affairs.

What now is considered the great face-off between the two powers took place on September 13, 1759 when Marquis Louis Joseph de Montcalm, overall commander of French forces in Canada, chose to fight British General James Wolfe outside the walled city of Quebec on the Plains of Abraham. Montcalm's forces lost that day but the fate of New France was not decided until the following year when British forces over-ran Montreal in September 1760. Earlier in the year, French forces tried unsuccessfully to recapture Quebec but all was lost for the Bourbon King Louis XVI and his colonial jewel on the St. Lawrence. With the Treaty of Paris

² Bruce Trigger, *A History of the Huron People*, Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1976.

signed in 1763, France lost most of its North American possessions except New Orleans and the islands of St. Pierre, Miquelon, Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁴

Many historians suggest the British takeover of Canada (which they immediately re-named Quebec) was not the series of catastrophic events that some *nationalistes* or *sovereignistes* from Quebec would lead us to believe. Just three percent of the resident population (those who were from the ranks of the aristocratic class) returned to France after the conquest. Some suggest this decapitation retarded the cultural, social and economic development of the Canadians who would have played a key role in the new mercantile economy introduced under British rule. Others point out that the French Canadians were no more inclined to respect the new arrivals of British and colonial merchants than they would have French merchants as “military status [in Quebecois culture] conveyed more status, and therefore leadership, than success in trade.”⁵ The Catholic Church preached loyalty to their new British rulers hoping to avoid the tragedies faced by the Acadian deportations from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in 1755.

Contrary to expectations at the time, the relative quiet that ensued in Quebec the following decade was a welcome change for the British ruling class who hoped to shape Quebec to become another British colony. A programme of assimilation was introduced and official status from the Roman Catholic Church, French civil law and the seigneurial system (a form of feudal land tenure) were to be discouraged while a

³ Kohn, George C. *Dictionary of Wars*, Anchor Press, 1986, p 169.

⁴ *Ibid*, p 169.

⁵ Finlay and Sprague, *The Structure of Canadian History*, Prentice Hall Canada, 1989, p 70.

massive immigration of British settlers was expected to move in through land grants and other initiatives. The theoretical objectives of British expectations towards the former French colony were sound in practice but the social, political and economic realities of the French Canadians in Quebec prevented the realization of these goals: representative institutions of a government “agreeable to the laws of England” were not introduced and settlers from the American colonies and Britain were not forthcoming in numbers significant enough to outweigh the Quebecois. Instead, Governor James Murray, a Scot, ruled with the assistance of an appointed council consisting of seigneurs and Roman Catholic clergy. After 1765, Guy Carleton, Murray’s replacement, sought to codify the French Canadian way of life, legal, social and spiritual. Carleton appreciated that the French Canadians lived peacefully under an absolutist system and sought to entrench their rights as French speaking, Catholic, feudal land holding citizens under British rule. At first, Carleton’s initiatives met with stiff objection in Britain. However, by the early 1770s, the traditional good will shown by American colonists towards their British rulers in the former thirteen colonies had changed and Britain re-thought the French-Canadian question.

With the American colonists inflamed by a series of British tax policies designed to raise revenue for the massive debt incurred by the Seven Years War, the government in London saw an opportunity to seal an alliance with the Quebecois should a rebellion break out in the English speaking colonies. By 1774, the British government passed the Quebec Act legalizing the seigneurial system, French civil law and the right of the Catholic Church to collect the tithe. The French Canadian way of life had been codified by this act and it was to be administered under the

guidance of an unelected governor. This final act in a series of *Intolerable Acts* outraged the Americans who foresaw the day that unrepresentative institutions and absolutism were to be imposed on their colonies.⁶

The seeds of the American Revolution, planted by these unpopular tax policies, germinated with the Quebec Act. The American Continental Congress met in Philadelphia later that year to discuss a Declaration of American Rights. Soured relations between the British and Americans moved the English speaking colonies towards declaring their independence from Britain on July 4th, 1776.⁷ By then, peace among the colonies was a way of the past as the British and the American Continental armies launched their military campaigns up and down the eastern seaboard. Curiously, but not surprisingly, Quebec resisted American attempts to coerce the French speakers into joining their independence movement. Quebec would remain unconvinced by the Americans' arguments for liberties and the inherent rights of free men in a democracy (French Canadian suspicions were rooted in a belief that the revolutionaries were another English speaking majority intent on subsuming their culture as and when required). French speaking Quebecers opted out of participation in the American Revolution deciding, instead, to live with their newly codified rights and quietly observe the revolution from their enclaves along the St. Lawrence. In this way, Quebec remained a separate and distinct British colony after the United States nullified their colonial relationship with Britain.

⁶ Gwynne Dyer and Tina Viljoen, *The Defence of Canada*, McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1990, p 32.

⁷ George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History*, Second Edition, W. Norton and Company, 1988 p 297.

3.1 - The Plight of the Loyalists in Post Revolutionary America and the Road to Canadian Confederation

“Not everyone, perhaps not even a majority of the population in the separatist [American] colonies, welcomed independence. Nor was it a majority of the colonies in the British Empire that united to separate from the old arrangement.” So observed Finlay and Sprague in their analysis of the American colonists who remained loyal to Britain after the War of Independence.⁸ Yet, those who remained loyal in the former thirteen colonies, and whom the Patriots persecuted during the Revolution, had their lands confiscated and were after 1783, a suspected minority in the United States. The times had changed and the Loyalists were the former enemies of the independent Americans.

At the Peace Conference in 1783, the British reluctantly recognized the United States as an independent nation. But the plight of the Loyalists remained the same: no land, no livelihood and no friends in the new American Republic. George Brown Tindall observed that the negotiators at the conference “earnestly recommended” the restoration of the Loyalists’ property; however, he also pointed out that this was no more than a face-saving gesture for the British.

As a result, 30,000 English-speaking Loyalists migrated northwards. They landed in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec. Ten thousand settlers from this group arrived at Quebec (then encompassing the region of Ontario) expecting to find a political and social environment from whence they came:

⁸ Finlay and Sprague, 1989, p 77.

freehold land tenure, British laws, a Protestant religious establishment and representative government. By the Constitutional Act of 1791, Quebec was split into two provinces: Upper Canada (above the St. Lawrence and located West of Montreal) and Lower Canada (east of Montreal along the St. Lawrence).⁹ The act established the British system of government alongside the Seigneurial System so that two distinct nationalities co-existed with each other although relations between the French and British soon lapsed into an admixture of cultural, political and economic tension that continues to pervade Quebec society today. Suffice it to say, the basis for much of that tension finds its roots during this period of the constitutional development of Canada.

Even so, the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists represented the germination of the present day Canadian Confederation.

3.2 - Imperial Relations – Britain and the North American Colonies

From the passing of the Constitution Act of 1791, British North America was established to develop under British institutions but, like the American experience, demonstrated an early preference for democratic institutions. And like the Americans, elements of English and French Canadian society rose in armed rebellion in reaction to the aristocratic grip of governance that pervaded the seats of government in Montreal and Toronto. These growing pains were quickly rectified by the British after the quelling of the 1837 and 1838 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. The experiences convinced the British that the road to Canadian

independence would present the best solution to all parties concerned.

With Canadian confederation a political reality by 1867, a series of political, economic and military discussions amongst the British North American colonies were held in the years preceding the passing of the constitutional independence act. In 1864, the elected delegates of the original signatories of the British North America Act (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and the United Province of Canada (Quebec and Ontario), had met in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, to consider the possibility of a maritime union. It was here that observers from the larger United Province of Canada chose to drive the confederation initiative after the conclusion of the discussions. Led by a coalition of French and Anglo-Canadian politicians, the politically astute, Glasgow-born lawyer, John A. MacDonald, rose above his peers to push hard for the union. His and their initiatives to form a united federation, created the necessary impetus to expand the original concept from a maritime to a cross-continental union.

The economic, political and military context for a Canadian confederation must now be considered. This will provide the necessary milieu informing our own understanding of the context of this thesis.

By the 1860s, British concern for their North American possessions migrated to a position of detached concern. From the time of Seven Years War, the focus of British policy necessarily lay in continental affairs and their imperial possessions to the east – India. The British North American colonies slowly diminished in priority for the United Kingdom government. From the mid 1840s, British colonial and

⁹ Ibid., p 80.

economic policy de-emphasized British responsibility in Canada - passively encouraging colonial autonomy.

In 1846, and with the repeal of the British Corn Laws, preferential trading between the colonies and the Mother Country gradually came to an end and the granting of responsible government finally permitted the British North Americans to govern themselves.

By the 1850s, Britain became annoyed by their military responsibilities in North America. Although British prestige was at stake on the global stage, British politicians realized the ever increasing military power of the United States. The former English speaking colonies and Britain's relations with the Americans were strained in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution of 1776. In fact, the two nations went to war in 1812 resulting from a variety of outstanding grievances (a hang-over from the days of the Revolution) while diplomatic relations throughout the 19th century continued to be overwrought. On several occasions, the British demonstrated their military commitment in British North America by investing huge sums of money in fortifications along the St. Lawrence River and the Maritimes. But, it was not enough to construct these fortifications at Toronto, Kingston, Quebec City and Halifax. Britain also committed the manpower through her soldiers and sailors to maintain the necessary and overt military posture with the United States.

As the decades of the 19th century passed, the British grew financially weary of committing themselves to an anticipated campaign against the Americans. Moreover, since the colonies were granted democratically elected governments by the 1840s, London believed, appropriately, that Canadians should begin to contribute to

the costs of defending themselves.

The Canadians balked at this rhetoric throughout the 1840s, 50s and 60s. With scores of immigrants arriving in British North America from Scotland, England and Ireland, there was an unquestioned loyalty to the British Empire from these sectors of the population. And with a growing American empire whose foreign policy initiative was driven by the desire to conquer the entire North American continent, there was a sense of safety in belonging to the world's largest empire. Moreover, if any overt indicators gave the Canadian colonists a sense of military security, that lay in the British navy - the world's largest and most lethal at that time.

The Canadians, throughout the 19th century, did not express any desire to change their privileged military arrangements with Britain. How could they be otherwise? Yet, the cost of maintaining British soldiers and sailors in a North American setting was fiscally unsound and developed into a fervent political topic in London. If the colonials could govern themselves (as they had been doing since 1841) they could contribute to the costs to defend themselves. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli aptly described to Lord Derby in 1866, the sentiment most acutely felt about the British North Americans at the highest levels of government in London.

We must seriously consider our Canadian position, which is most illegitimate. An Army maintained in a country which does not even permit us to govern it! What an anomaly!...Power and influence we should exercise in Asia; consequently in Eastern Europe; consequently in Western Europe; but what is the use of these colonial deadweights which we do not govern?¹⁰

¹⁰ Gwynne Dyer and Tina Viljoen, 1990, p 117.

3.3 - Military and Political Context of Confederation

With the conclusion of the American Civil War in 1865, British North Americans gazed uncomfortably at the domestic situation south of the border. The American Army was, undisputedly, the world's largest and arguably, the most bloodied and experienced by the conclusion of the campaign against the Confederacy. Add to this already uneasy admixture, the contentious history of Anglo-American relations since 1776. The two nations were openly hostile to each other in both actions and oratory. Britain, the undisputed world-power, continued to taunt the Americans while Americans responded in kind through rhetoric and political posturing. As the American Civil War raged, Anglo-American relations continued to sour, and Canadians grew increasingly wary of American intentions should their war end favorably for President Abraham Lincoln and his Union supporters.

Britain did not help matters. Throughout the war and in a variety of gestures, the British supported the southern cause upsetting many northerners, including President Lincoln. According to George F. Stanley, the boiling point in Anglo-American affairs concentrated around the depredations of the Confederate naval cruiser *Alabama* to the United States Navy. The *Alabama* had been built in a British shipyard, annoying Americans to no end. Likewise, the Americans were equally galling to their British adversaries. The Trent Affair is a splendid case in point. The United States Navy stopped a British vessel, the *Trent*, on the high seas, arresting two Confederate agents aboard. An outraged British public demanded immediate retribution. The government in London sought an apology and a return of the two agents. They then proceeded to order 14,000 soldiers to Canada. "One war at a

time,” the president was heard to exclaim,¹¹ while the American Secretary of State, William Seward, demanded compensation through the annexation of the western lands under the control of the Hudson’s Bay Company. American reprisal was appropriate, in Washington’s view, and an emboldened American republic would almost certainly act on their annoyance at the British.¹² The matter resolved itself but not without some concerted diplomacy on behalf of the Prince Consort but, the bitterness and the exasperations did not soon pass between the two nations.

From a British North American perspective, a group of disorganized and disparate colonies could, it was argued, be easily overwhelmed by the American army should Washington choose to invade. This was a powerful tonic for the Canadians to act towards creating a union for defensive purposes.

Quickly following General Robert E. Lee’s surrender of the rebel army to Union Forces in April 1865, the government of the United States signaled to Britain their intention to end a reciprocity agreement signed with British North America in 1854. American anger was palpable and now coming to fruition in response to Britain’s southern sympathies. Moreover, this move was interpreted by the Canadians as a possible precursor to a strategic military maneuver to take over the colonies of the north.

In order to tip the balance of power in North American power politics, Britain would have to send tens of thousands of troops to Canada in the face of a renewed American threat. For Britain, this option was out of the question. Canada did not yield the economic output driving the British Empire. Simply put, the North

¹¹ Ken Burns, *The Civil War*, Public Broadcasting Corporation Video Series, copyright, 1989.

American colonies were not worth defending against a possible American military invasion (or the expenditure on Canadian defence was not worth the price of deterrence; should war break-out, there was no question the British would have acted but to maintain a large standing army in a land harvesting little wealth was obtuse).¹³

Britain, seeing the situation for what it was, encouraged the Canadian colonies to form themselves into an independent confederation (which they had begun to discuss at the Charlottetown Conference of 1864) allowing the British to withdraw their forces and dignify American supremacy on the continent. By 1866, the delegates from the united provinces of Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia met in London to draft a group of resolutions into a bill for submission to Parliament. On March 29, 1867, the British North America Act received Royal Assent and on July 1st that year, it became “lawful for the Queen...to declare by proclamation that the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick shall form and be One Dominion under the Name of Canada; and on and after that Day those Three provinces shall form and be One Dominion under that name accordingly.”¹⁴ Canada was born.

¹² Finlay and Sprague, 1989, p 176.

¹³ Ibid., p 177.

¹⁴ British North America Act (with Amendments to 1975) in the *Structure of Canadian History*, Appendix II, p 511.

3.4 - Scottish Settlement in Canada

According to author and historian Jenni Calder, nearly five million Canadians lay claim to some degree of Scottish heritage in their genealogy, representing around 15% of the total current population of Canada.¹⁵ This is clearly a significant statistic, and the cultural implications of the Scots' influence on the nation are considerable and manifested in many ways, including within the onomastic record:

The map of Canada is peppered with Scottish names. They have been given to rivers and mountains, towns and counties, bays and inlets. Canada's telephone directories are filled with them.¹⁶

The Scottish immigrants who came to Canada in the colonial and post-colonial eras figured prominently in all aspects of Canadian life. They played significant roles in the national development of the economy as well as the political and social formation of the nation. Scots were also active in the Canadian army, raising several regiments of militia, complete with Scottish inspired names and forms of dress. Also, the Scots were responsible for bringing with them to Canada the music of the bagpipes and the fiddle music of Neil Gow and the poetry of Robert Burns. This section will briefly address Scottish migration to Canada with a view to placing this within the broader context of the national chronology.

Scottish immigrants, like those of all nationalities, left their homeland for a variety of reasons. For many Scots, the factors which lay behind their decision to emigrate related to political and social upheaval within Scotland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but as Calder reminds us,

¹⁵ Calder, J. *Scots in Canada*, Luath Press, Edinburgh, 2003, p 3. See also *Statistics Canada Census*, October 2007, <http://www.statcan.ca/start.html>.

It was a tradition fostered by aspiration and a sense of adventure as much as by hardship and the pressures of penury, all of which would play a part in sending Scots to Canada. Although many left because they had no choice, it is probably fair to say that most believed that they were making a journey towards a better life.¹⁷

But as McLean points out, we must never lose sight of the scale of the choice that was facing a potential emigrant, nor indeed of the social statement which accompanied the decision to leave:

The decision to emigrate is a radical choice, one which expresses clearly the emigrant's preference for life elsewhere than the homeland. In the case of the Highland Scots, whose attachment to their native glens and communities was legendary, unprecedented numbers of people chose to go – a devastating critique of the new order.¹⁸

The first serious Scottish attempt to settle Canada commenced in 1622 and 1623 with the establishment of a colony in Nova Scotia (New Scotland) led by Robert Gordon and William Alexander. These attempts were a direct result of the lands granted on the eastern shores of North America by King James VI. Although the colonizers and their sponsors fully intended to succeed in their initial forays to the New World, ultimately their attempts ended in failure and the colonies were abandoned in 1632 after the terms of a peace treaty gave the rights of the land to the French. Although the Scots who had sponsored these projects had been discouraged by their experiences (no doubt influenced by the unforgiving Canadian winter), they were not dissuaded from their aim to succeed at permanent settlement.

Good fortune and historical circumstance would come to the Scots enterprisers. Through a dramatic series of events marked by international peace

¹⁶ Calder, 2003, p 2.

¹⁷ Calder, 2003, p 3.

¹⁸ McLean, M. *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1991, p 9.

treaties during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tens of thousands of Scots would eventually settle Canada's most distinctively Scots province. The first and most celebrated group of Scottish settlers who were the beneficiaries of these treaties sailed on the ship *Hector* and landed at Pictou County in September 1773. They were therefore the first group of settlers to bring a lasting Scottish cultural flavor to the province, which now successfully promotes this heritage through its tourist industry.

Scottish migration gathered momentum during the second half of the eighteenth century following the 1745 Jacobite Rising and the subsequent social and cultural upheaval which altered the very fabric of Highland society. The story of the highlands through the post-Culloden years has of course been well rehearsed,¹⁹ and needs little expansion here, but suffice to say the combination of draconian government-led retribution, a rapidly rising population, a precarious agricultural system, acute overcrowding, the erosion of traditional paternalist relationships between landowner and tenant and the emergence of new attitudes towards land use and land tenure led many to conclude that a better life awaited them overseas.

Permanent Scottish settlements to Ontario began following the Seven Years War. Desiring to create a loyalist following among their recently won lands in the former colony of New France, the British government encouraged soldiers of the disbanded 78th Fraser Highlanders and retirees of the 42nd Black Watch to settle among the French-Canadians of Quebec. And so settlements along the St-Lawrence

¹⁹ See, for example, James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, John Donald, Edinburgh, 2000; Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2000; T.C Smout, *History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830*, London, 1972; Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, London, 1991; T.M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: the Social Transformation of the Highlands*, Manchester University Press, 1994; T.M. Devine, *Clearance and Improvement: Land, Power and People in Scotland, 1700-1900*, John Donald, Edinburgh, 2006.

River were created for this group of former Scottish soldiers along the south shore and into the Eastern Townships bordering the United States. Additional permanent settlements followed the conclusion of the American Revolution.²⁰ In the mid-1780s, Loyalists from the Mohawk Valley in New York – many of them Scots and no longer welcome in the American republic - moved into an area of Ontario that is now Glengarry County, located approximately 50 kilometers east of Ottawa. This was the first band of settlers preceding a large-scale migration from Glengarry and neighbouring districts of the western Highlands of Scotland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. MacLean identifies four main phases of this migration movement into Glengarry County, each with its distinct characteristics, but combining to create a highly significant Highland presence within that part of Ontario. The aforementioned ‘Loyalist’ migrants constituted the first of these, followed quickly by the main phase which lasted from 1785 to 1793, then two more identifiable groupings which she terms ‘The Peace of Amiens’ and ‘Post-1815’ emigrants respectively. This pattern of large-scale migration was later complemented by a series of smaller groups and individual families. The end result, asserts MacLean, is that together, all of these people were ‘almost rebuilding whole western Inverness communities in Glengarry’.²¹

The Glengarry Highlanders played such a significant role in the transference of Scottish cultural traditions to Canada that the county is now the host of the Glengarry

²⁰ Matthew Shaw, *Great Scots! How the Scots Created Canada*, Heartland Associates Inc, 2003, p 124.

²¹ Maclean, 1991, p 6. Although the majority of settlers did come from eastern Inverness-shire, other areas of the Highlands were represented too: there was a small but significant influx of families from Loch Tay in Perthshire in 1815, for example. MacLean, 1991, pp 161, 216.

Highland Games and the North American Pipe Band Championships, the largest of its kind on the continent. Although Glengarry is now a productive farming community, all was not fruitful in the early years of the settlement as the climate and soil were bitter contenders challenging the settlers' immediate subsistence. Poverty and hardship were more often than not the hallmarks characterizing this central Canadian settlement. But the challenges did not dissuade the waves of immigrants and by 1806, around ten thousand of Scotland's Glengarry Highlanders were living in this region of eastern Ontario.²²

Economic conditions in Scotland during the 18th century were as significant a catalyst as any other driving the Scots to Canada. As wealthy as the emerging British Empire was becoming, the results of this prosperity were difficult to see in the Highlands. Rising rents and poor harvests in the 1770s meant that the individual could no longer subsist in his situation. For many, remaining in Scotland meant abject poverty and impending starvation. The situation was no better in the Lowlands as textile workers – a dominant industry in the south - were being encouraged to seek their fortunes in North America as their economy experienced the travails of a serious recession.²³

So the Scots left; and they left in significant numbers and with great speed. It is estimated that around 15,000 Highlanders left for Canada between the end of the last Jacobite rebellion in 1746 and 1815.²⁴ So depopulated had Scotland become that

²² Calder, 2003, 47.

²³ Ibid. p 47.

²⁴ Shaw, 2003, p 13.

Samuel Johnson, England's leading scholar, was moved to comment about the "epidemic fury of emigration" during his tour of the Highlands in 1773.²⁵

But the numbers leaving were to become much more dramatic: an estimated 170,000 Scots (predominantly Lowland Presbyterians) emigrated to Canada between 1815 and 1867. And between Confederation and the end of the 20th Century, over 750,000 Scots moved to Canada. Their influence continues to shape the Canadian narrative. Matthew Shaw captured the spirit of the Scots immigrants when he wrote,

The truly astonishing part of the story is what happened after the Scots arrived: In very short order, they took over the country, dominating all institutions in the budding nation to such an extent as to defy credulity. The Scots became so prominent so quickly and continued to exert such power throughout the development of Canada that the whole phenomenon is certainly one of history's great anomalies, one that merits considerable attention.²⁶

Scotland's loss was Canada's gain. This is revealed in all facets of Canadian life stretching back to European contact with the French explorer Samuel de Champlain. Champlain's pilot, a Scotsman named Abraham Martin, navigated the St Lawrence River in 1603. Canada's first prime minister, Sir John Alexander Macdonald, was a Scot from Glasgow; the first Liberal prime minister elected to office in 1873 was Alexander Mackenzie - a Scottish stonemason from Perth. One of the major financiers of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Canada's first transcontinental) was a Forres man named Donald Smith (latterly Lord Strathcona). When Smith arrived in Canada in 1838, he spent the next 30 years working for the Hudson's Bay Company in Labrador, the mainland portion of Newfoundland. He eventually

²⁵ James Hunter, *A Dance Called America*, Mainstream Publishing, 1994, p. 39.

²⁶ Shaw, 2003, p 14.

became the director and major shareholder of the company working from its headquarters in Montreal.²⁷

The dominant influence of the Scots continued. The chief engineer of the transcontinental project was Sandford Fleming, a Scot originally from Fife and who, during the 1860s, gained his major survey experiences by charting large tracts of land for the Intercolonial Railway.²⁸ Sandford Fleming became internationally renowned for inventing Standard Time (the 24-hour clock) and was a founding member of the Royal Society of Canada. He is also credited for the invention of Time Zones, gained through his work experiences in the Canadian west. Of course, not much could have been achieved in the westward expansion of Canada without the exploits of the indomitable drive of explorer Alexander Mackenzie. Mackenzie was the first European to complete the first transcontinental crossing of the upper half of North America. Mackenzie trekked as far north as the Arctic Ocean eventually returning west to reach the Pacific Ocean in July 1793, a full decade preceding the much-vaunted Lewis and Clark expedition sponsored by President Thomas Jefferson.²⁹

Given that the establishment of British North America was founded on the economic ventures of the fur trade, many Scots who were already participating in the enterprise eventually assumed leading roles within the business community. We briefly referred to the likes of Donald Smith's influence on the Hudson's Bay Company during the mid-19th century; it is also important to note the company's earlier ventures in the late 18th century. The Hudson's Bay Company's work force at

²⁷ Calder, 2003, p 120.

²⁸ Ibid., p 12.

that time consisted predominantly of men from the Orkney Islands. In fact, four out of every five workers or 80 per cent of the employees were specifically recruited from this most northerly island.³⁰ Of course, the Scots made their strongest imprint on the fur trade in the era immediately following the fall of Quebec. It was during this period that the controlling interests of the fur trade returned to France and the influx of Scottish traders and adventurers moved into Montreal and Quebec City, literally filling the social, economic and political vacuum that was created by the Conquest. Such was their influence and the availability of furs during this period that the Hudson's Bay Company's only significant rival was the North-West Company, created by Simon McTavish, a Scot who had apprenticed into the trade in New York at age 13, moving onto Montreal in search of greater opportunity after the British take-over. The North-West Company became a resounding success under McTavish.³¹ The Scottish influence over the development of the Canadian nation remains one of the more compelling historical subtexts in Canada's long history. To say that the Scots' contribution to Canada's national development was profound would in itself be an understatement. Their descendants continue to drive the Canadian economy, participate in national political life, occupy leadership positions within the Canadian Forces and of course, drive the vibrant musical scene of Canadian piping. From the first colonial adventures in the early 17th century - whether in the employ of the French or the British -the Scottish presence in all aspects of Canadian life asserted itself and it continues to do so today. One

²⁹ Lamb, W. Kaye, "Alexander Mackenzie" *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=36643&query=Mackenzie%20AND%20Alexander>.

³⁰ Shaw, 2003, p 21.

manifestation of this, of course, has been the ongoing development of the bagpiping tradition, as is discussed in the following chapter.

³¹ Ibid., p 24.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pre-Confederation Bagpiping in Canada

As noted previously, the bagpipes became entrenched in Canadian society with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists although the instrument may have made its Canadian debut on the Plains of Abraham in September 1759. It was on these plains that the epic assault led by the 78th Fraser Highlanders - to the accompaniment of their pipers - determined the fate of the French empire's North American possessions. Another Scottish unit enlisted against the French during the Seven Years War¹, the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment (Black Watch), were deployed throughout what is now the north eastern United States where the regiment suffered grievously at the Battle of Fort Ticonderoga (Fort Carillon) at the mouth of Lake Champlain in 1758.²

The bagpipes were also evident throughout pre-Confederation society. Pipe Major Steve Mackinnon wrote that "Scottish fur traders and adventurers brought the instrument with them to beguile the tedium of long months and years in isolated trading posts."³ Certainly the musically inclined Scots traders of the North-West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company used their musicianship to promote trade with the Native American bands of the Iroquois Confederacy and the plains Indians. Even the explorers Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser "knew the value of the pipers as a medium of peaceful penetration."⁴ Mackinnon continued:

¹ Also known as the French and Indian War fought between the British and French Empires between 1755 and 1763.

² Rene Chartrand, *Canadian Military Heritage Volume II 1755-1871*, Art Global Inc. 1995, p 215.

³ Steve Mackinnon, "The Bagpipes in Canada" in *The Canadian Geographical Journal*, 1932 p 233.

⁴ *Ibid.* p 233.

The Indians were known to be partial to the warlike strains. Whether, as has been suggested, more or less frivolously, they were hypnotized or frightened by the sound, or whether it was a case of genuine admiration, matters little. The fact is that the aboriginal Canadian responded and still responds to the pipes as to no other white man's music. The Hudson's Bay Company was fully aware of this and used the instrument to advantage in its dealings with the Indians. Pipers accompanied the company's officers on ceremonial rounds and the bagpipes voiced the majesty of the law over a vast tract of northwestern territory.⁵

Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1828, employed a piper to trumpet his arrival on a tour of various trading posts throughout the Canadian North West.⁶

David Waterhouse, a scholar at the University of Toronto, notes in the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada*, that "although undoubtedly there was much activity, it was difficult for players in isolation from the fountainhead of their tradition to maintain or improve standards even if their enthusiasm was undimmed. The names are recorded of some Canadian pipers and of Scottish émigrés pipers active around World War 1; but there is no way of ascertaining their standards or performance, and no one seems to have investigated whether they may have handed down unusual variants of traditional tunes."⁷ Our purpose here is not to determine which tune arrangements proliferated throughout British North American society (there is probably no way to accurately determine this); rather, to trace the historical evolution of the instrument in 19th century Canada. However, Waterhouse is correct in his assumption that "the bagpipes must have been introduced to Canada by the

⁵ Ibid. p 234.

⁶ A water colour was commissioned by the Hudson's Bay Company to commemorate the occasion and in 1928, piper Donald Fraser, a descendent of Sir George Simpson's piper, played at Fort St. James to mark the centenary of Simpson's tour.

⁷ David Waterhouse in *Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada*, 2nd Edition, Kallmann, Potvin and Winters (eds.) University of Toronto Press, 1992 pp. 66-67.

earliest Scottish settlers to Nova Scotia and Upper Canada.” Waterhouse asserts, “that until quite recent times the story has to be told as a series of footnotes to the history of piping in Scotland.”⁸ What we do know is that the bagpipe made its presence known from the earliest days of colonization and that a thriving community of pipers and experts alike was extant throughout the British colony.

4.1 - Pre-Confederation Pipe Bands

Pipe bands in the modern sense (comprising a group of pipers performing together with a corps of drummers [basses, tenors, and snares]) have flourished throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. However, pipe bands are a relatively recent invention, coming into existence sometime around the Crimean War period.⁹ Pipe bands were a military creation and numerous Scottish regiments stationed in Canada throughout the 19th century employed pipers and drummers who were executing their musical duties in such a manner (see “below Bagpipes in Victorian and Edwardian Canada”). However, from a purely Canadian context, the formation of pipe bands can be traced to the formation of volunteer militia companies. In this context, the oldest pipe band in Canada is Montreal’s Black Watch (The Royal Highland Regiment of Canada).¹⁰

⁸ Ibid. p. 66.

⁹ David Murray, *The Music of the Scottish Regiments*, The Pentland Press Limited, 1994, p 113.

¹⁰ David Waterhouse in *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada* and Archie Cairns (formerly the Senior Pipe Major of the Canadian Forces) assert that the first Canadian pipe band was the 5th Highland Regiment of Hamilton, founded in 1816. I disagree. No published record of the regiment exists. Even as late as 1928 when the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Hamilton published their first regimental history, no account is provided of the 5th Highland Regiment or its pipers. In fact, according to the Argyll’s regimental historical committee, Hamilton’s first militia unit was the 13th Battalion who were raised in 1861 to counter the American threat during the Trent Affair. *Historical Records of the of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise’s) Formerly the*

4.2 - Scottish Bagpipes in Victorian and Edwardian Canada

As noted previously, the music of the Scottish Highlands has played a significant role in the cultural development of the province of Ontario. Although this study deals primarily with the development of the art in a twentieth century context, bagpipe music was well entrenched within provincial society long before the dawn of the twentieth century. Given the inherent martial nature of the pipes coupled with the cultural composition of 19th century Canadian society, (predominantly British with the exception of Quebec), it is not surprising that the Canadian military were avid supporters of bagpipe music - the instrument overtly symbolized Upper Canadian (Ontarian) cultural provenance. This leads us to ponder what type of bagpipe community existed in the Ontario region prior to the turn of the century. Who assumed the leadership roles in the bagpipe community in the nineteenth century? And, by what means was the community able to survive up to 1914 (the approximate commencement date charting the course of this study)? Although this section will attempt to illuminate our purview of 19th century piping, it is by no means an exhaustive nor a comprehensive examination of the community. Moreover, we may never gain an accurate historical portrait of piping in Victorian Ontario. Historians have not been forthcoming in scholarship regarding Victorian pipers in Central Canada. This may be attributed to a lack of published primary source material as well as the absence of recording technology in the 19th century. Mature scholarly assessments, therefore, are wanting. It is my hope that given the limited resources

91st Canadian Highlanders Militia, 1903-1928, Robert Duncan and Company, 1928, p 7.

available to the modern-day researcher, this brief synopsis of 19th century piping will be sufficient to serve as a platform for creating an historical context in the present circumstance. Moreover, it is my belief that if other scholars are desirous of serious academic examination about nineteenth century bagpipe communities, the following historical material may catalyze them to explore this field.

The Canadian Army Militia in the latter nineteenth century was, by far, the most important supporting element of the bagpiper. We begin to see a role for the piper in the militia as early as 1841 when the 3rd Middlesex Regiment held its annual parade. The degree of military efficiency, as articulated in the following excerpt, suggests a level of ineptitude in the rank and file. Nonetheless, the pipers were there to inspire their comrades.

Here the subs [subalterns] display their politesse. They had none of the drill sergeant tone about them, but the openings in the ranks were so wide. 'Mr. So and So' was civilly requested to close up. **WON'T YOU BE KIND ENOUGH TO STEP NEARER THIS WAY...NOW YOU MEN BE GOOD ENOUGH TO KEEP YOUR PLACES, OR HALT, AND LET THE OTHERS COME UP, CAN'T YOU,** were the sharpest expressions made use of... The line would come up as a zigzag as the fence around the field. And the marching in quicktime with a bagpiper, a fiddler, or a single drum and fife their head made no very grand impression. But the mess at McGregors (tavern) made up for all the deficiencies and the heroes of Sevastopol could not display a more martial spirit.¹¹

Although various Scottish Gaelic and Caledonian societies employed pipers to provide appropriate music for various celebratory occasions (like Robbie Burns Dinners, St. Andrews Balls', Highland Gatherings and the like) the pipers' role during the genesis of volunteer Highland companies in the Canadian militia during

¹¹ Traditions and Customs of the Canadian Forces, Part 3: Bands and Music. Published by the Department of National Defence, 30 May 1991, p. 38

the 1860s would mark his place for musical identification.¹² When these companies organized themselves into regiments between the 1860s and 1890s, the pipers' place within the regimental organization solidified. A century after the formation of those militia units, Lieutenant-Colonel Langille of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa observed "the pipes have been indigenous to Canadian Highland Regiments throughout the entire history of Canada." Thus the bagpipe had demonstrated its purpose and survivability within the confines of the Canadian highland regiments. These regiments throughout the 20th century blooded the fields of Europe and Asia while simultaneously creating a storied military history linking the music of the pipers to the lore of the regiments. Langille's introductory remarks in his 1982 training publication, *To Understand the Pipes and Drums of War*, instructed his readers to appreciate the special bond between pipers and their regiments, their relationship to their modern day warrior counterparts, and the distinctive music's call to a regimental past. Langille continued, "It is useful therefore ... to have a quick reference which contains general knowledge on the historic role that this instrument has had in highland regiments and the special association which the band of pipes and drums continues to have on the life and character of their regiment."¹³ Langille's words were appropriate in 1982 for they echoed familiar sentiments of a Canadian-Scots militia soldier's affection for his pipe band, no less so than his historical predecessors. A strange familiarity rings through Langille's diction, evoking similar affections found in the work of historian Alexander Fraser. A century before Langille,

¹² George S. Emmerson, "The Gaelic Tradition in Canadian Culture", in *The Scottish Tradition in Canada*, edited by W. Stanford Reid, McClelland and Stewart in association with the Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1976, p 245.

¹³ M.V. Langille, *To Understand the Pipes and Drums of War*, Published by The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa and the Department of National Defence, Ottawa, Canada, February 1982.

Fraser wrote, "One of the necessary parts of a Highland regiment is a pipe band."¹⁴ As regimental historian of the newly raised 48th Highlanders in Toronto, Fraser strongly and rightly believed in the requirement to record his regiment's support of the pipe band, not only for posterity's sake, but perhaps more importantly because the pipes and drums fulfilled a sacred yet profane role in the organization of the unit. Moreover, the thought of a Highland regiment without a piper, let alone a band of pipes and drums, was inconceivable to Victorian historian Fraser and his later twentieth century counterpart, Langille. No doubt, the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders (not unlike other pipe bands in Scottish units throughout the British Empire) were one of the most overtly demonstrative groups of culturally minded citizens in the Toronto-Scots community during the 1890s. After all, given the novelty of a new Scottish regiment, its pipe band, and the interest the 48th generated from a sympathetic Anglo-Scots community, it is no wonder that the organization and its pipe band flourished (especially when the 48th and her regimental counterparts like the 5th Royal Scots of Montreal and latterly, Ottawa's Cameron Highlanders, were regularly seen by an adoring public, given their ceremonial commitments).

Excluding a chapter about the pipes and drums in the newly published *History of the 48th Highlanders* would never occur to Alexander Fraser; historical and social considerations within the 48th would dictate the band's inclusion in this Victorian historian's mind. To have disregarded the pipes and drums from the official history of the regiment would have spelled social and political suicide for Fraser. The 48th's Officers Mess comprised men of significant social and political standing who wielded

¹⁴ Alexander Fraser, *History of the 48th Highlanders of Toronto*, E.L. Ruddy, Toronto, 1900, p. 85.

their influence in the affairs of the community.¹⁵ Significant financial expenditure to outfit the pipes and drums with uniforms and instruments was incurred by the officers of the regiment. Fraser's exclusion of the pipes and drums from the regimental history would, most certainly, raise the ire of these powerful socialites. Therefore, due deference to their efforts would be dignified through the romantic yet glorified history of the band. Indeed, Fraser not only lauds the merits of the pipe band's participation in Toronto community life; he details the lengths to which the regiment went in recruiting its championship pipe majors and provides a brief musical history of their individual lives (see below Regimental Pipe Majors of the 48th Highlanders). Fraser then, politically astute, paid homage to the patrons of his art (not unlike the archetypal regimental piper composing a tune to honour his commanding officer, a common practice amongst pipers today). However, the political climate in Fraser's time should not skew our interpretations of his responsibilities as the regimental historian. In fact, in his history of the pipes and drums, Fraser writes deftly about the longstanding battle history of the pipes within highland culture providing a context for the inclusion of the pipers within regimental organization. "Tradition," he wrote, "assigns a place to the piper at Bannockburn, and, even English Chaucer sang of the bagpipes as an instrument of war." Fraser thus informs his readers of the prestige afforded pipers in history. The piper's distinguished martial provenance is carefully charted in his text, perhaps serving as a lesson to his fellow officers. Fraser then commented upon the pipes' and drums' inclusion in his Victorian world of regimental organization. "An efficient pipe band," he considered, "is the pride of every true

¹⁵ See Chapter Two, "The Regiment Organized" in *The History of the 48th Highlanders* regarding the social and economic standing of the senior officers of the regiment during the 1890s.

commanding officer of Highlanders; without one the very heart would be out of the thing.”¹⁶ Conceding the loss of the soul of a highland regiment without their pipers, Fraser painstakingly details their historic role inspiring Scottish soldiers to brave and glorious deeds in battle. Fraser informed his readers of the potency which pipe music embodied, suggesting an evangelicalism about their role and mission within a military hierarchy. This musical evangelism, quite symptomatically, intertwined the pipers within their regimental lore. Doubtless, these musicians fired the imaginations and enthusiasm of their fellow soldiers. The piper’s music also embodied centuries of highland tradition through their renditions of ancient airs and stirring marches. Surely, when Pipe Major Robert Ireland struck up his pipes on a drill evening at the Upper Canada College buildings in Toronto and performed *Scots Wha Hae* and *The Green Hills of Tyrol*, it certainly conjured images of Scotland’s anecdotal past in the minds of his fellow militiamen.

Bagpipe music, pipers and pipe bands flourished in Toronto - as elsewhere in the former British colony - with the 48th Highlanders. The model to which units like the 48th looked for inspiration was animated by the Scottish regiments of the British army, many of which were stationed throughout British North America in the 19th century. These regiments with their overt cultural plumage - kilts and bagpipes - created an exciting energy amongst the colonial population with their distinctive dress and music. It is instructive, for our purposes, to briefly examine some of these regiments who brought with them to Canada their regimental pipers who undoubtedly catalyzed the Canadians to model their native militia regiments after their imperial

¹⁶ *History of the 48th Highlanders of Toronto*, p. 85.

examples. Not a few of Scotland's romantic and battle hardened regiments served in the frontier towns of British North America. These included: the 42nd Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) from 1851 to 1852; the 71st Highland Light Infantry from 1824 to 1831 and from 1837 to 1854; the 78th Highlanders (Ross-Shire Buffs) from 1867 to 1871; the 79th Cameron Highlanders 1825 to 1836 and from 1848 to 1851; and the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders who were garrisoned in Toronto from 1838 to 1845.¹⁷

In her discussion about British soldiers stationed in Montreal, Elinor Kyte Senior assessed the social impact of the 71st Highlanders shortly after their arrival there in 1837 (the 71st's new security task was not made easy as they found themselves in the midst of the Lower Canadian Rebellions of 1837-38, perhaps stirring the fever of apprehension between themselves and the citizens). When the 71st disembarked at the port of Montreal, the regimental band performed "Voulez-vous danser, Mademoiselle" as the Montrealers "cheered without end."¹⁸ From the moment of their arrival, these Scottish troops forged close links with the local inhabitants. Its soldiers formed the escort for the eight rebels destined for exile in Bermuda in 1838; they were responsible for burning and pillaging south of the St. Lawrence river during the suppression of the second rebellion; and, when the Beauharnois insurgents were marched to jail, it was the music of the 71st who "annoyed us during almost the whole of the journey with the noise of their bagpipes."¹⁹ This would not be the only occasion when the music of the pipes either

¹⁷ *History of the 48th Highlanders of Toronto*, p 19.

¹⁸ Elinor Kyte Senior, *British Regulars in Montreal: An Imperial Garrison, 1832-1854*, McGill-Queens University Press, 1981, p 164.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p 164.

annoyed or endeared the 71st to the residents of Montreal. According to Senior, officers of the 1st Provincial Regiment and the Provincial Cavalry found the pipes “something of a mixed blessing.” When the soldiers of the 71st arrived at the border to help the frontier forces bring in the New Year, their commanding officer, Sir Hew Dalrymple, brought a 71st piper to aid in the celebrations whom one provincial officer referred to as his “noisy attendant” and considered it “lucky for us that he did not bring five and twenty [since] human nature could not have survived the infliction.” Yet, the “stirring pibroch” produced by the strutting piper was somewhat softened as Dalrymple distributed a quaich “to all who desired to drink in the New Year.”²⁰

In a different period and setting, the pipers of the 71st were welcome ambassadors to their British North American hosts. We see this in the actions of the citizens of the city of St. John, New Brunswick. When the 71st were ordered to garrison Montreal, the local inhabitants met the regiment at Watson’s Hall to express their regrets “that the rules of the service required that Her Majesty’s 71st be removed from this garrison.” In an address to the officers and men of the 71st, the citizens thanked the commanding officer for his “kindness in allowing the excellent band and bugles and National Pipers...to play for the gratification of the public.”²¹ No expressions of “noisy attendants” or “infections” upon the sensibilities here. The 71st were posted from Montreal to St. John for a period of two years in 1840. By 1842, the regiment was augmented by its reserve companies forming a second battalion. The 1st battalion departed almost immediately for the West Indies leaving

²⁰ Ibid. p 165.

²¹ Ibid. p 165.

its 2nd battalion at Chambly, Quebec.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Kingston, Upper Canada (now Ontario), Alexander MacDonell, wooed by the skirl of a 71st piper, was lured to St. Helen's Island (Montreal) where he met Major General Sir James MacDonell and enjoyed a conversation in Gaelic with the piper. The Bishop then invited General MacDonell and the commanding officer of the 71st to join him and the superior of the Sulpicians on a visit to the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and to dine with the priests of the seminary. From these social occasions arose various invitations for the regimental band and pipers to participate in such wide-ranging events as the Grand Rural Festival of the Montreal Horticultural Society to attending the solemn High Mass at the Roman Catholic Church on St. Jean Baptiste Day. On one occasion, the 71st led the recessional of Quebecois worshippers out of the Catholic Church to the strains of "Vive la Canadienne," a Quebecois folk song melody which elegantly transcribes to the scale and range of the bagpipes as a quick march.

The ability of the 71st to mix with and captivate both British and French Montrealers was impressive. Of course, this was evinced by the number of engagements they filled during their residency there and this varied throughout their tenure. On one occasion in 1849, the combined bands of the 71st (military and pipe bands) led the "largest procession" of citizens ever witnessed in Montreal to Mack's Hotel where the new president of the St. Andrew's Society, Hugh Allen, officiated at the St. Andrew's Day festivities.²² On another, when the city firemen left for the annual picnic at Beauharnois, pipers of the 71st "all plaited and plumed in their tartan

²² Ibid. p. 166.

array accompanied them to provide the music for the day.”²³

The soldiers of the 71st, like all British troops stationed in British North America, were rotated intermittently from one garrison to another. These fortresses dotted the Canadian frontier throughout Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Frequently, independent companies of the 71st found themselves executing their duties at Chambly, St. John, Kingston and in the former provincial capital of Canada West, Toronto,²⁴ where three companies were stationed in 1850. No doubt, everywhere they went, the 71st endeared themselves to the local populations. By 1854, the 71st’s duties in British North America ended abruptly. They returned to Britain to prepare to embark for participation in the Crimean War.

Demonstrating equal panache and drama amongst a resident Canadian population, the 78th Highlanders (Ross-Shire Buffs) perhaps provide the most impressive example of inspired regimental piping. The 78th were, arguably, the greatest regimental patrons of pipe music during the Victorian period. The regiment was stationed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, between 1869 and 1871 and provides us with a glimpse of their musical activities while there (see photo of historical re-enactment unit at Appendix Six pg. 349).

²³ Ibid. p 166.

²⁴ Upper Canada (Ontario) was renamed Canada West as a result of the Act of Union, 1841. Coincidentally, Lower Canada (Quebec) was renamed Canada East. Both provinces were united and their provincial parliaments merged to form an uneasy political relationship between English and French Canadians. The Act of Union was drafted upon a recommendation by a member of the House of Lords, Lord Durham. “Radical Jack” as Durham was nicknamed in England, was sent to Canada to report on the political and social state of the colonies after the combined rebellions of Upper and Lower Canada in 1837-38.

The 78th Highlanders were raised for service during the French Revolution in 1793 by Colonel Francis Humberstone Mackenzie. Today, the 78th are perpetuated by the 1st Battalion the Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordons and Camerons), an active infantry unit in the British Army's order of battle. Like their modern day counterparts, piping in the 78th was firmly established and highly encouraged. In fact, for the first recorded reference of pipers performing together - somewhat analogous to band playing (see footnote 14 for first recorded instance of pipe band playing) - was reported by Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) after the Battle of Assaye in September, 1803 when he recorded that "the band of the 19th (Light Dragoons) and the bagpipes of the 78th play delightfully."²⁵

When the 78th arrived in Halifax, they brought with them their full complement of five pipers and one pipe major; however, photographic evidence suggests that additional pipers from the officers and non-commissioned officer ranks were utilized. The pipers of the 78th were under the command of Pipe Major Ronald Mackenzie (1842-1916. See colour sketch, Appendix Six, pg. 347), a small wiry-built individual whose reputation as a fine exponent of the art was recognized by his contemporaries. MacKenzie was a native Strathpeffer, Ross-Shire, and was taught the pipes as a youngster by his uncle, John Ban Mackenzie, "King of Pipers."²⁶ Ronald Mackenzie began competing at the age of 17 and, like his uncle, was awarded the Gold Medal for piobaireachd at the Northern Meeting, Inverness in 1863. Mackenzie enlisted in the 78th in 1859, was appointed pipe major at age 23, and served in that capacity until his retirement from the army in 1879. According to one

²⁵ Cameron Pulsifer, unpublished manuscript, Halifax Citadel Defense Complex.

²⁶ C. A. Malcolm, *The Piper in Peace and War*, Hardwicke Press, 1927, p 256.

source, he was long regarded as one of the best pipers of his day. He won many piping championships, though it has been suggested that one of the reasons for his success was the fact that he was accompanied to all competitions by a Major Jock Forbes of the 78th who secured a seat on the adjudicators' committees. According to Jeannie Campbell in the *Piping Times*, Mackenzie was the most fortunate of all competitors for whenever he competed, he was awarded all the first prizes with the single exception of the Highland Games at the Edinburgh Exhibition in 1886 where he failed to gain any prizes.²⁷ Even so, he was awarded the title "Champion of the Champions" at Inverness in 1873 and was one of the more prominent figures in the Scottish piping community. Mackenzie was said to have been a "most reliable man of gentlemanly nature" and "a very nice fellow."²⁸ According to Robert Meldrum²⁹ who studied piping in the 78th under Mackenzie's tutelage (while stationed in

²⁷ D. R. MacLennan (half brother to Pipe Major George S. MacLennan, Gordon Highlanders) spoke of Ronald Mackenzie to the Piobaireachd Society Conference in March, 1976. "He was known as the king of the pipers but I don't think that appellation really should have applied to him - according to what my father [Lt. John MacLennan, Edinburgh Police] said at any rate. He was a close neighbour of my father's - they had neighboring crofts in the Black Isle and my father said that every morning - before he joined the army - Ronald would be out at the end of his house at seven o'clock in the morning playing until eight o'clock before breakfast. Well there's not many of us do that nowadays." *Proceedings of the Piobaireachd Society Conference*, 1976, p. 6.

²⁸ Cameron Pulsifer, unpublished manuscript.

²⁹ According to D. R. MacLennan who recalled meeting both Ronald Mackenzie and Robert Meldrum. "He was a very, very nice fellow," said MacLennan of Mackenzie. He continued, "I met him once when we came to the house about 1910 or so. He was then piper to the Duke of Richmond at Gordon Castle in Fochabers. He was well liked by the officers of the regiment and I remember Bob Meldrum telling me...that they came back from Canada and the ship came round - I think they transhipped at Belfast - and then came up the West coast of Scotland, round the Pentland Firth and down into the Moray Firth and disembarked at Fort George. Bob Meldrum said that when the ship was approaching Fort George, the commanding officer, a chap called Squeaker Mackenzie who had a very (some folk thought he was a woman in disguise) very high pitched voice, he shouted out "Hey Ronald, play up 'Caber Feidh.' I said to Bob, "Do you mean to say that the commanding officer addressed the Pipe Major as Ronald?" "My boy," said Bob, "Ronald Mackenzie never got anything else but Ronald from the officers." Now that was something wasn't it? It doesn't happen often these days either. Well that's the great Ronald Mackenzie, a very nice little man. I liked him very much in spite of what my father said. *Proceedings of the Piobaireachd Society Conference*, 1976 p 7.

Halifax), his teacher was “well liked by the officers.”³⁰

It is not certain how many pipers Mackenzie actually had at his disposal. Cameron Pulsifer believes there were at least two additional pipers in Halifax. However, a statement by an annalist of the North British Society recorded that “700 men of the 78th Highlanders with 16 pipers attended the parade held in Halifax on 15 August, 1871 to celebrate the birth of Sir Walter Scott.” Pulsifer suspects that this number may have been blown out of proportion as a “contemporary newspaper account reports that only two companies of the 78th, at most 150 ranks, were present at this parade.” However, what is certain is that at least five official pipers and possibly five additional³¹ - if not more - were available for performances between 1869 and 1871.

The pipes and drums of the 78th were given ample opportunity to showcase their musical talents as they performed on numerous occasions while in Halifax. The *Acadian Recorder* reported on June 14, 1869 that “a detachment consisting of eighty men of the 78th Highlanders headed by their fine pipe, fife and drum corps, marched from their quarters through Sackville and Hollis streets to the Province Building this afternoon to take part in the ceremonies attending the prorogation of Parliament. They created quite a sensation as they passed down the street.”³² A Halifax Garrison order dated 1 April, 1871 instructed the 78th to provide a guard of honour of “1

³⁰ Eventually, Meldrum transferred to the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders and became that regiment’s pipe major in 1875. Like his teacher, Meldrum was also awarded the Gold Medal at Inverness in 1886. He later left the army to accept the appointment of personal piper of Lord Willoughby d’Eserby, later Lord Ancaster, but rejoined the army in 1915 as pipe major of the 3rd Battalion Cameron Highlanders (See Malcolm’s *The Piper in Peace and War*).

³¹ These additional pipers not counted amongst the official roster of pipers were Alexander Ross, Alexander Stables, Robert Meldrum, Alexander Cameron and Thomas McMillan. See Pulsifer’s unpublished manuscript.

³² *Acadian Recorder*, June 14, 1869.

captain, 2 subalterns, 4 serjeants, 100 rank and file, with band, drums, pipes and Regimental Color” to attend a similar ceremony at Province House. And on September 19, 1871, a detachment of the same size “with Band, Drums, Pipes and Regimental Color” was ordered to Cunard’s Wharf to greet Lieutenant General Doyle who was returning from an inspection in Quebec. Doubtless, the band, pipes and fifes were performing with their drummers on these occasions.³³ In addition to their military musical duties, the pipers would often perform at various social occasions organized and attended by the local citizens who regularly extended invitations to the officers of the 78th and other members of the Halifax garrison. Once again, these events demonstrated the ability with which these Scottish soldiers, like their compatriots of the 71st Highlanders in Montreal, mixed with their colonial hosts.

Like many Scottish regiments, the 78th held annual highland games and while in Halifax, these were held in conjunction with the local highland society. John Gibson has written extensively about the early games in Maritime Canada and has said,

Records of the various Caledonian clubs’ Highland games in the Maritimes are poor; newspapers are often the best source of information. One difficulty however, is the newspapers tended to present a limited, socially acceptable, somewhat stereotyped image of what was going on. The frequency of visits to the events by prominent British personages even in the twentieth century shows how keen organizers were to establish the Maritime gathering as socially acceptable in English terms...In Nova Scotia as elsewhere in Canada, the Highland games idea took deeper root than in the United States by virtue of the British connection. Highland gatherings often involved special visits by the vice-regal and the prominent, processions with pipers and military brass bands, speeches and committed Britishness in general...Even as a Dominion, the country was highly conscious of empire.³⁴

³³ See Pulsifer, undated.

³⁴ John Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Piping: 1745-1945*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998, pp. 235, 230-231.

Gibson believes the games tradition in Halifax was launched around 1860. The Antigonish Highland Society held their first annual gathering - which continues to this day - in 1863.³⁵ By 1869, the highland games in Halifax had become an annual event and surely with a Scottish regiment such as the 78th residing in the garrison, must have created a fevered pitch in the tone and presentation of the event. Among the events at these games were competitions in the Highland Fling, the Sword Dance, the Reel of Tulloch and piping. At the games held on McNab's Island (located in the harbour) on August 25, 1869 - attended by none other than the visiting Prince Arthur - first prize in the highland fling was won by Alexander Cameron of the 78th. Pipe Major Ronald Mackenzie won second prize. First prize in piping was won by Alexander Staples, 2nd place by Piper McMillan, both of the 78th. Mackenzie won the highland reel but it is not known if he competed in the former competitions.³⁶

Outwith their competitive exploits, the pipers of the 78th had other duties to fulfill during their day at the games such as performing for the arrival of the chief of the Halifax Highland Society, Alexander Keith. Later during the games, the regimental band and pipers performed a choice selection of pieces while the honoured guests enjoyed refreshments in the marquee. The *Halifax Weekly Citizen* lauded the day's activities by stating, "O What music was there! Never did McNab's or any

³⁵ Ibid. p 229. Gibson notes that the *Eastern Chronicle* (printed in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island) reported "the Glengarry [Ontario] champion [highland dancer] was also expected to be there and he would probably astonish the natives by an exhibition of extraordinary skill and strength. R. R. MacLennan, the subject of the aforementioned newspaper article, stood 6 feet 8 inches tall and must have struck an imposing stance, on or off the dancing platform. The article however, reveals that the games tradition in Ontario had obviously been initiated and the organizers there (members of the various Gaelic and Scottish societies in the localities scattered across the province) were already designating certain select competitions as 'championship' category of events."

³⁶ Puslifer, undated.

other island, re-echo to grander strains.”³⁷

In September 1870, the 78th attended the games on McNab’s Island again and improved their overall standings in both piping and highland dancing. If we can take C. A. Malcolm’s and Jeannie Campbell’s testaments that Ronald Mackenzie was one of the most respected pipers in the Scottish piping community, the standard to which the 78th pipers performed must have been exceptionally high for on this occasion, Piper James Campbell won first prize with Piper James Mathieson coming second, edging out their pipe major. (Quite possibly, Mackenzie stood down from the piping competitions. Or, perhaps he was the piping adjudicator.) There is no evidence to suggest Mackenzie’s participation in piping or judging. However, Mackenzie competed in the highland dancing competitions where he was victorious in the Highland Fling and the Reel of Tulloch. A photo taken of Mackenzie in 1867 reveals the pipe major instructing 78th soldiers in the art of highland dancing so he must have possessed some measure of talent as an exponent of the art.³⁸

Highland games were not only held as an annual gathering in the early days of their provenance. At least in 1871, the annual gathering was centred on a theme; for the people of Halifax, the games were held at the Horticultural Gardens on August 15, 1871 in conjunction with the centenary celebration of the birth of Sir Walter Scott. Pipe Major Mackenzie competed in the piping events at this venue and was awarded first prize. But Mackenzie’s pipers did not gain a single prize on this occasion. We are left to speculate as to whether the pipers of the 78th actually

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *The Piper’s Day: Regimental Duty Tunes of the Queen’s Own Highlanders*, Copyright, Regimental Headquarters, 1991. p 23.

competed at all.³⁹

Besides highland games, the 78th pipers were prominent in their public appearances at entertainment nights staged either by the regiment or the local theatrical community. The most dramatic and perhaps the most comic entertainment involving the 78th was their participation in a theatrical production re-enacting the regiment's role at the siege of Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The scene of the event, carefully re-constructed by Pulsifer, describes the evening in the following excerpt:

However, the pipers did figure in another re-enactment [sic] of the relief of Lucknow, which occasionally took place in Halifax. This was the staging of the popular Victorian dramatic potboiler 'Jessie Brown, or the Relief of Lucknow' by the Anglo-Irish playwright Dion Boucicault. The play's action concerned the last desperate days of the besieged inhabitants of the Lucknow Residency, before relief arrived. Death at the hands of the fiendish sepoy seemed to be imminent [sic] except that one of the inhabitants, a Scottish girl named Jessie Brown, kept hearing the sound of far off bagpipes - to the disbelief of her comrades. In the play's final scene when all seemed lost, the females of the residency were making preparations to have themselves shot so as to avoid a worse fate when they were taken by their sepoy [sic]. Just as the firing squad of British soldiers was about to pull their triggers, however, a blare of bagpipes was heard, a relieving force of highlanders rushed onto the stage, and all was saved. The curtain closed on scenes of wild rejoicing. This play enjoyed great popularity in America and at in at least the white portions of the British Empire. It was staged frequently in Halifax the decades following its premiere in New York in 1858, and at least five performances took place during the years that the 78th was here. It was understandable, perhaps, that the producers should have arranged for the members of the 78th, the regiment which had actually performed the deed, to portray the relieving force in the play's final scene. If the memoirs of the leading actress, Clara Morris (who went on to become one of the leading 'stars' of the New York stage), can be relied upon, at a performance at Temperance Hall on 30 June, 1870 an incident occurred which must have been long talked about in Halifax theatrical circles. The 78th 'extras', according to Morris, "having been too well treated beforehand and being moved by the play...became so hot that they attacked the mutineers not only with oaths but with clubbed muskets; and while blood was running and heads being cracked in sickening earnest on one

³⁹ Ibid. p 23.

side of the stage, a sudden wall-rending howl of derisive laughter rose from the part of the Theatre favored by the soldiers. I saw some holding programs close to their eyes, and knew that something was awfully wrong.

The Scotch laddies were pouring over the wall, coming to the rescue of the starving besieged. I looked behind me. The wall, a stage wall, was cleated down the middle to keep the joint firm, and no less than three of the soldiers had portions of their clothing caught by the cleats as they scaled the wall. The cloth would not tear, the men were too mad to be able to see, and there they hung, kicking like fiends and - well the words of a ginny old woman who sold apples and oranges in front of the stage will explain the situation. She cried out at the top of her voice: "Yah! Yah! Why do ye no pull down yer kilties, instead o' kicken there? Yah! Yer no decent - do yer hear?" And the curtain had to come down before the proper time to save the lives of the men being pounded to death, and the feelings of the women who were being shammed to death. A surgeon had to attend to two heads before their owners could leave the theatre, and after that an officer was kind enough to come and take charge of the men loaned to the manager.

Evidently, the *Halifax Evening Reporter* did not report the incident, choosing instead to report that "A squad of the 78th Highlanders with pipers assisted in the representation of the closing scene of the piece, which was received with enthusiasm by the audience."⁴⁰

An alternative form of social interaction in which the 78th participated with their Haligonian hosts were the meetings of the local Highland Society. On these occasions, the 78th pipers usually provided a showcase of music and highland dancing to the Society members. In addition to their interaction with civilians through these meetings, members of the pipe section also taught local residents in the art of the bagpipe. Of course, we have already discussed one of Ronald Mackenzie's most noted pupils, Robert Meldrum (see footnotes 34 and 34) but evidently, Mackenzie also taught a native Haligonian - John MacLauchlan, son of the manager of the Halifax tobacco company A. A. & W. Smith - who displayed all the requisite

⁴⁰ *Halifax Evening Reporter*, July 2, 1879.

musical capabilities to become a champion competitive piper. In 1879, Alexander Mackenzie, editor of the Scottish publication *The Celtic Magazine* visited Halifax as part of a Canadian tour. Prior to leaving Scotland, Alexander Mackenzie met Pipe Major Ronald Mackenzie at the meeting of the Gaelic Society of Inverness and informed him of his plans to visit Halifax. "Well if you are," said the Pipe Major, "you must call and see my old pupil John MacLauchlan, son of MacLauchlan the tobacco manufacturer there, one of the best Highlanders I ever met from home. Before I left Halifax, the pupil could almost play as well as his master, and if he continued to practice and progress as he did when I was there I expect he will be quite equal if not better than myself." When Alexander Mackenzie visited Halifax, he called on MacLauchlan and spent the evening listening "to the pipes played in perfect style. I never heard a cleaner finger on the chanter, and for time, spirit, and accurate playing, I honestly believe that the teacher's prediction has been verified, and that the pupil is as good as his master." The editor believed that if MacLauchlan competed at the North Meeting at Inverness "he would carry away some for the principal prizes and possibly the medal." This is quite a testament to Mackenzie's abilities as an instructor as well as MacLauchlan's talents as a musician.

Unfortunately, this is the last we hear of the talented Haligonian piper: no further details concerning MacLauchlan have surfaced since Mackenzie's report in *The Celtic Magazine*. Moreover, historian Cameron Pulsifer in his research on the 78th has not been successful in uncovering any more of this curious individual's life.⁴¹

On November 16, 1871, the 78th regimental band and pipers gave their

⁴¹ Pulsifer, undated.

farewell performance at Temperance Hall embarking for Scotland shortly thereafter.

We see through the activities of units like the 78th Highlanders, their unique musical contributions to Canadian society and how they influenced the character and make-up of the militia- specifically, the Canadian highland regiments. Bagpiping would play a prominent role in defining the character of units such as the 5th Royal Scots of Montreal, the 48th Highlanders of Toronto, and the 91st Canadian Highlanders in Hamilton. Piping in Victorian and Edwardian Canada found its domain in the ranks of these regiments. When these units were called to arms during the First World War, their pipers would play a dominant role in encouraging their comrades to victory across the battlefields of Western Europe.⁴²

4.3 - The Evolution of the 19th Century Pipe Band

Pipers and drummers, it is generally agreed, began to perform as an ensemble by the middle of the 19th century. The first recorded incident of pipers and drummers performing together took place, surprisingly, not in Scotland but rather in Montreal, Quebec in July, 1848. The vessel carrying the 79th Cameron Highlanders for duty in Canada had become ensconced in the dense fog of the mighty St. Lawrence River. A diary kept by a lieutenant with the Camerons recorded that “The Pipers and Drummers were placed on the forecastle to warn vessels ahead by their discord.”⁴³ Interestingly, Pipe Major John MacDonald of the 79th composed *The 79th's Farewell to Gibraltar* on the occasion of that regiment's departure from their

⁴² See below “Canada's Victoria Cross Piper” for Piper James Richardson's exploits at Regina Trench, 1916.

⁴³ See Diane Henderson's “Colonel Maude and His Pipers,” *The Queen's Own Highlander*, vol. 22, no. 62, 1982, p 24.

garrison duties in the Mediterranean. It is the author's belief that the practice of pipers and drummers performing together was well established by 1848. Given a musician's nature to experiment with alternative music forms - and in the military context, experimenting in the corridors of a barrack room if not openly on the parade square was probably a common occurrence - it would not be surprising to learn that these military musicians were in fact inventing a new musical genre for the period. It would also seem logical to suggest that their experiments were an effective method to combat the boredom precipitated by the daily drudgery of routine garrison duty and thus by mental necessity, the pipe band was born. As no documentary evidence has emerged to suggest otherwise, the deliberate act of musicianship - or discord, depending upon the interpretation of the listener - perpetrated by the 79th Cameron Highlanders would seem to be the premiere performance of the modern day version of the pipe band. By the time of the Crimean War, the practice of pipers and drummers performing together was well established. Author C. A. Malcolm, in his 1927 publication *The Piper in Peace and War*, described the evolution of their amalgamation. "In the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries, pipers played without any drum accompaniment. In some corps, each company marched or doubled past the saluting base to the marching or charging tune of the battalion played by the piper of one company. This was later altered, so that the pipers of all companies, with the drummers, stationed opposite the saluting base, act as one band while the companies double past."

4.4 - Regimental Pipe Majors of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, 1891-1913

We can see in the foregoing discussion on piping in Victorian and Edwardian Canada that the art was well entrenched and highly regarded in the southern Ontario region, particularly so in the Toronto region with the 48th Highlanders. By 1900, three pipe majors had served in this regiment: Robert Ireland from 1892 to 1895, Norman MacSwayed from 1895 to 1900, and Farquhar Beaton who led the band from 1900-1913.

Robert Ireland's reputation as a piper of singular note was well established on his appointment in 1892 since he, according to Fraser, "was the best player on the North American continent." Ireland had served as a piper in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders before immigrating to the United States and subsequently to Canada (his move to Toronto resulted from the initiatives taken on behalf of the 48th to secure him for the pipe major's position). Ireland figured at many highland games in the north-eastern United States and in Ontario and for many years, held several championships, among them, as Alexander Fraser notes,

being the Champion Cup of Canada presented by the Caledonian Society of London, Ontario and the Champion Bagpipe Trophy of North America (won three times) presented by the West Elgin Caledonian Society, Dutton, Ont. In the bagpipe contests held by the North America United Caledonian Assn., of whose committee he was a long member, he was prominent, and generally the leading competitor. As a composer of marches, he occupies a flatteringly high place. When Pipe Major of the Forty-Eighth he composed a march in honour of the Regiment, and named it 'Lieut.-Colonel John I. Davidson', after the commanding officer of the battalion at that time. The march is an exceedingly beautiful composition, on account of the delicate intricacy of the gracing and combinations, it is heard to better effect, in the hands of a good piper...it holds a high place in the estimation of the lovers of the pipes. It is greatly admired in the Old country, and just as in some instances one song has made a poet famous, so this one tune has raised Mr. Ireland to a niche in the piper's temple of fame. Other compositions might be mentioned also, were they associated with the gallant forty-Eighth. The writer, however, may be

pardoned if he makes a single exception and acknowledges here Mr. Ireland's tune named after him, which also has met with no small praise.⁴⁴

After three years of leading and training the pipes and drums, Ireland relinquished command of the band to a fellow Scot from Dingwall, Norman MacSwayed. Little is known about MacSwayed; however, he served with the British army and was a piobaireachd performer of some merit, receiving an award for his performances at the Braemar Gathering in Scotland. MacSwayed was reputed to have been a strict disciplinarian but was praised by Alexander Fraser as being "a thoroughly capable leader." MacSwayed returned to his native Scotland after serving with the 48th for five years.⁴⁵ By 1900, the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders began to flourish. The band's new pipe major, Farquhar Beaton, would capitalize on the foundation laid by Ireland and MacSwayed. Under Beaton, the pipes and drums grew to a strength of 16 pipers and seven drummers; however, as Fraser recorded, "there are quite a number under tuition who do not rank with the strength of the band." Accordingly, Fraser reports the strength of the pipe section to be "21 in number, a sizeable organization by contemporary standards." Beaton was a welcome addition to the regiment and was highly respected for his work ethic. He organized four rehearsals per week for the 48th, "two for beginners and two for advanced" with much of Beaton's energies focussed on teaching. "With the former," Fraser alluded,

⁴⁴ *History of the 48th Highlanders*, p 86.

⁴⁵ According to the Queen's Own Highlanders' publication *The Piper's Day*, a piper Norman MacSwayed of the 78th Highlanders composed Cuidich'n Righ as the 1st Mess Pipes for the Sergeants Mess. It is reported here that MacSwayed later became pipe major of the Stirlingshire or Highland Borderers Militia but makes no mention of the 78th's MacSwayed emigrating to Canada during the 1890s. It is possible that the Canadian MacSwayed served in the 78th Highlanders. A strong case is made in Norman's favour as his father Angus was pipe major of the 78th from 1833-37. This unit survived in name until Cardwell's 1881 Army reforms when they were amalgamated with the 72nd Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders and became the 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders.

great pains are taken. Besides the ordinary scales Mr. Beaton has devised simple scales, which explain those given in the books, with the result that the music is simplified and made easier to the learner. Attention is given to the capacity of each member of the class and special exercises are given accordingly. Therein lies Mr. Beaton's success as an instructor. He has introduced a new practice to his band, viz., playing the four parts, the melody, tenor, alto, bass, of the tune at the same time, on an orchestral basis, as has been the practice with some of the Old Country regimental bands of many years, but hitherto unknown in Canada.⁴⁶

Beaton first began piping at the age of 14, and showed early promise as a competitive soloist. He was awarded the solo piping Championship Medal of Edinburgh in 1881 against a reputed 15 pipers including one William MacLennan. Beaton was also the recipient of the Chicago World's Fair Championships and Gold Medal; from 1895 to 1897, Beaton received "every first prize for which he competed and he holds the first place for two of the three years required for the championship trophy of the West Elgin Caledonian Association." Beaton was a gifted composer and had published two tunes with David Glen of Edinburgh: "The Midlothian Amateur Pipe Band" and "The North American Pipers' Association March." Another of Beaton's melodious compositions, "Colonel D. M. Robertson", was written to honour his commanding officer.⁴⁷ Beaton gained considerable fame as a professional piper in Canada and the United States.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p 87.

⁴⁷ "Colonel Robertson" is performed annually on November 11th by the pipes and drums as the regiment approaches their cenotaph to observe Remembrance Day.

4.5 - Formation of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's) of Canada, Hamilton, Ontario

Much like the volunteer militia companies in Toronto and Montreal, the citizens of Hamilton were inspired by the examples set by the recognition of the 48th Highlanders and the 5th Royal Scots. Hamilton, quite naturally, raised several bodies of militia throughout the 19th century when their American neighbours periodically threatened their security⁴⁸ or during outbursts of civil disobedience.⁴⁹ In Hamilton by 1862, all existing independent militia companies were organized into one unit, the 13th Battalion, whose purpose was to defend the colony in national emergencies. Number Three company, the Highland company (adorned with kilts), were raised in 1856 and operated within the administrative confines of the 13th. However, Number Three company eventually provided the impetus to raise an independent highland battalion. After numerous meetings among the leading citizens of Hamilton, a deputation travelled to Ottawa in the spring of 1903 and met with the Minister of Militia and Defence, Sir Frederick Borden. A petition with letters of support promising aid from the various Scottish societies (such as the St. Andrew's Benevolent Society, the Sons of Scotland and the Gaelic Society of Hamilton) was presented to the minister. The citizens of the new committee selected William Alexander Logie, a lawyer by profession and a captain of the 13th, to lead the movement for the formation of the new regiment. Logie called for 700 volunteers, formed his officer-corps, and sought the support of the Inspector-General of the Canadian Militia, Lieutenant General The Earl of Dundonald. Dundonald threw his

⁴⁸ The War of 1812, the Trent Affair in 1862 and the Fenian Raids of 1866 for example.

⁴⁹ The Rebellions of 1837-38 and the North-West Rebellion of 1885.

support behind the formation of the regiment and on September 16, 1903, the 91st Regiment Canadian Highlanders was born. On June 2, 1905, an official alliance was created by Royal Warrant, and the Canadians became allied to Scotland's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. By 1920, the 91st were re-designated the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's).⁵⁰

The pipes and drums of the 91st Canadian Highlanders were raised in conjunction with the regiment in 1903. The first pipe major of the band was Pipe Major Munro. He was succeeded by Pipe Major Alexander McGregor and in 1913, Pipe Major Charles Dunbar was appointed upon his retirement from the Gordon Highlanders (see below, 'The Role of the Canadian Militia'). Dunbar was to have a great impact not only upon the development of the Argylls' pipe band but also upon the standards of piping in Ontario in general. Dunbar would teach such prominent pipers as John Knox Cairns (who subsequently became pipe major of the Canadian Argylls and who would teach the pipes to his son Archie),⁵¹ Sydney Featherstone and other notables in the Hamilton area. Dunbar led the Argylls' pipe band until his death in 1937.⁵²

⁵⁰ During the First World War, the opportunity for the Scots and Canadians to associate behind the lines was not lost. The 91st Canadian Highlanders were perpetuated by the 16th and 19th Infantry Battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Given the strengths of these wartime associations, notwithstanding the uniform similarities of both units, the Canadians pushed for the name change. *Historical Records of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's) Formerly the 91st Regiment Canadian Highlanders, Canadian Militia, 1903-1928*, Robert Duncan and Company, Hamilton, Ont. 1928, pp. 6-12

⁵¹ Archie Cairns became such a proficient competitive piper that he would win the coveted Hendrie Gold Medal and Clasp for piobaireachd in post-World War Two Ontario. The strength of the Argyll tradition for bagpiping continues to be felt in the competitive performer community through the influences of Archie Cairns. In 1999, Archie's son John Knox, though having never served in the Argylls, won the Gold Medals for piobaireachd at Inverness and Oban, a rare occurrence for a piper to win both medals in the same year.

⁵² *Ibid.* p 23.

4.6 - Crown Patronage

It is not known the extent to which Queen Victoria's official representatives in Canada were responsible for establishing an office similar to the Sovereign's Piper; however, we do know through author C. A. Malcolm that Pipe Major John MacDonald of the 72nd (Duke of Albany's Own) Highlanders was piper to the Governor General of Canada, the Marquis of Lorne.

The Marquis of Lorne (Sir John Douglas Sutherland Campbell) was appointed Governor-General in 1878. Prior to his arrival in Canada, he had sat as the Liberal Member of Parliament in the British House of Commons representing Argyllshire. He was accompanied to Canada by his wife, Princess Louise, the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria. The vice-regal couple lived in Ottawa until the end of their term in 1883. Sir John later became the Duke of Argyll.

As the sovereign's representative in Canada, the Governor General was called upon to officiate over parliamentary proceedings as well as to host and attend a myriad of functions throughout the Canadian dominion. It seems appropriate, given the Marquis's Scottish background, and his Mother-in-Law's affinity with the Highlands, that he should appoint his own personal piper. How this was initiated is not known. It is also not known in what capacity Pipe Major MacDonald served the Governor General and the Princess outwith his musical functions. However, it would not be an inaccurate conjecture to suggest that his duties were of a servant's nature, perhaps analogous to the modern day Sovereign's Piper. (At the time of writing, Pipe Major James Motherwell, M.B.E., is Queen Elizabeth II's piper. Motherwell is also an associate of the author of this study. Motherwell has informed me that his role not

only includes playing the pipes for the Queen under her dressing room window from 0900hrs to 0915hrs daily; he is also employed as a type of aide-de-camp briefing foreign heads of state and other visiting dignitaries.)

Pipe Major MacDonald was a pupil of the famous personality during the 19th century, the “King of Pipers”, John Ban Mackenzie. MacDonald’s musical proficiency must have been very good; it is safe to suggest he was a virtuoso given his gold medal win at the Northern Meeting in 1856.⁵³ Like many of his contemporaries in the army, MacDonald’s career was peppered with overseas service, some of it in wartime. He accompanied his regiment to the Crimea for the war against the Russians in 1854. In 1857, the regiment was on the move again, this time to India to quell the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857. On his return to Britain, the regiment was inspected in London by Queen Victoria. Evidently, the Queen was taken by the Pipe Major’s deportment and held a pleasant discussion with him during the inspection. Either through his appearance or his power to charm - probably a combination of both - MacDonald received the Royal command to proceed to London to be photographed in order that his picture might be preserved at Windsor Castle. A reproduction of this photo appeared in the *Illustrated London News*. After retiring from the army in 1865, MacDonald was appointed pipe major of the Stirlingshire Militia. In 1878, MacDonald accompanied the Marquis of Lorne to Canada to take up his post as Piper to the Governor General at Rideau Hall (Government House) in Ottawa, Ontario.⁵⁴ To what degree MacDonald participated in the colonial piping community is not known. Like Ronald Mackenzie of the 78th Highlanders,

⁵³ The Piper’s Day. P 72.

⁵⁴ C. A. Malcolm *The Piper in Peace and War*, First published in 1927, re-issued in 1993 by Hardwicke Press, p 253.

MacDonald probably taught a few piping students in the Ottawa area when his duties did not see him travelling with the vice-regal couple. Nonetheless, the point that a professional army pipe major was appointed to this post is acknowledged for our purposes here. And certainly, the professional calibre of MacDonald was not lost on the local citizens in the national capital region. That MacDonald was appointed to the post of Governor General's piper illustrates the extent to which the Marquis of Lorne was desirous of perpetuating his Scottish roots within the Dominion which was settled at that time, in large measure, by the Scots.

When the Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise arrived in Canada in 1878, Canadians were enthusiastic about their new head of state. English Canadians during that period were committed to Queen Victoria's Britain and were overtly demonstrative of their loyalties to the empire and its global contributions – for better or worse – in science, economics, the arts, constitutional monarchism and the rule of law. Of course for colonial Canadians, in one form or another, all of these traits were embodied by members of the British Royal family. This explains the Canadians' excitement at the prospect that Princess Louise would be the first royal resident as a head of state for the Canadian dominion. The royal couple made many lasting contributions to Canadian society during their tenure: they encouraged the establishment of the Royal Society of Canada, the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, and the National Gallery of Canada.⁵⁵ Perhaps with their departure along with John MacDonald in 1883, the opportunity of establishing a Royal Canadian Piping Society was lost. Nonetheless, the precedent was set for a permanent posting to

⁵⁵ See the official website of the history of the Governors General of Canada at www.gg.ca/history/bios.

Rideau Hall for a Canadian equivalent of the Sovereign's Piper during MacDonald's time there.

4.7 - Regimental Highland Games

The practice of highland game sponsorship (like that of the 78th Highlanders in Halifax between 1869 and 1871) was later copied by the 48th Highlanders of Canada. On Saturday August 19th, 1893 "under the patronage of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Kirkpatrick, and of Lieut.-Col. Davidson and Officers of the Regiment"⁵⁶ a Military Tournament and Scottish Games were held at Toronto's Rosedale Grounds. Music was supplied by the regimental bands under the direction of Band Master John Griffin, Pipe Major Robert Ireland, and Bugle Major Robertson. According to the 1893 programme, the professional piping competitions fell into four categories: piobaireachd, marches, strathspeys, and reel and a separate fourth category "confined to members of the 48th Highland pipe band. Winners in 1, 2, 3 and pipe major debarred."⁵⁷ Highland dance events were also included in the games in addition to a highland dress category where a "Best Dressed Highlander" was chosen amongst a field of entrants aiming to out-dress one another in a showcase of supposed tartan traditionalism. Curiously, there are no details in the regimental records of a pipers' adjudication panel. It can only be assumed that the pipe major of the regiment acted as the piping judge. First prize for the piobaireachd in 1893 was \$12.00. In 1894, the regiment staged its second annual highland gathering and altered the conditions of the piobaireachd competition. The regulations read, "In

⁵⁶ 48th Highlanders Scottish Games and Military Tournament, Programme dated August 19, 1893.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

addition to playing a pibroch, each competitor shall write an essay, not to exceed 500 words, on the pibroch, stating the position it occupies in Bagpipe music, its peculiar characteristics, the occasions on which it can be appropriately used, with historical references and allusions. The essays shall be the property of the regiment. In awarding the medal, the judges shall take into the account the merits of the essay as well the merits of the playing of the pibroch.”⁵⁸ Surely this must be one of the few occasions in piping history where competitors were required to submit a thesis in addition to performing the music testifying to their eligibility to compete. Moreover, this passage also provides some explanation of the mystery behind the adjudicators’ panel in that it consisted of more than one individual. But, who were these individuals? Were they pipers? How did the judges weigh the merits of the performance against the merit of the essay? Major Archie Cairns stated that as late as the 1930s and even up to the 1940s, numerous adjudicators in Ontario were not even pipers themselves, completely unaware of the finer nuances of the music or musicianship. In the case of the 48th’s highland gathering, we do not have evidence to tell us if the adjudicators were pipers or not. The 1894 winner of the professional pibroch was awarded \$8.00 (reduced by \$4.00 from the previous year) and a silver medal donated by the Gaelic Society of Toronto. The 1894 games also revised their best-dressed highlander competition to “The smartest turned out soldier (private)” which was confined to the soldiers of the 48th. In addition to the music and dancing events, amateur athletics (bicycle, obstacle, running races “100 yards in kilts” and a tug-of-war) were organized alongside an animal race in which “goats, dogs, horses,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

and donkeys [were] barred.” There was a further stipulation in the animal race in which “sticks and whips [were] not to be used.” One can only imagine what the entrants chose to race and how they inspired their beasts to cross the finish line. “Catching a greasy pig” also fetched a prize in the 1894 games. The practice of military sponsored highland games seems to have been established by militia units such as the 48th in the 1890s, demonstrating a genuine affection for ‘things Scottish’. Incidentally, a final note in both the 1893 and 1894 games urged all interested parties that “having in view the national character of the event, all who can conveniently do so, are earnestly requested to attend in the kilt”.⁵⁹

4.8 - Canada’s Victoria Cross Piper - James C. Richardson

Given the leading role the military played in Canadian piping up to the beginning of the 20th century, it comes as no surprise that a large number of pipe bands would be raised within the ranks of the Canadian Army during the First World War. The first Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) battalions, raised in the summer and fall of 1914, comprised significant bodies of native Scots and Canadians of Scots descent.⁶⁰ Pipe Major Steve Mackinnon, a native Scot who emigrated to Canada in 1911 and became pipe major of the Canadian Railways pipe band, estimated that Canada outfitted approximately 30 pipe bands for overseas service, not an insignificant number by any criteria.⁶¹ Members of countless pipe bands fought in the trenches with their battalions and many pipers distinguished themselves in action.

⁵⁹ Author’s private collection.

⁶⁰ See Desmond Morton, 1993, p 73.

⁶¹ S. Mackinnon, ‘The Bagpipe in Canada’, *The Canadian Geographical Journal*, April 1932, Vol. iv, No.4, pp. 232-241.

Of the numerous citations for individual bravery in the Canadian Corps, perhaps one piper stands above the rest for his actions: Piper James Cleland Richardson (see Figure 9 at Appendix Six pg. 354). It would be wilful neglect not to include his brave deeds here. Richardson was one of many pipers whose actions have been recorded in the annals of Canadian military history, though Richardson was the sole recipient to be awarded the British Empire's most esteemed medal for valour, the Victoria Cross. The actions of men like Richardson contributed to the total victory of the Allied forces in 1918 and their exploits would inspire the descendants of the CEF regimental pipe bands of the Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada in the immediate post-war period.

Born on November 25, 1895 in Bellshill, Scotland, Richardson immigrated to British Columbia, becoming a professional electrician. He enlisted in the 16th Battalion at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. The 16th were a composite unit made up of immigrant Scots and Scots-Canadians drawn from four militia regiments: the 91st Canadian Highlanders (Hamilton, Ontario), the 79th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders (Vancouver, British Columbia), and the 50th Regiment, Gordon Highlanders (Victoria, British Columbia).

Richardson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions during the Battle of the Somme at Regina Trench on October 8, 1916. Richardson was not detailed to accompany the assault force, but implored his company commander to allow him to play the pipes during the advance. "As the company approached the objective," reads the citation,

It was held up by very strong wire and came under intense fire, which caused heavy casualties and demoralized the formation for the moment. Realizing the situation, Piper Richardson strode up and down the wire, playing the pipes with the greatest of coolness. The effect was instantaneous. Inspired by his splendid example, the company rushed the wire with such fury and determination that the obstacle was overcome and the position captured. Later, after participating in bombing operations, he was detailed to take back a wounded comrade and prisoners. After proceeding about 200 yards Piper Richardson remembered that he had left his pipes behind. Although strongly urged not to do so, he insisted on returning to recover his pipes. He has never been seen since, death has been presumed accordingly owing to lapse of time.

Richardson was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his "most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty." Richardson's citation appeared in the *London Gazette* on October 22, 1918. His commanding officer said, "I really think his Victoria Cross performance was one of the great deeds of the war. The conditions were those of indescribable peril and terror. The lad's whole soul was bound up in the glory of piping, and he was only taken into action after imploring the colonel with tears in his eyes. Altogether a most wonderful example of high-souled courage and enthusiasm."⁶²

The foregoing discussion, albeit brief, provides an accurate account of piping throughout the period of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Although a much more thorough exploration of the historical circumstances could have been made, I am confined to the parameters of this study and thus am limited for reasons of space. What we are able to determine from this discussion though, is that piping was indeed, in a very healthy state, although the Canadian population was scattered across a vast

⁶² Master Corporal D. M. Drysdale, "Pipe Band of the 16th Btn (C.E.F.) Canadian Scottish", in *Pipe Band Music, Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's)*, produced by NISS Graphics, Port McNeill, British Columbia, 1998.

expanse of land stretching from Nova Scotia to Ontario and eventually British Columbia, most of these piping communities remained isolated from each another. What is interesting about these communities is how and why the citizens threw their support behind their pipers. These sentiments arose from the dominant British citizenry (with the descendants of the British Isles) who for political, economic and social explanations, wished to create a loyal community. This community, as historian Jack Granatstein and others have remarked, would stand as an alternative geo-political entity to the American republic and would incorporate many old world traditions. In this, the Loyalists of British North America were successful. Indeed, the British way of life successfully transferred to pre and post-colonial Canada helping to create an environment that was exceptionally fruitful for the development of pipe bands. Although we only provide a brief account of the piping times between the Conquest up to the early 20th century, it provides the all-important context in which the piping communities of the rest of the 20th century in southern Ontario can be measured. It is hoped, then, that the historical context which the following discussion takes place may be properly assessed and understood. Of course, it could be argued that the true flowering of Ontario competitive piping in the latter half of the 20th century when the 78th Fraser Highlanders won the World Championships, could not have taken place without their historical predecessors. Though the performances of the Hudson's Bay Company's piper throughout the Canadian Northwest during the 1820s or the massed pipes and drums of the Canadian Corps who marched past their commander, Sir Douglas Haig, in France in 1917 were isolated events, both involved the participation of Canadians who laid the foundation for what would become a

thriving piping community beyond their comprehension.

CHAPTER FIVE

The History and Organization of the Canadian Forces – A Brief Overview of the Regular and Militia Forces of Canada

The Spartan bands of Canadian Loyalist volunteers, aided by a few hundred English soldiers and civilized Indians, repelled the Persian thousands of democratic American invaders, and maintained the virgin soil of Canada unpolluted by the foot of the plundering invader.¹

So commented writer, educator and Ontario religious leader, Egerton Ryerson, in 1880. In over-emphasizing the role of the Canadian militia during the War of 1812², Ryerson unknowingly contributed to a national mind-set elevating the role of the part-time soldier in a way that continues to colour the perspective of Canadian defence policy today. In fact, government practice for many years was to discourage the development of a professional standing army in Canada because of the potency of the *militia myth*, a term coined by Jack Granatstein.

5.1 - The Militia Myth

The premise behind the militia myth was that Canadian colonists would provide for their own defence through a citizens' army, a non-professional military force³. The militia,

¹ Egerton Ryerson, an Ontario educator writing in 1880, expressed in grandiloquent terms the role of the Upper Canadian militia in the War of 1812. Ryerson's florid interpretations would later serve as a basis for historian Jack Granatstein's theory entitled "The Militia Myth" in Canada. Quoted in Jack Granatstein's *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p 4.

² A war declared by President James Madison to combat Britain's practice of seizing American shipping and pressing their sailors into service for the Crown.

³ The militia myth was equally potent in pre and post-colonial America although here, it was ideologically based upon the principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In a document dating from 1697, English writer John Trenchard eschewed a professional standing army in England on the grounds that an armed group of "mercenaries" were capable of destroying all rights, laws, and liberties based upon the whims of corrupt political leadership. In America, Thomas Jefferson, Josiah Quincy and

mustering annually, would receive a minimal amount of training in drill and weapons so that, should the day arise, they would deliver the mettle and corresponding victory through a modicum of professionalism on the battlefield. In truth, history exposes Canadian citizen-soldiers as little more than a disorganized rabble.⁴

Yet, the myth was enduring and the Canadians approach to establishing a profession of arms was blocked for years after Confederation. Even Granatstein concedes,

In New France, after all, the *habitants*, from teenagers to greybeards, had rallied to their elected captains to fend off marauding Indians and incursions from the hated Americans or English. In Upper Canada the sturdy yeomanry, their flintlocks at the ready, had formed a military force-in-being, quick to serve their leaders in war against the republic to the south or enemies of the crown. And the South African War, the Great War, the Second World War, and Korea were all fought and won by militiamen.⁵

In all of her military ventures, early Canadian battlefield success was often achieved through good luck rather than martial skill. The Canadian experience in the First and Second World Wars clearly demonstrate this trend. And Canada's citizens' army paid dearly in the early years during those conflicts. But the Canadians also developed a tough-minded professionalism through front-line experience.⁶ They earned the respect of their allies and a stellar reputation for their ferocity. These essential facts of Canadian military history provide so much insight into the mindset of Canadians and

other pamphleteers gleaned much inspiration from the writings of Trenchard. Their prose would characterize the new American republic's approach to national defence. Thus, the framework of the American military, by political dictates, was designed to be minute, conservative, and subordinate to the civilian legislative and executive offices. See Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Belknap Press, 1967, pp. 60-61, 84.

⁴ Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

⁵ Granatstein, 2000, p 3.

⁶ This point forms a central part of Granatstein's argument.

their peculiar approach to defence policy. In many respects, the myth of the militia justified its own existence given the record of success of the Canadian Corps between 1916 and 1918 and subsequently after the First Canadian Division landed in Sicily in July 1943. Those details supply the drama to the narrative and the substance behind Canadians' belief that amateurism in peace will in due course deliver professional success in war. Yet through the drama, lies the central tenet of our defence policy: a tale of neglect that arguably continues to haunt Canadians today⁷. Let us turn to a brief discussion about what the Canadian army was, how it developed and where it is today.

5.2 - Early Development and Reliance on Britain

Canadians were hesitant about accepting responsibility for their own national defence, both before and after Confederation. Numerous explanations account for this mindset but the over-riding rationale was the imperial connection. In Canada, British imperialism created a culture of dependency among the colonists. It is within this context that we must view the events of the period in order to understand and explain the rationales behind our evolving defence policy. Canadians, in essence, did not have the liberties of free choice when it came to their own defence position and so the necessity to develop a robust defence force never emerged in the Canadian national identity because of its reliance on the British. Naturally, this relationship had its advantages.

⁷ With the election of a Conservative minority government in January 2006, and on a platform to rejuvenate the Canadian Forces, it is hoped a renaissance in Canadian defence policy will take shape to introduce what the Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, describes as a "relevant, responsive and effective Canadian Forces."

In a scenario that saw pre-Confederation Canada (British North America) pitted against the Americans, the Canadians could rely on British soldiers for help without question. This approach was never far from the mindset of Canadian politicians either. With the bitter experiences of the United Empire Loyalists contributing to a latent Canadian identity (defined, among other traits, by an anti-American attitude) and with America's dreams of removing all vestiges of British imperialism on the North American continent, an uneasy relationship developed on both sides of the border. This uneasiness exploded into conflict with the War of 1812, the results of which did not favour the Americans. And so the uneasiness between British North America and the United States continued unabated throughout the 19th century.

The relative calm that characterized relations between the two adversaries for almost 50 years teetered on the brink during the American Civil War. Here, knee-jerk reaction to British boldness nearly overtook rational thinking behind Lincoln's administration in Washington. And so for the Canadians, a reliance upon the Imperial watch-dog became our fall-back position. In some ways, it could be interpreted as retarding our own national military development.

Nonetheless, the Canadian militia, the citizen-soldiers, were present during the times of crisis: they were there to support the British infantry during the War of 1812, and accounted themselves well. But, in many respects, they could not equal their professional counter-parts given their lack of training and combat experience. This state of military affairs would change but not before Canada's relationship with Britain altered.

5.3 - Independence and the Birth of an Army

By the middle of the 19th century, Canada's colonial days were numbered. It was clear to the British that their interests lay in the east and that North America was no longer economically viable as a dependent and profitable colonial outpost. It was this evolution between Canada and Britain that signaled the conclusion of our reliance upon the *Mother Country* for our national defence. For the first time in our history, our national security became our sole concern and not that of the Crown. But the enduring myth of militia invincibility continued its stranglehold on the mindset of the politicians. This would change, gradually, in the coming years after Confederation in 1867. Britain granted Canada her independence and imperial defence forces withdrew from their commitments there.

After two centuries of fighting wars, patrolling borders, putting down small rebellions and maintaining peace in Canada, most of the British soldiers departed from their North American garrison permanently, with the exception of a number of officers who remained.⁸ The Canadians were faced with a military void that required an immediate solution. With surprising haste, the Canadian government created two batteries of garrison artillery to take charge of the guns and stores left by the British Royal Artillery at the forts in Quebec City and Kingston. The gunners were initially drawn from the ranks of the Canadian militia on short service call-out although their numbers were augmented by several ex-regulars of the Royal Artillery. Within a short while, the gunners were transformed into respectable batteries of artillery. However, the

⁸ Halifax, Nova Scotia, was the exception. British soldiers remained there until 1906, guarding the Royal Navy's large dockyards, safeguarding British maritime interests on the Atlantic Ocean.

call of the militia was never far from the mandate of these professional soldiers: a primary duty of the new Canadian artillery was to lead and train their militia counterparts. As small as it was, the Canadian army was born.⁹ Yet, for much of this period, there was a great deal of confusion regarding the need for a professional army, what they should do, and a management system that “retarded the inculcation of expertise, corporateness and responsibility, within the profession.”¹⁰

And so the watershed years for Canada’s professional army were 1871 to 1914. This was the period which bore witness to the creation of a tiny group of soldiers whose sole duty, as it was argued at the time, was to train the part-time militia.

5.4 - Development and Expansion

In the closing decades of the 19th century (and according to precedent), the Canadian militia (including the Permanent Force as the Regulars were labelled)¹¹ was lead by British officers. Most of the officers occupying the post of General Officer Commanding (GOC) Canadian Militia, urged their Canadian political masters to expand the ranks of the Permanent Force. The designs of the GOCs, however, were thwarted regularly throughout the post-Confederation period given Canadians’ rather chilly feelings about a

⁹ In 2006, the descendants of A and B batteries are perpetuated through the 1st and 2nd Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.

¹⁰ Harris, 1988, p 6.

¹¹ “Canada’s land forces have had a bewildering array of official titles over the years,” wrote Stephen Harris. “some of them quite misleading. ‘Active militia’ for example, designated the part-time force of citizen-soldiers who never trained. Although ‘Canadian Army’ as a proper name has existed only since the Second World War, I have used ‘Canadian army’ as a generic term for land forces. ‘Regular (s) and ‘permanent force’ are employed to describe the professional, full-time army and its officers. ‘Volunteer (s), ‘militia,’ ‘reserve,’ and ‘citizen’ denote the part-time, non-professional army.” I, like Stephen Harris, accept this analysis and use these terms throughout this thesis to refer the various branches of the Canadian army. Harris, 1988, pp 8-9.

regular army. And the politicians, reacting in customary fashion - no matter the dictates of their conscience - followed suit, resisting any expansion of the ranks of the army. Two overriding reasons explain this sluggish attitude towards the drive for Canadian national defence. Both arguments were regularly raised by the Conservative Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald and his Liberal successor, Alexander MacKenzie, the two Canadian leaders governing during the period between 1867 and 1891: 1) The cost to the Canadian people; 2) Canadian foreign policy was a prerogative left to the British ministry in London. Canadian Confederation did not grant the Canadians the right to direct their own external relations. Canadians were still bound by the exigencies of the policy makers waging war and keeping the peace in Great Britain. What was the point of creating a standing army, no matter the size, if Canadians were not given the control over where their soldiers were to deploy?

There was enough concern throughout the new federation that something had to be done in light of the emergence of American power. And it was apparent to the GOCs that the militia was not the back-bone many Canadians had deluded themselves into thinking they were.¹²

Yet, the winds of change for the Permanent Force still abounded, particularly through the persistence and initiatives of the GOCs. A military college was opened in Kingston in 1876 as a way of applying professional military education to the dubious officership pervading the ranks of the militia. Given the maladroit attempts to introduce professionalism to the Canadian military, it comes as no surprise that there was no

¹² The Canadian militia performed poorly during the Fenian Raids of 1866. Canadians were lucky that the Irish American raiders who crossed the border into Canada - to rescue British North America from British control - did not possess the tenacity to drive home their military objectives.

obligation for the graduates of the newly formed Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) to serve in the militia upon graduation. Despite the initial intent, RMC became an alternative route to gain a commission in the Canadian militia which few chose to follow.¹³

Additional expansions to the Permanent Force came in 1883 when two schools of infantry and cavalry were authorized through a new militia act. These units became the Royal Canadian Regiment (infantry) and the Royal Canadian Dragoons (cavalry). The process was slow but a small professional army was created in the waning years of the nineteenth century.¹⁴

British imperial policy also played its role in the expansion of the Canadian army – regular and militia - during these years. At the close of the 20th century, Great Britain dispatched a huge army to the South African veldt to fight the Dutch descended colonists – the Boers. With appeals from London and buoyed up by English Canadian public opinion, the Canadian government under the premiership of the French Canadian Sir Wilfrid Laurier felt compelled to send troops on what was perceived as a jingoistic imperial adventure for money and land. Several thousand Canadian volunteers, predominantly drawn from the part-time militia, were sent to South Africa to fight alongside the British and other colonial contingents participating in the foray.

Although the British won the South African war, their army did not perform well throughout the campaign and the glaring weaknesses were apparent for all to see. With

¹³ Yet, RMC was grounded in a professionally sound nine month curriculum of strategy, tactics, field engineering and military history. Its class sizes were small and by 1894, 84 of its graduates accepted commissions in the British army versus only 10 who joined the Permanent Force in Canada. Granatstein, 2000, p 27.

¹⁴ Ibid. p 28.

the close of the Boer War in 1902, changes in British army doctrine, equipment, training and policy were forthcoming and the Canadians would indirectly benefit from these improvements.¹⁵

Prime Minister Laurier's Minister of Militia and Defense, Sir Frederick Borden, would preside over significant change in the Canadian army following their Boer War experiences. Borden was an active militia officer as well as a medical doctor and he accepted and appreciated his duties as Militia Minister. He was sensitive to the gravity with which his policies would be received, particularly in an era when Canadians were reluctant to shoulder their own mantle of responsibility. In other words, Borden understood the inherent weaknesses within Canadian national defence from personal experience. He also understood the nature and context of global affairs during his tenure (1896-1911) and sought to expand the ranks of the militia. In short, the militia budget more than quadrupled during this period and Borden is credited for helping steward the readiness of the Canadian army at the beginning of the First World War.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid. p 45.

¹⁶ Gwynne Dyer & Tina Viljoen *The Defence of Canada*, McClelland and Stewart Inc, Toronto, 1990, p 177.

5.5 - The Scottish Influence

It was during Borden's tenure as Minister of Militia that we see a rapid increase in the number of Scottish units in the ranks of the Canadian militia. Although three Scottish regiments were already established prior to Borden's appointment as minister (The Royal Scots of Montreal, the 48th Highlanders of Toronto and the 94th Regiment "Argyll Highlanders" of Cape Breton) the 91st Canadian Highlanders of Hamilton, the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders of Vancouver (see Figure 5 at Appendix 6 pg.350), the 50th Gordon Highlanders of Victoria and the 79th Cameron Highlanders of Winnipeg were all formed during this period.

British-style units resonated with Canadians so although a number of Scots units were raised during the post Boer War period, other more "traditional" regiments were also included on the Canadian roster – Montreal's Grenadier Guards provides an appropriate example for our purposes here.

5.6 - World Wars

Further Canadian units followed the example of these regiments with the raising of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) for service during the First World War. In fact, of the 262 battalions comprising the Canadian Corps from 1914 to 1919, 29 battalions were Scottish.¹⁷ Perhaps the Canadian people's greatest testament to the Scots and their descendents' unwavering determination in the Canadian Corps is the large bronze kilted figure portrayed in his battle dress as part of the Canadian National War Memorial. The

¹⁷ The Canadian Expeditionary Force also included 12 French-Canadian battalions, 5 American, 4 Irish and 219 regional Canadian battalions. In fact, according to historian and bagpiper Tim Stewart, 50 CEF battalions contained pipe bands. Indeed, a considerable number.

determined-looking highlander is one of several Canadian soldiers and nursing sisters that comprise the memorial located in downtown Ottawa. One need only review the battle record of regiments like Canada's Black Watch to fully appreciate why the killed figure appears so prominently: nearly twelve thousand Canadians served in the ranks of this regiment during the First World War with 2,163 killed and 6,014 wounded. The regiment was awarded a stunning 6 Victoria Crosses and 26 battle honours between 1915 and 1918.¹⁸ The Black Watch were not alone.

Regiments like Toronto's 48th Highlanders were equally blooded in their wartime experiences. In fact, the 48th suffered such appalling casualties in their first engagements that the original overseas battalion nearly ceased to exist following their experiences at the first gas attack in history. In total, they were awarded 21 battle honours at a cost of 1,467 dead.¹⁹ The war itself, coupled with the Spanish 'Flu epidemic of 1919, proved so destructive that its victims became known as 'The Lost Generation'. For Canadians, the cost was over a quarter-million dead and wounded.²⁰

Canada's army had certainly swelled during the period of the conflict: from a nation of just over 8 million, about 620,000 soldiers served in the Canadian Corps with approximately 420,000 of those serving on the Western Front. For the Allies of the young Dominion, the Canadian Corps proved to be shock troops that spearheaded most of the major Allied assaults in 1918 spelling the end of German resistance. Yet for

¹⁸ Paul P. Hutchison, *Canada's Black Watch: The First One Hundred Years*, Published by the regiment, (publication place not listed) 1962.

¹⁹ George W. Beal - *Family of Volunteers – An Illustrated History of the 48th Highlanders of Canada*, Robin Brass Studio, Toronto, 2001, p 46. Of the 1, 170 officers and men of the 15th Battalion (48th Highlanders) who comprised the originals at Camp Valcartier in the summer of 1914, only 212 answered the roll call following the 2nd Battle of Ypres on April 22, 1915. The 48th virtually disappeared in their first actions on the Western Front.

²⁰ Gwynne Dyer & Tina Viljoen 1990 , p 289.

statesmen and historians alike, the First World War witnessed Canada's maturing as a robust military state that could stand up and endure what was then described as the *Great Crusade*.

The Canadian Corps' existence would not long survive after peace finally came with the verification of the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919. As soon as they could, the government demobilized the Canadian Corps. They reduced the army with such quick efficiency that historians marveled at the rapidity with which it had taken place. That the Canadian Corps had been considered to be the most lethal offensive tool in all of the British Empire's combined forces was the legacy that the Canadian army of the 1920s and 1930s were bequeathed. Despite this recognition, the federal government - reflecting the attitudes of Canadians at the time - left Canada's standing army small and under-funded. However, two new regiments of infantry were added to the order of battle that had not existed in the permanent force before 1914: the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the French speaking Royal 22nd Regiment (The Vandoos).²¹ Although these two units represented significant milestones in Canadian defence planners' *vision* of an expanded army, the nation at large was showing little interest in military matters and the result was that there was very little further development of the forces at this time.

The intervening years between the First and Second World War was marked by official apathy at the federal level and the modernization of the Canadian army, both regular and militia, was ignored. What forcibly updated Canada's military (navy, army and air force) were the outstanding grievances left to fester in Germany at the 1919

²¹ Gwynne Dyer & Tina Viljoen, 1990, p 157.

Peace Treaty at Versailles. These dragged Canada inexorably into the Second World War. And thus, a similar repetition of events occurred in 1939 as it did in 1914 with the declaration of war: Canada's three services swelled to capacity to fight to preserve democracy.

5.7 - Post War Defence

By 1945, the Canadian Army counted 730,000 in its ranks. And as in 1919, they demobilized as rapidly as they had done after their return to Canada from overseas.²² However this time of rapid demobilization soon took a slightly different course as new defence agreements bound Canadians in such a way as to force her government to take national defence seriously.

First, the organization of the Canadian army came to terms with their own terminology: the Canadian army was split into two components (not unlike it had been previously but now, each with its own official title) – The Active or Regular Army and the Reserve army (still popularly referred to as the militia).²³

Second, although the roster of the Canadian Armed Forces was fixed at 55,000 in 1946, these increased with Canada's commitments to her allies with the signing of several defence agreements, chiefly with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the North American Air Defence agreement. The NATO agreement – and the saga of the Korean War and the troops required for the conflict there - catalyzed an unanticipated growth in Canada's Regular army which was expanded to 55,000 soldiers.

²² Ibid. p 313.

²³ George, F.G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers*, MacMillan of Canada, Third Edition, 1974, p 387.

With this reversal in Canadian military policy, a substantial increase in units was required and several historic regiments from Canada's Army Reserve were brought onto active service: the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, the Canadian Black Watch, the 8th Canadian Hussars and the Fort Garry Horse. Additionally, a new regiment of Canadian Guards with four battalions was created. In many respects, these were the halcyon days of the Canadian Army for it never enjoyed such a large number of regular troops in its entire peace-time history. The heady days lasted until the Canadian Forces Reorganization Act was passed into law in 1968, when these proud regiments were disbanded, not only reducing the number of troops in the army but also robbing the army of much of its regimental identity.²⁴

These cuts to the army (with the Air Force and Navy to follow) continued throughout the period from the 1970s through to 2005. The attitude at the Department of National Defence was characterized by a cut and slash policy of economics eventually reducing Canada's regular forces from about 120,000 in the late 1960s to a mere 52,000 effectives by the turn of the 21st century. However, with Canada now fully committed to the war in Afghanistan and the Conservative government intent on re-establishing Canada's military reputation, from 2005 the Canadian Forces have been intent on expanding to an operational strength of 75,000 men and women by 2010.²⁵ Time will tell if they meet their recruiting objectives.

Although this chapter covers a large chronology and does not nearly adequately address the story of the Canadian Forces, it gives us a snap-shot view of the character of

²⁴ Ibid. p 388.

²⁵ Admiral Tyrone Pile, Chief of Military Personnel for the Canadian Forces, addresses military members at Canadian Forces Base Borden in the summer of 2006.

national defence in Canada. It is hoped this will provide the reader with the necessary background for the rest of this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX

Charles Dunbar, James Fraser and the Role of the Canadian Militia 1913-1960

The following discussion addresses the role the Canadian military played in the evolution of piping in southern Ontario during the first half of the 20th century. In this, I have selected two regimental pipe majors and followed their careers in the British army, which led them to enlist in the Canadian militia. The first portion of the chapter documents the state of the Canadian military, their training facilities and how the pipe band operated within the confines of the regimental establishment. The discussion then focuses on the lives of Pipe Majors Charles Dunbar and James Fraser and how their influence developed a vigorous and supportive musical environment for a pipe band in the early 20th century. Here, we begin to witness the trend of Ontario pipe bands imitating the Scottish model through the recruitment of former British army pipe majors. This was not a phenomenon peculiar to Ontario: numerous regiments across Canada employed the same strategy to improve the organization, administration and musical standard of the pipe band. We see in Ontario the brilliant era of the military pipe band and the moulding of the Ontario piping ethos into what eventually became a community defining itself upon a rigid competitive ideal. Musical luminaries such as Dunbar and Fraser ushered in this age. Up to this point, competitions had played only a minor role in militia band objectives. If engaged in at all by the band, they were merely a frivolous activity existing on the periphery of the musicians' duties. Consequently, the pipe band existed purely to perform in a non-

competitive environment: martial functionality and musical entertainment were their central concerns.

This stands in contrast to the growing twentieth century fashion in Scotland for pipe bands to take part in formalised competitions. The early history of pipe band development, especially within the civilian sphere, has yet to be fully investigated,¹ but Cannon and Donaldson in particular have made a very useful start. The civilian band movement appears to have begun around the 1880s, with one of the earliest, the Govan Police Pipe Band, being founded by public subscription in Glasgow in 1885.² Within a generation, the concept had gained a good degree of popularity, especially in lowland urban communities across the central belt, with mining towns and villages appearing to embrace the idea particularly enthusiastically. The Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band is a product of this enthusiasm, having been founded in 1906, and it remains one of the top competitive bands in the world to this day. Its early development must have been fairly typical, as lack of resources forced the members to practise behind a cart shed at a local hotel, and it was eight years before they could afford uniforms.³ But with community support of various kinds, civilian bands were able to develop and thrive. As Donaldson asserts

The pipe-band movement was an autonomous and self-regulatory response by the performer community to the opportunities of an urban environment. Although financial support was essential to such activity, it tended to come from commercial or professional rather than landed sources, and was not

¹ This is a point which has been emphasised by both Cannon, *The Highland Bagpipe and its Music*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1988, p 153, and by Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society, 1750-1950*, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 2000, p 358.

² Cannon, 1988, p 153; Donaldson, 2000, p 359. The Edinburgh Police also formed a pipe band, although the date of its inception remains unclear: both 1883 and 1901 have been suggested. As Cannon points out (p 153), the Midlothian Amateur Pipe Band may have predated these police bands, having had a tune composed and published in its honour by 1881, but the precise dating and sequence of development remains unclear. There may also have been others.

³ Donaldson, 2000, p 359.

accompanied by attempts to gain control of the music.⁴

Competition appears to have played a significant role within the movement from very early in its development. Football clubs such as Glasgow Rangers and Heart of Midlothian were hosting band contests at Ibrox and Tynecastle respectively around the turn of the 20th century, while at the Cowal Gathering in Dunoon an unofficial world championship competition was being run from around 1897.⁵ By 1907 around 400 pipers and drummers were taking part in the band contests there⁶ and it remained the principal platform upon which bands could build up their status as successful competitors until the Scottish Pipe Band Association (SPBA), formed in 1930, began to organise its own contests, holding its first official world championships in 1947. The winner of the inaugural SPBA world title was a mining community band from Fife, Bowhill Colliery.

While much work remains to be done on analysing the influence of competition on playing styles, it is clear that not all commentators reacted positively to the development of a competitive culture within the band movement, nor indeed to the existence of bands at all. Some feared that band playing would have a negative effect on technical standards, as inaccurate or 'sloppy' finger work could remain undetected, and that tune settings would inevitably have to be simplified in order to accommodate the weaker players.⁷ While this may have been true in some cases, it may also have been the case that the competitive spirit served as a counterbalance to this, driving *up* standards of musicianship. Certainly, the material selected for

⁴ Donaldson, 2000, p 359.

⁵ Cannon, 1988, p 153.

⁶ Donaldson, 2000, p 360.

⁷ Donaldson, 2000, pp 359-63.

competition was highly challenging, with the playing of 'heavy' marches, strathspeys and reels, with full gracings and decorations being required of the senior bands.⁸

Despite attempts by the Cowal committee to discourage overly ambitious playing by setting a required pace for the marches which was so fast that it became impossible for all but the best bands to accommodate, as the twentieth century wore on there is little doubt that the standard of playing within many civilian bands began to reach high standards. The inter-war period brought 'new-style technically virtuosic civilian bands' to the fore within Scotland⁹, which in terms of their musical ability and ambition were a far cry from the functional military styles of the previous century.

This style of pipe band music subsequently transplanted itself to Ontario with successive waves of Scottish immigrants who were reared in the competitive tradition. While in Scotland, Dunbar and Fraser were undoubtedly exposed to the contemporary competitive style which was in vogue; surely, they must have introduced features of this style to their Canadian students? Unfortunately, no recordings of their playing exist and what this may have sounded like is left for us to ponder. Nonetheless, the story of the military pipe band and its contributions to the early development of the pipe band tradition in Ontario cannot be over-stated.

Inasmuch as culture transmission and emigrant traditions are concerned, this chapter confirms, once again, that the tradition bearers in the early 20th century were still the emigrant Scots. It was the Scots who transported their knowledge and expertise to apply to their Canadian circumstances. This was true of 19th century

⁸ For a discussion of this point see Donaldson, 2000, pp 360-365.

Ontario piping, too. But, as the 20th century progressed, Ontario witnessed the on-set of native Canadian expertise. This new generation of pipers were progressive: they learned quickly from their Scottish masters. And Canadians would no longer look to recruit subject matter experts from Scotland; they would be home-grown by mid century.

Canada's Militia was an ineffective and poorly trained force . . . in fact, the militia was incapable of meeting any development which might require Canada either to defend her own shores, send a force to assist Great Britain, or fulfill Canadian obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations.¹⁰

F.G. Stanley's declaration of Canadian militia affairs between the First and Second World Wars echoes a familiar theme in defence policy throughout the twentieth century, yet, in the 1920s and 1930s, Canada suffered the effects of a cataclysmic European conflagration, which ingrained disturbing images in the national conscience. Understandably, defence spending was not a priority government initiative following the Great War. In fact, defence reduction was the policy to which the Department of National Defence was forced to adhere. When a proposal for a small increase in defence appropriations was initiated by the Tory government in 1921, opposition leader Mackenzie King decried to the House of Commons

"The Minister [of Defence] seems to think that at the present time we ought to vote an amount at least equal to amounts that were being voted prior to the War . . . Conditions are wholly different to-day [sic]; there is no world menace. Where does the Minister expect invasion from?"¹¹

Canada's fighting capability therefore was reduced upon the demobilization of the Canadian Corps in 1919. Canadian government officials, echoing public sentiment

⁹ Donaldson, 2000, p 363.

¹⁰ F.G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of An Unmilitary People*, MacMillan of Canada, Toronto, Third Edition, 1974, p 345.

¹¹ Ibid. p 341.

throughout the Dominion, reduced total military expenditures to paltry sums through the period between the two World Wars. The public loathed revisiting events that occurred between 1914 and 1918 and even if it meant a proactive mandate of defence reductions, the government would seek to satisfy public sentiment. Yet, with what remaining manpower available in the armed services after demobilization (permanent and non-active), official government expenditures would perforce focus on combat elements rather than ancillary services; combat service support and regimental bands were relegated to the periphery of regimental budgets. Nevertheless, the golden age of the regimental band, particularly the regimental pipe band, blossomed during the 1920s. In fact, the hub of piping in Canada and especially Ontario was found overwhelmingly in the Non-Permanent Active Militia. Doubtless, the survival of these pipe bands, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, depended almost entirely upon the benevolence (financial and otherwise) of regimental officers and non-commissioned members alike. "Had it not been for the devotion of the militia officers and men," Stanley lauded, "it would have been impossible for some of the units to have been kept alive."¹² Certainly, many famous militia regiments from the pre-World War One era could count on continued perpetuation after the 1919 demobilization. Units such as the 13th, 15th, 16th and 72nd Battalions, Canadian Expeditionary Force could look to the future with renewed hope. These units, upon disbandment from active service, were to be the proud inheritors of some of the most acclaimed regimental pipe bands in the Dominion. Indeed, the Black Watch (Royal Highlanders of Canada), the 48th Highlanders of Canada, the Canadian Scottish

¹² Ibid. p 343.

Regiment and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada all reported similar musical successes during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The militia band then, was the ideal setting for pipers to achieve membership during that era.

The militia bands served a dual purpose for both novice and advanced musicians. First, they provided a haven for aspiring players as progressive musical instruction was offered by senior members of the band. Second, militia pipe bands - with sufficient uniform allotments and ample practice facilities (such as drill halls and armories) - were attractive to pipers and drummers alike because they provided a forum for rehearsals, negating the logistical challenges faced by civilian bandsmen. Consequently, leading soloists and bandsmen performed together in the ranks of the militia with little or no overhead cost to the individual member.

Master players were deliberately sought after by commanding officers to lead the pipes and drums. Often, the hallmark of a good regiment was reflected in the standard of its pipe band. A commanding officer could expect new recruits through his band's activities in the local community - an ideal recruiting tool - thereby justifying his administrative establishment to militia inspectors. The issue of militia justification was particularly acute during the era of official apathy ("militia adversity" as Kim Beattie wrote in reference to the 48th Highlanders)¹³ when units were scrutinized by Militia District Inspectors. Therefore, recruiting well-qualified pipe majors to produce good bands fulfilled a military function that served to aid the survival of the regiments. Recruiting also had the unique effect of contributing to the commanding officer's social status within the community. Citizens from the local

community enlisted in the militia to fulfill their military interests and, perhaps more importantly, to ensure that their professional interests were being served through the social avenues offered by the regiment - the Officers' and Sergeants' Mess.

Militia regiments provided a type of kinship network which served to further an individual's professional career and, thus, to perpetuate the old boys' network. Many a commanding officer found himself in a chief executive's role at a leading industrial or commercial firm. The commanding officer, desirous of young, energetic and intelligent men to take a commission in his regiment, exercised his professional influence to employ potential members of the regiment at his place of work. The Canadian militia performed a familial role within community organization: the commanding officer, acting as patriarch, oversaw the successful integration of his militiamen into the regiment by wielding his authority at commercial employment centres. Militiamen, who were provided with a stable itinerary of military training and vibrant social activity, could thus move comfortably from professional to militia life without jeopardizing either role. The role of the pipes and drums in militia recruiting was to provide the overt musical demonstration, which quite naturally captivated an audience sympathetic to Anglo-Canadian (as opposed to French-Canadian) traditions. Additionally, the lavishness of the band's display of pomp and ceremony often formed the basis of sound regimental custom and tradition, which could only be provided through the private income of the Officers' Mess (particularly given the lack of funds provided by the Militia Department and the cost of full dress uniforms). It was therefore in the best interest of the commanding officer to retain a

¹³ Kim Beattie, *Dileas: History of the 48th Highlanders of Canada from 1929 to 1956*, Published by

healthy regimental pipe band for it overtly demonstrated his and his fellow officers' social status within the community. The pipes and drums were also as much a function as they were inspiring: they were a potent tool for harnessing community support for the regiment through their majesty, color and stirring music.¹⁴

When potential pipers and drummers enlisted in the militia, it was the pipe major's responsibility to train the musicians to an acceptable standard. However, the pipe major's teaching responsibilities could be alleviated if his musical abilities were noted throughout piping circles, precipitating a steady stream of experienced pipers and drummers to enlist. Undoubtedly, this was the case with the 48th Highlanders of Canada, based in Toronto, Ontario and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's) based in Hamilton, Ontario.¹⁵ These units were the most musically formidable in Ontario during this period for they not only attracted accomplished pipers and drummers, but they also attracted young musicians in their ranks to ensure band continuity and longevity. Pipe Major Stephen Mackinnon writing in *The Canadian Geographical Journal*, 1932,¹⁶ illustrates the extent to which militia pipe band strength capitalized on the resources of the piping community in the 1920s and 1930s. Mackinnon reported 23 pipe bands in Ontario, of which the 48th reported a roster of 45 pipers and drummers and the Argylls 36 pipers and

the 48th Highlanders of Canada, Toronto, 1957.

¹⁴ This familial theme would play a significant role in militia organization, particularly during the Great Depression, where regimental organization (the chain of command) provided stability to militiamen. See Kim Beattie 1957 and also Desmond Morton's "Business As Usual: Going to War" in *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*, Random House of Canada, Toronto, 1993.

¹⁵ For ease of reference, I will refer to the aforementioned units by their short forms - the 48th and the Argylls.

¹⁶ Mackinnon, Stephen. 'The Bagpipe in Canada' *The Canadian Geographical Journal*, April 1932, Vol. iv, No. 4, pp. 232-241.

drummers. The remaining militia regiments reported a significantly higher number of musicians than their civilian counterparts at approximately 27 members, while civilian bands (sponsored by legions, city councils, rail companies and the like) reported their numbers in the mid-teens.¹⁷

Why do the 48th and the Argylls figure prominently in Ontario piping history, particularly during the combined eras of Charles Dunbar (pipe major of the Argylls from 1913-1937) and James Fraser (pipe major of the 48th from 1913-1952)? Why were the 48th and the Argylls able to maintain their musical status throughout the 1950s and 1960s, when militia piping began to diminish? Simply stated, Pipe Majors Dunbar and Fraser represented a British Army tradition that found a captive audience in the Canadian militia, primarily because the militia was attempting to nurture traditions that duplicated an imperial precedent. "They [Dunbar and Fraser] contributed a great deal in maintaining the traditions and the standards that had been set in the British army in the highland regiments," notes Major Archie Cairns. Cairns, the ever trenchant observer, continues "It [militia tradition] had all come down through the highland and lowland regiments [of the British Army]. It was all passed down from generation to generation. So it was an in-house thing, but, it helped in fostering and keeping alive things that were not being kept alive in civilian bands."¹⁸

¹⁷ Mackinnon, 1932. Steve Mackinnon was pipe major of the Canadian National Railways band in the 1930s and 1940s, a noted "A" Class Band in competition (Grade 1 by contemporary standards). He was a native Scot who emigrated to Canada in 1911. During the First World War, he served with the 42nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (The Black Watch of Canada). Mackinnon was a pupil of the famed John MacDougall Gillies, and was a noted professional soloist throughout Canada. Pipe Major John Wilson's memoirs noted Mackinnon's professional abilities. By the 1950s, Mackinnon was an adjudicator for the Pipers' Society of Ontario.

¹⁸ Archie McNeil Cairns, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, London, Ontario, January 18, 1999. Archie Cairns (b. 1929) has a long and distinguished career in piping. Born and raised in

The Canadian Militia in 1913 (when Fraser and Dunbar were appointed as pipe majors of their respective regiments) was a young organization. Although a few militia units had participated in several isolated conflicts by the commencement of the First World War - primarily the Fenian Raids of 1866, the North-West Rebellion of 1885 and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 - they continued to search for traditions outwith their brief battle lore to assert distinctive regimental identities. Because the Canadian army was based upon the British regimental system, the tenets introduced and practised by men such as Dunbar and Fraser were readily embraced by their adopted regiments. This explanation, however, addresses only scantily the various factors underlying the success stories of the pipes and drums of the 48th and the Argylls. And although one pipe major possessed superior performance skills over the other (Dunbar was a solo piping champion while Fraser was a highly effective teacher), their conventions were accepted as gospel by their bandsmen who came to know no limits of musicianship. Effectively preaching doctrinaire British army pipe band drills, Fraser and Dunbar were as much sounding boards as knowledge bases for their new bands. *Ergo*, if British army pipe bands were operating in the fashion as

Hamilton, Ontario, he learned to play the pipes under his father, Pipe Major John Knox Cairns, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's). In the 1940s, Archie Cairns was an active member of the Pipes and Drums of the Canadian Argylls. He was also a leading soloist in the Open Professional piping competitions throughout the province. Cairns succeeded Pipe Major John Wilson of the Argylls in 1952. After only two years as pipe major, Cairns was recruited to the Canadian Regular army to lead the newly formed Pipes and Drums of the Regiment of Canadian Guards at Camp Petawawa, Ontario in 1954. In 1964, Cairns graduated from the Pipe Major's Course at the Army School of Piping, Edinburgh Castle, with a "Distinguished Pass" under Pipe Major (later Captain) John MacLellan. After leading the Canadian Guards for 10 years, Cairns transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force and became Pipe Major of Air Station Rockcliffe Pipes and Drums in Ottawa, Ontario. Upon his retirement from the regular force in 1981, Cairns secured the establishment of the Pipes and Drums Wing of the Canadian Forces School of Music, training reserve and regular force pipers and drummers. He initiated the only sanctioned Gold Medal piping contest outwith Scotland - The Piobaireachd Society (Canada) Gold Medal - which has run continuously since 1973. At the time of writing, Cairns leads the London Police Pipe Band, which he wryly admits, "is my community orchestra," and is in constant demand to judge and conduct workshops across North

Fraser and Dunbar asserted, the 48th and Argylls must mimic their imperial counterparts in order to garner comparable results.

Dunbar and Fraser homogenized a successful combination of music and leadership which produced a superior musical product. In Fraser's and Dunbar's case, it happened that their vocations brought them to the Non-Permanent Active Militia in Toronto and Hamilton.

Dunbar's and Fraser's presence in southern Ontario laid the foundations of world renowned piping at the door step in Ontario militia regiments. Pipe bands outwith the 48th and Argylls (militia and civilian) attempted to mirror their success, both on and off the field of competition. James Fraser and Charles Dunbar, the quintessential leaders of the 48th Highlanders and the Argylls and Sutherland Highlanders between 1913 and 1952 are, in no small way, responsible for the standard of musicianship which Ontario enjoys today. Doubtless, the evolution of Ontario piping in the early twentieth century is based upon their combined imprint in the Non-Permanent Active Militia - a singularly bold assertion, yet not without foundation.

6.1 - Charles Dunbar - Scottish Soldier, Distinguished Piper

Charles Davidson Dunbar was born in Halkirk, Caithness, Scotland in 1870. He was orphaned at age seven and raised in an industrial school in Edinburgh. It was during his school days in Edinburgh that he learned to play the pipes, displaying an above-average musical ability that would serve him throughout his career. In

America.

October 1886, Dunbar enlisted in the Seaforth Highlanders as a piper. After a tour of duty in Ireland and Scotland, he transferred to the 3rd Battalion Royal Scots. By 1895, Dunbar's military career suddenly changed for the better (primarily attributed to his proficiency on the pipes) and he was posted to the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders as pipe major. When not soldiering, Dunbar devoted his time to competing throughout Scotland where he amassed numerous accolades as a top ranking solo piper, thereby earning a reputation as a great exponent of the art.¹⁹ By 1899, Dunbar was deployed to South Africa to participate in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), forcing him - for the moment - to subordinate his competitive aspirations to his profession.²⁰

If Dunbar's musical reputation was secure in the closing years of the nineteenth century, his combat record was equally commendable throughout the South African campaign. In fact, his record of service throughout the Boer War - and eventually the First World War - would undoubtedly serve to aid his career, particularly when he enlisted in the Canadian militia. At the Battle of Elandslaagte on 21 October 1899, Dunbar piped the Gordons into combat and despite a bullet wound to the head, continued to inspire his fellows with his music. In recognition of his tenacity throughout the battle, Dunbar received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Dunbar would continue to distinguish himself throughout the war and was

¹⁹ *The Hamilton Spectator*, Monday January 30, 1939. *The Spectator* also reported that Dunbar won first prize for the Open Marches, Strathspeys and Reels at the Argyllshire Gathering, Oban and the Northern Meeting, Inverness. These Press facts are also corroborated by Major Archie Cairns. In my discussions with Mr. Cairns, he recalls several conversations with his father, Pipe Major John Knox Cairns, citing Dunbar's successful competitive record in late 19th century Scotland as well as Ontario in the 1920s.

²⁰ United Kingdom, Public Records Office, Kew, WO97 4880, Charles Davidson Dunbar, British Army Service Record, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London.

subsequently cited for bravery on three separate occasions. By the conclusion of the South African War, Dunbar was back competing and performed at the Inter-Regimental Bagpipe Competition in Pretoria where he won first prize awarded by the Commander-In-Chief of the British Forces in South Africa, The Earl Kitchener, no small achievement for Dunbar, given the numerous solo pipers who were deployed with the British Army in South Africa.²¹

Dunbar's return to Scotland in early 1901 saw his resumption of duties as pipe major of the Gordons. Outwith his regimental responsibilities, Dunbar spent many hours teaching at the Aberdeen Amateur Pipers' Society. He also performed at many public and private functions, extending his popularity with the lay public and the piping community throughout Scotland during the early 1900s. In April 1901, Dunbar was posted to the Permanent Staff of the 3rd Battalion Gordon Highlanders (Territorial Army) where, once again, he assumed the duties of pipe major. Dunbar's appointment as pipe major of the 3rd Gordons would be his last regular army posting.²²

After 24 years and 135 days service to the Crown (1886 to 1911), Pipe Major Charles Dunbar D.C.M. retired from the British Army. Dunbar's superiors reported that his "conduct and character while with the colours" were exemplary. His "special qualifications for employment in civil life" were reported thus: "a good clerk. A good instructor of pipe music and highland dancing."²³ Thus concluded the first phase of Dunbar's military career. More was in the offing for this distinguished pipe

²¹ *The Hamilton Spectator*, Monday January 30, 1939.

²² U.K. P.R.O. WO97 4738, Charles Dunbar.

²³ *Ibid.*

major, however. Indeed, the flowering of the Canadian militia pipe band system in southern Ontario would soon unfold under the aegis of the talented musician from Caithness.

Shortly after his discharge, Dunbar emigrated to Canada. Dunbar and his family were sponsored by a relatively well-known member of the Canadian piping community, Mr. D. Manson.²⁴ The Dunbars landed at Montreal, Quebec in 1911, where they remained for nearly two years before moving to Hamilton, Ontario. It is not known what Dunbar's motives were for leaving Montreal; however, upon his arrival in Hamilton, Ontario, he was immediately employed by Hendrie and Company, owned and operated by Lieutenant Colonel Hendrie, commanding officer of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's). Upon assuming his responsibilities with the cartage company²⁵, Dunbar and Colonel Hendrie entered into discussions regarding the pipe major's position with the Canadian Argylls. Hendrie persuaded Dunbar to accept the appointment of regimental pipe major²⁶ and on September 15, 1913, Dunbar enlisted in the Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada. The James Street Armoury, headquarters and drill hall of the Argylls, became Dunbar's new 'home away from home', as he laboured many hours teaching the subtler points of musicianship to the pipes and drums of his adopted regiment.

²⁴ David Manson was former pipe major of the 5th Regiment, The Royal Highlanders of Canada (Black Watch) (Non-Permanent Active Militia) from 1897-1907. I suspect Manson learned of Dunbar's retirement and attempted to secure him for the pipe major's position of the 5th Regiment. See Paul P. Hutchison's *Canada's Black Watch: The First Hundred Years*, Published by The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment of Canada), Montreal, 1962.

²⁵ Archie Cairns believes Dunbar was a clerk.

²⁶ It is unlikely that we will ever know whether coercion was used as a negotiating tool by Colonel Hendrie.

Dunbar embarked on a significant phase of his piping career when he moved to Hamilton. Although there seems little significance in the routine mandate of a piping teacher, Dunbar's method of improving his band's standard was extraordinary given the relatively inexperienced nature of the Ontario piping establishment during the 1910s. He demanded a level of perfection unlike any previous band leader. The individual musician's level of accountability to Dunbar was such that it now proved costly to the piper's status (and perhaps his character) not to rehearse through the working week for fear of public censure. It was not unusual for Dunbar to point out musical mediocrity, diplomatically single out the transgressor and use him as an example of how not to perform. What was perceived by the band as Dunbar's unconventional behaviour - particularly through his rehearsal techniques - nonetheless produced a significant improvement previously unknown to the Argylls. Perhaps more unusual to the conventions of the Argylls was his introduction of a school of piping within which players were provided with concentrated formal tuition. Through active external recruiting and continued instruction by Dunbar and his lieutenants, the Argylls began to improve.²⁷

Dunbar's strategy not only proved effective, but also possessed long term corollaries: commanding officers during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were no longer required to search outside the regiment to fill their vacant pipe major appointments. The resources were found within the regiment under the auspices of Dunbar. This in fact was the case with Sydney Featherstone and John Knox Cairns; both were

²⁷ Archie Cairns, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, London, Ontario, January 18, 1999.

Dunbar's successors as pipe majors of the Argylls and both were taught by and served under Dunbar.

Dunbar was an unusual figure in Hamilton. First, he was one of the most accomplished pipers during the 1910s and his superiors immediately recognized his abilities. Second, his intimate knowledge of military tradition, especially regarding highland regiments, was sought after and enthusiastically embraced within the regimental culture of the Argylls. Third, his combat record was impeccable, serving several purposes for Dunbar and the Argylls. His exploits were entrenched within the lore of the regiment; they adopted him as a living hero. In this, his duties were less entrenched in military bureaucracy. His authority was not held up to command scrutiny as his superiors endorsed his initiatives. As his war record slowly propelled him to a level of fame throughout the community, a mixture of mysticism and reverence surrounded his character bringing a previously unknown level of popularity to the regiment (an ideal recruiting tool). Indeed Dunbar was the quintessential Victorian soldier, recognized by all who came in contact with him. Truth, duty, honor and modesty, some of the virtues exemplified in Dunbar's character, blended with extraordinary musicianship and all combined to create an esoteric yet intimidating character. Major Cairns, having received lessons from his father John Knox, recalled his first meeting with Dunbar. As a young lad in the 1930s, Cairns was playing his pipes on the rooftop of the James Street Armoury when Dunbar approached, "I was shaking in my boots when he first heard me play...He was so

revered it was unbelievable.”²⁸ Yet, the perceived super-human characteristics or the lore surrounding Dunbar quickly eroded around his friends and colleagues. His character, that of a pleasant archetypal old-country gentleman, quickly outshone his medals, commendations and piping accolades.

6.2 - The Great War and the 1920s

In 1914, Canada as a Dominion in the British Empire found herself at war with Imperial Germany. For an ill-equipped and ill-prepared Canadian Army, this meant a total reorganization under the auspices of the Minister of Militia, Colonel Sir Sam Hughes. Hughes took the existing militia units in the Non-Permanent Active Militia, and re-numbered them into battalions of the newly created Canadian Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.). Hughes then initiated a recruiting drive calling for 30,000 volunteers to join his army in Quebec. Dunbar answered the call of duty and he traveled to Camp Valcartier where the First Canadian Division mustered for overseas service. Dunbar enlisted with the Canadian Remounts as a Staff Sergeant. After training in England, he transferred to his old unit, the 19th Battalion C.E.F., and immediately assumed command of the pipes and drums. Dunbar along with the men of the 19th battalion were taken to the Western Front and deployed in the trenches. During the Battle of the Somme (Courcelette) in September 1916, Dunbar found himself executing his old Boer War duties by piping the Argylls over the parapet, and again he was wounded, this time in his stomach and left leg. He was sent to England to recuperate. While recovering, Dunbar was invalided out of the Canadian Corps

²⁸ Archie Cairns Interview

and returned to Hamilton in the summer of 1917. For recognition of distinguished service to the Corps, the Argylls commissioned Dunbar a lieutenant. Dunbar's distinction, however, was peculiar in that he was officially gazetted a Pipe-Lieutenant - quite unprecedented in the British Empire. Although it was possible for a piper to re-muster to another trade or even to accept a commission, Dunbar's commission was unique in that he now occupied a status analogous to the director of music in other forms of military band. As an officer on parade with the pipes and drums, he was observed marching in front of the band (normally reserved for the drum major) instead of playing on the right flank as a pipe major, an unusual sight to behold. In this sense Dunbar was 'set apart', elevated to a status beyond any other military pipe major, a fact overtly acknowledged within the spatial formation of the band on parade. Nonetheless, Dunbar continued to lead the pipes and drums in his new appointment after the First World War. The band leadership cadre now entered a new phase.

As an officer, indeed, as a pipe major, Dunbar's regimental responsibility was to administer the band (administratively and musically), which he did with deftness and aplomb. The position of pipe major, however, remained vacant following Dunbar's commission in 1917. For reasons unknown to us, Dunbar left the command structure of the pipes and drums intact - the band operated without a pipe major. Finally in 1924, after six years without a pipe major, Dunbar decided to appoint his former student and former pipe major of the 19th Battalion, Sydney Featherstone.²⁹ In essence, a collective leadership reigned over the organization of the band. The

²⁹ Lt. Col. H.M. Jackson, Editor *The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess*

reciprocity practised and enjoyed by Featherstone and Dunbar worked remarkably well, and hampered neither band ethos nor performance standards. The arrangement between Lieutenant Dunbar and Pipe Major Featherstone was somewhat analogous to the relationship between a pipe major and a pipe sergeant: the pipe major establishes his vision and goals for the band while the pipe sergeant assists the pipe major in the realization of those goals. Through the assumption of various leadership capacities, the pipe sergeant executes the pipe major's directives, never questioning his supervisor's authority (in theory). With the Argylls, the line of demarcation between leader and follower was clearly evident - the band members felt no ambiguity between Featherstone's and Dunbar's combined leadership roles. The rank and file who enthusiastically embraced the paradigm shift experienced a renewed confidence in the direction of the band. If anything, the band were intensely proud of their own uniqueness, for they were the only pipe band in Canada, indeed the British Empire, to be led by an officer and a pipe major.

The Argylls matured musically during the 1920s. The pipes and drums attracted numerous players to their ranks; meanwhile Dunbar's classes for beginner and junior pipers developed a competent pool of musicians from which the unit readily drew. In fact, the Argylls developed into a family band as sons followed their fathers' example (an illustrative example being Pipe Major John Knox Cairns followed by his son Archie. See footnote 8.). The band, now thriving in the 1920s and 1930s, accepted and embraced Dunbar's leadership style with alacrity and enthusiasm. The influence of the officer-piper took shape. During this period,

Louise's) 1928-1953, Compiled by the Officers of the Regiment, 1953.

Dunbar returned to competitive playing, and in 1923, was awarded Professional Piper of the Day at the Pictou Highland Gathering in Nova Scotia. Dunbar would go on to distinguish himself and his regiment at the first Highland Gathering at Banff, Alberta, in 1928 where he was awarded first prize for Piobaireachd, and first prize for the Ian Beattie Cup for Highland Regiments. Despite Dunbar's advanced years, he continued to deliver exceptional performances on and off the competitive platform, and continued to serve as the role - model for pipe majors in the greater Hamilton region.³⁰

Dunbar's influence in Hamilton was truly incredible. Piping improved significantly within the ranks as he continued to teach while his stature flourished throughout the community. "It was like being in the presence of a god when standing before him," recalled Cairns.³¹

Dunbar retired as Pipe-Lieutenant of the Argylls in 1937. With numerous accolades to his credit (he ended his career by leading the Argylls to the Ontario Pipe Band Championships in 1936 and 1937)³², Dunbar departed the Argylls leaving behind a thriving organization: it was he who had cultivated a set of musical standards within the Canadian military establishment previously unknown. Perhaps Dunbar examined his lengthy career and saw his greatest impact, not in the Gordon

³⁰ From the late 1920s, the Canadian Pacific Railways sponsored a Highland Gathering and Competition at the Banff Springs Hotel, Banff, Alberta (Nearly two thousand miles west of southern Ontario). Considered to be the most revered piping competition of its day, the gathering held a special Canadian Militia Competition "open to all regimental pipers in good standing in the Active (non-permanent) Militia of Canada...This is intended as a competition for the best pipe-player in the Canadian militia, and must be won two years in succession in order to become the property of the winner." Although the official programme states the Gathering's classification as a "Open" contest, Major Cairns insisted to the author that the militia contest was by invitation only. As a testament to the stature of the best regimental piper in Canada, an aggregate of \$375.00 and a gold medal were available for the taking - a vast sum of money for the 1920s.

³¹ Archie Cairns, Interview by Author, Digital Audio Tape, January 18, 1999, London, Ontario.

Highlanders but rather, with the Canadian militia. Certainly, his talents were permitted to thrive beyond reasonable expectation. What Dunbar generated in Hamilton with the Argylls impacted directly on the tradition of excellence that marks piping in the modern era; his exploits have created generations of pipers who continue to play the pipes in Dunbar's spirit of dedication and perfection.

Dunbar's unexpected death on January 25, 1939 came as a great shock creating a dramatic outpouring of emotion. It is worthy of note that the *Hamilton Spectator* reported the death of Dunbar on the front page, and provided a full account of the funeral. The *Spectator* wrote:

The sincere tribute of a sorrowing community was paid to Lieutenant Charles Dunbar, DCM, VD, former pipe major of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and member of the famous Gordon Highlanders Saturday afternoon when, with full military honours the remains were born [sic] from St. Paul's Presbyterian Church to their last resting place in Woodland Cemetery. The Church was filled to capacity with a representative assembly of Hamilton citizens and many persons prominent in military circles in other cities throughout the province. Outside the church a large crowd stood during the service and the street was lined with persons along the route the funeral cortege passed...The unusually large pipe band, which followed the procession behind the escort and firing party, consisted of the 48th Highlanders of Toronto, under Pipe Major James Fraser; the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders under Pipe Major S. H. Featherstone and the Toronto Scottish Regiment under Pipe Major Adam Macdonald. Members of the St. Catherine's Pipe Band, under Pipe Major Hugh MacPherson also walked with the above bands...At the cemetery, the firing party fired three volleys over the grave. This was followed by the Last Post and the playing of the Lament, "Flowers of the Forest" by the massed bands, at the conclusion of which the final lament, "Lochaber No More" was played by Pipe Major Fraser of the 48th Highlanders at the head of the grave and Pipe Major Featherstone of the Argylls at the foot of the grave.³³

The *Spectator's* coverage of Dunbar's funeral provides us with an ideal portrayal of

³² *The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada*, p 8.

the despondency that the Hamilton community experienced, and in no small way conveys the influence he wielded amongst his fellows within and outwith the piping establishment. Cairns commented on his father's reaction when he learned of Dunbar's death, "I came home after school, and my father was behind the kitchen door weeping...he couldn't collect himself after he discovered his friend and mentor, Charles Dunbar, had passed away."³⁴

A great loss to the piping community was suffered with Dunbar's passing. Nonetheless, Dunbar's contributions to the art were immeasurable in terms of the numbers of students he taught, his thoughts on pipe band music progression and the maintenance and continuity of musical excellence through a multi-focused regimental pipe band. Dunbar was a rare gift to the Ontario piping community. His conventions are currently embodied in the contemporary leadership of the pipes and drums of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada and indeed, reverberate throughout southern Ontario and beyond.

6.3 - James Fraser: The Early Years

"He was all soldier, a real gentleman, a patient teacher and a very good instructor; I think he is one of the finest men I've ever met in my life," observed piper Robert Taylor about his teacher and former pipe major, James Fraser.³⁵ Taylor continued, "I would have to think [he taught] hundreds of people...an awful lot. He came to the regiment [the 48th Highlanders] from the Gordon Highlanders in 1913 and he retired in 1952. He worked at the [University Avenue, Toronto] Armouries all

³³ *The Hamilton Spectator*, Monday January 30, 1939

³⁴ Archie Cairns, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, London, Ontario, January 18, 1999

³⁵ Robert Taylor, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, Toronto, Ontario, January 6, 1999.

day long and it seemed that there was always someone in there playing the pipes.”³⁶

In fact, James Fraser taught the majority of his pupils from the practice facilities at the University Avenue Armories. Fraser’s popularity was so intimately connected with the Pipes and Drums of the 48th Highlanders that when one uttered the words “48th Highlanders”, images of the stalwart pipe major with his razor sharp moustache immediately came to the public mind. Remarkably during this period, little was known - or cared - about the operations of the militia regiment by Torontonians, such was the regard of Fraser’s band. The operational role of the regiment was secondary to the music, a phenomenon which survives to this day.³⁷

And if Torontonians were proud of James Fraser and *his* 48th Highlanders, the piping community outwith the urban metropolis also radiated with pride and envy, as “Pipie Fraser” (as he was affectionately referred to by his contemporaries) brought a new standard of musicianship to pipe band performance in Ontario during the early to mid-twentieth century. As a matter of course (or perhaps historical fate), James Fraser employed similar musical leadership strategies and tactics with the 48th as his friend and colleague ‘Charles’ was exercising at the Argylls.³⁸ Fraser’s impact on the Ontario piping establishment when he retired from the 48th Highlanders in 1952 was such that it led one writer to note Fraser as the “King of Pipe Majors.” By that

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Robert Taylor interview.

³⁸ Dunbar’s and Fraser’s service records reveal that they served together at the Gordon Highlanders Depot prior to their retirements in 1911 and 1913, respectively. James Geddes Raffin (a pupil of Fraser’s during the 1930s) intimated to the author that both men solidified a great friendship while serving together at the Depot. Their mutual admiration for each other continued as members of the Canadian Militia. When Dunbar passed away in 1939, Fraser was adamant that the 48th Pipes and Drums send a contingent to Hamilton to pay their last respects at his funeral. James Raffin, a young piper with the 48th at the time, performed at the funeral. “It was a sombre occasion...Fraser’s friend

time, Fraser had taught hundreds of pupils including the pipe majors of six leading competitive bands in Ontario.³⁹ Lloyd Tucker, formerly a drummer in Fraser's band, and expressing popular sentiment amongst his contemporaries at Fraser's retirement, wrote that Fraser's 60 year career "could be filmed, the result [of which] would make the 'Cavalcade of Noel Coward' pale into insignificance."⁴⁰

James Fraser joined the 48th Highlanders in 1913. Like his friend Charles Dunbar, Fraser served 22 years with the Gordon Highlanders. Fraser was born in the parish of Keith in Aberdeenshire, northeast Scotland in 1874. On August 1, 1892, standing at 5'5" "with a fresh complexion" and a small scar under his left eye, James Fraser enlisted as a private soldier in the Gordon Highlanders.⁴¹ His career with the Gordons was long and colourful. He participated in the Chitral Relief Expedition on the Dunjar Frontier in 1895, the campaign against the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier in 1897-98, and the Boer War 1899-1902, receiving a gunshot wound to the thigh. Upon his return to Britain at the conclusion of the South African campaign, Fraser settled into battalion life with the 1st Gordons. In 1907, Fraser was posted to the Gordon Highlanders Depot in Aberdeen where he taught young soldiers how to play the pipes.

In 1913, Lieutenant Colonel William Hendrie, Commanding Officer of the 48th Battalion Highlanders (the regiment's official title upon its raising in 1891), sought assistance from the Gordon Highlanders - the 48th's allied regiment - to

had passed away."

³⁹ *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1952.

⁴⁰ Lloyd Tucker, "The Retirement of Pipe Major James R. Fraser", in *The Falcon*, The Regimental Journal of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, Published by the 48th Highlanders of Canada, Toronto, 1952.

⁴¹ U.K. P.R.O., WO97, 4880, Short Service Attestation papers, James Robb Fraser, 1892.

provide the services of a pipe major. Farquhar Beaton, after 13 years as pipe major with the 48th, relinquished his post. Upon receiving notification from Colonel Hendrie, the commanding officer of the Gordon Highlanders Depot posted the pipe major vacancy, requesting any interested pipers nearing the conclusion of their service to apply. Two pipers responded to the notice and one, Lance Corporal James R. Fraser, received the appointment. On July 31, 1913, Fraser retired from the Gordons and immediately sailed for Canada.⁴² Fraser thus embarked upon a new facet of his career that would be singularly devoted to the musical development of the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders. Fraser would not foresee his impression upon the Toronto scene over the next several decades.

As no musical archive of the 48th exists from the early twentieth century, the band's level of performance upon Fraser's assumption of duties cannot be assessed. Photographic evidence suggests that the band retained a healthy membership of 17 pipers and nine drummers. In fact, press notices compiled by the band indicate that the pipes and drums were well received wherever they gave a performance, and were an active organization throughout the state of New York and southern Ontario. "We all hail with delight," wrote the *New York News*, "the pipers of the 48th Highlanders who won a warm place in the heart of everyone who attended the [military]"

⁴² *The Falcon*. Argyll oral tradition holds that the vacancy opened to Fraser was initially intended for Charles Dunbar; however, this is chronologically impossible according to both Fraser's and Dunbar's service documents. Dunbar originally emigrated to Montreal, Quebec in 1911; the 48th Pipes and Drums were already led (as indicated above) by Pipe Major Beaton since 1896. It may be more accurate to submit that the 48th learned of Dunbar's reputation through their professional/military relations with Montreal's 5th Royal Highlanders and perhaps were more anxious to secure Dunbar - given his reputation as a piper and soldier - if a piper from the Gordon's did not assume the position upon Beaton's retirement. This is purely speculation on the author's behalf. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Dunbar retired from the Gordons in 1911 and Fraser in 1913.

tournament two years ago.”⁴³ An introductory pamphlet produced by the 48th prior to Fraser’s arrival pronounced that “the work of this band, even on the concert platform, exemplifies the fact that Bagpipe music, when well rendered, is most acceptable to not only Scotchmen, but the most cosmopolitan audiences,” and “for street demonstrations, it is second to none compared with other bands.” Apart from the band’s own admission of excellence and veiled self-praise, they were pronounced “by the combined press of Canada and the United States as one of the strongest drawing cards on either side of the line” (“the line” suggests the border between Canada and the United States).

Capable and inspiring leadership were the hallmarks of the pipes and drums of the 48th since their formation in 1891. It should come as no surprise that the regiment wished to continue the practice of sound leadership with the appointment of James Fraser as pipe major. At the time of publication of the 48th’s introductory pamphlet, the band was under the command of Fraser’s predecessor, a piper with high competitive credentials. “Pipe Major Farquhar Beaton,” the pamphlet lauds, “holds more honours in bagpipe competition than any other piper in the country at the present day. Amongst his past honors are included the Championship Gold Medal of Canada; the Championship Gold Medal of the Great World’s Fair at Chicago; the Championship Medal of Edinburgh, Scotland; and first Prize Winner in both competitions at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, N.Y.”⁴⁴ While Fraser was not a competitive soloist as Beaton was, he nonetheless had been exposed to the practice of inspired leadership and sparkling performance skill in the Gordon

⁴³ *New York News*, March 5, 1904.

Highlanders, the regiment that claimed to produce one of the greatest exponents of 20th century bagpipe music, Pipe Major G.S. MacLennan.⁴⁵ While serving in the Gordons, Fraser keenly mastered those precepts and brought them to Toronto.

If James Fraser harbored notions of second - rate colonial piping, the aforementioned press notices would lead one to believe the 48th were trend setters in the Ontario piping establishment during the 1910s. Fraser was not about to take charge of a band that was full of incapable musicians; quite the opposite was true. Beaton left an accomplished group of musicians to Fraser who capitalized on his gains. Fraser launched a teaching programme that set a high standard for incoming pupils. By Fraser's retirement in 1952, he boasted a band of 30 pipers and 17 drummers and his competition ensemble had captured nine first prizes in 13 contests (Class A or Grade 1 by modern standards).⁴⁶ The 48th by the 1950s were judged, undoubtedly, as one of the best musical ensembles in North America. Not only were they invited to perform all over the continent but, when they took the opportunity to compete, they consistently demonstrated a musical superiority which led them to numerous victories.⁴⁷ Through the 48th's competition ensemble though, we begin to see how the piping community in Ontario slowly shifted its attention from military show bands to that of competitively-driven pipe bands. One only has to look as far as the membership of the 48th contest band circa 1951. A significant portion of its membership was drawn from its Second World veterans whose attitudes, desires and music inaugurated an irreversible tidal wave of competitive band performance

⁴⁴ 48th Highlanders of Canada Pipes and Drums Pamphlet, 1913.

⁴⁵ *Gordon Highlanders Standards Setting of Pipe Music*, 1983.

⁴⁶ Lloyd Tucker, *The Falcon*, 1952.

previously unknown in Ontario. These war veterans and their interactions with the Scottish competitive musicians while stationed in Britain seared life-long impressions on their musical senses. Their experiences altered the band scene in Ontario. And although military pipe bands were the primary repositories for pipers and drummers, competition music and its alluring effect was clearly on the horizon.

Piping was not the only domain of artistic expression taking shape in the immediate post World War Two period. Numerous aspects of the greater music community, classical and otherwise, experienced a new vigor promising a bright future. Undoubtedly, the radically changing social conditions in Ontario sparking a *renaissance* in its artistic community was rooted in a post-World War Two immigration boom, which saw Pipe Major John Wilson arrive in Ontario (as discussed in Chapter Seven below). So too was the piping community a recipient of this boom. Gibson's Cape Breton ceilidh pipers, whose art remained relatively unaffected by floods of Scottish immigrants, were passed over by the rising tide of musical standardization brought to Ontario. Ontario was hard on the heels of the emerging Scottish competitive scene in the immediate aftermath of World War Two. In the midst of the tide was James Fraser and the 48th Highlanders; however, this evolution will be examined more deeply in the conclusion of this thesis.

6.4 - James Fraser: First Time Pipe Major

Fraser took command of the 48th in 1913. This marked his first-time appointment as a pipe major but global events quickly overshadowed his vision for

⁴⁷ A review of the Ontario Pipers' Society competition statistics in the early 1950s reveals the

the band. By August 1914, Canada was at war with Germany and the newly formed First Infantry Division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.) mustered at Valcartier, Quebec. The First Division was composed primarily of voluntary enlistments from Non-Permanent active militia units like the 48th. This formation marked the abolition of the regimental system in favor of numbered battalions, although many infantry regiments maintained their individual unit identities despite the exigencies of higher command. As pipe major of the 48th Highlanders (Reserve), Fraser's primary mission was to furnish pipers for the active service battalions of the unit perpetuated by the 15th, 92nd and 134th Battalions C.E.F. Fraser, remarkably, never lost sight of his goal for maintaining high standards of piping during the tribulations of the First World War. He continued to reorganize the band's ethos by initiating and directing a school of piping for beginners and experienced musicians. In the process, he created a virtual pool of pipers ensuring the band's continued longevity.

The introduction of Fraser's demanding rehearsal schedule - a significant departure from Pipe Major Beaton's conventions - created a disturbing sense of unrest amongst Beaton's cadre. "Slowly but surely," wrote Lloyd Tucker, "new tunes were mastered and the band began to develop into a competent musical organization under its new teacher...[eventually] the new pipe major's strenuous practice schedule proved too much [for the older members who] dropped out."⁴⁸ Fraser demanded high standards and commitment from his musicians, discouraging

winning ways of the 48th.

⁴⁸ Lloyd Tucker, "A History of the Pipes and Drums of the 48th Highlanders of Canada" in *The Pipe Band: The Official Organ of the Scottish Pipe Band Association*, published by The Scottish Pipe Band Association, Vol. II, No. XXI, 1951, p 13.

some while exciting others. With the Treaty of Versailles came the return of thousands of troops to Canada. The 48th pipes and drums swelled with the resurgence of veteran players who took their places beside the younger members of the band.⁴⁹ Now, Fraser focused his attention on the development of the band without the worries of the war draining his pool of manpower.

If the war demonstrated his success as a proficient pipe tutor and human resource manager balancing rehearsals, recruiting drives and training sessions, his post war activities with the 48th affirmed his place as a natural leader. The band continued to seal its eminence as a musical unit with a formidable reputation and under Fraser's auspices, continued to travel extensively in Canada and the United States. In 1927, the 48th performed a pivotal role in the unveiling of the Canadian War Memorial in Arlington Cemetery, Washington, D.C. In 1934, the band accompanied the regiment to the Chicago World's Fair, providing music and colorful drill sequences to the exhibition. In 1936, the regiment was given the singular honor of providing their drum corps for the composite militia pipe band participating in the unveiling ceremonies of the Canadian War Memorial on Vimy Ridge, France.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Whereas one photo of the 48th from the turn of the 20th century sees only 7 pipers and a handful of drummers in its ranks, a photo from the mid-1920s reveals an organization of 26 pipers and 12 drummers under Fraser's direction.

⁵⁰ Pipe Major Sydney Featherstone, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's) was chosen by the Minister of Militia to direct the composite pipe band. Pipe Sergeant John Knox Cairns, also attended the "Vimy Pilgrimage" as a representative of the 19th Battalion, C.E.F. *The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada*, p 8. Doubtless, functions of this nature, combined with the mutual admiration felt between Pipe Major Fraser and Lieutenant Dunbar, initiated the camaraderie that existed between the two regimental pipe bands during the 1930s, 1940s, 50s and into the 60s when both Fraser and Dunbar had passed away. As piper Bobby Taylor recollected "The connection [between the 48th and the Argylls] was there when I was there [in 1947]. Young fellows met other young chaps in the bands...When the Argylls were having their Ball, that would be a great thing. [The 48th] would get a bus and off we'd go [to Hamilton]. Then, they'd reciprocate; we'd have the Pipes and Drums Ball here and they'd arrive by bus. I still have a friend who I met in the Argylls, in fact, we're meeting for a beer next week!" Bobby Taylor Interview, January 6, 1999.

In September 1939, in his 26th year as pipe major, Fraser again was called upon to train young pipers for active service with the 1st (Overseas) Battalion 48th Highlanders. Meanwhile, he continued to lead the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion pipe band performing throughout Toronto and the surrounding area in support of patriotic fund raising and recruiting drives geared towards the Allied victory. No events of significant consequence transpired in the 2nd 48th outside of their reinforcement role. By 1946, the 2nd Battalion reverted to its former militia status, as the men of the 1st Battalion returned to Toronto to be de-mobilized and reincorporated into the Non-Permanent Active Militia, if they so desired.

6.5 The Post-War 48th Highlanders and the Emergence of the 48th Highlanders Competition Band

When their schedule permitted during the 1930s, the 48th occasionally competed throughout the province of Ontario; however, there was a frivolous nature about the band's participation in band competition. It was not deemed necessary to compete to measure your standard against a criterion that was not enforced by the public. After 1945 though, musical attitudes across Canada began to alter in the military piping world. Competition started to become a central focus for regimental pipers (and civilian pipers too - see Chapter Nine below). With their new Pipe Sergeant, Archie Dewar, a veteran of the 1st (Overseas) Battalion and former pupil of Fraser, the 48th formed a competition band and Dewar led them with great success in numerous highland games across Ontario, quickly establishing a dominant position for the regiment. Between 1946-51, the band gained a total of 41 firsts, 14 seconds

and 8 third place awards. Meanwhile, the band appeared regularly at tattoos, parades and other ceremonial and civic functions, reinforcing the piping predominance of the 48th. They were successful at balancing both competitive and civil commitments. In 1949, *The People's Journal* of Dundee surprised British newspapers and the piping community in an editorial that stated that the Pipe Band of the 48th Highlanders of Canada "out-piped Scotland"; it was the largest in the British Commonwealth. This recognition was echoed throughout the Dominion when the General Staff of the Canadian Army recorded in 1950 that the 48th was rated the most efficient military band of all classes in the country - brass, bugle, corps of drums and pipe bands. Indeed, this was a testament to Fraser's toils.⁵¹

By 1952, with dozens of performances, hundreds of rehearsals and thousands of miles marched across the globe, James Fraser announced his retirement as pipe major of the 48th Highlanders. What was Fraser going to do next? Although Fraser groomed his heir apparent, it was difficult to imagine the 48th without James Fraser. Yet, his retirement was not a complete surprise to the piping community. Fraser was 79 years of age and it was time to allow his pupils to assume their place amongst the great pipe majors of the era.

Fraser's successor was his pipe sergeant and fellow Scot, Archie Dewar. Dewar accepted the appointment having prior experience leading the 1st Battalion pipes and drums during the liberation of the Netherlands in 1945.

The change of pipe majors' parade at University Avenue Armouries took place on February 28, 1952. The ceremony - one of the largest attended in the Toronto

⁵¹ *Dileas: A History of the 48th Highlanders of Canada*, p 797.

garrison - was of such significance to Torontonians that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the three Toronto daily newspapers recorded the event with superb detail: "4,000 People, 9 Bands Bid King of Pipe Majors Adieu;" "Prince of Pipers Retires After 39 Years With 48th;" and "Honor 48th's Grand Old Man" were headlines reflecting the reverence which Fraser generated with this, his final parade.

The *Toronto Telegram* reported the ceremony in a typically florid description:

To the accompaniment of crashing drums and skirling pipes, Pipe Major James Fraser of the 48th Highlanders, Canada's grandest old soldier said good-bye to his beloved regiment last night. He handed over his pipes, adorned with the Queen's color, to his successor, Pipe Sergeant Archie Dewar, and accepted with great dignity the salute of the regiment...But that was not all. Long before the ceremony was due to start, the University Avenue Armories, home of the 48th Highlanders, was filled to the doors. The galleries were filled and the floor had a solid crowd around it of spectators five deep. They, 5,000 of them, had come to pay tribute to this wonderful man...Pipe Bands from all over the district came too. Jimmy Fraser was something dear to them also and they wanted to add their note to the cascade of sound which shook the armories to its foundations. There were the pipe bands of the Irish Regiment, The Toronto Scottish, Lorne Scots, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Earls Court Legion, Dominion Civil Service Branch of the Legion, RCAF 400 Squadron and Caber Feidh of Toronto. The 48th Highlanders brass band was there too and it played beautifully but it was a pipers show from start to finish...Hundreds of veterans of the regiment fell in on the west side of the armories, and when Lt-Col. M.E. George called for three cheers for the veteran of the famous Gordon Highlanders and of the 48th Highlanders, they joined in the cheers. Lt.-Col. George, when addressing the battalion said: "The name of James Fraser will be remembered as long as the regiment lives." Everybody in the vast audience agreed with that, for the 48th Highlanders and Pipe Major James Fraser are almost one and the same thing...There was one very impromptu but touching little item which perhaps was the most emotional thing of the evening. When Col George called for Pipe Major James Fraser to come forward, the veteran soldier had to march all the way from the pipe band on the west side of the floor to the very centre, and as he moved forward he hesitated for everyone knows Pipe Major Fraser dislikes being in the limelight. The brass band struck up very softly, Auld Lang Syne. Perhaps at that moment James Fraser felt

a little lonely and suddenly thought of what his future would be like without his beloved band...It is a long time since James Fraser, as little more than a boy, piped the Gordon Highlanders into victory in India; it is a long time since South Africa or World War 1, but James Fraser must have seen it all again last night as he stood alone accepting the salute of his regiment - the end of his soldiering.⁵²

Fraser handed over the reins of leadership to Archie Dewar at an all time high point in the history of the pipes and drums. By their own record, the 48th were one of the best competitive bands in Ontario and certainly, one of the most respected military/show pipe bands in North America. Pipe Major Dewar would go on to lead the 48th to a stellar competitive career as the band captured six North American Championships throughout the 1950s. Also under Dewar, the 48th released several quality phonograph recordings in which the standard of rhythmic expression and unison, stylistic hallmarks of modern piping, are clearly evident.

Dewar led the 48th in a spirit similar to that which Fraser had painstakingly laid down between 1913 and 1952. At the invitation of Pipe Major Archie Dewar, James Fraser continued to perform with the pipes and drums, albeit occasionally, through the remainder of the 1950s.

Fraser continued to play the pipes and teach; however, he devoted the majority of his time to his own retirement. On July 18, 1963, at 90 years of age, James Fraser passed away leaving an enduring legacy that continues to echo throughout the Moss Park Armoury, the streets of Toronto and the province of Ontario. James Fraser remains a vital link in the history of Ontario's piping heritage.

⁵² *Toronto Telegram*, March 1, 1952.

6.6 Conclusion

James Fraser, Charles Dunbar and the Canadian militia contributed significantly to the development of the Ontario bagpiping tradition in the twentieth century. These men performed a profound role in the regiments that brought them to Canada. Although Fraser and Dunbar were not the only pipers accomplishing remarkable feats in the piping community,⁵³ they epitomized a trend that was practised by several militia regiments throughout the young Dominion: securing the talents of ex-British Army pipers to organize and maintain a credible pipe band reflective of a standard the militia hoped to attain.⁵⁴ Interestingly, the Argylls' and 48th's musical descendents continue to develop the standards laid down by Dunbar and Fraser. In fact, a significant number of talented Canadian Forces pipe majors emerged from Fraser and Dunbar's units during the Cold War period.⁵⁵ This marks a departure from the days when commanding officers were required to recruit Scottish pipe majors to Canada. This circumstance prevails no longer. The tradition

⁵³ Telephone Interview, Allan B. Clarke, Windsor, Ontario, March 17, 1999. The Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment (Windsor, Ontario) recruited Pipe Major Jock Copland, M.B.E. during the First World War. Originally a boy piper with the Seaforth Highlanders in Scotland, Copland was speedily removed from the Seaforth's roster due to his youth (Copland was 12 years of age at enlistment). Copland emigrated to Canada in 1911 and moved to Galt, Ontario where he precipitated the organization and training of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada Pipes and Drums. A machinist by trade, Copland was in great demand throughout the province and often found himself moving from town to town prior to World War One. After numerous attempts at enlisting in the Canadian Corps, Copland was invited to Windsor and joined the 241st Battalion C.E.F. (the progenitors of the Essex Scottish Regiment) and was duly appointed pipe major. After demobilization, Copland joined the Non-Permanent Active Militia's Essex Fusiliers (latterly the Essex Scottish Regiment and today, the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment) and began the arduous task of building their regimental pipe band. As a contemporary of Dunbar and Fraser, Copland applied similar principles to the Windsor piping community. In fact, pipers from the Windsor/Detroit region today enjoy a spirited competitive rivalry with their counterparts from Toronto and Hamilton due to the efforts of Pipe Major Copland. Indeed, Copland left an indelible imprint on Windsor piping that history cannot deny.

⁵⁴ Pipe Major John Gillies, Seaforth Highlanders, Vancouver, Pipe Major L. Collie, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, Winnipeg and Pipe Major A. Macpherson of the Toronto Scottish Regiment are some examples of this trend.

⁵⁵ Some of these pipe majors included Archie Cairns, Bill Gilmour, Reay Mackay and Keith Lee. See further details on Bill Gilmour and Reay Mackay in respective chapters.

bearers were now native Canadians themselves who would enforce prevailing standards of musicianship upon several successive generations of pipers. A maturation in the art had thus taken place in southern Ontario.

Although the high watermark of Canadian Army piping (Regular Force and militia) has long departed, men like Dunbar and Fraser, in a deliberate manner, laid the foundations of a standard which we enjoy today. Canadian Forces piping is no longer an institution to be admired as it once was (a professional piper's opinion). Numerous factors contributed to its erosion, not least of which was the continued neglect of the Canadian military by the policy makers at the Department of National Defense ("militia adversity" to quote Kim Beattie), coupled with the decline in the social status of the militia officer corps spelling doom for the traditional patrons of the music and the musicians themselves. Nonetheless, the subtle guise of militia piping within the greater piping establishment forms a teaching base which captivates a modest number of junior pipers who continue to maintain the traditions of their forebears. Nowadays, talented pipers in the militia seldom stay with their units: the musical challenges no longer reside there. They seek to further their skills by joining local competitive bands. These bands attract more talented musicians who perform the music they now seek to master. And, the former militia pipers leave their martial roots permanently behind them.

Many civilian pipers in and out of Ontario do not understand the history of Canadian military piping or perhaps they do not choose to acknowledge their musical provenance. It is a sad state of affairs if the contemporary Ontario piping community ignores its past achievements. In Granatstein's words, "history is the way a people

learn who they are, where they came from and how and why their world has turned out as it has . . . history matters and we forget this truth at our peril.”⁵⁶ In our contemporary world of piping, this suggests that pipers today must reflect on their past to comprehend why Ontario currently claims several Gold Medalist pipers and why a Toronto-based band won the World Pipe Band Championships in 1987. Our future success relies on our ability to comprehend yesterday’s lessons.

The quality of music that epitomized military piping in Dunbar and Fraser’s era no longer exists. Perhaps the heyday of the militia pipe band has passed. Canadian society was in a radical state of flux by the 1960s. The era of the flower child, or the liberalization of Canadian youth, coupled with the relative disinterest of the public in Canadian military affairs, were serious factors causing the diminution of military piping. Given the transient nature of the piping community and the anti-establishment fever gripping Western youth, it is not surprising that the system which promoted military piping could no longer sustain it. The community, therefore, sought other outlets to perpetuate its music. One primary outlet, the highland games field, first appeared on the periphery of the military band’s mission in the early 20th century. The music that drew talented pipers and drummers to the games became the militia band’s nemesis for it was there that the competition band was born to reign supreme in the pipe band world. For now, the art was maturing and the southern Ontario piping tradition was fast becoming the handiwork of first generation Canadians.

⁵⁶ J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, HarperPerennial, Second Edition, 1998, Preface to the Second Edition, xii.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Scottish Piping Magus - The Life and Legacy of Pipe Major John Wilson

The following chapter details the critical role John Wilson (1906-1979) performed in the development and maturation of Ontario piping in the 20th century. Wilson was a force for change in the Ontario community at this time: he represented the pinnacle of the Scottish competitive standard during the 1930s and 1940s and brought that to Ontario where he won much of the piping community's affection and admiration. We see in this chapter Wilson's self-discipline at work, not only in his own piping performances but also in his approach to life. We also witness his ability to impart his discipline and skill to his students. Perhaps most important for us to recognize about Wilson's students was their national background: they were Canadian. This is where we begin to see the emergence of the Canadian challenge to Scottish competitive piping. By the 1960s, Wilson's students were recognized by their peers as 'the aces of the art', thus signaling the end of Scotland's exclusive reign over competitive piping.

The competitive culture of the pipes found a healthy and happy home in Canada. The art was thriving in Canada but acquired a new vigor with Wilson. Canadians were considered good musicians prior to World War Two but the measurement factor which competitive piping is based upon was not as prevalent then as it became during Wilson's era. And, if Wilson was teaching, he would demand nothing less than his style of perfection from his students. Of course, Wilson's students are chronicled in a later chapter, but it is worth noting here that his

prize winning students are considered the pioneers of the Canadian competitive movement in Scotland which helped pave the way for bands like the 78th Fraser Highlanders to win the World Pipe Band Championships in 1987. In this way, he effected a significant contribution to the Ontario piping community.

From a different dimension, we see how this emigrant tradition, piping, was actively cultivated by a native-born Scot eager to see his Canadian underlings thrive in the Scottish competitive environment. In this, Wilson was no different from Charles Dunbar and James Fraser. Yet, Dunbar and Fraser's circumstances differed from Wilson's: their reputations were established upon the musical ascendancy of their bands, far removed from the strictures of competitive piping. Wilson's reputation, however, was built upon his unrivaled competitive success during the 1930s and his equally formidable list of prize-winning students. When he moved to Ontario, competition would quickly become the primary domain of the music, largely ushered in by Wilson. The tradition grew under Wilson and it grew much more rapidly toward the Scottish competitive standard to which he was accustomed. Ontario desired to become more entrenched in the Scottish scene and benefited by his expertise; hence, the speedy rise in the standards of competitive solo performance during this period.

The opposite was true with Gibson's Cape Breton pipers. Cape Breton piping grew differently because the performers' concerns were focused away from the competitive platform; their *modus operandi* continued to reside in pleasing their local communities at the ceilidhs, picnics and other social occasions. Competition introduced an exclusivity in the musical experience. Competitive piping in Ontario

would foster this movement in the post-World War Two era when piping removed itself from the everyday concerns and functions of society (unlike the experience during the high era of military pipe bands). Cape Breton would not witness this process. That discussion though, will be addressed in the conclusion of this thesis.

“When Wilson came over here [from Scotland]”, acknowledged Canadian Gold Medallist Ed Neigh, “he took over the [Canadian] Argylls. That lasted two years. Well,” continued Neigh,

If you knew John Wilson. Well I'll tell you, have you read his book? Talk about somebody saying one thing and the reader taking something else from it. John raves on about the world and all he's doing is telling everybody what an egotistical, idiotic character he was. I mean, they made him a pipe major in the British Army because he could play. They ended up making him personal piper to some General because nobody could stand him! Oh God! Running a pipe band? I'm sure he would have had people fleeing from the band. I mean what a honeymoon: The *Great*¹ John Wilson teaching your band but eventually you went absolutely nuts. I've never met a man like him. Ah, it was great entertainment.²

John Wilson remains one of the most controversial and elusive characters in the Ontario bagpiping world in the 20th century. For all of his musical accomplishments, he could be universally scorned by large segments of the Ontario bagpipe community which he not only loved but, had also come to despise by the late 1960s. Indeed, he has been described by one modern day observer as “one of the most egotistical and obstinate men I came across during my competitive days with the Clan MacFarlane pipe band.”³ Others have described him as “a most devoted

¹ Author's emphasis

² Ed Neigh, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, Wellesley, Ontario, January 14, 1999.

³ Dr. James Fryer, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, Ottawa, Ontario, December 14, 1999. The Clan MacFarlane Pipe Band evolved into one of the most highly respected Grade 1 competitive bands in the Ontario region during the late 1960s. Prior to accepting a teaching position

teacher,” “unusually gifted,” “blunt, honest, undiplomatic” and “the quintessential bagpipe man of the 20th century.” Although over two decades have passed since his death in 1979, his supporters and detractors continue to be decisive in their convictions about the Wilson they came to admire or detest. His impact to this day remains palpable.

Certainly, Wilson was no stranger to controversy throughout his life. Writing in the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*⁴ in early 1977, Wilson glibly declared, “When I received the invitation to judge [at the Kansas City Highland Games], I looked at the map and discovered that Kansas City was right in the center of the U.S.A. And I wondered what kind of horrible piping I would hear in such an out of the way place.”⁵ It maybe telling of Wilson’s personality that the most effective way to convey his uncompromising musical expectations - his vision - was through his more than occasional damning condemnations in the Ontario Piping Society’s publication. Wilson, however, chose not to restrict his beliefs to the confines of *The Bulletin* as he indeed utilized his influence as a judge to incite polemical discussion with his contemporaries. Perhaps his judging commitments met a ravenous appetite to harshly criticize a colonial diaspora piping community in its amateur yet genuine attempts to ape its counterpart in Scotland. Yet, that may not have been the case with the inner Wilson as confirmed by pupil Robert Worrall. Speaking to the Toronto

at Stanford University, Dr. Fryer was a leading soloist on the Ontario highland games circuit during this period. Fryer would eventually return to Ontario to become the Chair of the Medical Research Department at the University of Ottawa. Fryer subsequently re-joined the piping community by becoming a member of the Grade 1 Dunvegan Pipe Band under Scott MacAuley in 1984.

⁴ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* was the official publication of the Piper’s Society of Ontario during the 1970s.

⁵ John Wilson, “Round the Games” in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, Published by the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, July 1978, Vol.33, No.1, p 5.

Piobaireachd Club in 1989, Worrall attested that Wilson instinctively invited the ire of his fellows, for his own amusement, but was perceived by the ranking members of the Ontario Pipers' Society to satisfy his apparent desire for conflict. "Wilson," Worrall proclaimed "was playing with the executive of the Pipers Society. He was having fun at their expense."⁶

Perhaps there was a psychological dimension to Wilson's persona. As many of Wilson's pupils will confirm, he possessed an internal philosophy of self-discipline and perfection that drove him as a human being and by extension, drove his entire approach to piping: teaching, performing, judging, and composing. However, with Wilson's superior abilities as a performer and given his inherent self-discipline (Pipe Major Reay Mackay observed that Wilson was "one of the most disciplined men I ever met") tact was somehow an unemployed tool of diplomacy when interacting with his fellows, particularly when spearheading several initiatives to improve the piping competitions throughout Ontario in the 1960s and 1970s. Certainly Wilson's more than occasional harsh and intractable observations invited endless debate throughout the provincial piping community which, undoubtedly, forced pipers and drummers alike to pay heed to this remarkable individual.

7.1 - The Early Years

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1906, John Wilson was raised by his father, mother and two older siblings. Wilson vaguely makes reference to an elder sister who remains nameless; apparently, she did not merit Wilson's attention. Although

⁶ Robert Worrall, Seminar presented to the Toronto Piobaireachd Club, Cassette recording, Sergeants'

Wilson's brother Alexander began his piping with Archie MacColl, the young Wilson became entranced by the instrument and its music through his uncle, John 'the Baldooser', who regularly visited the Wilson family, regaling them with his piping and effervescent personality. "Many a night, I would fall asleep to the music of the pipes"⁷, Wilson revealed in his memoirs. Indeed, Wilson was exposed to a great deal of pipe music during his youth. As a boy during the First World War, Wilson witnessed first hand the rotation and training of Scottish regiments in preparation for their deployment to the Western Front, which, no doubt, reinforced his keen interest in the bagpipes. "Lots of extra battalions were mobilized," Wilson wrote, "and every Sunday morning my Father and Mother took me with them to watch the various battalions parading to Saint Giles Cathedral."⁸ We used to take up position opposite the main entrance, and it was a fine spectacle to see the different units, each headed by a band or bands, swinging round from George IV Bridge, or down from the Castle, or up the High Street."⁹ Amidst the happy boyhood memories of troop movements and grand military parades, a solemnity pervaded much of British society during that period. Yet, the sullen wartime atmosphere continued to produce anecdotal tidbits of humor, which found refuge in the Wilson household:

In those days a military guard was maintained at Holyrood Palace and for a while it came from Leith Fort. When the Dandy Ninth [The 9th Battalion Royal Scots] was stationed there, the guard was always played up Easter Road by a piper, and immediately I heard the pipes I would rush 'ben' to the parlor and watch and listen as the soldiers marched past. There was one

Mess, 48th Highlanders of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, April 15, 1989.

⁷ John Wilson *A Professional Piper in Peace and War: The Autobiography and Memoirs of Pipe Major John Wilson*, published by John Wilson, 1978, p 3.

⁸ These battalions were practising the age-old tradition of the regimental church parade. The battalion paraded in full strength to participate in a regimental church service to the apparent delight of Wilson and his contemporaries.

⁹ Wilson, 1978, p 4.

particular piper whom I came to recognize and look for. He was a big, fine looking young man with a terrific carriage. My brothers enjoyed getting me to imitate him, and I always finished my performance by saying “Oh! What a swagger!”¹⁰

Wilson, obviously displaying a penchant for showmanship, began to develop a stage persona, which served him most effectively during his latter forays *on the boards*¹¹.

Wilson’s father, recognizing his youngest son’s obvious affinity for the Great War Pipe, arranged instruction for the precocious youngster: he took his first lessons from Pipe Major Robert Thompson, 5th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, at Edinburgh Castle in 1915. After a year under Thompson’s instruction, Wilson’s older brother Alexander gave him his bagpipe (Alexander enlisted as a soldier with the 16th Battalion Royal Scots) and he quickly performed his first tune, *My Home*, a slow air, in the band room at the Castle. By late 1916, Wilson’s teacher was posted with his battalion to Redford Barracks and thus he was sent to one A.R. MacLeod to continue his tuition. Wilson’s progress was rapid and after a year with his new teacher, MacLeod recommended Wilson to Roddie Campbell, “an excellent piper”¹² who would play the most significant role in Wilson’s musical training.

We can only speculate that Wilson’s natural ability was immediately recognized by Campbell, who urged his parents to enroll the youth in the Highland Pipers’ Society of Edinburgh¹³. The club, which met twice monthly, boasted a

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 3-4.

¹¹ A piping term loosely meaning “to compete.” In many bagpipe competitions, both past and present, a small stage was constructed for competitors to perform upon. Over the course of the 20th century, piping vernacular has evolved so that in the course of any given conversation, one may hear one competitor saying to another “See you on the boards” or “Good luck on the boards”.

¹² Wilson 1978, p 6. Roddie Campbell possessed a solid reputation as a performer in the Scottish piping community as he was a winner of the Argyllshire Gathering Gold Medal for Piobaireachd.

¹³ The club was a haven for both pipers and highland dancers as well as keen enthusiasts of piping and highland dancing. The Highland arts - dancing, piping and the Gaelic song tradition - were avidly supported during the post-war period. Wilson noted in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, that there

membership of many leading competitive pipers of the day: Willie MacLeod, Malcolm Johnston, D.R. MacLennan, Allan MacLeod Calder and several others of notable repute. Wilson thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings of the club and continued his instruction with his new mentor. Unfortunately, Wilson's promising career on the pipes was temporarily suspended by the harsh realities of war. Playing at home on a Sunday afternoon, Wilson blew off the better part of three fingers in a freak accident involving explosive war materials. The accident is best told in Wilson's prose.

Like most boys, I collected war souvenirs like military regimental badges, blank and even live bullets etc. which I kept in a shoe box and treasured greatly...It was a dull, dark Sunday afternoon in November when I thought of my box of curiosities. A Sunday in 1918 Scotland was a dreary day indeed for children especially. No games could be played, and no laughing or singing or whistling were allowed...On this afternoon I was 'bored stiff' and the thought of my box of souvenirs was a real inspiration. After a bit of a search, I found the box and began looking through all the junk it contained. I came upon the little perforated copper container which was shaped like a bullet. As I looked at it and noticed that it still had a few grains of powder in it and I thought it might give a flash if ignited. The temptation was too great, so I took it over to the kitchen range in which a fire was burning brightly, and, holding it in my left hand, I shook it gently over the fire. A terrific explosion shook the house, and the room was filled with smoke and ashes. My Father, who had been sitting in an armchair at the side of the fireplace reading the 'People's Journal', jumped what seemed to me to be a fabulous height into the air, and I immediately thought about the spanking I would get for making such an unholy noise on the Sabbath...I couldn't feel a single thing for the explosion had made me quite numb, but when the smoke cleared away I saw my Father looking at me he said, "My God, laddie, your fingers are off!" The police ambulance arrived, and all the way to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary my father kept saying, "You wee bugger, you'll never play pipes again; do you realize what you've done?"

At the "Royal", I was operated on in the emergency department. The protruding bones had to be cut away and the fingers and the palm

were three additional societies of this nature in Edinburgh: The Caledonian Pipers' Society, The Royal Mile Pipers' Society and the Royal Scottish Pipers' Society, all of which held their own competitions "quite independently of each other." *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, January/February 1970, p 9.

of my hand sewn up.¹⁴

Wilson would not have the final dressing removed from his left hand for another six months. Surprisingly, he presided over his own rehabilitation program - with practice chanter and music - armed with a stubborn determination to succeed in spite of his family's convictions that he would never play again. Gradually, Wilson regained the skills he lost for six months and entered the highland games at Scotstoun (Glasgow) in 1920 where on a cool and rainy day, he received third prize in the Piobaireachd competition, revealing his potential for future successes in competition. However, given the climatic conditions of the day, Wilson's "little stumps" turned blue and he was forced to pack his bagpipe away, prohibiting him from competing in any light music events such as the marches, strathspeys and reels. This incident foreshadowed numerous episodes which dogged much of Wilson's competitive career - cold and damp weather conditions severely hampering his performances. However, on several occasions when the outdoor conditions were merciless on his stumps, Wilson would exercise his mental self-discipline in an attempt to overcome the sensitivity of his disfigured digits. The following year, 1921, Wilson returned to Scotstoun and secured the three Gold Medals, the Mitchell Cup and the Amateur Championships. Throughout 1919-1921, Wilson regularly returned to the Edinburgh Pipers Society meetings where he performed "fairly well and became quite a minor celebrity."¹⁵

It is interesting to note that Wilson reveals a minor yet significant anecdote

¹⁴ Wilson, 1978 pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ Wilson, 1978 p 9.

regarding the Scotstoun contest that may have unwittingly contributed to, at the tender age of 14, his dogged insistence on technical perfection in order to legitimize his membership in the community. The Scotstoun incident may have also contributed to his unique character development for Wilson eventually cultivated an unassuming stage presence (charisma) that evolved into an exceptional competitive bravado.¹⁶ As the results of the 1920 Scotstoun games were announced, Wilson, standing with his brothers and several leading pipers of the day, overheard one individual blurt out, “Wha [sic] the hell is Wilson? He’s shairly [sic] a dark horse. And the best o’ the baur [sic] is, the bugger hasnae [sic] a finger tae [sic] to play wi.” Wilson’s older brother Alex quickly retorted, “What the hell are you talking about? My brother competed here last year but the weather was too cold for his fingers, but he has more music in the little stumps on his left hand than the most of these buggers put together.”¹⁷ Wilson certainly sensed his brother’s emotionalism: he would not have written about it if he did not. Wilson concludes this particular anecdote by including the names of his fellow competitors informing us, in his own subtle way, that he competed against the leading amateur pipers who distinguished themselves in

¹⁶ This persona was confirmed by a letter submitted to the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin* by one N. Sinclair - latterly of Montreal, Quebec - in February, 1960. Sinclair wrote, “I remember the ‘Boy Champion’ fifty-two or fifty-three years ago. As near as I can recall at this late day, he was anywhere between fourteen and seventeen years of age, and he had a very attractive personality and a cock-of-the-walk bearing, from which - many of us thought - he got as much acclaim as he got for his artistry on the pipe. Nevertheless, considering his age then, he played well, and had been well taught. However, virtuosity is not always a corollary of the well-taught.” Curiously, Sinclair attempted to denigrate Wilson’s claim to the title ‘Boy Champion’, perhaps in an attempt to remind the virtuoso piper - in print - of his boyhood roots. Thus, Sinclair continued, “At that time, the title Boy Champion could be assumed without challenge because pipers of his age and caliber were few. Many boys were playing pipes, but they belonged to one boys band or another. And the tutorial system lacked objectivity. The paramount idea was to get the boy ready to take his place in the band in the shortest possible time, unless he showed promise of being a potential soloist. However, there were few who emerged from that crucible to shed luster on the art.” *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, Published by W.A. McPherson, February, 1960, p 3.

¹⁷ Ibid. p 10.

the professional piping contests during the 1920s and 30s. A similar incident involving the clashing of personalities, apparently at the Aboyne games during the inter-war period, would illustrate and re-confirm Wilson's competitive machismo (in addition to his independence of character). The Aboyne incident, however, did not appear in his memoirs; rather, Bob Worrall related the Aboyne tale involving Wilson and Pipe Major J.B. Robertson, Scots Guards, to the Toronto Piobaireachd Club.

He was such a competitor and as a competitor, he would do whatever he had to do to win. If the trend was to play fast, he would play as fast or faster. J.B. Robertson played a march, strathspey and reel and came off the platform, looked at John, who was going on next - who had his own repertoire - and said 'Beat that.' John thought for a second, decided he wasn't ready to play his own tunes, went up and played the exact same tunes as J.B. and won!¹⁸

The tale, true or false, succinctly underscores Wilson's pride. The natural corollary of this pride was manifest in the bold and confident competitive spirit Wilson allegedly displayed at his daring performance at Aboyne, which likely surprised the adjudicator, stunned the audience, amused Robertson and delighted Wilson. Perhaps more importantly, the tale illustrates the reputation he strove to maintain and the extent to which he was prepared to go to assert and protect that image. Wilson was endowed with a gift to which he became accustomed; he capitalized on it by maintaining his standard of performance throughout his life and was, justifiably, both proud and enthusiastic - in his dour demeanor - to communicate his competitive prowess to anyone willing to listen to him.

The following year, 1922, and under his teacher Roddie Campbell's counsel, Wilson promoted himself to the Open Professional Piping category; victory was not

¹⁸ Worrall, Seminar to The Toronto Piobaireachd Club, 1989.

long in the offing for the young piper. After a few sporadic successes at the two largest piping competitions in Scotland - Oban and Inverness - Wilson, on his fourth attempt, was awarded the Gold Medal for Piobaireachd playing at the Northern Meeting, Inverness, in 1925. This meteoric rise to the top of the professional class was followed up two years later on Wednesday September 11, 1927: Wilson performed the Piobaireachd *The Prince's Salute*, securing him the equally coveted Oban Gold Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering. Indeed, Wilson demonstrated his musical virtuosity around the highland games earning the approbation of critics and fellow competitors alike, judges and piping enthusiasts.

Outside of his cherished music career, Wilson found employment in numerous places working at several jobs during the latter 1920s and 30s: from apprentice clerk at a coal merchant's company at age 14, he would move into various sectors of the service economy ranging from a manager for a public house in Peebles to a salesman for a housing development on the outskirts of Edinburgh where he "had no need to tell a lot of lies in order to sell them."¹⁹ In fact, his employment as a salesman suited his physical requirements at the time given that he was suffering from knee damage, due to his keen interest in playing soccer. In 1933, he was ordered by a general practitioner to remain off the knees for the entire calendar year. Evidently and quite unusually for the period, Wilson did not suffer from lack of employment. The single most evident manifestation of the Great Depression during the 1930s was the unemployment rate; the fact that several victor nations after the

¹⁹ Ibid. p 22.

Great War – particularly Britain – had to contend with their wartime debts meant that most of the western world during the 1930s suffered greatly - economically, socially, and politically - from the effects of the Depression. Yet Wilson remained unaffected by the tragedies that struck global populations, including his own in his native Scotland. He continued in employment, as a reliever sorter for a time with the General Post Office and continued to compete voraciously.²⁰

As the decade of the 1920s closed, Wilson, at a youthful 24 years of age, became so entranced by his art that he made a significant yet short lived-career decision: he resolved to abandon his office work and make piping his full time occupation. To this end, he attended and competed at as many highland games as possible throughout the summer of 1929 (including contests that were held throughout the working week). Interestingly, this was not an uncommon practice for a few of the champion pipers of the day. Wilson therefore did not stand alone in his chosen profession. He testifies that the following pipers “toured the whole circuit”:
Pipe Major Willie Ross (Director of the Army Class for Piobaireachd at the Castle, Edinburgh), Pipe Major J.B.Robertson (2nd Scots Guards), Pipe Major Robert Reid

²⁰ Curiously, Wilson fails to even acknowledge the Depression in his memoirs; so unaffected was he that he continued to take several summers off from his regular job - wherever he happened to be employed at the time - to compete and supplement his income through his competitive winnings. One may even draw the conclusion that Wilson remained almost completely unaware of the significant issues facing British society in the 1930s. Certainly, Wilson must have been aware of the rise of fascism and other related issues during the period; however, he excluded these matters in his book. To speculate that Wilson was completely ignorant of his contemporary world is nothing more than engaging in the mere art of conjecture; however, he was an exceptionally intelligent man (according to all who came in contact with him and corroborated by Wilson himself in his memoirs on page 1) it is not entirely without foundation that he did not pay any heed to events he did not wield any influence over. Pipe Major Reay Mackay, one of Wilson’s most talented students in Canada, cited that “Wilson was only ever interested in Pipes, Pipes, and Pipes.” Perhaps it is not all that surprising that Wilson viewed his world from the cloistered perspective of the consummate artiste. Reay Mackay, Seminar for Toronto Piobaireachd Club, cassette recorded speech, on John Wilson, Toronto, Canada, April 15, 1989.

(7th Highland Light Infantry, Territorial Army) and Malcolm Ross MacPherson. The leaders of the art from both a performance and compositional standpoint surrounded Wilson. However, given the limited cash prizes available at the time to the soloists - the theme consistently pervades the piping community to this day - it is not surprising that Wilson did not continue his practice of solely relying on his income from the games. Wilson concedes "It was a great experience and I did fairly well...At the end of the games season, I got a shock. Although I had quite a bit of prize money, I found I wasn't any richer and I realized that I had been far too lavish in 'standing my hand' and I resolved to be more sensible in the future." Wilson subsequently found suitable alternative employment to support his artistic endeavors. "I had no more financial worries for I was single and had no expensive tastes and like my mother, I knew how to look after the little money I had."²¹

Nineteen thirty-six (1936) was Wilson's greatest year in competition²²: out of 26 games he attended, he won 70 prizes of 72 events including 8 first prizes for Piobaireachd - The Gold Clasp or Former Winners competition at The Northern Meeting ranks in his victories this year, 8 firsts for marches, 16 firsts for Strathspeys and Reels, 1 first for March, Strathspey and Reel contest, and 2 firsts for jigs. The remaining prizes were as follows: 24 second placings, 5 thirds, 5 fourths and 1 fifth. "People had often said that I was another Geo. MacLennan, but only in 1936 did I ever think I even approached that truly great player. If G.S. had lost fingers the same as I had, he might not have been as great a player as he was, and if I hadn't lost any fingers, I might have been as good as George. But all that year of 1936 my hands

²¹ Wilson, 1978 p 20.

were in the best condition they have ever been in and nothing was difficult for me.”²³

Wilson received open recognition for his performances from his fellow competitors and enthusiasts alike that year. These were significant events for a significant artist.

In fact, as Wilson writes, his teacher, Roddie Campbell, wrote a letter to Wilson, which gave him “more pleasure than any prize” he received at the highland games.

The context of the letter written was that Wilson had broadcast a recital over the wireless radio for the British Broadcasting Corporation and evidently gave a

landmark performance. Roddy Campbell’s commendation stands as a unique

testament on its own:

I wish to congratulate you on your last night’s performance on the Wireless. It was simply grand. I went down to Victor McLeod’s to listen in, and both of us had no hesitation in placing your performance as the best we have heard on the Wireless. The beauty of it too, was that you seemed to improve as you went along, each selection seemed to be better than its predecessor, and your grand final burst made one almost gasp. I have no doubt that in many a highland and other homes there would be a clapping of hands and shouting for more of the same. I can vouch for this being the case in the house where I sat.²⁴

Wilson continued to receive private and public admiration into the latter 1930s. A

more significant article appeared in the newspapers of Lochaber after he won the

Clasp at Inverness in 1936. The article lauded the exploits of the 30 year old.

Brilliant Winner— Mr. John Wilson, Edinburgh, set the seal on his great performance at the Northern Meeting by winning the pibrochs. His choice was Padruig Og MacCrimmon, which he played in almost faultless fashion. Later in the day he secured second place in both the march and strathspey and reel competitions. A pupil of Mr. Rod Campbell, a well-known Edinburgh tutor, Mr. Wilson’s skillful fingering was greatly admired. His win in the pibrochs was his 28th premiere award this season. In addition, he has secured about 30 second prizes.²⁵

²² Wilson refers to this as ‘My Peak Year’ in his memoirs.

²³ Wilson, 1978 p 29.

²⁴ Drafted on 23 April, 1935, reprinted in *Wilson 1978* p 25.

²⁵ Curiously, this article records Wilson’s Piobaireachd as “Patrick Og MacCrimmon’s Lament,”

Wilson's dedication and drive were demonstrated through his victories in his peak year; he would continue to demonstrate those characteristics throughout the closing months of 1936 and indeed, would reveal those same qualities for the remainder of his music career. As the "Dirty thirties"²⁶ came to a close, Wilson could look back to highly successful competitive career; however, Wilson would not be allowed to enjoy his triumphs for any significant duration as personal tragedy overtook his life and subordinated his passion for the art.

In the summer of 1937, Wilson's mentor, teacher, and good friend, Roddie Campbell, passed away. "His death was a great loss to me, for we had such a happy relationship", Wilson admitted. He continued, "I bitterly blamed myself for not doing more to help him." Campbell was admitted to a nursing home a few months prior to his death, although the medical doctors could not determine what afflicted the old master. Wilson revealed that he visited his friend from time to time. Evidently, nothing could be done for Campbell and as one Dr. Simpson reportedly informed Wilson, "he had lost the desire to live and just turned his face to the wall and died."²⁷

All would not be calm for Wilson as he was immediately faced with the unexpected death of his mother in January 1938, "I took it very hard and stopped

however, Wilson informs us he in fact performed "The King's Taxes." We are also not informed as to the newspaper in which this article appeared. Wilson found the article among his mother's papers. Nonetheless, the record stands that Wilson was a recipient of one of the most coveted and revered prizes in the piping world - The Gold Clasp - in 1936 (his name is printed as the winner that year in the Northern Meeting Programs in 1988 and 1990, both of which are in my possession).

²⁶ So called by historians because of the decade's characteristic mass unemployment, impoverished social conditions and the rise of fascism. For a Canadian perspective of the global phenomenon, see Bothwell, English and Drummond's *Canada Since 1900*, University of Toronto Press, 1987.

²⁷ Wilson, 1978, p 36.

practising or playing the pipes.” Wilson, not having the same desire to play, was coerced by friends into performing at the London Bratach Gorm competitions. Wilson self-admittedly did not perform with the zest and dynamism that defined his previous performance style - he did not receive a prize. As Wilson still lived at the same residence with his parents, he decided to send his widowed father to reside with his eldest sister in Forres, Morrayshire, closed up the family house in Edinburgh and accepted employment in Peebles. Later that summer, Wilson experienced a “pins and needles” sensation in his left hand producing a few inconsistent performances; however, he returned to his usual health as the summer progressed. The run of tragic events in Wilson’s life continued. In March 1939 at the age of 80 years, Wilson’s father passed away. This event though does not seem to have affected Wilson with the same emotional amplitude as the loss of his mother.²⁸

Although Wilson’s personal life was shaken, he re-entered competition that summer and once again, confirmed his place amongst the best pipers the competitive world had to offer. Yet, his life was not his own as circumstances altered later that year for him - like so many others around the world - and he became affected by the events shaping global history.

If, as suggested, Wilson took no marked interest in European diplomacy, the fact is that he anticipated the coming of the Second World War and enlisted with the 4th Battalion, Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders at Inverness late in the summer of 1939.

²⁸ Wilson noted that his father had “one great weakness - a love for whisky” suggesting he bore witness to fairly regular instances of substance abuse and conceivably all the typical corollaries - behaviors - that are associated with those abuses. These factors may explain why Wilson did not memorialize his father. Instead, Wilson subordinated his father’s personal side and exposed his

To sum up Wilson's music career prior to the war: he secured a stellar reputation as a performer, winning both premiere Gold Medals (Oban and Inverness) and the Clasp (Inverness) amongst numerous victories around the Scottish highland games circuit piping; recorded several discs for broadcast with the Beltona Record Company and the British Broadcasting Corporation before he turned 30 years of age.²⁹ He began instructing at various summer schools throughout the latter 1930s and was beginning to demonstrate his promise as a composer and in fact, became quite a prolific composer. Urged by fellow pipers who clamored for his hand-written compositions, he published his first collection of highland bagpipe music in 1937. Wilson's first collection of published works contains a significant number of musically mature works and continues to be hailed by pipers who are challenged and intrigued by the technicality and melodious nature of his compositions.

By the commencement of the Second World War then, Wilson demonstrated to onlookers that he had not only overcome the loss of his fingers from his boyhood days but also triumphed in adversity, surprising all those around him (supporters and detractors) as he thrived in his artistic endeavors. Meanwhile, he developed a keen sense of self through his bagpipe performance and was secure in the knowledge that he was on the leading edge of performance standards ultimately carrying him through his war experiences and his subsequent emigration to Canada.

personal weakness - alcoholism.

²⁹ In a photo taken at the 1934 Oban Argyllshire Gathering, Wilson is shown performing with the three other leading pipers of the day (Robertson, Macpherson and Reid) and he referred to himself as a member of "The Big Four."

7.2 - John Wilson and the Second World War

Wilson's initial contribution and participation in the second great war of the 20th century was marked by great spirit and enthusiasm. Yet, his experiences were doomed to the fortunes of the ill-fated 51st Highland Division who were captured in the summer of 1940 at St. Valery, France, precluding his active participation in the war. The next five years of his life were marked by years as a German prisoner of war, thus, his contribution - like thousands of others - to the Allied war effort was limited. Upon Wilson's appointment as Pipe Major of the 4th Camerons, his duties as senior piper of the battalion invariably took him away from his band. And his abilities as a prize-winning musician and the mentality he engendered as a soloist did not endear him to his chain of command. Wilson, stubborn and opinionated about the organization and administration of his band, often found himself contrary to his superiors particularly in matters of military protocol. He was also quick to point out - from his vantage point - their numerous faults and so found himself quickly out of favor with his supervisors. Upon the battalion's deployment to France in January 1940, Wilson's pervasive problems with the chain of command marred his efforts with the band. He was re-assigned as personal piper to General Victor Fortune, Commander of the 51st Highland Division.³⁰ In the spring of 1940, after Wilson

³⁰ Ed Neigh refers to this incident in his statement at the commencement of this chapter. In fact, Pipe Major Wilson records the notorious incident, which resulted in his dual distinction (slam) of not only being posted away from his battalion but demoted from the rank of sergeant to private. Evidently, when the 4th Camerons returned from a route march in France in early 1940, Wilson was ordered to stand-to the band for a Regimental Sergeant Major's parade. Wilson disobeyed the command and ordered the band instead to stand down so the instruments could be dried after their morning exercise. Shortly thereafter, Wilson was marched in front of the commanding officer, the Earl of Cawdor, and charged for disobeying a lawful command. "He" Wilson notes, "and his officers must have thought that I was a very conceited, stuck up, sort of person, when I was really very nervous and very unsure of myself because of my ignorance of military procedure." In Wilson's defence, he was not properly trained by the military and was appointed a senior non-commissioned officer because of his abilities.

assumed his new duties, disaster struck the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk. Within days, what was left of the demoralized British Army - with a few exceptions - was evacuated from continental Europe and sent back to Britain. Wilson though, was captured. The victorious Nazi armies occupied France and the former pipe major quickly found himself marching to a prisoner of war camp.

7.3 - John Wilson - Prisoner of War

Noting with careful detail his Prisoner of War (POW) experiences, Wilson judiciously points to his time behind the barbed wire as a time fraught with hard labor, poor rations, and the pervasive battle for psychological supremacy; at times, his mental challenges involved both his German captors and his fellow POWs. Commenting on an incident involving the swarming of a group of French women by British Non-commissioned officers, Wilson noted "This was the beginning of an education which taught me more about my fellow men than 50 years of sheltered living in peace time could have done."³¹ Wilson's POW experiences carved an indelible impression upon his psyche. How could they not? However, his reminiscences reveal his characteristic pluck and individuality which were never consumed by the overwhelming forces that weighed against him during this period. As a matter of course, albeit occasionally, he cleverly took advantage of a system that, by definition, did not freely allow the opportunity to do so, ever. As such, Wilson repeatedly demonstrated his capacity to undermine his German hosts thereby

Neither Wilson and the British Army had the time or inclination to understand each other and thus Pipe Major Wilson, 4th Cameron Highlanders, found himself as Private Wilson, Personal Piper to the Commander of the 51st Highland Division.

³¹ Wilson, 1978 p 54.

maintaining his own physical and mental well-being.

Wilson understood the futility of his and his comrades' situation upon his internment at Camp Erfurt, Germany. As a prisoner, Wilson and his fellows could only sit out the rest of the war, but that did not mean - for Wilson especially - that aiding the enemy economy was his desired end. He immediately inaugurated his protestations. "I had never done heavy manual work at home," Wilson wrote, "and I wasn't going to do it for Germans if I could help it so, I took the opportunity to lodge a strong protest about having to do heavy work when I had a weak left hand and had only been a musician in the army. My protest worked, and I was kept in the lager to sweep out the rooms after the men had left in the morning and also to sweep out the Commandant's rooms and guards quarters."³² Meanwhile, Wilson clandestinely collected cigarette ends and crusts of bread to distribute amongst his fellow POWs as they returned from laboring on the autobahn.

During Wilson's five year internment, there were, on occasion, opportunities to play both the practice chanter and the bagpipe and, to Wilson's discovery, he did not lose his performance edge. The bagpipes appeared at several POW camps that Wilson occupied and provided the opportunity to take his mind off the daily routine of prisoner life. "We had some great sessions on the pipes," Wilson duly noted, "but the Germans were very suspicious of us, for they suspected that we used the pipes to cover the sounds made by tunnel diggers."³³ Wilson did not display any degree of antipathy towards the pipes during his captivity as evidenced by his fable at Molsdorf

³² Ibid. p 57.

³³ Ibid. p 64.

- his final POW camp. Evidently, Wilson with a New Zealand army officer, and one Duncan Cameron of the 4th Battalion Cameron Highlanders (Wilson's former unit), began to play the pipes with great fervor, some sessions lasting hours on end. As Wilson described, the patience displayed by the officers for the bagpipes diminished rather quickly. Wilson accorded this outward hostility as a mark of their English provenance; to his amazement a vote was organized "to see whether A) the bagpipes should be banned, B) the bagpipes should be allowed to be played at any time, C) the bagpipes should be allowed to be played for two hours only per day. The result was a victory for (C)."³⁴ Pleasing Wilson, this decision allowed him to maintain his sanity through his artistic endeavors and successfully see out the rest of the war.

Wilson experienced numerous personal debacles throughout the war, which, admittedly, were orchestrated by him. However, his cleverness usually carried him through to witness a successful resolution whenever he took exception to the tactics employed by the Germans to have the Allied soldiers working for the Nazi economy. Surely, these episodes were an outgrowth of his stalwart determination to survive the five-year ordeal. They were also a manifestation of a fixed principle within Wilson, a principle that was not to be compromised at any price, including his life. One incident deserves attention here as his prose reveals, in painstaking detail, the one and only standoff that nearly killed him.

When we arrived at a place called Unterbreishbach, I took an instant and violent dislike to it...I had confided to a chap of the Seaforth Highlanders that I had made my mind not to go down the pit, and he said he would refuse also. Soon, Mackenzie and I were the only ones of our party not in the cage, and a German foreman shouted at us to get in. We stood still and the foreman and another man came over to us...I said I wasn't going down the pit, that I had

³⁴ Ibid. p 68.

had my bellyful of salt mines...Then they called the guard over, who was a soldier with a rifle. They said that if we refused once more, the guard had orders to shoot. I don't know how to describe my feelings at that moment. I was absolutely fed up with life and I wouldn't have cared if the whole German army had been there. The foreman asked us again to go into the cage and the guard raised his rifle. I said something about where he could stick the rifle and I told the foreman to go to hell. Then something happened which took us completely by surprise; the guard burst into tears. He lowered his rifle and put the back of his right hand over his eyes. After a few moments of silent astonishment, the guard was led away and we were put into a small room while the foreman and others stood outside talking. I have thought about his incident many times and I always reach the conclusion that we were very lucky indeed.³⁵

'Lucky indeed' perhaps is too mild - 'divine intervention' may be the only explanation for the outcome of this dramatic battle of the human condition.

Given that time could prove to be thought provoking for Wilson, and, that he possessed and cultivated an extremely active mind throughout his life, this period led him to contemplate his emigration from Scotland at the conclusion of the war. Interestingly, Canada was not his first choice; he resolved that if he saw his freedom returned to him, he would prefer to move to a country with a warm and sunny climate and Wilson chose South Africa as his future country of adoption.

Meanwhile, Wilson sat out the rest of the war with his not so unusual bouts of adversarial behavior to the Germans. At one time, he complained emphatically of lumbago, was removed from his work in the salt mine and immediately sent to a German military hospital. Wilson thoroughly enjoyed his station - he was provided with clean bed sheets, regular meals and all the other comforts of home and hearth. Whilst recovering though, he was assigned a British doctor whose sympathy he cunningly enlisted in order to extend his stay, "I think he had a shrewd idea that I

³⁵ Ibid. p. 65

wasn't as bad as I made out I was, but the back is one thing that can puzzle doctors. After a week or two the German doctors quite openly accused me of shamming and wanted to send me back to Unterbreisbach, but the British doctor stuck up for me and I stayed on."³⁶ Wilson was, indeed, a cunning individual primed to improve and extend his lot to successfully carry him through his personal difficulties.

After the Normandy invasion in June 1944, Allied land forces quickly edged their way inland threatening Germany's hegemony of Europe; Wilson and his contemporaries, aware of the Allied advance through an illegal wireless radio, began to radiate hope as they became increasingly aware of the desperate situation of the Nazis. Of course, by the spring of 1945, Wilson and his fellow POWs were liberated - "recaptured" in his own words - by American forces. Within weeks, the former pipe major was discharged from the army, was back in his home town, Edinburgh, residing with his brother and sister-in-law at his parents' old home but it was not as he remembered from his pre-war days as an innocent youth. Wilson had changed.

Wilson's POW experiences left a lasting imprint on his approach to life. Returning to civil life as quickly as he did, it is no surprise that numerous everyday events did not pique his interest. As far as we are aware, the British army did not service him with a repatriation course and so it was Wilson's own personal responsibility to address the circumstances he had experienced from 1940 to 1945. Certainly he found a respite from the daily drudgeries of his return to civilized society by visiting his sister in Morayshire; however, his period of adjustment would extend much longer than even he anticipated. "The long walks helped me a lot, but I

³⁶ Ibid. p 66.

still didn't feel up to working again and I couldn't be bothered with bagpipes. I potted about in the garden and helped my brother with his racing pigeons.”³⁷

Wilson had temporarily lost his enthusiasm for the instrument he had passionately cultivated since his youth. The war altered his perspectives; it would take two years and a number of employment experiences to reinvent the world he had lost in 1940.

Wilson's wartime experiences are particularly important for the clues they provide into his character. In fact, it would not be surprising to extrapolate that his subsequent approach to the art was shaped in part by his time served as a captive. Pipe Major Ed Neigh, who dramatically described Wilson in the first paragraph of this text, would also acknowledge Wilson's incredible sense of fairness as a judge on the panel of the Ontario Pipers' Society. Neigh noted, “Oh yeah. He was scrupulously fair. He was this character that you just had to stand back and laugh [but] I remember John Wilson being fair.”³⁸ It is instructive to recall that Wilson's time in Germany saw him witness numerous acts of arbitrary injustice to his fellow human beings and this overriding factor may have contributed to his sense of fair play as an adjudicator. Wilson's personality also changed in that he became intolerant, especially of rude behavior and musical mediocrity. Although the war may have temporarily subordinated his passion for the pipes, he did return to the music scene - after a two year self-imposed absence - with his characteristic intensity and fervor. With reference to rude behavior, Wilson cited an employment incident, possibly foreshadowing future condemnations in his monthly column for *The Piper*

³⁷ Ibid. p 78.

³⁸ Ed Neigh, Interview by author, digital audio tape recording, Wellesley, Ontario, January 14, 1999.

and Dance Bulletin in the 1960s and 1970s. The incident, worth recording here, harks back to his sense of pride and self-dignity. One is taken aback by Wilson's rapidity to judge the following situation, a radical departure from convention for Wilson. Employed by a firm for a housing scheme, Wilson was recruited to work for the head office and quickly found he did not work easily with a co-worker. Wilson wrote

There was a female dragon there, a sort of secretary to the boss...One day, when she finished her lunch, she came to my little office with some garbage and asked me to put it in the garbage receptacle which stood outside the back door. I snapped 'You're perfectly capable of disposing of your own garbage what do you take me for?' That did it. I was handed my cards at the end of the week. At the unemployment bureau I was told I would have to wait for six weeks before I could draw benefit, but I explained that I hadn't left, I had merely told the male office superintendent that if I was expected to empty garbage, I would just as soon be given my books...I said to the insurance man 'Do you think I did nearly five years as a POW to come back and empty garbage for an ignorant bitch like that?' He then apologized to me for what he called a gross insult and said I would be put on benefit right away.

This was the post-war John Wilson; yet, he still maintained his demeanor, composure and sense of humor with the majority of his contemporaries within and without his circle of associates. Wilson became more assertive and intransigent in his opinions as depicted in his memoirs; he jealously defended his musical principles whenever they were scrutinized (rightly so, as a subject matter expert) and he became both revered and reviled for his stalwart defence.

Wilson survived his POW experiences but they tarnished him too. By 1948, he had endured three years of mild psychological disturbances, probably Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He re-adjusted to Edinburgh life as best as he could and tried returning to the old life he had known prior to the war. Wilson re-entered competitive piping resuming his former stature but this time, his competitive

experiences were not as rewarding as they previously had been. Wilson was not completely comfortable with his life in Scotland; he needed a change and decided to emigrate to Canada in January 1949 where arguably, he would make his greatest contribution to the art of piping. We will look at this phase of Wilson's life in the following chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

John Wilson: Gold Medalist Emigrates to Southern Ontario

In 1949, Wilson moved to Oshawa, Ontario, a suburban metropolis located due east of Toronto. At the time, his adopted country - Canada - fresh from its wartime experiences and demonstrating it had successfully weathered the storm of the Depression was economically rich and its citizens were immensely optimistic about their future. Indeed, this was a degree of optimism not previously enjoyed in the nation's youthful existence¹. Wilson arrived at an ideal time: work was plentiful, the Scottish diaspora community - exercising significant influence in the local socio-political economies - was enthusiastic about receiving and integrating him into their society, ensuring a welcoming and positive transition to the new world mentality. Like many new immigrants, Wilson found that his initial impressions of Canada did not reflect the anticipation that may have pervaded his thoughts and feelings on his voyage to the new land. After he arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wilson journeyed over 700 miles on the train in order to reach his final destination at Oshawa. Wilson noted of his new land, "Everything was covered with snow and the dreary landscape was relieved at long intervals by villages whose only decent structure appeared to be

¹ Robert Bothwell, J.L. Granatstein *Our Century: The Canadian Journey*, Toronto, McArthur & Company, 2000, p 139. Historians Robert Bothwell and Jack Granatstein described Canada during the decade from 1949 to 1959 as the Spacious Decade. The era was marked by significant population growth, 29.6 percent (the largest increase in a single decade in Canadian history), surging economic potential (the Gross National Product rose 65 per cent during the 1950s) and unprecedented social contentment.

the church. Apart from the train on which I was traveling, the only other means of transport I could see was an occasional horse drawn sleigh or sometimes a sleigh pulled by a dog. I began to wonder what kind of country I had come to.”² Wilson was met by a Pipe Major John Reid of the General Motors Pipe Band, who, to Wilson’s surprise, did not have employment arranged for him at the local motorcar plant. Dismayed, Wilson sought employment elsewhere in Oshawa but to no avail. In the interim - between his successful bid for employment and the annoyance and boredom of unemployment – he waited.

Wilson’s reputation as a leading Scottish soloist created a remarkable sensation among the piping community in Toronto. Shortly after his arrival, the newly established Toronto Branch of the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario invited him to perform at the Toronto Scottish Sergeants’ Mess at Fort York Armoury. Fifty years later, his performance was still remembered: “It was marvellous. You just didn’t hear playing like that. Well, I never had”, said Pipe Major William Gilmour, one of Wilson’s most promising pupils.³ Bobby Taylor, another keen piping enthusiast remembered, “...the first time we met him [Wilson] down at the Pipers Society? He certainly made an impression. As you know, he had some fingers missing so I felt like going home and chopping off a few fingers. Oh yes, he made quite an impression.”⁴ Another remarked of his performance that, “he played a number of jigs, just one after another and everybody was just mesmerized.”⁵

² Wilson, *Piper in Peace and War*, p 85.

³ William Gilmour, Interview by Author, Digital Audio Tape Recording, Canadian Forces Base Ottawa (North), April 12, 1999.

⁴ Robert Taylor, Interview by Author, Digital Audio Tape Recording, 48th Highlanders of Canada Regimental Museum, St. Andrew’s Church, Toronto, Ontario, January 6, 1999.

⁵ Don Pringle, Interview by Author, Digital Audio Tape Recording, 48th Highlanders of Canada

Perhaps Wilson's modern day disciple, Pipe Major Reay Mackay (acknowledged by Wilson as possessing similar musical promise as Billy Gilmour) said it aptly when addressing the Toronto Piobaireachd Club in 1989.

My first recollection of John Wilson was at one of the indoor games at the [James Street] Armouries in Hamilton and that was about the spring of 1949; John was outside - I can recall it very well. John was outside on the roof playing and somebody said to me 'There's that famous John Wilson over there, let's go have a listen.'

My very first impression of his playing was that first of all, he had an absolutely excellent, excellent sounding instrument; extremely clean execution; played I guess, rather quickly and I think that at that time there were two particular styles that were very distinctive - the East coast and the West coast style. The East coast or Edinburgh style was very fast whereas the West coast or Glasgow style was slower and much more pointed...John, being from Edinburgh, stepped things out.⁶

Using a selection of Wilson's Beltona recordings of 1934, I took the occasion to record his metronome markings. Wilson did indeed play quickly and like MacKay, I was completely spellbound by the technical accuracy with which he executed his embellishments (see table below).

Sergeants' Mess, Moss Park Armoury, Toronto, Ontario, January 5, 1999.

⁶ In an interview with the *Piper and Drummer* magazine, MacKay further elaborated on his former teacher's musical prowess: "I stood listening to him in absolute awe...I was overwhelmed by the playing of this man. He was playing light music and it had to be the cleanest and most dexterous fingering I had ever heard. The man was the most fantastic player, no question about that. When I heard *this* [italics mine] playing, I was absolutely elated and immediately went back to my Dad and said 'I want to be able to play like that.'" *Piper and Drummer*, Published by the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, Volume 7, Issue 3, April 1990, p 18.

Born in 1939, Reay MacKay began studying the pipes at age five. His father, Colin MacKay, an open professional competing piper in the 1930s and 1940s, was his first teacher. After Wilson emigrated to Toronto, Reay, along with his boyhood piping mate Billy Gilmour, began lessons with the master player. Reay studied on a weekly basis with Wilson for 10 years, receiving, Reay estimates, approximately 45-50 piobaireachds and innumerable pointers on the subtleties of the Wilsonian piping style. Reay would imbue the same principles in his own style of playing as that of Wilson. MacKay, like his mentor, dominated the amateur and professional solo contest scene throughout southern Ontario in the 1950s and 1960s. During this period, Reay became a member of the illustrious pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, serving amongst some of the most talented pipers in the Toronto area. MacKay, displaying his native ability at an early age, was earmarked for a leadership position and eventually succeeded Pipe Major Ross Stewart as the pipe major of the regiment from 1975 to 1985. Interestingly, as Pipe Sergeant, MacKay was detailed with fielding and administering the 48th's Grade 1 competition band during the late 1960s. Despite Reay's commitments to the Pipes and Drums, he continued his long teaching association with his mentor until Wilson's death in 1979.

Table 1
Comparison of Tempos

	John Wilson*	Typical Ontario Competitive Performance**
March	102 beats per minute	68 – 72 beats per minute
Strathspey	168 beats per minute	108-112 beats per minute
Reel	120 – 126 beats per minute	84-96 beats per minute
*Beltona Recording 1934, courtesy Reay MacKay **Author's observations, Ontario, circa 2000-2005		

Wilson's tempos in the 1934 recording for a selection of a March, Strathspey and Reel were as follows: the march was recorded at approximately 102 beats per minute; the strathspey at approximately 168 beats per minute; the reel was performed at 120-126 beats per minute. In stark contrast to Wilson's tempos, modern day tempos are not nearly as quick. For example, a typical Ontario professional competitor in 2006 would render a march at between 68 to 72 beats per minute, a strathspey at approximately 108 to 112 beats per minute while a competitive reel may be performed at approximately 84 to 96 beats per minute. The data, although given in approximate tempos, are not misleading. Additionally, the aforementioned tempos are subject to change over time; however, as a current professional competitor, I have never experienced in my contemporaries' performances any tempo settings of this nature. This is not to say that one would not be exposed to the Wilsonian tempo genre on the Ontario circuit. However, one would be unlikely to hear such tempos performed in competition in the early 21st century.

The following pieces which Wilson performed during the 1934 Beltona

recording indicate the skill level demanded of the performer: *The Lochaber Gathering*⁷; *The Piper's Bonnet*⁸; and *Pretty Marion*⁹. Altogether, Wilson's 1934 performance is a wonderful display of musicianship and technical virtuosity bearing testament to the narrative of Gilmour, Pringle, Taylor and MacKay.

Wilson sealed his reputation in Toronto through his first recital and underscored it by his subsequent performance in Hamilton later that month, which was received with as much enthusiasm and support. He was quickly canvassed to join various pipe bands and was also approached by various piping enthusiasts - novice and learner alike - to establish a portfolio of students.

As luck or fate would prove, Wilson was approached by the commanding officer of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, Colonel Bliss, offered employment by Bliss in Hamilton and quickly moved to Hamilton in the spring of 1949 where he enlisted in the Canadian Army Militia as a corps piper in the Argylls under the leadership of Pipe Major John Knox Cairns. Two years later, upon Cairns' retirement from the band, Wilson was appointed Pipe Major, raising the hackles of most of the musicians. The rest of the band members viewed this initiative as a virtual *coup-d'état* of the heir-apparent. This created a hostile environment for Wilson, compromising the effectiveness of his leadership; for the band, it produced

⁷ Composed by one of Wilson's contemporaries, Pipe Major George Stewart MacLennan, reputed to be one of the finest competitive pipers in the 20th century (according to the Gordon Highlanders, MacLennan's parent regiment, and conceded by Wilson). This march indeed, is often heard performed in Ontario by a few professional pipers today.

⁸ A technically demanding piece if the performer interprets the music according to the manuscript as outlined in the Scots Guards Standard Settings of Pipe Music. At the time of writing, this piece has not been heard by this author for several years at Ontario competitions, perhaps given the technical demands of the piece itself.

⁹ Like the preceding one, a demanding piece that requires finger dexterity beyond that normally expected of an average competitive piper. Again, at the time of writing, the author has not heard this piece included in professional pipers' repertoires, I suspect, given the inevitable musical pitfalls. One would expect however, that if the tune were performed to a judge's expectations - whatever they may be - the successful performer would most likely be awarded top honours for his determined efforts.

an unhealthy aura contributing to much dissatisfaction and contempt for their newly appointed leader. "I suppose this displeased some people, and I could see that I would have to take some action," Wilson wrote upon his assumption of duties. Wilson harboured pointedly negative feelings towards some of his fellow musicians and the perceived contempt they held for J.K. Cairns. "It was mainly a young band and they were mostly likeable fellows. [Yet] the way some of them spoke to Pipe Major Cairns made my blood boil at times and I wondered why he put up with it."¹⁰ The drama surrounding Wilson's *fait accompli* therefore, was ensconced within Wilson's psyche; add to the melange the suspicions of the new Pipe Major by some members of the band, and indeed, the components for an often openly hostile and dissonant relationship between the leader and his followers were ripe. Wilson, perceiving the detrimental effects of the malcontents within his band, acted quickly: after conferring with the commanding officer and regimental sergeant major, he immediately fired five musicians. Wilson then embarked upon a revitalization of the Argylls' repertoire and began teaching his fellow band members on the side. Happy times with the Argylls would not, however, highlight Wilson's career with the storied regiment.

In the summer of 1951, Wilson took the pipes and drums to Scotland. This tour proved to test Wilson's patience to its maximum capacity, and can be regarded as the final straw contributing to the breaking point with the band. Wilson attests to this fact (or rather, it can be easily extrapolated from the tone of his prose) in his memoirs as he detailed the numerous problems with the band in Scotland rather than accentuating the highlights of the trip¹¹. Upon receiving notice that the commanding

¹⁰ Wilson, 1978 p 87.

¹¹ It seems clear to the author that both Wilson and the band's expectations of each other were

officer had accepted the invitation from the City of Edinburgh for the band to attend various functions related to the Edinburgh Festival, Wilson's man-management difficulties immediately confronted him. "The whole band could not be taken", recounted Wilson, "so I told the pipers that I would hold an audition on a certain date, when I would listen to each piper privately and pick the ones to go. This immediately raised a storm of protest from some members. Did I mean to say that I would pick a comparative newcomer over an older member of the band? I said that was exactly what I meant. I said that I didn't want to get a red face in Scotland if I could possibly help it, and I would therefore pick the strongest band I could."¹²

While touring Scotland, Wilson and his band gave performances at the Edinburgh Tattoo¹³, Stirling Castle, The Usher Hall and numerous other venues. The band also competed at the Murrayfield Highland Games (Edinburgh) and the Cowal Highland Gathering. In competition, the Argylls gave an excellent account of themselves and took first prize in the premiere grade at Cowal - an historical debut for the band and indeed for Canada as the trophy left Scotland for the first time, perhaps acting as a harbinger of events to come in the not so distant future. The band also won first

inappropriate, thereby contributing to Wilson's discharge from the band shortly after their return to Hamilton.

¹² Wilson, 1978, p 88.

¹³ Wilson protested, albeit unsuccessfully, against the band's participation in the Tattoo, stating they were not provided with the music for the massed band performances thus limiting their contribution to the show. The producers, however, anticipating audience enthusiasm for the Canadian band, altered the program and gave the Argylls their own performance segment. Unfortunately - and to Wilson's absolute disgust - the band's premiere performance was a musical fiasco. Recounting the incident with excruciating detail, Wilson wrote with dismay, "I chose tunes which every player in the band was familiar with. We had played them over and over again and I just couldn't see how they could go wrong. On the opening night we formed up just inside the draw bridge and out of sight of the audience. The 2/4 march I had chosen to go on with was 'The Siege of Delhi' (every time I hear that name or hear that tune, I just shudder) when I got the signal to start I gave the command "By the right, quick march." What I hadn't reckoned on was the nervousness or stupidity of the bass drummer. As soon as he started beating the tempos for the rolls, I realized with a horrible sinking feeling that it was painfully slow, and I was scared to do anything in case the fellow would go from bad to worse and make the whole show like a Mack Sennet comedy...I'll never forget that horrible experience as long as I live. When I die, it may well be that 'The Siege of Delhi' will be engraved on my heart."

prize in the military pipe band category at Murrayfield.

After numerous personality confrontations throughout the remainder of the band's tour, Wilson possessed enough foresight to predict the band's tardy turn-out and less than stellar performances during the autumn's evening rehearsals and parades. Intolerant of undisciplined behaviour and ultimately with the best intentions for the band in mind, Wilson requested the commanding officer's support to dismiss the entire band and re-engage players of his own choice. This time, the commanding officer did not throw his support behind Wilson's initiative. Wilson's rejoinder was swift and decisive: "I decided to leave Hamilton, leave my job and leave the Argylls."¹⁴ Wilson's Canadian regimental experience was filled with bitter memories but it was not all one sided either (see footnote).¹⁵ After two years as a pipe major, Wilson wearied of his responsibilities and relinquished his appointment to the 23 year-old Hendrie Gold Medallist pipe corporal, Archie MacNeil Cairns. Wilson was

¹⁴ Ibid. p 92.

¹⁵ This episode remains on the minds of a few former members of the Canadian Argylls, particularly Archie MacNeil Cairns. During my interview with Cairns in January 1999, he adamantly defended the high standards of musicianship exhibited by the band both prior to and subsequent to Wilson's "storming-off to Toronto" in 1951. Cairns asserted, "You know, people talk about what John Wilson did, and he did yeoman things...And in his book, he talks about taking over a rag-tag group of Argylls and polished them into whatever they became. Well, you know, I can show you a copy of the year-end report my father had put into the C.O. [commanding officer] the year before Wilson took over. In there, it shows that our pipe band was an A Grade Band, same as the 48th, and in something like 12 contests, we had 8 firsts, 4 seconds and in the solo scene [*the professional solo piping category*], there was Bus Featherstone, Duncan Ross; there was Bobby Jamieson, there was myself, who were all right at the top of the heap. So where is this rag-tag group that he took over? I really took exception to that because it was a slam at what my father had left him and it is simply not true. We have the records to prove it." Archie MacNeil Cairns, Interview with Author, January 18, 1999, London, Ontario. Wilson, although not labelling the Argylls as a "rag-tag" group as such did, however, compose an article in the March 1972 edition of the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin* containing the offending remarks Cairns referred to. Wilson wrote, "When I came to Canada in 1949, I joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Hamilton in March and played in the band under Pipe Major John Cairns. He retired in November of that year and I was made pipe major. *Despite the poor material I had to work with* [*italics mine*] the Argylls Pipes and Drums under my leadership were very successful in competition at the Highland Games in Canada and the USA in Grade 1 and even won the Territorial Championships at Cowal in 1951." Perhaps Cairns harked back to this article of Wilson's; nonetheless, Wilson's damning assessment of the Argylls rings negatively in Cairns' mind to this day. Again, Wilson's off-hand remarks demonstrate his proclivity to render decisive opinions - balanced or otherwise - and publish those despite the likelihood of their damaging repercussions (many of his opinions elicited negative reaction as they were often received on a personal level).

disappointed by his experiences in Hamilton. However; his time with the Argylls demonstrated that he would not willingly be subjected to the vicissitudes of an institution over which he was not given direct control. He was not prepared to compromise the musical standard he established for the band and was not willing to accommodate anyone and anything that stood in his way to achieve those objectives. Wilson, however, made the best of the situation: he found employment in Toronto with the Canadian Bank of Commerce and launched his immensely popular weekend piping classes at the Fort York Armoury, located across from the Princes' Gates on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition.

8.1 - John Wilson: Teacher, Judge and Polemicist: 1960-1979

“Everyone knew John! You wonder if your parents are your birth parents by sending you to this ogre for lessons. But, he was famous and everyone had an opinion about him.”¹⁶ So said Cameron Clark, reflecting on his years of tuition with the recognized master. By the 1970s when Clark studied with his pipe teacher, Wilson had re-located his classes to a lecture room in the basement of the Moss Park Armoury at the busy intersection of Queen Street East and Jarvis Street in downtown Toronto. Clark recalled Wilson’s intense pedagogical approach and how his intensity discouraged more than a few unsuspecting students, “Initially, my instruction with John was with an older fellow who was learning bagpipes at the time. John had him for dinner. He left after a couple of months so my lessons turned out to be private.”¹⁷ Clark conceded that Wilson “wanted and demanded passion from his pupil’s playing.

¹⁶ Cameron Clark, Interview By Author, December 22, 2000, Toronto, Ontario.

¹⁷ Ibid.

But you also had to deliver.”¹⁸ As a student of Wilson’s, it was not enough to identify with his love for the bagpipe: his students had to perform to his expectations. One of the key factors in a student’s success with Wilson, Clark remarked, was the student’s ability to execute flawless finger technique - the clean execution of embellishments as rendered on the finger board of the pipe chanter. This fact overrode all other considerations in Wilson’s estimation, which kept the “ogre” at bay.

Wilson’s personality was complex and his humanity could be as striking to his students as his dour countenance (which became all too familiar to the masses of the Ontario Pipers Society). Clark, reminiscing about the human side of his teacher - a rare theme in much of the collected body of research on Wilson - remembered fondly,

He was more than willing to relate his life experiences when you asked him. He loved to do that. He was always a reflective person, particularly at the end of the teaching year. He was an incredible sentimentalist and he would conduct quite a dialogue with us; coming to Canada and how much that meant to him. I would say the private John Wilson was a real nostalgic or a romantic and was truly a misunderstood person.¹⁹

Perhaps Wilson was largely misconstrued by elements of the North American piping community because of his occasional displays of unconventional behaviour, which contributed to this perceived enigmatic personality. One isolated instance of his puzzling yet comic-opera-like conduct took place at the Alma Highland Games Grade 1 Pipe Band competition in the early 1970s. Major Sandy Jones, co-adjudging with Wilson on this occasion, found himself embroiled as an unsuspecting witness to Wilson’s delivery of a most notorious *faux-pas*

¹⁸ Ibid.

extraordinaire in North American Pipe Band lore: Wilson tied every band in the Grade 1 competition, leaving Jones the singularly unenviable task of assuming responsibility for the final result. The scenario burgeoned as a result of Wilson's on-going feud with the executive branch of the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario - his status as a sanctioned judge had, once again, been cancelled by the Society. The Alma Games were well attended by Ontario bands; they were also co-ordinated, in large measure, by officials from the Executive Branch of the Ontario Society. The P.P.B.S.O.'s participation however, did not preclude the Alma Games Committee from inviting judges from the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association, of which Wilson was an active member. The situation and venue were tailored for an outcome of sorts, in this instance, Wilson's cunning shenanigans at this highland gathering in the northern United States.²⁰ It may have been unfortunate that Wilson consciously

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sandy Jones, speaking to me via telephone from Charleston, South Carolina in April 2000, delightfully recalled the tale. Jones fondly remembered that this edition of the Alma Games was his first occasion adjudicating a Grade 1 pipe band contest; he had hoped to glean a few tips on the finer points of ensemble judging from the elder Wilson. As circumstances prevailed, the Grade 1 contest was composed entirely of bands from Ontario; Wilson proceeded to tie all parties concerned due to his unwillingness - intransigence - to suspend his arguments with the executive of the Ontario Pipers Society. Immediately following the final Grade 1 band's performance, Wilson approached Jones - curious behaviour, Jones thought - and enquired of his younger contemporary "How'd you have 'em?" After inspecting Jones's score sheets, Wilson handed them back to him and briskly commented, "Well Boy, you're calling the shots today." Perplexed, Jones soon discovered Wilson's caper. This incident has provided Jones with years of amusing recollections. Jones, however, intimated his nervous anticipation at meeting several grade 1 pipe band musicians in the beer tent after the games. After all, Jones's scores were the determining factor in deciding the winners of the contest which the bands quickly discovered as the score sheets were circulated amongst the competitors. Amidst the revelry of the post games activities, according to Jones, the Ontario pipers and drummers accepted his final decision with equal measures of dignity and grace while Wilson's decision was received with confusion, hostility and laughter.

Jones retired as the Director of Piping and Drumming at The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina in 2003. He now lives in Brevard, North Carolina. Prior to his appointment with the college in 1977, Jones was pipe major of the United States Air Force (USAF) Pipe Band, Washington, D.C. from 1964 to 1970. According to recognized pipe band experts at the time (Captain John MacLellan, Director of Army Bagpipe Music, Edinburgh Castle, among others), the USAF Pipe Band was one of the finest bands in the world. The band displayed the talents of some of the best competitive pipers and drummers in the United States during the 1960s. The USAF Band never participated in competition: a Department of Defence order barred the band from competing against civilians although the band appeared at dozens of highland games across Canada and the United States and were hailed for their unconventional performances encompassing intricate drill routines, elaborate

took aim at the Ontario bands, who were innocent, yet were subjected to his personal fulminations against the executive of the Society.

Wilson, despite his occasional outbursts at the Ontario administration, continued teaching with passion and vigor, anticipating musical proficiency from his students, as he demanded of himself. Rather comically, Clark recalled the venue in which he received instruction from Wilson. "These lessons were held in an armoury - a building that's capable of sustaining an enemy attack. You've got to wonder why a pipe practice hall and a tank facility are built beside each other, and I don't think the armoury could sustain John Wilson!"²¹

By 1957, Wilson had been married for seven years to Margaret Reid, daughter of Pipe Major John Reid of the General Motors Pipe Band, was raising two boys and leading "a happy, busy life";²² he pursued his composing/arranging interests and published his second book of pipe music that year. Just like his first collection of highland bagpipe music, the North American piping community hailed his publication as a work of significant musical substance containing memorable pieces such as the slow air *Toronto Exhibition Park*, the quick march *The Toronto Scottish Regiment*, and amongst a number of light hearted hornpipes *Bobby*

drumming displays in addition to a plethora of challenging and melodious bagpipe arrangements. Jones recalls the barrage of requests for performances all over North America (the band was even requested by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to perform at her husband's grave-side at the State Funeral, Arlington National Cemetery in November 1963). During Jones's tenure, the band performed outside its base in Washington D.C. - on the road - approximately 20 days per month. Outwith his daily routine in Brevard, Jones is an adjudicator with the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association and is in constant demand as a clinician throughout the United States. For many years, Jones has been revered in American piping circles and I believe may be deserving of the term *American Patriarch*: he has been instrumental in the guidance of dozens of prize winning amateur and professional competing pipers and pipe bands in the United States, not least of which is the Grade 1 City of Washington Pipe Band.

²¹ Cameron Clark, Interview with Author, December 22, 2000.

²² Wilson, 1978 p 94.

Cuthbertson and *St. Valery*.²³ Wilson occasionally competed during this period, but primarily focused his energies adjudicating and teaching. His instructional efforts bore fruit; one of his more talented pupils, Billy Gilmour of the 48th Highlanders, competed at the Braemar Highland Games in 1954 and won the under-18 Gold Medal, the first Canadian to gain such recognition. Wilson was touched by Gilmour's competitive success as he acknowledged years later in *The Bulletin*.

As an intriguing complement to his prodigious piping classes, Wilson's active participation as an adjudicator on the Ontario highland games circuit produced some of the most entertaining anecdotes in latter 20th century Ontario piping lore. Indeed, these anecdotes uniquely characterize the somewhat quarrelsome relationship between Wilson and his musical compatriots within and without the Ontario region. It was not so much his adjudication decisions that his fellow musicians challenged, as his abrasive attitude and cavalier opinions which often descended into the realm of personal abuse. An illustrative example of Wilson's stinging penmanship is found in the October 1960 edition of *The Bulletin* in his response to one Helen Howie who, Wilson perceived, slighted his character in her submission regarding his opinion of the Round Hill Highland Games in Connecticut. In typical Wilsonian fashion, he not only recounted his perception of the situation in question, but also provided a quick-witted yet scathing rebuttal in order to maintain his professional reputation and relegate the said offender - Howie - to her position of ignorant subordination. Thus Wilson wrote,

Dear Sir: In her letter re Round Hill Games, Helen Howie concludes

²³ Archie Cairns, Reay MacKay, Bill Gilmour and a number of my interviewees recalled the musical merits of Wilson's second collection of bagpipe music. During my own piping lifetime, many of Wilson's compositions could still be heard around the competition circuit all over Ontario, the Maritimes and the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Wilson's three books of music are still on the market in 2006.

with the remark - "Now what about that?" That remark sounds to me like a challenge, and I certainly do not want the readers of *The Bulletin* to get a wrong impression of John Wilson. My remarks on the Round Hill Games could hardly give anyone with reasonable intelligence a wrong impression of the games. As a matter of fact I did not make one adverse comment on the Games. I said that the day was sunny but very windy; I remarked on the vastness of the Polo Club ground; I praised the committee, and the smooth conclusion of the piping events by 5.30 pm. I certainly stated that drinks in the bar were 85 cents a shot and 50 cents for a can of beer, but that wasn't my opinion, it was, a bitter fact. The only thing left, therefore, that can possibly have annoyed Helen Howie is the description I gave of the sour reception I received when I went to collect my fee and expenses. This had nothing to do with the Games programme. It certainly had nothing to do with the prize money or entry fees, which I did not mention in my article. These being the facts, it becomes perfectly clear that Helen Howie is merely "nosey" and is, in fact, "poking her nose" into something which doesn't concern her in the slightest. Now What About That?

P.S.- It might interest readers to know that I have enjoyed Round Hill Games several times; first as a competitor in the open piping events and latterly as a judge. Perhaps the most enjoyable day I ever had at Round Hill was when I won the silver and ivory set of Henderson pipes, given as a special prize to the piper with the most points in the open piping. I sold them on the field that same day for, I think \$120.00. *Now What About That?* - J.W.²⁴

Wilson's pointed remarks illustrate the extent to which he jealously upheld his reputation. What is saliently evident about Wilson's letter, heralding similar patterns of behaviour in subsequent editions of *The Bulletin*, was his rapid adoption of an offensive strategy without due consideration to Howie's innocent message.²⁵ Howie did not respond to Wilson, in print; however, his tone was instructive and indeed serves as a paradigm of subsequent events. These exact same patterns, complete with lofty prescriptions of pomposity, emerged in Wilson's prose in the following year, 1961, when he was suspended from the P.P.B.S.O. Judges Panel. Wilson spared the Executive neither accusations nor insults in his reactions to their initiative to relegate him to the periphery of the piping community. Sparking the remarkable

²⁴ *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, October 1960, p 3.

²⁵ In order to fulfill the author's commitment to historical objectivity and in fairness to Helen Howie,

scenario was Wilson's personal initiative to raise his own adjudication fee without consulting the Pipers Society or the various organizing committees supervising and administering the provincial games, thus eliciting a storm of controversy and over-reaction by both the Pipers Society executive and Wilson. Wilson's damning letters over his suspension and the P.P.B.S.O.'s responses invited lengthy commentaries - inciting considerable partisanship amongst the readership - by captivated observers within and outwith the provincial association. In essence, Wilson's and the executive's combined actions effectively split the membership of the Ontario Society into two camps, supporters and detractors of Wilson.²⁶ After lengthy deliberations between the Pipers Society and Wilson (at the behest of a few non-partisan members of the piping community) and paralleled with ample doses of pride-swallowing/ego-subordination - Wilson applied for a reinstatement of his former adjudication status. He was duly accepted. Curiously, or perhaps characteristically, Wilson neglected to mention the suspension in his columns 'Round the Games with John Wilson'. Years later though, and in his usual brusque delivery, Wilson cunningly harked back in his memoirs, "I tried to screw an apology out of them [the P.P.B.S.O.] but they were too thick in the head to understand what they had done, so I didn't succeed."²⁷ Indeed, this embarrassing series of events must certainly prove to be one of the few instances where Wilson failed to meet his desired objective. In retrospect, both the Society and Wilson emerged as winners in their standoff. Both parties subsequently enabled themselves to move on with their respective artistic endeavors rather than engage in petty trivialities. Perhaps also, the incident is reflective of the Wilsonian character

her letter addressed to the editor of *The Bulletin* appears at the conclusion of this chapter.

²⁶ See Letters to the Editor, encapsulating the diversity of opinions regarding Wilson's suspension.

²⁷ Wilson, 1978 p 94. Further details regarding Wilson's dispute with the Pipers Society appear at the conclusion of this chapter. Several articles printed in *The Bulletin* appear describing the

that developed in his early childhood subsequent to the loss of his fingers. As one observer noted, “The more barriers placed in front of Wilson, the more inspired he became”²⁸; thus his determination and tenacity to succeed in all aspects of life stuck with him from an early age and applied not only to piping.

Wilson’s health by the mid-1950s suddenly deteriorated. Shortly after his second son was born, he suffered a heart attack. Upon the advice of his doctor, he stopped smoking and attempted to lead a healthier lifestyle. However, as the years passed, it became evident that Wilson’s penchant for tobacco had inflicted more damage to his lungs than originally diagnosed. In 1964, a malignant tumor was found on his left lung and his doctors immediately recommended the removal of the cancer. Wilson, in characteristic style, approved the procedure. “I told the doctor that I had every confidence in him and his colleagues and to carry on and do whatever they thought necessary.”²⁹ His entire left lung was removed, not only astonishing his friends and family but even Wilson himself. He temporarily gave up piping to fully recover his health while he eagerly anticipated his judging commitments in the summer of 1964. Once again though, and to paraphrase Wilson, “troubles never come singly.” Bad luck struck. In the summer of 1964, Wilson complained of cranial pains; medical doctors discovered a blood clot on his brain and surgery was immediately performed. The operation was a success though Wilson’s recovery was doubly retarded by a loss of memory and a severe speech impediment as a result of the procedure. So salient in Wilson’s mind, however, was the importance of his piping that while trying to overcome his debilitating condition, he noted with chagrin, “I had lost my memory and I couldn’t get past the first measure

sensational event.

²⁸ Cameron Clark, Interview by Author, Toronto, Ontario, December 22, 2000.

of any tune.”³⁰ It seemed that Wilson subordinated his speech dilemma to his perceived musical dilemma; nonetheless, he determined to overcome his complications.

It was infuriating and frustrating...The neurosurgeon who had operated on me started to give me tests in counting etc., and I slowly began to improve. I told the doctors that if they allowed me to go home, short daily walks in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds would do me a lot of good, and they finally consented...At first I only walked down the avenue, and back again, and then gradually extended my walks until I reached the CNE grounds [after which] life proceeded on its normal course.

Once again, Wilson took control of the situation, determined *his*³¹ most appropriate course of action, applied the principles of his renowned self-discipline and witnessed the successful recovery of his health.

Throughout the mid 1960s through to 1979, Wilson continued to contribute his monthly columns to the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, providing broad sweeping advice - solicited or otherwise - on musical matters, judging fees, how to improve the performance conditions for outdoor competitors and assessments of individual and band performances he adjudicated at numerous piping competitions. Wilson also included numerous personal piping threads from the 1920s, 30s and 40s and perhaps audaciously, concerned himself with the standards of dress and deportment in 1960s Ontario.³² Wilson never failed to entertain his readers. He was a great storyteller,

²⁹ *Piper in Peace and War*, pp 94-95.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Italics mine.

³² In the August 1967 edition of *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, Wilson instructed his readers - in an uncharacteristic departure from his pseudo-patriarchal musical morals - in the conventional wisdom of the wearing of the kilt. Wilson, at the Brantford Highland Games, took note of several musicians who were improperly attired; he enjoined his readers in his admonition, “As I stood watching the individual Pipe Bands marching into the center field for the Grand Finale, I noticed something I seem to have overlooked before. I refer to the large number of “droopy drawer” kilts. Boys and men with kilts away down to the calves of their legs. What a horrible sight! Come on now men and boys, take a lesson from the girls and get those kilts away up - but take it easy now - not too far up; just to the middle of the kneecap. A kilt worn properly looks very smart indeed, but a kilt worn in “droopy-

effectively relating his often cogent messages to the greater piping public.

Details of Wilson's letters appear in Appendix Two.

8.2 - The Twilight Years: 1970-1979

Wilson, as an individual of near infinite energy and focus, continued to conduct his life in similar fashion throughout his autumn years. Indeed, he did not allow his age nor his physical ailments - he now had only one lung - hamper his musical objectives throughout the final stage of his life.

Befitting Wilson's lifelong commitment to the art, three significant achievements crowned Wilson's twilight years during the 1970s: his successful one time return to competitive playing in 1972; the awarding of the 1977 Inverness Gold Medal to his pupil Bill Livingstone; and the publication of his memoirs in 1978, one year prior to his death. Although he continually bickered with the Ontario Pipers Society, taught countless students at the armouries and remained faithful to the publication of his column 'Round the Games with John Wilson', these combined events testified to the greater piping public that Wilson's presence was potent. His teaching skills remained consistently sincere and regimented,³³ his performance skills undiminished, and his commitment to the advancement of the art through the written word unwavering.

In 1962, Wilson, in his capacity as an adjudicator at an Ontario highland games, declared his intention to return to competitive playing in 10 years. This was a remarkable statement, demonstrative of the goal-oriented mindset he was renowned

drawer" fashion looks ridiculous." There seemed to be no thematic limit to Wilson's musings but he wrote passionately with the improvement of the art central to his credo.

³³ Cameron Clark remarked, "His critical analysis skills were phenomenal; his delivery was analogous to a hooligan but, we stood to gain as his students in the end. I think this is why Canadian

for. If he in fact did compete, it would certainly be a landmark assertion of his self-discipline. Reay MacKay was present when Wilson professed the declaration. "He said ten years before that, that he was going to play at Thousand Islands [in 1972] and that's precisely what he did." MacKay continued, "John's philosophy was self-discipline...he worked extremely hard before playing. I know he did. He worked very hard all of the time."³⁴ Wilson attests to his own work ethic, but that did not override his enjoyment of the hours devoted to his own practice schedule. In fact, in Wilson's entire body of published writing, his elation is no more keenly evident than in his description of his return to the competitive platform at the age of 66, 36 years after his self-described peak competitive year in Scotland. Wilson's candid prose effectively captures the struggles he contended with over the course of those ten years. Ultimately, his article reveals an inner effusiveness, mirroring the elation of a boy upon discovering his own boundless potential. The article which appeared in the April 1973 edition of *The Bulletin*, follows in its entirety.

Ten years ago (1962) at Maxville Games, I promised that I would return in ten years time and compete again. I said it in jest, but little did I know all that would happen long before the ten years were up. Less than two years after I made that promise, I was hospitalized and had to have the whole of my left lung removed because of a cancerous tumor. I had recovered nicely from that when I had to return to hospital and have a blood clot removed from my brain. This operation really got me down and it took me years and years to get over it. However, I gradually got stronger, kept doing my deep breathing and other exercises and played away on the practice chanter until I could blow a very easy pipe. Then my back started to bother me and X-rays showed that I had several de-generated discs in my spine, so I had to wear a corset, put a sheet of plywood on my bed etc. etc. Then I had to have several front teeth on my lower jaw extracted and a partial plate fitted. I gradually got over all that, too.

Last year (1971) I found myself playing so well that I determined to compete at just one gathering in 1972 and I picked Brockville because George Beley had done such a magnificent job the first year the 1,000 Islands games was held. I drew up a practise program of 3 piobaireachd, 6 marches, 6

pipings is so highly regarded today." Interview by Author, Toronto, Ontario, December 22, 2000.

³⁴ Reay MacKay, Toronto, Ontario, April 15, 1989.

strathspeys and reels and 3 jigs and hornpipes for intensive practice and then reduced in nearer the games time to three of each. I retired from the Bank last September at sixty-five, so I devoted an hour to the pipes every forenoon and I steadily improved. My nerves were bad though, so, three weeks before the great day, I went to my doctor and explained the situation to him. He was very interested and prescribed some pills, which, I am sure, helped me tremendously, for I didn't feel nervous at all. I was drawn about 17th in the order of playing but I soon got my pipe ready and found one of the judges waiting for competitors. I asked if he would take me and he replied, "Certainly, come right on." It was the March competition and the judge chose "John MacFadyen" for me to play. When I struck up, my drones were in perfect tune so I left them alone and started to play. I found that I was concentrating on my playing perfectly and, despite the rough ground, I thought I made a good job of this fine tune and that was all I wanted to do. When I finished and was walking away, the judge said "What about your Strathspey and Reel?" I said "are you taking them right away?"; "O.K" and I named three strathspeys and three reels, not without some difficulty, despite the fact that I had been practising them for months. I was asked to play "The Shepherd's Crook" and "Pretty Marion." and again, my drones did not need the slightest touch and I made a pretty good job of the S & R for an old fellow. I felt very pleased with myself. Shortly thereafter I noticed Angus MacDonald waiting for Piobaireachd clients, so I went over and gave him my tunes. He selected the "Lament for Mary MacLeod" and this time I gave my drones the slightest tune down. I think I played well enough, but I had several little chokes and my 'E' note wasn't perfectly clear at times. I did not expect to be in the prize list, but I was pleased I finished the tune without major mistakes. I wandered along talking to this one and the next until the Open Jig started and I soon got my fingers and pipe in shape. I saw a piper finishing and, as no one came forward, I went over to Tom Hinchey and gave him the names of three jigs. He chose 'Sandy Thompson' and when I struck up I found my drones in perfect tune again. How about that? I think I made a fine job of the jig and would have liked to have played it twice. Once over seems so very short.

What do you know? When the results were posted up, I was second in the S & R and also second in the Jig. It far exceeded my fondest hopes, for I merely wished to show everyone that I was anything but a 'has been.'

I dined that night with Al James who was driving me home next day and everything tasted extra sweet. I went to bed and slept soundly the sleep of a contented man.³⁵

Wilson never competed again.

Outwith the scores of students Wilson instructed over thirty years, his lasting

³⁵ John Wilson, "Round the Games with John Wilson" in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, April, 1973 pp. 4-7.

contribution to the piping community was the publication of his memoirs in 1978. The project, from the first written word to the publication date, took less than three years. As resolute as ever, Wilson determined on New Year's Day, 1975 to "really settle down and write the story of my life." Once again, displaying his characteristic determination, Wilson wrote every day "for three months...my eyes became so tired that I frequently had to stop and dry the tears which streamed from them."³⁶ A *Professional Piper in Peace and War: The Autobiography of Pipe Major John Wilson of Edinburgh, Scotland and Toronto, Canada* is a monumental contribution³⁷ to the historical literature respecting the development of competitive piping in Ontario in the latter 20th century. Equally significant, Wilson details the Scottish bagpipe community in which he was reared, providing us with a context within which to measure his Ontario experiences.

Surely, Wilson was aware of the unique time period during which he had lived: he witnessed and participated in the virtual genesis and evolution of competitive piping in Scotland. As a musician who fully immersed himself in the art, Wilson became one of the few *avant-garde* by-products of the competitive genre that represented the leading edge in his artistic world. He brought those skills to Canada where he systematically applied his philosophy of bagpipe performance to an already well-trained enthusiastic music community waiting to absorb the latest trends. Wilson's memoirs, then, are a valued contribution to the evolution of competitive piping in the Canadian context. It is interesting, yet ironic, that when Wilson emigrated to Canada in 1949, no Canadian pipers competed at what Wilson

³⁶ Wilson, 1978, Foreword.

³⁷ I write *monumental* in my text primarily because the subject matter under investigation is devoid of a ready source of published resource material. Outwith the monthly publications of various trade magazines, there are virtually no substantial publications available to researchers to compare with the

dignified as the most significant contests in the piping world - the Piobaireachd Society's Gold Medals at Oban and Inverness. Yet - and not without some nostalgia - Wilson's final page of his memoirs contentedly acknowledges Ontario piping's global maturation, as manifested through his student Bill Livingstone's Gold Medal victory in 1977. By then of course, a half-dozen Ontarians were making the annual excursion to Scotland to compete at those same contests. Curiously, most of those intrepid competitors were students of Wilson at one time or another. These events undoubtedly provided Wilson with infinite satisfaction - and perhaps a sense of relief as well - as he pleasantly recounted, "I wanted to end this autobiography on a happy note and the perfect ending was provided by William Livingstone, jnr. of Whitby, Ontario, Canada. On September 15, at the 1977 Northern Meeting in Inverness, Scotland, Bill became the first piper from Canada, and indeed from the Western Hemisphere to win the coveted Gold Medal for piobaireachd playing...So the pipers from Ontario have again brought honor and credit to Canada, and I can lay down my pen with a big sigh of contentment."³⁸ Contentment indeed.

8.3 - Conclusion

John Wilson died in 1979 leaving the Ontario piping community hundreds of students, three published collections of music, dozens of articles, a solo album, numerous anecdotal judging exploits and the province's first Scottish Gold Medal recipient. The music practised by this Ontario community - *his* community - evolved in no small way through his presence. Of course, Canadian piping as a whole was

recorded history contained in Wilson's book.

maturing from coast-to-coast. Like Ontario, many provincial piping communities were slowly seduced by the attractions of the competitive platform, which was not exclusively patronized by the soloists. Bands also began to co-ordinate their activities around the highland games. Clearly, by Wilson's death, the focal point of the art was centered on the highland games. The transition to the competitive platform was ushered in by Wilson and his supporters. "If the competitive standards are not met by the pipers, the instrument does not deserve its due attention in public" one might say. Public attention for Wilson was the competitive arena. I am convinced Wilson would unequivocally endorse this statement; arguably, this was his credo when teaching and was ultimately his *raison d'être* when thinking, teaching, playing and discussing piping. When surveying the contemporary Ontario competitive scene, it is striking to witness the sheer number of participants and the quality of musicianship produced. Wilson is owed a certain amount of credit for this state of affairs.

Alternative ensembles (non-competitive organizations like the military pipe bands) continued to enjoy relative success during the latter half of the 20th century but many had long faded from the competitive platform. Many had not even bothered to compete; they simply could not maintain the musical standard expected of competitive musicians. If the competition platform became the bane of the military, that analysis could extend itself to the Cape Breton piping community. However, Cape Breton pipers remained unaffected by the likes of Wilson because they were not interested in competing; they remained firmly entrenched within their communities where competition did not matter. The Cape Breton social gathering - where dancing and singing prevailed - was the petrol fuelling the engine.

³⁸ Ibid. pp. 229-230.

Wilson's true legacy now rests with his students and their achievements.

CHAPTER NINE

Post War Piping: The 1950s Generation and the Roots of Ontario's World Champions

This chapter sketches the Ontario piping scene beginning in the late 1940s and details two of Toronto's most noted pipers: William J. Gilmour and Reay S. Mackay. These individuals were endowed with a corpus of musical talent; however, what differentiates them from their peers was that they were, arguably, the first pipers to absorb the Scottish competitive piping standard that would thrust Ontario pipers onto the global competitive stage. Although Gilmour and Mackay did not play as active a role in Scottish competitive piping as subsequent generations would, they would ensure through their example - through teaching, competing and adjudicating - that their successors would be more than prepared to hold their own while performing in Scotland.

No less so, this chapter also witnesses the so-called subject matter transference from Scottish hands to native Canadians. Although numerous Canadians played the bagpipes in the late 1940s, Mackay and Gilmour represent the first *homegrown* guardians of outstanding musicianship who earned continental respect throughout the North American piping community.¹ They epitomize the maturation of the tradition in Ontario. Through their combined efforts, they would ensure good competitive piping would remain in Ontario and no longer be a jealously protected art

¹ This is not to say that Archie MacNeil Cairns was excluded from this movement. Cairns appeared on the Ontario competitive scene in the late 1930s as a boy piper with the Argylls of Hamilton and figured prominently on the scene throughout the 1940s. Cairns then became pipe major of the Canadian Guards in 1952 and focused his efforts on the development of Canadian military piping in the regular force.

form exclusive to the Scots.

Although the 78th Fraser Highlanders won the World Championships in 1987, a portion of their victory must be credited to the efforts of their predecessors who had been competing in Scotland throughout the 1960s and 1970s². These musicians established a formidable reputation, which competitive bands like the 78th sought to emulate. Although several of Ontario's most recognized competitive pipe bands and soloists committed themselves to some of the most revered piping competitions in the world (like the World Pipe Band Championships and the Gold Medal piobaireachd competition at the Northern Meeting), these bands had to overcome logistical, administrative and financial challenges in order to fulfill their competitive aspirations. But perhaps these challenges were minimal at best because the Canadians submitted themselves to a foreign competitive landscape. Would the Scots cast a dubious eye on their Canadian colleagues because they were foreigners performing Scottish music? Indeed, pipe bands were a Scottish creation. And although their Canadian counterparts performed the same genre of music, some Scots were fascinated by the Canadians while others were both angered and unmoved in their musical assessments of this new competitive element in the 1970s.³

The Canadian forays to Scotland became habitual by the mid-1980s and were interpreted by the soloists and bandsmen as a necessary ingredient to their annual

² These bands included the City of Toronto, Clan MacFarlane, General Motors, the 48th Highlanders, the Black Watch and the Canadian Guards, to name a few.

³ Some Scots were not so reserved in voicing their displeasure at the Canadians. For example, Ed Neigh was harassed on several occasions during the 1970s for his successes in solo competition. Although the incidents were trivial in nature, the substance is representative of a broader theme: a home-based cultural activity perceived to be threatened by a foreign element because of its proficiency to mimic its counterpart. The context of this sociological argument does not lie within the scope of this study. Suffice to say that a few minor incidences between Scots and Canadians took place in the 1970s highlighting some of those cultural tensions.

competitive schedules. With the successes of Ontario pipers in the 1970s, their reputations slowly took hold in the global piping community. Yet much contemporary piping lore in Canada focuses on the efforts of those individuals at the contests held at Oban and Inverness during this period. Though their efforts are no less valued by the contemporary piping community in Ontario, the following discussion intends to illuminate the contributions of a select group of Ontario pipers who were actively competing during the 1950s and 1960s, whose history has remained dormant. Their example would set a precedent that subsequent generations would look to for inspiration and guidance. The remainder of the discussion will then re-examine the competitive lives of those pipers who participated in the gold medal contests of the 1970s and 1980s. These pipers contributed to a psychological momentum experienced by many Canadian bands - in the years leading up to the historic win of the 78th Fraser Highlanders - that Canadians were worthy to assume the mantle of 'World Champions' in 1987.

9.1 - Wilson's Prodigies: Toronto's William Gilmour and Reay Mackay

John Wilson's merits as a piper and teacher have been dealt with in a previous chapter. His influence on dozens of pipers in Canada and the United States continues to affect piping today. However, Wilson directly influenced two young pipers who grew up piping together in the 48th Highlanders but whose life paths diverged shortly after their adolescence. One became a professional soldier who gained some of the most sought after piping awards offered during the 1950s and 60s while the other became a high school science teacher who equalled his peer in solo competition

becoming one of Ontario's most recognized adjudicators and clinicians. Both would continue to play the pipes and lead pipe bands throughout their professional careers. Both shared a talent for piping which was sharpened by Wilson.

The glories of early Canadian military piping have been chronicled in an earlier chapter. However, if one individual deserves attention for his demonstrations as a piping virtuoso in the Canadian military in the latter half of the 20th century, it must surely be Pipe Major William John Gilmour of Toronto. By age 26, Gilmour had achieved competitive fame as one of the most successful pipers in Canada. He consistently won prizes in the open professional piping competitions (primarily in Canada and in Scotland in 1953) and was hailed by the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin* as a teenaged boy who “was in the vanguard of those Canadian pipers who brought credit to the North American piping community by entering and doing well in Scottish competitions.”⁴ Not least of his many honours was his Pipe Major's certificate from the Army School of Bagpipe Music under Captain (then Pipe Major) John MacLellan.⁵ Gilmour was the first Canadian to graduate from the British army's extended course of study⁶ and placed first in his class. Upon his return to Canada, he was appointed pipe major of the 2nd Battalion Canadian Black Watch at Camp Gagetown, New Brunswick.

⁴ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, April/May 1976, Published by the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, p 1.

⁵ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* reported in November 1962 that, “Piper Billy Gilmour of Toronto, now attached to the 2nd Bn. Canadian Black Watch in Germany, has commenced a six-months Pipe Major's course at Edinburgh Castle under Pipe Major John MacLellan. As a boy, Billy was a very successful competitor at the games in Canada and the United States. In 1953 he won the Inverchapel Shield at Cowal for Piobaireachd under 18 years of age. This was the first and only time the shield left Scotland. In 1954 he was placed second in the same event.”

⁶ During World War Two, Pipe Major Willie Ross, the Chief Instructor of the Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle, ran several short service piping courses for Canadians and other allied servicemen.

Born in Toronto on April 1, 1937, “Billy” as his friends call him, took his first bagpipe lessons from Archie Dewar, Pipe Major of Toronto’s 48th Highlanders. Gilmour was not initially interested in learning to play the pipes and pleads ignorance as to how it began in 1948. Gilmour received one-on-one tuition from Dewar at the 48th Highlanders of Canada Club on Church Street in downtown Toronto. “There was a one-lane bowling alley there and that’s where he did his teaching,” recalls Gilmour.⁷ Gilmour studied with Dewar for three years before joining the 48th Highlanders Cadet Pipes and Drums. After a short apprenticeship with the Cadets, Gilmour was admitted to *The Big Band*⁸ and played his first parade with his boyhood friend, Reay Mackay, on 11 November 1951. Typically self-effacing, Gilmour remarked about his experience “Oh you know, I enjoyed it. Reay Mackay was on that parade too and that was his first parade. He’s a year and a half younger than me, so, we were awfully young.”⁹

Gilmour’s first solo contest was at the Earls Court Legion in Toronto where he won first prize in his grade playing the march, *The Taking of Beaumont Hamel*. He rose rapidly through the amateur grades to the open professional category. By the early 1950s, both Gilmour and Mackay were taking lessons from the recently arrived Gold Clasp champion piper, John Wilson. Wilson’s influence on the young apprentices was immediate: their natural talent and technical ability were sharpened delivering immediate successes in competition.

In 1953, Gilmour spent six weeks touring Scotland competing at Oban, Nairn,

⁷ Bill Gilmour, Interview with Author, digital audiocassette, Ottawa, Ontario April 12, 1999.

⁸ So called by the members of the 48th pipes and drums. The term not only refers to its size (during Gilmour’s days the band numbered 52 pipers and drummers) but also refers to the reputation the band commanded within and without Toronto piping society circles.

Braemar, Cowal and at Egham, England. In his first appearance at Cowal, Gilmour, aged 16, was awarded the Gold Medal for piobaireachd for pipers under the age of 18,¹⁰ an exceptional achievement that would be repeated elsewhere. Several prizes at the North American championships were forthcoming in the 1950s and 1960s; however, Gilmour considers his personal best was at a contest which received very little publicity in the piping community in 1965. Gilmour was stationed in Germany as part of Canada's obligations to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the pipes and drums of the 2nd Canadian Black Watch were invited by the Queen's Own Highlanders to participate in the BAOR (British Army of the Rhine) Championships. As he fondly recalls "Prior to coming home from Germany, the QOH ran this competition in 'Osnabruk'. They had various levels of events and I won the Open piobaireachd, the march, strathspey and reel and the jig that day against the imperial Black Watch, the Queen's Own, the Royal Highland Fusiliers, the Royal Scots Greys and the band that I had, the 2nd Black Watch...It was good. In fact, most of the guys that were on the pipe major's course two years prior to that were also up there competing."¹¹ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* reported a lengthy commentary about the contest offering their support for the Canadians success story.

⁹ Bill Gilmour, Interview with Author, digital audiocassette, Ottawa, Ontario April 12, 1999.

¹⁰ Wilson was proud of Gilmour's accomplishment. In fact, it is a testament to his student's ability that Wilson remembered Gilmour's award 22 years later. In an article acknowledging the depth of Ontario piobaireachd playing Wilson noted "I started my Saturday afternoon classes in Toronto and we have never been short of good performers ever since. In 1953, Billy Gilmour of Toronto, Canada, won the Inverchapel Trophy for Junior Ceol Mor playing at Cowal Games, Scotland, and lots of other fine players have passed through my hands since then." *North American Scotsman*, Published by A.J. MacLeod and G.S. Tuck, St. Catherine's, Ontario, April 1976, p 33.

¹¹ Gilmour was awarded the British Army's Pipe Major's certificate with honours for graduating first in his class. His class contained some exceptionally talented pipers such as Andrew Venters, who was a piper of considerable note with a gift for composition. Venters eventually assumed the leadership of the pipes and drums of the Queen's Own Highlanders. Also in attendance with Gilmour was John Slattery, 1st Scots Guards, who competed successfully as a professional piper throughout the United

CANADIAN PIPE MAJOR WINS BRONZE STAR

Pipers, drummers, buglers and dancers of the several Scottish regiments at present stationed in Germany and also those of the 2nd Bn. The Royal Highlanders (Black Watch) of Canada, were the guests recently of the 1st Bn. Queen's Own Highlanders at Mercer Barracks, Osnabruck for the battalion piping competitions...The competition was pretty well representative of the Army and in the circumstances it was most appropriate that the overall champion, who was Pipe Major. W.J. Gilmour, of the 2nd Bn. The Royal Highlanders of Canada, should receive a bronze star presented by the Royal Scottish Pipers Society. A prize was also presented by the Piobaireachd Society for the winner of the open piobaireachd event - this was also won by Pipe Major Gilmour.

Pipe Major W. J. Gilmour (Toronto) won first prize in all three major competitions and gave an outstanding performance in every respect. Among the younger players two young Queen's Own Highlanders who have recently passed through the Highland Brigade Junior Soldiers Wing showed promise, Pipers Iain Morrison (Stornoway) and Kenneth Griffin (Drumnadrochit). Lt. Col. A.G. Findlay, Commanding Officer of the 1st Bn. Queen's Own Highlanders, concluded (the event) by congratulating Pipe Major Gilmour on an outstanding performance.¹²

After Gilmour's return to Canada later that year, he participated in the Hamilton Branch of the Piper's Society 2nd Annual North American Miniature Pipe Band Championships. Adjudicating the day's solo events were his former teacher, John Wilson, and Gilmour's boyhood contemporary, Reay Mackay. Wilson provided an account of his performance. "Nine players competed and there was no hesitation on Reay Mackay's part in agreeing with me that P/M William Gilmour of the Black Watch was the winner. He played "The Desperate Battle" in fine style on a really brilliant instrument which kept in perfect tune from start to finish...The invitation march, strathspey and reel was held on the platform on the main floor of the James Street armouries. According to my points, five outstanding performances with very little between them." Again, Gilmour placed 1st while the 48th Highlanders' Sandy

Kingdom in the 1960s. Slattery would subsequently lead his battalion's pipe band during the 1970s before meeting an untimely death.

¹² *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, May 1965, pp. 4-5. See full article at Appendix Three.

Dewar placed 2nd.¹³ And, at the North American Championships that summer, Gilmour competed in the open events winning the Open Piobaireachd with 96 points; he placed second in the Marches and third in the Strathspey and Reel. Said Wilson of the occasion,

It was like old times to see and hear “Billie” [sic] Gilmour once again. He is now Pipe Major of a famous regiment and he looks very well indeed. I was glad to note that he has lost none of his ability as a piper although he has been away from the games for years. I asked “Bill” what he thought of the standard of playing. He said that from what he heard, it had definitely improved and especially in the bands.¹⁴

Gilmour was a competitive success. He was admired for his prodigious gifts as a performer and composer and when his name was uttered amongst a group of pipers, his reputation instantly generated a buzz of conversation. By 1970, Gilmour had recorded no less than three combined band and pipe albums with the Black Watch in addition to a successful solo album. The young pipe major, assuredly, could rest on his musical laurels and reflect upon a successful career that combined fulfilment, gratification and invariably, dozens of musical highlights. Further challenges lay ahead for Gilmour as the fate of his regiment was in the hands of a newly elected federal Liberal government under Pierre Trudeau; all was not to be enjoyed in the main.¹⁵

¹³ In the words of Wilson, “Young Sandy Dewar played as I knew he could play, and was worthy of his place in the prize list.” Sandy Dewar was son of Pipe Major Archie Dewar of the 48th Highlanders. At the time of the North American Miniature Pipe Band Championships, Dewar was 18 years of age. *The Piper and Dance Bulletin*, November 1965, p 5.

¹⁴ “Round the Games with John Wilson” in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, September, 1965, p 5. The winners of the Class “A” (now grade 1) band competitions at Maxville in 1965 for the March, Strathspey and Reel were: 1st) Worcester Kiltie Pipe Band (Massachusetts); 2nd) 2nd Battalion Canadian Guards; 3rd) St. Thomas Legion Pipe Band, St. Thomas, Ontario. The winners for the Slow March and 6/8 March competitions were: 1st) City of Toronto; 2nd) Worcester Kiltie; 3) Clan MacFarlane Pipe Band, St. Catherines, Ontario; 4) St. Thomas Legion.

¹⁵ Pierre Trudeau was chosen as the new leader of the Liberal Party leader succeeding Prime Minister

Shortly after taking office, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, in consultation with his minister of national defence, Donald MacDonald, reviewed the roster of units in the Canadian army and initiated a reorganization. What this meant for the regimental system in the Canadian infantry was a severe reduction in the number of units included on the Order of Battle. The government reduced both regular battalions of the Black Watch to nil strength. Displaced Black Watch soldiers were re-mustered to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) despite significant opposition within the units themselves and their civilian constituencies in the Maritimes. In spite of the mixed emotional state of the formerly killed RCR soldiers, the regiment formed a pipe band and appointed Gilmour as their first pipe major. The new pipes and drums, clad in the distinctive Maple Leaf Tartan, absorbed the former Black Watch battalion bands and the new unit began competing at several Ontario highland games in their first year as RCRs.¹⁶ Their inaugural performances in competition were success stories: the band competed in grade 2 placing second at the North American Pipe Band Championships in 1972 and first place at the Thousand Islands Games in Brockville, the following day.¹⁷ By now, Gilmour had retired from active solo competition and began pursuing alternative musical goals perhaps considered to be on the periphery of the competitive piping community. His achievements remained palpable in certain influential quarters and he was not

Lester B. Pearson in April 1968. Upon assuming the mantle of leadership, Trudeau dissolved the government and called a federal election. He was returned to power with a majority government and a new mandate. See Edgar MacInnis, *Canada: A Political and Social History*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Toronto: 1982, p 667.

¹⁶ A third battalion of the RCR was created out of displaced Canadian Guards soldiers. Like 2 RCR, the 3rd battalion formed a pipe band from the leftovers of the Canadian Guards battalions. 3 RCR's pipe major was a former Seaforth Highlander, Willie Stirling, a Scot who served under Pipe Major John MacLellan. Bill Gilmour, Interview with Author, digital audiocassette, Ottawa, Ontario April 12, 1999.

forgotten. In 1976, he was awarded the Glasgow Institute of Piping's *Diploma of Piping* once again demonstrating his master status in the community while at the same time re-affirming his place in the piping press meriting front-page status in the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*. "Pipe Major William Gilmour," announced the *Bulletin*, "2nd Royal Canadian Regiment, is the third North American piper to be awarded the Diploma...While his activities on the games circuit here are limited by his military responsibilities, he is a most formidable competitor."¹⁸ Meanwhile, Gilmour's career continued to flourish and in 1981 was appointed Senior Pipe Major of the Canadian Forces with the rank of Chief Warrant Officer. Gilmour's responsibilities included qualifying armed forces pipers for the appointment of pipe major - analogous to the pipe major's course at the Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle - at the Canadian Forces School of Music (Pipes and Drums Wing) in Ottawa. In addition to his duties at the School of Music, Gilmour was also placed in command of the Canadian Forces Base Rockcliffe Pipes and Drums, a base volunteer pipe band sponsored by the Air Force. Always mindful of challenging his band, Gilmour entered the band in grade 2 competition where they met with minor success in the competitive environment of the early 1980s.

Always willing to help pipers strive towards their musical goals, Gilmour continued to teach privately while in Ottawa. Two of his more noted pupils, Scott Macaulay and Andrew Hayes, have demonstrated remarkable skill in both Canadian and Scottish solo competitions. In 1991, Gilmour retired from active service enjoying a career that spanned "three great organizations: the Black Watch, the Royal

¹⁷ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, April 1973, p 16.

Canadian Regiment and the Canadian Air Force.”¹⁹ Today, Gilmour enjoys a relaxed lifestyle - a significant departure from his service days. His schedule is no longer fraught with rehearsals, performances, travel, teaching, competitions and administrative responsibilities. The majority of his time is spent close to family and friends in Ottawa although his passion for the bagpipes, albeit not as evident as it once was, continues to punctuate his weekly routine: he teaches approximately fifteen students three days per week.²⁰

9.2 - Pipe Major Reay S. Mackay

Perhaps equally formidable on the competitive platform and no less representative of the Canadian piping vanguard in the 1950s is Reay S. Mackay. Brought up in Toronto’s west-end, Mackay was born on January 5, 1939 and has been described as “a true gentleman,”²¹ “A renowned technically brilliant player” and “probably the most well-known figure in Ontario piping [today].”²²

Mackay’s musical background is deeply rooted in his ancestors’ home, the Orkney Islands and the 48th Highlanders. Both would play an integral role in Mackay’s evolution as a musician. Mackay’s father and uncle, Colin and Douglas

¹⁸ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, April/May 1976, p 1.

¹⁹ Bill Gilmour interview in *The Sentinel: The Official Magazine of the Canadian Forces*, Summer 1991.

²⁰ At the time of writing, I remain in sporadic contact with Gilmour. In the spring of 2006, his wife Sheila (nee MacNeil) passed away. Until 2001, I continued my musical relationship with him by annually reviewing the Piobaireachd Society Gold medal tunes prior to the staging of the Canadian Gold Medal competitions in Maxville, Ontario. In my opinion, his performance technique on the bagpipe and practise chanter was as dextrous and crisp as in 1990 when I was a candidate on one of his courses at the Canadian Forces School of Music.

²¹ Bobby Taylor, Interview with Author, digital audiocassette tape, January, 1999.

²² *Piper and Drummer*, “Interview with Reay Mackay” Published by the Pipers and Pipe Band Society

respectively, hailed from the Orkney Islands and emigrated to Canada in 1926. The elder Mackays were taught the pipes by a fellow Orkney man, Samuel Leask.

According to Reay, Leask lived for a time in Toronto, piping with the 48th Highlanders under James Fraser and the Metropolitan Toronto Police before returning to Scotland. Given Leask's experience with the 48th, it was probably through his encouragement that Colin and Douglas Mackay joined this band when they moved to Toronto. "When my Dad came to Ontario he had a letter of recommendation from Leask to Pipe Major James Fraser."²³ Both brothers began playing with Fraser's band, launching sixty years of continuous Mackay service to the 48th Highlanders. Leask, surely, was a sound teacher. As Mackay asserts, "My uncle Douglas was a damned good player and my Dad was an open professional player who won a lot of good prizes in the Open, more so after the war."²⁴ The young Mackay was exposed to good musicianship from the commencement of his studies.

Mackay first began fiddling with the pipes at the age of five. "I started with my Dad when he brought home a miniature set of pipes from the armouries for my fifth birthday. I guess those miniature pipes gave me the bug", recounted Mackay.

My Dad was a stickler for grace notes and technique. I can remember playing the F doubling and E doubling scales and just working on those for about five or six months before he thought it was good enough to carry on to the next doubling. I was delighted when I got down to the D doubling - that was a major accomplishment...[My Dad] stressed the fundamentals so much so that, when I finally found a sheet of music in front of me, which was about one and a half or two years after I began, I could play a reasonably good 6/8 or 2/4 march quite readily. The fundamentals were there, and it was all a

of Ontario, April 1990, p 17.

²³ Interview with Author, December, 2001. In fact, Samuel Leask was a Sergeant Piper under the command of Pipe Major Farquhar Beaton in 1900. Leask's name is listed under the roster of pipers and drummers in Alexander Fraser's *History of the 48th Highlanders*. Leask must have been a musician of some talent as he was the band's pipe sergeant.

²⁴ Ibid.

matter of putting them in the right order. Another thing with my Dad was that practically every night of the week I went to bed listening to bagpipes. From the earliest time I can remember I was listening to them. My Dad was a fairly good player. He played fine, heavy 2/4 marches and he had quite a repertoire.²⁵

Mackay's thoughts precisely reveal this post World War Two community's drive towards technical perfection. Certainly the elder Mackay had kept pace with the increasing trends in mid-century Scottish piping through the influences of those in the Toronto piping community. Many Toronto pipers were exposed to the Scottish standard, either through Scottish immigrants or through the influences of wartime veteran pipers who were stationed in Britain during the 1940s. This tendency to measure the *New World* (emphasis mine) state of the art against the cradle of the tradition was particularly acute then and is demonstrative of how this emigrant tradition began maturing with the native Canadian generation through the likes of Mackay and Gilmour. Further, Mackay's passage reveals how 'modern' piping in Ontario, as John Gibson calls it in *Traditional Gaelic Piping*, really diverged from pre-competitive piping in Cape Breton, which continued to thrive in a non-competitive, entertainment domain, which was unconcerned with competitive Scottish standards. Whereas in Ontario, the community established itself to measure up to the prevailing standards in Scotland; the opposite was true in Cape Breton.

After three years of studying embellishments, Mackay was introduced to Murdo MacLeod, a native of Benbecula and one of only a handful of pipers who played piobaireachd during that period. "As with many west coast players," Mackay

²⁵ *Piper and Drummer*, p 18.

says “he played on the other side.”²⁶ (By this he meant that MacLeod unconventionally positioned his bagpipes under the right arm, hands reversed). MacLeod’s primary musical influence was through John MacDougall Gillies, a most respected Glasgow piper.²⁷ Perhaps Gillies’ most acclaimed pupil was Robert Reid, a contemporary of the celebrated composers and performers such as G.S. MacLennan, John Wilson, William Ross and J.B. Robertson (to name of few amongst many others from that era of 20th century piping).

Mackay’s father, Colin, was not a piobaireachd player but was interested in learning. MacLeod invited Mackay to his Sunday afternoon classes at the Toronto Scottish Regiment’s pipe band mess at Fort York Armouries (he initiated these classes soon after the cessation of hostilities in 1945). Young Mackay was “dragged along” (jokingly expressed by Reay) to observe and fondly remembers - as an eight-year-old child - sitting down with his father as they listened raptly “to old Murdo. And it was a full afternoon’s session. And it was a good one.”²⁸

MacLeod was seen as a bit of a maverick who cut a unique figure in 1940s Canadian society. “Sometimes you would see old Murdo in the summertime walking down the street with his straw hat and braces, his fingers lodged in between.” (Mackay smoothly positioned his thumbs by his breast pockets.) “But he was a brain, an absolute brain.”²⁹ Undoubtedly, MacLeod approached his music in much the same manner as he lived his life: distinctively colourful.

MacLeod approached his piobaireachd classes with a dour determination. He

²⁶ Interview with Author.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

hoped to pass on the knowledge he accrued with MacDougall-Gillies. With this in mind, MacLeod's tune choices were not designed for technically weak players. In fact, his first class covered the ambitious yet melodic *Mary's Praise*, a rather lengthy and technically challenging piece for an elementary class. "That was how old Murdo was... he was a bit of an eccentric in that regard", recalls Mackay. "But, he was an absolutely excellent musician. And, he always carried a practice chanter in his pocket. Always."³⁰ Mackay continues, "I would sit and listen to the lessons going on and go home and work away at the tunes. I didn't have old Murdo instructing me at the time; he didn't have me on a one-to-one basis until later."³¹ Mackay expanded his initial piobaireachd experiences to describe a disturbing trend in the solo piping community's ethos: some did not openly promote the study of Piobaireachd.

[The scene] here was kind of a funny thing. At one point, there was a rivalry between players.³² They didn't want to divulge their knowledge. It was prior

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² This rivalry was exceptionally acute during the 1930s particularly between MacLeod and his fellow Scot Donald Ewen MacPherson. "Murdo used to talk about MacPherson all the time" according to Mackay. MacPherson and MacLeod had competed at a Highland Gathering in Toronto during the 1930s. MacPherson had taken the top prizes in the piping competitions, vanquishing his challenger MacLeod. "Murdo didn't like that at all. At the end of the day" Mackay recounts "'I [MacLeod] stood by the fence, looked at the judges and played *I'll gang Nae Mair to Yon Toon*' and Murdo would laugh like hell!" MacPherson hailed from Skye and was a commanding personality in Toronto's Scottish community during the inter-war period. He was labelled an "All rounder": he was a piper, a highland dancer and an athlete. MacPherson profited from his varied skills by competing in as many events as were open to him on any given day at the games. Mackay recalls MacLeod's reminiscences in the late 1940s: "He [MacPherson] would win the piping, the highland dancing and the athletic events and very often he would wind up piping for the remaining dancing events all in the same day!" In addition to his dancing exploits, MacPherson owned a Toronto gym and instructed wrestling. This is borne out in William Donaldson's book *The Highland Bagpipe and Scottish Society*. In it, Robert Meldrum recalled his pupil Donald Ewen MacPherson of Skye 'who was a most promising piper, playing some splendid piobaireachds, but he preferred the athletics side of the games and while Pipe Major of the Royal Scots won the wrestling championship of the Services.'" As I informed Mackay of Meldrum's historical background (see "Historical Introduction" and the history of the pipers of the 78th Highlanders), Mackay remarked, "Well there's a direct line to some fantastic piping right here in Toronto and most people have never heard of him." MacPherson was also a member of the Toronto Gaelic Society; in conjunction with MacLeod, they entertained Society members with their piping and dancing.

to the information age; there were no tape recorders. They had it all in their brains. 'I've managed to pick it up but I'm not going to pass it on' was the attitude. But, in their older ages, they changed their tune. And Murdo was one of them. In his latter years, [this prompted him] to run some classes.³³

This attitude was not a permanent fixture in the piping society. By 1947, the community itself began to take steps to organize itself into "one great fraternity of all pipers in Ontario"³⁴ as outlined in the newly established Pipers Society of Ontario

³³ Ibid. According to Mackay, MacLeod was in his seventies when he began instructing in Toronto. It is not known when MacLeod moved to Toronto; however, Mackay's private photographic collection contains a photo of his former teacher as a piper with the 48th Highlanders clad in Davidson tartan. This evidence suggests that MacLeod played with the band sometime between its formation in 1891 up to 1913. In 1913, the pipers of the 48th Highlanders were presented with the Stewart of Fingask tartan and have worn this continually since that date. It may be more accurate to pinpoint MacLeod's membership with the 48th under the command of Pipe Major Farquhar Beaton (1900-1913) given MacLeod's age and his experiences as a pupil of MacDougall-Gillies; however, this is pure conjecture on my behalf but not impossible to surmise.

³⁴ "PPB50: The Pipers' and Pipe Band Society of Ontario Goes Gold," *The Piper and Drummer*, August 1997, p 16. According to a document published in the 1954 Exhibition Park Grandstand Tattoo and Games in Toronto, the Ontario piping community "felt the need of a governing body who would look after the interests of the pipers at competitions and set up a school for the teaching of beginners and advanced players. In 1946, due to intense pressure of numerous pipers, pipe majors, and lovers of the pipes, Dr. Norman A. McLeod of Toronto, consented to take immediate steps to form a society." In Reay Mackay's retrospective on the state of bagpipe adjudication at the highland games during the 1940s, he said, "all those guys [Donald MacMillan, George Duncan, John Wilson and Alex MacNeil] were famous for being fair. I think a lot of it stemmed from this business *they* were talking about over there [Scotland]. *The Jolly Boys Club*. It was the same people winning prize after prize after prize. It got to the point where *they* vowed if they ever got to the bench, this would not happen. You play for your prize. And this was the catalyst behind the formation of the Pipers' Society." Archie Cairns is also in agreement with Mackay. According to Cairns, "there were a number of games that were taking place where there were no rules; no guidelines. You haven't lived 'til you've gone to a contest where - and I remember this well at Embro one year, maybe 1940 or '41 - they used to have a bell tent off to one side, and that was for the judges. You could stand outside the bell tent and hear the whisky glasses clinking in there. And you'd hear them in there "Ach John aye, are ya' judging today?" "Ach no, I'm playing today, but I'm judging next week." And so it was such a fixed thing; that was the impression I got. It was such a fixed thing it was ludicrous. And there were no rules. I recall when we used to have a slow march competition and you're slow marching across the field and a judge comes wandering right into the pipe section, while you're playing, and he's half-hammered. This guy bumped into my cousin Bill Day and threw him off his tune and then penalized him on the score sheet for making mistakes. But who do you appeal to? There was nobody you could appeal to. And this was when they [the competing pipers centred in and around the Toronto area] started getting together and said 'Hey. We've got to do something about this. If we're going to have contests, let's have some guidelines to go by.' I can recall one judge in the piobaireachd contest - he had a habit of sitting with his arms like this and his crooked stem pipe, sitting there, puffing away - who fell asleep during the tune. They had to nudge him when the tune was over. And I think he gave that guy 2nd place! But there was no appeal. Nothing. I think that necessitated some kind of organization to set up the guidelines for competing. I know that there was a strong faction from Hamilton - not from what you read in *The Piper and Drummer*, it reads that it was all Toronto that did this. I'm sorry, but it was not *all* Toronto. There was very strong input from Hamilton and between them they set up what eventually

whose goal, amongst others, was “to encourage the study and playing of Piobaireachd on the Highland bagpipe.”³⁵

The state of piping in the entire region, indeed, perhaps the entire country, would soon alter considerably with the arrival of gold medallist John Wilson in 1949. By then, Mackay was a “fairly experienced piobaireachd player.”³⁶ The nature of the art was changing throughout this period becoming more recognizable to the piper of 2006 than, say, earlier periods in our history where our contemporaries may not have played with the sharpness of technique which we identify with. Moreover, the venue which pipers and drummers readily identify - the highland games - quickly evolved into staple competitive venues with regulated piping, drumming and pipe band competitions. The competitive piper, drummer and pipe band was born in Ontario as the young Mackay was blossoming as a player.

In the spring of 1949, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders hosted the annual Hamilton Indoor Highland Games at their regimental home, the James Street Armouries. On that cool and sunny morning, typical of a Canadian spring, Mackay heard John Wilson give his maiden performance in open competition. He later recalled,

became the *strong* Pipers Society of Ontario.” (interview with author, January, 1999). Despite Cairns’ concerns about a Toronto dominated provincial piping society, the membership coalescing around Toronto’s Dr. McLeod in 1946 looked to the Piobaireachd Society and the British Columbia Pipers’ Association as models to mould their own provincial society. Pipe Major Ed Esson, Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, and Archibald Campbell were “exceedingly gracious and helpful in supplying the nucleus of our present society.” A charter was secured from the Ontario government; the society’s crest and motto were designed by Duncan Ross of Hamilton. At a meeting in the fall of 1946 in the Toronto Scottish Band room at Fort York Armouries, Dr. McLeod “presented a draft of the constitution for approval.” At this meeting, officers and an executive committee were selected and thus the Pipers’ Society of Ontario came into being. Published in the *Toronto Highland Games Association program*, June 18th-19th, 1954.

³⁵ “The Pipers and Pipe Band Society Goes Gold” p 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p 16.

I stood...in absolute awe. [I heard him prior to that] practising on the roof of the armouries. He was playing light music and it had to be the cleanest and most dextrous fingering I had ever heard. The man was the most fantastic player I'd ever heard, no question about that...When I heard this playing I was absolutely elated and immediately went back to my Dad and said 'I want to be able to play like that.'³⁷

Mackay immediately began lessons with Wilson and found him to be a demanding instructor. "I can remember the first tune. I didn't get any further than the first bar before he was shouting 'No! No! No! That's a G grace note not an E grace note!'" Before long, "he helped me to such an extent that there was nothing out of place - you just couldn't get away without missing the odd grace note."³⁸ The Scots champion was keen to impress his contemporary style on his student. We see here the Ontario piping community, through Mackay's experience, measuring itself against the Scottish competitive influence.

Mackay was instantly struck by Wilson's playing style: it was decidedly different from what he was conditioned to listen to at that time. "John didn't waste any time" [Mackay refers to the speed with which Wilson performed]. He tended to be a quick player I would say, as opposed to Murdo [MacLeod] who was a very slow player. In those days, it seems to me there were two different styles, the Edinburgh style and the Glasgow style, but one wasn't necessarily better."³⁹ Interestingly though, this marked difference in performance genre did not impact upon Mackay's musical preference for he preferred to integrate both styles whenever he played and competed. In the mean time the young Mackay (with his father Colin) was playing as a valued member of the 48th Highlanders.

³⁷ Interview with Reay Mackay, *Piper and Drummer*, Published by the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, April 1990, p 19.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p 19.

The Mackay association with the 48th Highlanders pipes and drums, consummated by Douglas and Colin, began shortly after their arrival in Toronto in 1926. By 1947, Douglas had met an untimely death, reaching the rank of corporal and leaving Colin and Reay to carry on what would become a revered family tradition in the unit. “As far as the Highlanders were concerned, it was part of my life.” Mackay continued, “I didn’t know any different and it was a natural progression. My background was all 48th Highlanders.” Mackay, during a moment of introspection recalled his earlier days with the band:

I remember those days after the war. The 48th Highlanders was a household name. If you mentioned ‘bagpipes’ in Toronto, people said ‘48th Highlanders’. Not like it is today. But you were 8 years after the war. I remember the University Avenue Armouries [up to 1965, the drill hall on University Avenue in downtown Toronto was the Regimental Headquarters of the 48th Highlanders]. That drill floor was larger than the Moss Park Armouries. I can remember playing the regiment into the armouries and there not being a space on that floor there were that many people in the regiment. The regiment covered the whole floor. It was a big deal. And it was a big deal when Archie Dewar took over. That was Pipe Major Fraser’s retirement parade. You know, it was probably one of the only times that the Pipe Major was given the honor to take the salute as the troops marched by.⁴⁰

Mackay’s skills as a musician progressed rapidly. By the age of 13, he promoted himself to the Open professional piping category. Moving up with Mackay was his piping pal, Bill Gilmour.

That would have been 1952. What happened was that in those days the grading was by age: sixteen and under; eighteen and under and Open. Bill and I played hand in hand; we tagged all the way through. Either he was first or I was first. There was no competition for us. The two of us went up to the Open at the same time. He’s a couple of years older than I am so he would have been fifteen. And my first contest in the Open was a good day: I got 2nd in the marches, 1st in the Strathspeys and Reels. I placed in everything at thirteen!

³⁹ Interview with Author.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

9.3 – Mackay and the 48th - Increased Competition

During this period in Mackay's life, the 48th were fielding prize winning grade 1 competition bands ('A' Class during the 1950s) and had begun to encounter formidable rivals – newly formed or invigorated bands, notably the Argylls, the Toronto Scottish Regiment, the City of Montreal Pipe Band and the newly formed Cabar Feidh band. The pipe band landscape in southern Ontario began evolving in unanticipated directions.

The pipe band community in Toronto altered dramatically with the formation of the Cabar Feidh (latterly changed to "City of Toronto") pipe band under Pipe Major Hugh MacInnes. The Cabar Feidh was formed as a civilian band devoted exclusively to band competition. This would have broad reaching implications for pipe bands across Ontario and the nation as several bands across Canada (some were raised by the Royal Canadian Legion after the war, others formed through generous donations by private individuals and the like) began to devote their entire musical mission to the competitive platform. This form of pipe band was an anomaly to existing military bands whose personnel engendered a wide variety of opinions about the new breed of competition band. As Mackay points out,

It was the first real look that we had at a good civilian band and we thought this was a real strange being in Canada because we'd never heard of this sort of thing before. Alex Stewart was the pipe major who came from Scotland. The band was strictly civilian. No military personnel whatsoever. We thought 'What a strange being. Here's a band and all they do is compete.' I think the band was initially made up of Scottish immigrants. None of them wanted anything to do with the military. Let's face it: it was post war and

they'd seen enough of the military to last them a lifetime.⁴¹

So although pipe bands were initially created by the military, perhaps they would begin to die because of the military. The formation of the Cabar Feidh band as a single mandated entity set in course an irreversible momentum that turned the tide against military pipe bands. The military bands found themselves wanting in advanced musicianship by the 1980s. However, during the 1950s and 60s, the military bands were enjoying a zenith in strength and technical skill.⁴² Certainly Mackay's statement is a neat revelation articulating the changing nature of pipe bands in Ontario during his formative years as a piper. The band landscape however, was not exclusive in these emerging developments.

⁴¹ Ibid. In a letter addressed to *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, Pipe Major Hugh MacInnes relayed two unusual anecdotes pertaining to the rules and guidelines for pipe band competitions in Ontario in the early 1950s. MacInnes' anecdotes serve more to reveal the idiosyncratic nature of early band contests although their humour provides a human side to a society driven to establish a well regulated and disciplined art form. Evidence such as the following anecdotes pervades much piping literature, spanning several decades, involving countless personalities (soloists and bands) and resulting in several bruised egos - all the stuff of legend! MacInnes writes "The year that the Cabar Feidh Pipe Band won the A and B contests (Grades One and Two in early 21st century parlance) was 1951, and, at that time, I was Pipe Major of the Band. Alex Stewart was our Pipe Sergeant and John Cochrane, our leading side drummer. I do not remember all the bands who competed that day, but I do remember that the 48th Highlanders from Toronto and the Argylls from Hamilton participated. I remember when John Wilson (Pipe Major of the Argylls) congratulated me he remarked that he did not think it right that a band should be allowed to play in both A and B classes. I agreed with this, but at that time there was no such rule (as I pointed out to him), so we were quite eligible to play in both classes. The reason we were allowed to play in B class was because we were a new band and just started competing in 1951. Let me tell you of what I consider an unusual occurrence in a pipe band contest and here too the Cabar Feidh was involved. At a competition in Toronto, also in 1951, the Cabar Feidh were placed second to the Toronto Scottish Regiment pipe band. On seeing the scorecards after the competition, we found out that the Cabar Feidh was first in points for piping and also first in points for drumming. There was a separate judge for marching and deportment and this judge had our band enough behind in points to the Toronto Scottish to give them first place in overall points. The awkward thing about it all was the fact that the Drum Major of the Toronto Scottish was the judge for marching and deportment. Sincerely, Hugh MacInnes, West Glens Falls, N.Y. *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, April 1971, p 4.

⁴² Mackay recollects listening to other grade 1 military bands that appeared at various highland gatherings throughout Canada. Mackay recalls that, "The Black Watch [2nd battalion] had a bloody good band under Billy [Gilmour]." Their contemporaries in Grade 1 competition applauded the Canadian Guards under the direction of Archie Cairns. Additionally, the various station and reserve pipe bands belonging to the Royal Canadian Air Force produced very competitive grade 1 and grade 2 bands (such as the Station Rockcliffe pipe band, the 400 Squadron and 401 Squadron. These ensembles figure prominently in various highland games statistics produced in *The Piper and Dancer*

Solo piping in the province slowly redefined itself during the 1950s in both form and function. Pipers began travelling to Scotland to compete against their Scottish counterparts, previously unheard of in the community. Those competitors helped the community gain a self-confidence which it had not consciously acknowledged. And it is certain that competition altered the music community because pipers at that time did not exist for purely competitive reasons. Pipers piped for entertainment purposes. Mackay recalls his own musical proficiency.

We knew we weren't far off the mark [compared to the Scots]. Even as a kid I competed at Braemar and Aboyne when I went over with the choir and I won first in both cases. In the juvenile contests, I was competing against the likes of John MacDougall and Cruikshank who eventually went to South Africa. But it was a closed competition. The contest was restricted to players say, from the Aboyne/Banffshire area, but they allowed me to play. But they said, 'We'll allow you to play but you can't win a prize.' Well, I won both of them. But what I did get was a beautiful letter of recognition from the Marquis of Huntly who was at that time, chief of the Games.⁴³

Experiences like these contributed directly to the increasing sense of confidence that Ontarians, and Canadians, began to enjoy. Perhaps their musical abilities were comparable to the best competitive Scottish standards. Interestingly, an article written by Robin Walker adorning the walls of Inchdrewer House subtly addresses this theme.

Walker's article, written during the Second World War, tells of the life of Pipe Major Willie Ross, "doyen of pipe majors and world famous wherever pipes blow." Interestingly, three paragraphs are devoted to the Army School of Piping, the international scope of the soldier-students and a recognition of the Canadian standard of piping amongst their commonwealth peers. Walker writes,

Bulletin during the 1950s and 1960s). Interview with Author, December 2001.

But not only Scots come up to the High Street and climb the winding turret stone stairs to the band hall to attend these classes run by the Army and the Piobaireachd Society. Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and South Africans and even Russians are interested.

The Canadians, according to Pipe Major Ross are better pipers than he anticipated. The general standard is variable but on the whole extremely good.

Like old soldiers pipers never die. Their sons continue in Canada, South Africa, everywhere. And when they die it is often like their fathers before them, in the front of battle playing their pipes.⁴⁴

Mackay continues the normative theme with his recollection of John D. Burgess'

1956 Canadian concert tour with Pipe Major Willie Ross.

Oh we knew [where our standards were in comparison to the Scots.] Burgess was out here with Willie Ross and they stopped by in Toronto. In fact, Bill Gilmour and I played at the concert. The 48th had a quartette playing at that time and we had a winning quartette: my Dad, John Wakefield, Billy Gilmour and myself. So Burgess played for a bit. Then Gilmour and I played. We had a couple of solo spots for this recital. And I think Burgess thought 'What do they know about bagpipes here?' So then Billy and I played. And Christ! We played. And Burgess thought 'Wait a minute!' And he realized that 'these guys are no slouches.' And so he came out for the 2nd half and played for about an hour and a half and it was absolutely startling. The stuff he came out with was just brilliant. But, he knew he had to because we pushed him into it. Oh my God it was marvellous.⁴⁵

Although Ontario had not produced pipers like Burgess during the 1940s, 50s and 60s

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Inchdrewer House, Redford Barracks, Edinburgh, is home to the British Army School of Piping and Highland Drumming. Unfortunately this article did not include a citation. Walker's piece appeared to have been taken from a newspaper (likely an Edinburgh publication). The article captured my attention on two separate occasions: The first time in October 1998 when I was given a tour of the Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle by Lance Sergeant Brian Herriot, Scots Guards. Herriot was a pupil at the school whom I befriended over the course of the autumn. He graciously invited me to spend a raucous Christmas dinner weekend with his battalion, wife and family in Balleykinler, Northern Ireland the following December. I failed to record the article in 1998. Finally in 2001, I returned to Edinburgh to consult with my academic committee at the university. I scribbled the article on some scrap paper while given a tour of the school's new facility by a lance corporal piper named *Ali* in the 1st Battalion The Highlanders. I first met *Ali* when he was a Gordon Highlander in 1991. He was sent to Canada to help his allied regiment celebrate their 100th anniversary. Of course, this was my old regiment, the 48th Highlanders. Given the nature of the four-day celebration I doubted whether *Ali* remembered me when I met him again in 2001. After the tour, *Ali* conceded that he did recognize my face and vaguely recalled spending four fun filled days with the 48th.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

we can conclude the standard was much higher than what may have been assumed by the likes of Burgess. A World Championships title or a gold medal was not far off. With hindsight, perhaps the surprise we can see now is that an Ontario band did not win the World Championships sooner than 1987 and likewise that an Ontario piper was not awarded a gold medal earlier than 1977. Nonetheless, Mackay felt that his generation of pipers were playing good music with good results, comparable to those in Scotland.

In 1960 after graduating from the provincial teaching college, Mackay launched his professional career as a high school teacher; he also enrolled in an academic programme leading to an undergraduate degree at York University studying geography with a minor in science. He continued his band activities, his solo competitive career and his lessons with John Wilson. This only partially describes his musical interests. Mackay also played the squeezebox in various Scottish country-dance bands in the Toronto area. He also married and started a family, and would eventually see his daughters, Sheila and Glenna, take up Highland dancing and bagpipes. By 1965 when Ross Stewart became pipe major of the 48th (taking over after Archie Dewar retired), Mackay was asked to lead the Grade 1 competition band. It was shortly after this period that Mackay left active solo playing and began adjudicating. For Mackay, time was at a premium and he did not have enough of it to devote to his solo career. Not regretting his departure from the solo scene, Mackay looks back at his time as a competitor with great pride and considers his efforts as an adjudicator from the late 1960s to the present day with equal devotion and professionalism. Perhaps Mackay derives his satisfaction from judging because of

the requirement for his talents as a musician. Accordingly, he made himself available to the community in order to contribute to its promotion and development.

At that particular time there were not a lot of good judges on the circuit. I felt personally that I could do piping more good by judging than playing. Plus I had a military band. Had I had a civilian band I think I would have continued playing competitively much longer. But it was the old story - how much time can you devote to your own playing with the military? I had the bands: the street band and the competition band. I was playing accordion in a dance band. Plus all the social functions I had to attend or play at through my position with the 48th. I just didn't have time. And I could see there was a definite need for judges. So that's when I started doing it. And I enjoyed it. And I still do enjoy it.

Mackay continued to lead the 48th Highlanders' competition band throughout the 1970s. In 1975, he assumed command of the regimental pipes and drums, taking over from Pipe Major Ross Stewart. The band continued to compete and was relatively successful given the various musical tasks facing the band. Meanwhile, Mackay's teaching career continued. In order to gain further promotion, he matriculated as a master's degree student at Brock University studying Science in education. Mackay's life was busy⁴⁶ and certainly not without its moments of anguish. In typical Mackay fashion though, he smiled, maintained a positive outlook and dealt with the challenges addressing him.

By 1979, Reay's old teacher and friend, John Wilson, was admitted to hospital. Wilson's health ailments haunted him and he was in decline. During that time, Mackay and his wife, Joan, visited Wilson in hospital. What struck Mackay was Wilson's spirit. As Mackay informed me,

You could see it [death] coming. But, he was the most resilient man I've ever

⁴⁶ "My God, my life was never my own; I was never home." Mackay confesses. "If I wasn't at school I was out playing somewhere. And if you don't think that's hectic - playing with the 48th Highlanders and doing a masters program - well look! It gave me grey hair!" Interview with author, December 2001.

come across. His outlook; if anybody had a super outlook, it was John Wilson. He just never gave up. The last time I went into see John; well, he wanted to talk to me and he was lying in his bed. You could tell he was on his last legs. So John said to Joan, "Would you mind leaving the room? I want to speak to Reay." And all he wanted to do was talk about piping. And right to the bitter end it was nothing but bagpipes. And he was passing on his message to me to make sure that things would be done: "Do this and do that." Right to the bitter end. That's what John was like. God he was resilient."⁴⁷

Wilson died later that year and the legacy was bestowed by Wilson into Mackay's hands: to carry on with teaching, adjudicating and playing the great highland bagpipe as taught to him by the old master. Mackay would remain loyal to his teacher's vision. Meanwhile, Mackay continued at the helm of the 48th.

Under Mackay's leadership, the 48th toured extensively throughout North America, Great Britain, Belgium and The Netherlands. In 1981, the band participated in a Canadian Massed Military Band presentation at the Military Musical Pageant at Wembley Stadium in London. Mackay, working in tandem with Captain Gino Falconi of the Band of the Royal Regiment of Canada, played a leading role in arranging the brass, reed and pipe parts for the Canadian segment. In fact, many of his arrangements are still played by the pipes, drums and military band today, a testament to his natural ability as a musician. Following their appearances at Wembley, the 48th returned to Canada and capped a summer full of parades, tattoos and special events by tying for first place with the Clan MacFarlane Pipe Band⁴⁸ at the Fergus Highland Games. This would be the last year the 48th competed in

⁴⁷ Interview with Author.

⁴⁸ 'The Clan' as they are referred to, were the dominating force in the Grade 1 Ontario pipe band world during the 1970s and early 1980s and even during the formative years of the 78th Fraser Highlanders. They were led by Pipe Major Ken Eller throughout this period. Eller, who was nicknamed 'The Captain' by his fellow bandsmen, was respected and admired for his abilities as an inspiring leader who possessed both an engaging personality and a natural affinity for pipe music.

Grade 1 under Mackay's leadership.⁴⁹

By 1985, Mackay had completed 10 years leading the band and it had developed into a major musical landmark in the Canadian-Scottish piping community. Mackay's health suddenly deteriorated and he suffered a heart attack which forced him to step back from his duties with the band. Under Master Warrant Officer Sandy Dewar (son of Pipe Major Archie Dewar), the pipes and drums continued to perform their musical duties throughout Canada and the United States. On January 1 1986, Sandy Dewar was officially appointed Pipe Major by the commanding officer of the regiment, Lt. Colonel H.W.G. Mowat. Mackay's recovery was quick, however, and he returned to his various judging assignments soon afterwards.⁵⁰

There is speculation about Mackay's departure from the 48th Highlanders. A tangled web of deceit and subterfuge surrounds the circumstances of his departure and it has been claimed by various members of the band that Mackay was hastily dismissed due to hostile factions within the organization. The circumstances surrounding Mackay's retirement from the 48th may never be wholly known, even by the participants involved. Mackay did not divulge the particulars surrounding his departure from the 48th although I sensed there was something more to the story. I chose not to press the issue with him. Whatever the case may be, Mackay's love of

⁴⁹ Mackay reminisces about the competitive wing of the 48th. He intimated to me on one occasion that if he had been accorded more time perhaps the standard of the band in 2002 would be much healthier and more competitive than it is at the moment. As he admits "By God we were a busy band. But I wish we could have spent more time on the competitive side of it. There were a lot of really, really good players in the band. Had we been able to concentrate on the competitive side of it, there would probably be a lot of good players in the band today. And so many of them went elsewhere."

⁵⁰ In fact, I recall competing at the National Capital Region Highland Games in Ottawa in the summer of 1985 and saw MacKay adjudicating both solo and band events that warm summer's day. As a matter of jovial interest, the Pipe Major stopped me to adjust my lovat hose as I had let them slip down

the 48th Highlanders has not diminished and he can still be seen clad in his Stewart of Fingask kilt as he wields the adjudicator's clip-board. He continues to judge, teach and conduct workshops throughout Canada and the United States. As *The Piper and Drummer* wrote in 1990,

Mackay's piobaireachd score sheets are a lesson for every competitor, from the novice player to the Gold Medallist...From Fair Hill to Vancouver, Reay Mackay has represented the Ontario piping scene. It's difficult to think of a better ambassador. His friendly demeanor, his outgoing personality, and his ability to talk knowledgeably on anything to do with piping are traits he has taken all over the world.⁵¹

Mackay, now retired, spends his winters in Florida and his summers in Ontario, enjoying the family cottage in Orillia. His musical successes are broad-reaching while his list of outstanding pupils includes such notables as Michael Grey, John MacLean and Hector MacDonald. He certainly maintained a formidable military pipe band throughout a period of government apathy towards the military establishment. When other regimental bands diminished in numbers and musicianship, Mackay's 48th Highlanders were still vying for top honours in Grade 1 and continued to maintain one of the largest, if not *the* largest military pipe band in the country. His talents, abilities and leadership were valued by the 48th during his tenure as their leader. Mackay looks back on his piping career with great satisfaction and much contentedness much like a grandfather may look upon his progeny - beaming with pride. As *The Piper and Drummer* wrote of Mackay's career "He never speaks with bitterness"⁵² neatly summing up an attitude which no doubt is the mark of the true gentleman, effortlessly resonating throughout Mackay's personality. His

a considerable length producing a most undesired optical effect to the discerning eye.

⁵¹ *Piper and Drummer*, 1990, p 17.

⁵² *Ibid.* p 17.

opinions are still valued by pipers the world over and he can take his measure of credit for helping the Ontario piping community achieve its landmark success at the 1987 World Pipe Band Championships.

CHAPTER TEN

The Next Generation - James McGillivray and William Livingstone Take the International Stage

This chapter focuses on two Ontario pipers who built on the musical achievements of MacKay and Gilmour: James McGillivray and William Livingstone committed considerable personal financial resources in their relentless pursuit of a major Scottish piping championship, with ultimate success in both the solo and band arenas.

The reader will note throughout the text the proliferation of Scottish competitive terminology: The Canadian Clasp; the Canadian Gold Medal; the Inter-continental Pipe Band Championships; North American Pipe Band Championships and the like. We see here that the Ontario competitive system deliberately modelled itself upon the Scottish competitive paradigm. The competitive pipe band system in Ontario did not create its own unique style of pipe band competition such as happened in Australia and New Zealand; there, band competitions were adjudicated upon the principles of dress, drill, deportment and music. In the Australasian example, the visual display weighed significantly in determining the victor, while in Ontario, musicianship alone determined the best band (as in Scotland). And thus competitive trends in Scotland were quickly adopted in central Canada. Here again, we must note the divergence between the Cape Breton and Ontario communities. The pipers of Cape Breton, an isolated community, were perfectly content with their own musical tradition (as they had been for decades) and continued to remain largely

uninterested and unaffected by competitive pipe music in Ontario, at least until the early 1970s.

Born and raised in Kitchener, Ontario (seventy miles southwest of Toronto) in 1955, James McGillivray took up the bagpipes at the age of eleven. “My father had a bagpipe record, the worst I ever heard. I played it over and over again and fell in love with it and said, “That’s what I was going to do.”¹ His first teacher was John McIntyre, who instilled in the young pupil the importance of technique and the endless pursuit of flawless performance. McGillivray’s first pipe band was the Royal Canadian Legion Branch Fifty pipes and drums under the direction of Pipe Major Colin Miller, who inspired an enthusiastic attitude in the youthful McGillivray, which he maintains to this day. He remained with the Royal Canadian Legion for three years, when the band disbanded. In 1970, McGillivray met Pipe Major Ed Neigh of the newly-formed Guelph Pipe Band. This meeting marked the beginning of a long and fruitful musical relationship with Neigh, who moulded McGillivray’s playing technique. McGillivray was an average amateur competitor when he was first introduced to Neigh; over the next 15 years, McGillivray became a world class open professional competitor, amassing a plethora of trophies which culminated with victories in the Piobaireachd Society Gold Medals of Canada, Inverness, Oban, and the Glenfiddich championships. As McGillivray stated in an interview with *The Piper and Drummer* in 1996,

¹ James McGillivray, Interview with Author, digital audiocassette tape, December, 2000.

I met Ed in about 1970 when I joined the Guelph Pipe Band, which was then an up-and-coming Grade two band. Ed taught me for a winter and told me to get out of Grade three and into Grade two, where I could at least play a strathspey and reel. I did and I got good prizes in my first contest at the Brantford Highland Games. Seumas MacNeil was judging as I recall. For the next 10 years Ed had a huge influence on me. Not just what he taught me, but the piping he exposed me to. He introduced me to John MacFadyen and took me to John's schools. He lugged me along to hear the open players and the grade one bands. He always got the tapes of the BBC piping broadcasts from his in-laws and we played them endlessly in the car on the way to and from band practice. He always made sure the band hut had copies of all the piping magazines. And he talked and talked. Ed was in his 20s at that time and he was right into the scene on both sides of the ocean and he was thinking a lot, as Ed's always prone to do and just regurgitating it all at this empty sponge of a kid in the car beside him. Well, this stuff sank in and by the time I was 17 or 18 I think I had a pretty good idea of how the piping world worked.²

McGillivray truly enjoyed an exceptional exposure to one of Ontario's most prolific competitive pipers³.

In 1969 and 1970, McGillivray was actively competing in the Ontario Piper's Society amateur circuit. His successes quickly unfolded: he won the Ontario Champion Supreme title in Grade III piping in both 1969 and 1970. In 1971, he was upgraded to Grade II amateur piping and won the Champion Supreme title in that grade. By 1973, McGillivray was competing in the open professional solo category. Concurrent with his solo activities, he was instrumental in the organization and rehearsal scheduling of the Grade 1 Guelph pipe band as Neigh's pipe sergeant.

The decade of the 1970s in Ontario piping history has been described by writer/editor Andrew Berthoff as 'Ontario's Gold Age'. Numerous players from this

² *Piper and Drummer*, Interview with James McGillivray, May 1996, vol. 13, issue #3, p 26.

³ I cannot give a full biographical treatment to Ed Neigh and his piping career for reasons of space. However, Neigh is one of a number of Canadians who began the competitive treks to Scotland in the late 1960s. He met with excellent results, not least of which was his first place-place performance on the Isle of Skye when he was awarded the Portree Medal in 1973, the Best Overseas Player at the Braemar Highland Games (three times). Neigh met with great success in competition in Canada by winning the Open Professional Solo Piping Champion at the North American Championships as well

region were competing in Scotland at Oban and Inverness. They began to establish a formidable reputation in the Scottish community. Pipers like Bill Livingstone, Ed Neigh, Bob Worrall, John Mackenzie and others vied for the top prizes not only in Ontario but also in Scotland. As McGillivray recalls, "The good prizes in Ontario were translating directly into good prizes in Scotland. There were a dozen or fourteen people playing in the open and four of them were winning top prizes in Scotland... It was really the first time Canadian-born players were taking prizes consistently at Oban and Inverness, so that added a real lustre to the period."⁴ Certainly the scope and scale of the Ontario piping landscape had changed considerably since the 1950s when Reay MacKay and Bill Gilmour were active in competition. Competition and competitively-driven piping now defined the Ontario landscape. In this though, there was a determination to improve the technical standard of piping in the expectation that one day, an Ontarian would capture some of the most prestigious solo piping prizes from the Scots.⁵ This the Ontarians did

as the Piobaireachd Society Gold Medal and Bar (Canada).

⁴ Ibid. p 42.

⁵ This was a common feeling in the Ontario piping community prior to Bill Livingstone's 1977 victory at the Inverness gold medal. In 1970, an article appeared in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* entitled "North American Piper Wins Oban Gold Medal" going so far to predict that a North American piper would win a gold medal at Inverness or Oban in a generation. The article continued, "the heading is, of course, not true and at first glance seems to be ridiculous. Today it is, but it is not outside the realm of possibility that such a heading might appear as an actual fact within the next generation. Still sound ridiculous? Then let us take a closer look at the state of piping in North America today. At present there are a number of pipers on this continent of the ability to place well in the prize lists at many of the Scottish games and piping competitions in the march, strathspey and reel events. Some of these pipers are of high enough standard to warrant inclusion in many of the Piobaireachd competitions. The 1969 Coeur d'Alene "Bratach Na Neann" was won at Spokane by a performance, which, in view of P/M John MacLellan, was "up to gold medal standards." Since World War II, the general standard of piping here has improved 100% particularly noticeable in the Pipe Band world. This improvement has most certainly been partly due to the great number of pipers and drummers who emigrated from Scotland, helping to raise the standard wherever they have chosen to live. However, much of the increased interest in solo piping can be directly attributed to people who are dedicated to imparting their knowledge. To illustrate this, I would hesitate to guess the number of pupils who have been introduced to Piobaireachd and the finer points of piping by means of P/M John Wilson's "close season" classes over the last 10 years or so. Two hours of good solid tuition every Saturday from October to April! One cannot help but learn under this type of tuition and if the ability is there it will certainly come out. Other great piping names such as Seumas MacNeill, Thomas

and McGillivray was there playing an active role in the development of the art.

McGillivray's first significant victory - self-described - in open competition was at the Hamilton Indoor Games in the spring of 1974 when he was awarded first place in the piobaireachd. McGillivray recalls, "I'd really only been upgraded a year or two before and I stuck in for some prizes but I wasn't getting the prizes that I may have deserved (as I was told this later on)." He continued, "Donald Lyndsay came up from the States and judged the contest and gave me first in the piobaireachd and he said he took a lot of flak for that from the other competitors."⁶ After his baptism of fire, his professional prize-winning career began. Following several prizes in 1974, McGillivray's next memorable win was the 1975 Piobaireachd Society (Canada) Gold Medal competition in Ottawa where he played *MacNeill of Barra's March*. McGillivray rather circumspectly looks back at this victory with some hesitation. He recounts,

I don't know if you've ever heard of the 'Great Balmoral Scandal.' The Ontario Pipers Society perceived that there was a problem with discipline in the massed bands and they decided to crack down on it. And to make a point, the Oshawa band, General Motors, which was run by George Campbell and

Pearston, Donald MacLeod, John MacLellan, Robert U. Brown and John MacFadyen have also, for a number of years, been imparting their knowledge and piping skills by means of various summer schools. As these schools are usually of approximately 2 weeks duration, it would not appear to mean as much when compared to 5 months of continuous lessons of the previously mentioned weekly class system, but it is 2 weeks of concentrated piping or "total immersion" in piping under really expert instruction. The whole atmosphere of the school must surely stay with the pupils for a long time giving them something to aim for till the next opportunity of attending the school occurs. It is absurd to expect that a native born North American will, with a few years of this, jump to World Championship class, but the general standard must already have been elevated because of these new schools, made possible often by people who may not even be pipers but interested enough to try and do something to further the Scottish arts. One aid to the encouragement and growth of Piping which is unavoidably missing on this side of the "water" is atmosphere and the opportunity to attend good piping recitals and competitions without a great amount of travelling involved. The World Pipe Band Championships of 1966 were attended by only three North American bands who competed with merit in the top grade, the City of Toronto Pipe Band placing 5th. There is also the undenied possibility of this competition being held in Canada one year soon. Whether a native born North American will win the Oban Gold Medal or similar honour remains to be seen, but the consideration of all the foregoing adds up to a reasonably bright outlook for piping on this side of the Atlantic."

⁶ Interview with author.

had people playing in it like John Mackenzie, Bob Worrall and Bill Livingstone, came out in a show of defiance and played massed bands without their hats on. It was petty on both sides at the time. Anyway, they were suspended as a result from the rest of the contests that year and their soloists were suspended as well.⁷ So that suspension included Ottawa. And I think that would have been the third year of the gold medal at Ottawa and that contest had a lot of prestige at that time and here that contest came up and Bob couldn't play in it, Livingstone couldn't play it and I won it. And that was huge; that was my first big prize. And yet it was tainted because it was tainted by the scandal. Perhaps the prize that meant more to me was the very next year when I won it again with everybody playing. And so that one was really important to me too.⁸

McGillivray became quite a sensation on the competitive circuit at a relatively early age: he was a newly minted gold medallist in 1975 (with repeat victory in 1976) and prior to his medal victory had competed in the Gold medal contest at Oban⁹.

Although he was not placed, his performance was well received by the Scottish

⁷ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* at the conclusion of 1975 wrote an editorial piece entitled '75 - A Year Best Forgotten By Ontario and Pipe Bands?' Evidently, there were several incidents throughout the 1975 competitive season which raised the ire of the PPBSO officials and membership. Here follows a edited extract detailing the events to which McGillivray speaks.

"Can we hope that in 1976 we have no more idiotic situations where the Pipers Society of Ontario allow tradition and custom to be cast by the wayside to allow bands from another jurisdiction to play without headgear while competing in Ontario while severely penalizing an Ontario band for a lesser degree of the same 'sin'. While the subject here is 'dress' it is noted that a motion was carried at the A.G.M in Oct. '75 regarding the dress for 'solo women competitors'. If there are rules governing 'solo male competitors' then they must be unknown to many of the competitors and some of the judges, according to quite a few sights seen competing at Maxville in 1975, to mention just one gathering. It is time to lay down strict dress regulations and STICK to them by disqualifying any who infringe them, regardless of which province or state they hail from...Resulting from an incident at Brampton Games, General Motors Pipe Band were disqualified from competing at the next three contests. The decision was made also to disqualify all members of that band from taking part in solo competition for the same period. If a band is going to be penalized, then let it be the BAND as a BAND. It is both inane and unfair to prevent an individual from taking part in a solo contest because he happens to be a member of a particular band. When a person plays solo he does not play as a representative of a certain group but as an individual. Of course, Pipe Bands and solo piping will never be effectively served as long as they are controlled by the same body, although, at this time, there would seem to be no alternative. Yes, 1975 is a year Pipe Bands and soloists will want to forget. One giant step back."

⁸ Interview with author.

⁹ Neigh and McGillivray became common names around the piping community. Both were winning significant prizes in Ontario and Scotland and both were beginning to experiment at conducting piping clinics. The following advertisement appeared in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* in 1978 revealing their entrepreneurial piping spirit: Neigh and McGillivray conduct Piping Workshop in Guelph: Ed Neigh and Jim McGillivray, pipe major and pipe sergeant (respectively) of the Guelph pipe band are to hold a piping workshop in Guelph from July 1st to July 12th. Both instructors are well qualified in all aspects of pipe music; each has an impressive record in piobaireachd competition and the many

piping press where he was lauded by the editor of the *Piping Times*, Seumas MacNeill. McGillivray did not return to Canada empty handed either: he took second prize in the senior marches the following day.¹⁰

Throughout this period, McGillivray continued his instruction with Neigh and acted as his pipe sergeant in the Guelph Pipe Band. The band under Neigh earned a formidable reputation in the Grade 1 community at the time. In 1976, the Guelph band captured the Grade 1 North American championships at Maxville and as McGillivray says, “That was a huge thrill because we started as a no-name Grade 2 band four years before and basically through Ed’s hard work and ability to figure the whole situation out we worked our way to the top of grade 1 four years later.”¹¹

In addition to his lessons with Neigh, McGillivray also attended the summer piping schools held by John MacFadyen on Mac Campbell’s farm near Sarnia, Ontario. McGillivray recalls,

The school attracted players like myself, Ed Neigh, his brother Geoff, Bill Livingstone, John Goodenow, Dave Martin, Frank Edgely and some very good players from the Detroit area. The school was actually very small, sometimes no more than eight or nine of us. John [MacFadyen] would teach three or four people in a class first thing in the morning, then the rest of us could get an hour or more a day with John individually for two weeks. In the evenings he would practise for his annual Detroit recital by playing in the garden outside the farmhouse. A student would give a little 20-minute warm-up recital, then John would play for 45 minutes or so. If you were really lucky, he’d let you play his pipes for a couple of days to keep the moisture in them... It was a solid two weeks of playing, talking, thinking and living bagpipes out in the middle of flat Sarnia farmland...It was a pivotal experience for all of us who were serious about piobaireachd.”¹²

successes of their pipe band attests to their ability to instruct and guide others in pipe music of various types.

¹⁰ *Piper and Drummer*, May 1996, p 25.

¹¹ Interview with author. McGillivray calculated that there were approximately six pipe bands competing in grade 1 at the time: The Clan McFarlane, Cabar Feidh, St. Thomas, Erskine, 48th Highlanders and the Guelph.

¹² *Piper and Drummer*, May 1996, p 25.

In 1981 McGillivray succeeded Neigh as pipe major of the Guelph band. McGillivray led them to the Grade 1 North American pipe band championships at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario (incidentally, this would be the band's single first prize that season). McGillivray quickly grew tired of leading the band; however, he 'temporarily' left Guelph to focus his efforts on competing at the gold medals at Inverness and Oban, which payed off in great dividends. In retrospect, McGillivray looks back upon the 1970s and 80s as a high water mark in his solo competitive career. "That was my hey-day really," recounts the introspective piper. "I won lots of good first prizes at the outdoor games but they were never my strength; playing in the sun early in the morning. I tended to excel in the indoor contests and I realized years later, after I retired from competitive playing, that I didn't like it all that much and I was surprised at how happy I was to get away from it."¹³ He sought tuition from his contemporaries Bill Livingstone, Captain John MacLellan and Andrew Wright. McGillivray attributes the finer points of his piobaireachd performance style to Wright as he began a cassette tape exchange with McGillivray over the next ten years. This period of McGillivray's competitive career can be described as his zenith as the major prizes he set out to achieve became a reality.

¹³ Interview with author.

In 1985, McGillivray was awarded the Gold Medal at Inverness, playing the bold and gutsy piobaireachd *The MacDougall's Gathering*. "You can imagine the kind of thrill that was," expresses the pleased McGillivray. "The only other people who had won it from over here were Bill Livingstone, Jack Lee and Colin MacLellan. So that was good and when I got that it was a tremendous thrill but there was a real sense of relief because ever since I was 15 years old people were saying 'Oh you're going to get the gold medal' but you still have to go do it no matter how many people tell you you're going to do it."¹⁴ Such a significant victory would not go unnoticed in the Canadian media.¹⁵ The *Toronto Star* drafted a lengthy article about McGillivray and his victory. The following extract aptly describes McGillivray's mood.

Piper calls his tune and bags his medal - For five summers, Jim McGillivray took his holidays in Scotland so he could take part in a prestigious premiere piping competition sponsored by the Highland Society of London in Inverness. McGillivray had won some intermediary medals and "felt like I was knocking on the door" for the gold medal for playing piobaireachd, the classical music of bagpipes. Finally last month, the 30-year-old marketing representative for a computer software company, hit the jackpot. Of the eight tunes he offered to play, the judges chose MacDougall's Gathering - an offering taking a little over 10 minutes. And when the verdict was announced, McGillivray had won the coveted gold - "something I've been dreaming about for 15 years." A third generation Scot, McGillivray says the Scots are used to having Canadians win major competitions there. The standard of piping in southern Ontario, with its Scottish heritage, is second only to Scotland, he says. McGillivray, who won the North American championships in 1983 in Maxville, is now preparing for a return to Scotland at the end of this month. He's been invited to the world championship at Blair Castle in Pitlochry where he will compete against nine other pipers. This trip will be different - all his expenses are being paid for¹⁶

¹⁴ Interview with author.

¹⁵ The *Toronto Star* is a nationally circulated daily newspaper in Canada. It appears in cities from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Vancouver, British Columbia.

¹⁶ *Toronto Star*, September 1985.

Two years later, he won the Clasp playing *Lament for Donald Ban MacCrimmon* - a daunting piece that continues to try the calibre of some of the most successful competitive pipers. The successes continued for McGillivray and in 1986 he won the March, Strathspey and Reel at the Glenfiddich Piping Championships at Blair Castle. *UpBeat Magazine*, published by the *Kitchener Record*, recorded McGillivray's win on their front page as "Colonial Pipers Bag Scottish Competition."¹⁷ The short article appeared as follows,

Ontario bagpipers led by James McGillivray of Toronto, almost swept top honours at the world's premiere piping competition in Inverness, Scotland.

The three Ontario competitors swept five of six categories, with McGillivray, a marketing representative with a computer software company, taking the gold medal at the competition that dates back to 1781.

"This is a sharp shock to Scottish piping" said judge David Murray after the recent competition. "It brings home the need for hard work and practice."¹⁸

The Canadian press were supportive of these historic victories and their role cannot be under-rated when surveying the evolution of the piping scene. The popular news dailies such as the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Sun* and other newspapers of lesser stature recorded these events for the historical record. Yet, the Ontario Pipers Society's *Piper and Dancer Bulletin* remained the crucial element in the developing self-awareness of the Ontario standard. Certainly this publication informed the Ontario membership (and its supporters) regarding the latest musical events, bands, soloists, rehearsals, competitions and other matters relating to the

¹⁷ *UpBeat Magazine*, Published by the *Kitchener Record*, Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario, September 26, 1985.

¹⁸ Said Andrew Berthoff of McGillivray's career, "In the hierarchy of piping, top players often discuss what prizes were won with what tunes and McGillivray's record of taking his great piobaireachd awards with great tunes is as impressive as it is fortuitous." Was Berthoff suggesting McGillivray's victories were without deliberate intention? One is left to speculate.

Great Highland Bagpipe. As the 1960s and 1970s progressed, the Ontarians were emboldened by their competitive successes in Scotland and it is here that the printed fact corroborated the musical performances. Most of the Ontario piping community¹⁹ did not travel with the likes of McGillivray to hear his prize-winning performances. But, *The Piper and Drummer* was only too willing to be able to serve as the medium of communication to its constituents and, naturally, was equally pleased to promote their own native talents. This was also consistent with the publication's dedicated reporting of competition results, as it was in the 1940s, the 1970s and in the 21st century. This is where the various editors and writers over the publication's lifespan took great pride in reporting the achievements of their fellow Ontarians. It must be conceded that the PPBSO's publications have been instrumental in promoting the development of the art and the magazine undoubtedly will continue to be the voice of its membership for decades to come. Whether this remains in printed form remains to be seen.

10.1 - McGillivray and the Clasp

After McGillivray's impressive showing in Inverness in 1985, the *Toronto Star* printed a more detailed article about his successes. Certainly, the following article delves more deeply into the nature of the instrument and of the man himself.

¹⁹ By the mid-1980s, the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario comprised several chapters across the province. The membership included hundreds of pipers and drummers who were an interacting network of local societies. They were held together by programmes of meetings comprising general administrative/musical matters, usually followed by mini-competitions during the winter time and followed closely in the summer time by the large outdoor highland games, normally held in 12 different locales across Ontario. The members of the society hail from Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa,

Don Mills Man One of World's Top 10 Bagpipers

The bagpipes have been very good to Jim McGillivray.

The Scottish folk instrument has played a big part in his life for the past 20 years. In that time, McGillivray has piped his way to become one of the top 10 solo bagpipe players in the world.

The years of practice have brought artistic and personal fulfilment to the North York resident. And it was the skilful tone of his piping that initially caught the ear of his future wife.

McGillivray recently returned from the 12th annual Blair Castle Piping Championships held in Blair Atholl, Scotland. He competed against nine of the world's best solo pipers and tied for third overall.

To compete in the prestigious competition, McGillivray first had to prove himself at the Highland Society of London-sponsored piping competition held in Inverness. He had competed in the event since 1981 and last September - on his fifth trip - he finally won the coveted gold medal.

This meant to me that they finally said 'Yes, you can play,' says McGillivray, 30. 'But I paid my dues and I've proved I'm not a flash in the pan.'²⁰

Reminiscing about his clasp victory in 1987 and his competitive career,

McGillivray says

That was probably the biggest thrill I've ever had; it took my breath away. And shortly after that; well, I look on it with retrospect and I realize that I really didn't want to be competing anymore. I really didn't like it. I never really enjoyed solo competition and I kept doing it and I'm not sure why. It was expected of me. And I realized that any long term success in piping to some extent was ordained by the prizes you won so I kept doing it. But after that from about 1988 until I last played in 1991, I was on-again, off-again. I didn't really play that well. I guess I shouldn't say that. It was kind of a struggle for me. It wasn't fun anymore."²¹

McGillivray began re-assessing his musical goals. In 1988, he joined the 78th Fraser Highlanders pipe band with Bill Livingstone at the helm and was enjoying his band life. At the same time he wondered about his solo competitive longevity. As the 78th were entered for the World Pipe Band Championships that year, McGillivray was

Sault Ste Marie, Timmins, Windsor/Detroit, Cambridge, Kitchener/Waterloo, Montreal, Quebec and many other towns in rural Ontario.

²⁰ *Toronto Star*, December 3, 1985.

²¹ Interview with author.

persuaded to enter the Oban gold medal. McGillivray explains,

As it worked out, Oban was four days after the World Championships. And Michael Gray said, 'Hey why don't you compete at the Gold Medal?' I knew most of the tunes. And I thought 'sure why not'. I went, kind of as a bit of a lark. I don't know why. I wasn't even going to Inverness; just to Oban with the idea that I never won the gold medal at Oban and thought 'what the hell'. So I did that. I played a really good tune and they gave me the gold medal. And it was a funny thing. Even when I was there playing, before they had given me the medal, I tried to go there with a different attitude: 'I'm going to go there and take it nice and easy' and try to enjoy it. And, I wasn't enjoying it. I said to myself 'this is it for me.'²²

Prior to McGillivray's gold medal performance at Oban, he won the Canadian Clasp competition held at the Cambridge Highland Games. This qualified him to compete in the Glenfiddich Championships the following October. McGillivray recalls,

That was my last contest. I think I placed 4th and 5th. I didn't play brilliantly and that was it. I retired with the idea that it wasn't really retirement but rather that I wouldn't play for a while. I needed to get away from it. And the longer I stay away from it the less inclined I am to go back. I've always figured I would go back but I have completely lost my interest in solo piping competitions. I'm done.²³

McGillivray began to devote his energies to conducting workshops and master classes. Today, he teaches annually at the Invermark Summer School for Piping in Vermont and Massachusetts with Director Donald Lyndsay and Norman Gillies (father of the renowned Scottish-American bagpipe teacher at Carnegie-Mellon University, Alasdair Gillies). In addition to his summer judging commitments, McGillivray also conducts his own *Ontario Summer School for Piping* just north of Toronto. His faculty includes some of the most respected virtuoso pipers from across the globe.²⁴

McGillivray has maintained an entrepreneurial spirit throughout his piping

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Angus MacColl, Alasdair Gillies, Iain K. MacDonald, Rob Crabtree and Willie MacCallum to name

career and has recently launched his own line of piping products. One of these is *Rhythmic Finger Work*, an exercise tutor for pipers of all skill levels. At the time of my interview with McGillivray, his book had entered its third printing selling over 6,000 copies. As McGillivray says happily, "I'm absolutely not slowing down. I'm having more fun than I've ever had. And it's less oriented towards competition highland piping than it ever had been."²⁵ Interestingly, McGillivray has extended his musical studies to include Northumbrian and Scottish small pipes. It is unusual for a top solo competitor to branch out into alternative music forms. He no longer focuses exclusively on the Great Highland Pipe and has found his experiences liberating and enlightening.

McGillivray expresses a sense of mission about his work with pipers and their proper instruction. He finds it bothersome that the image of the instrument is tarnished by mediocre musicianship. "What I try to do is bring a better reputation to the instrument" says McGillivray. "A lot of people say that the bagpipes sound like a cat being strangled and maybe the last bagpipe they heard did sound like a cat being strangled. So my work is geared towards those people...There's a lot of bad bagpiping out there."²⁶

McGillivray's professional career altered considerably in 1998 when he fulfilled a dream. He was offered and accepted a piping instructor's appointment at St. Andrew's College - a private boys' school in Aurora, Ontario where he teaches piping on a daily basis to students ranging from ages 11 to 18. McGillivray, admittedly, is happier about his life than ever (his ex-wife Ellen [also a piper] happily refers to Jim and his vocation as "Jim and his bagpipe world.").

a few.

²⁵ Interview with author.

McGillivray's contribution to Ontario piping is a testament to the depth of his community. He musically matured at a time when a pioneering spirit amongst the Canadians gelled in their combined solo and band successes in Scotland. His contributions to the piping community will ring down through many generations and inspire pipers well into the 21st century.

10.2 - William Livingstone

The music possessed him, beguiling him away from his law books for months at a time and luring him inevitably to this church hall and the struggle for a victory whose elusiveness has come to haunt him. For Bill Livingstone, much more than a gold medal is at stake. He came close to winning it three years ago. The judges awarded him second prize - then took it back in a bitter controversy that came to be known as the 'Watergate of Piping.'²⁷

William Livingstone is no stranger to the press nor to controversy over his rich and varied piping career. The quoted text appeared in *The Toronto Star Sunday Magazine* in 1977 shortly after he won his first Scottish gold medal at the Northern Meeting in Inverness. In his article about Livingstone, author and writer John Doig drew attention to the Ontario piper's debacle in 1974 when a young Ontario amateur enthusiast, Leslie Patterson, mentioned to the judging panel that James MacGregor and Livingstone, who were receiving first and second prize respectively, had made note errors in their tunes. Captain John MacLellan as one of the adjudicators had secretly recorded the contest (much to the dismay of those present at the contest: notices posted throughout the hall where the contest was held clearly stated that no recording devices were to be present during the running of the competition), played back Livingstone's performance and discovered that the adjudicators had missed his

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ John Doig 'A Piper's Dream' in *The City: The Toronto Star Sunday Magazine*, December 4, 1977 p 27.

note error and duly took his second prize away, yet leaving MacGregor with his medal. "I'm really angry about it," notes Livingstone, "not because they took away the prize because frankly if you don't win the gold medal, it doesn't mean anything". "Well," he continues "what it told me was that those guys thought I was good enough for 2nd prize whether I missed a bar of music or not and so I took all the comfort I needed out of that. But, what really ticks me off to this day is that nobody ever remembers that I won the March, the Strathspey and Reel and the Jig that day. It was never done before and it has never been done since. On the same day!"²⁸ Even Doig picked up on Livingstone's dismay in his 1977 article: "Livingstone was furious and made it abundantly clear. That year he became the first piper ever to take three first prizes at Inverness. A place in the piobaireachd, even second, would have made the day's performance well-nigh unbeatable."²⁹ To many pipers in Canada, 'Bill' (as he is referred to by his friends, colleagues and detractors alike) is the quintessential Canadian competitive piper. His list of awards are seemingly endless: The Piobaireachd Society Gold Medal (Canada) and the bar to the medal, 15 times; the Clasp at Inverness in 1981 and 1984; the first prize for piobaireachd at the Glenfiddich Championships in 2000; and perhaps the most stunning upset in pipe band history when he led the 78th Fraser Highlanders to the Grade 1 World Pipe Band Championships in 1987, an epic victory that witnessed the trophy leave Scottish shores for the first time in its history. The story of Livingstone's success can be interpreted as the maturation of the Ontario piping community. And for Livingstone and Ontario (perhaps Canada), the events that articulate his career may be the culmination of various historical forces at work in Ontario since the days of

²⁸ Bill Livingstone, Interview with Author, February 2, 2001.

²⁹ 'A Piper's Dream', p 27.

Robert Ireland, Farquhar Beaton, Charles Dunbar, James Fraser, John Wilson and other such notables in the “pipers’ temple of fame.”³⁰ Thus Livingstone and his achievements may be the product of over one-hundred and fifty years of piping history in which timing and good fortune have played a unique role in the course of his career. His resounding success continues to inspire pipers who have heard him and his band perform. His thoughts about piping have appeared in numerous publications and continue to excite comment amongst the piping community throughout the world. In 1993 the editor of the *Piper and Drummer*, Andrew Berthoff, wrote that Livingstone was “perhaps the greatest all-rounder piping has ever seen.”³¹ Surely a bold statement; however not one without merit (See Figure 10 at Appendix Six pg. 355).

Born in 1942 in Coppercliffe, Ontario, immediately west of Sudbury, Livingstone was taught the pipes by his father, William Livingstone Senior, an expatriate Scot who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. “My father was a good player. He played very quickly”, recalls Livingstone.³² When Livingstone was 14 years old, he met John Wilson at the Sault Ste. Marie Highland Games where the master commented to young William’s father “that he could make something out of me”.³³ Livingstone was uprooted to Toronto where he was enrolled in classes at Western Technical School, began lessons with Wilson and joined the 48th Highlanders. Livingstone’s first Toronto experience would be short-lived though. When his parents visited him three months into the fall

³⁰ Alexander Fraser coined this term when referring to Pipe Major Robert Ireland and his gift for composition.

³¹ *Piper and Drummer* “Interview with Bill Livingstone” Published by the PPBSO, August 1993, p 16.

³² Bill Livingstone, Interview with author, February 2, 2001.

³³ Ibid.

term, Livingstone's 'Nanny' met them at the door, evidently drunk. Mr. and Mrs. Livingstone immediately brought the young piper back to Coppercliffe, where he finished his high school education under the eyes of his family. Livingstone also began playing piano in a blues band, appearing in the Sudbury bar scene, although he admits, "I played rather poorly".³⁴ Livingstone attended university locally where he studied psychology and eventually graduated from Laurentian University with his undergraduate degree. He considered pursuing graduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Instead, he married his girlfriend Lilian - whom he had met in the bar scene in Sudbury - and began a law degree at Osgoode Hall, Toronto, in 1965. Livingstone left piping to devote his efforts towards the successful completion of his degree. "Those were all hard, hard years", recalls the contemplative Livingstone.

The law school years were particularly awful. But for those five years of law school and the bar admission, it was very, very debilitating. People tell you that if you suffer through poverty, you get this great character building experience. Well I'm here to tell you that ain't so. There is nothing that robs you more of your self-esteem than being absolutely poor. And we were. It was awful. It was a very difficult thing because you're going to school with people who come from professional families. I went to school with a guy whose father was a judge with the Supreme Court of Canada for God's sake! I came from a family of smelter workers. And it was hard to deal with that kind of social misplacement. And we got out alive. And when I finished law school, I was determined not to go back to the Sudbury area because it just wasn't a place you could consider going back to; it was very, very bad.³⁵

Livingstone's law school experiences were defining. Perhaps his sense of accomplishment and singular focus developed from his life experiences at Osgoode Hall. His determination to succeed, which was probably evident (in latent form) in

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

his personality before his law school days, was undoubtedly sharpened and honed during these formative years. This dour determination would be applied, with great effect, to his competitive piping career.

Graduating from law school, Livingstone co-founded a law firm in Whitby, Ontario and considered taking up the pipes again. Although toying with the idea of returning to competitive playing, he did not act upon his inclinations until he heard a performance at the Canadian National Exhibition by the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders. As John Doig writes of Livingstone's experience, "The dark eyes light at the memory 'the chills went up and down my spine. It was like the call of the wild.'"³⁶ After strenuous practice and enrolling for lessons with John Wilson³⁷, Livingstone began competing in the Open. He reflects on his time in the Open in the 1970s and the differences between the Ontario and Scottish competitive scene.

It was hard here in Ontario. It was really good. Bob Worrall, Ed Neigh, and then Jim McGillivray and then Scott Macaulay. In

³⁶ 'A Piper's Dream', p 27.

³⁷ Livingstone fondly recalls his time with Wilson. Wilson forced Livingstone to become intolerant of technical encumbrances in his own playing. "He [Wilson] was a very harsh self critic. And he would not, could not, tolerate playing that was anything but absolutely and perfectly executed. For that reason, he was the best technician I ever heard on the bagpipe. He was just stunning...And I know when he played the practice chanter, it was exercises and technique and it just wasn't playing over tunes...I remember him saying 'It's very simple. Good piping is simply particular piping. Be particular.' He wouldn't tolerate you if you weren't. And if you sluffed over a piece he would make you stop and identify it. 'What the hell's that about!? Don't tolerate that! You know that that's not what you wanted to do. You know that that's not what you wanted to play!' he would say. Interview with author, February 2, 2001.

piobaireachd: John Goodenow, David Martin, Jim Thompson (particularly in piobaireachd), and Gary Hall in light music. It was a very good standard. It wasn't very deep (it still isn't). But to me that's the great distinction between Scotland and here. It was then, and it is now. The very best are on an equal footing with Scotland except that for every one of us there's five of them. So the depth was the biggest difference. That was certainly true in light music. In piobaireachd, I would say we were really behind.³⁸

Livingstone's last remark is misleading. If, indeed, he thought that the Ontarians were 'really behind,' in piobaireachd performance in the early 1970s, it would only be a few short years before Livingstone himself would win the gold medals at Inverness and Oban. Is Livingstone attempting to enhance his perception of his achievements by suggesting that his peers' musical backwardness in piobaireachd was a formidable obstacle that required extraordinary personal effort to overcome? Evidently, that is what he believes but, documentary evidence suggests otherwise. Others too, from Ontario, vied for the same honours as Livingstone and many achieved comparable successes during this era. And, a most telling article in the *North American Scotsman* entitled "Canadian Pipers at Oban" suggests the contrary according to the results at the 102nd Argyllshire Gathering.

...Fourth prizewinner was Ed Neigh from Stratford, Ontario, and he played "Lachlan MacNeill Campbell of Kintarbert's Fancy." This was a really musical performance on a very good pipe. His urlar was too slow and his hiharin movements suspect each time but it was melodious and his playing of Variation 1 was one of the best pieces of music heard in the entire competition.

³⁸ Interview with author.

Another Canadian, Bill Livingstone, was placed fifth with “The Old Men of the Shells.” Like the other prizewinners his bagpipe was excellent but he took far too long to tune and almost put them out. Nevertheless it was a good performance with the Urlar a bit bookish and the ends of phrases not being shown, but he had strong, clean, accurate fingering and kept the melody throughout.³⁹

The aforementioned extract suggests a certain appreciation on behalf of the adjudicators for the musicianship the Ontarians displayed at Oban that year. The result: the prizes. Other observers also noted the talent in Ontario at the time. “The Great Breakthrough,” an article penned by none other than the acerbic John Wilson, was both uncannily supportive and respectful of Ontario’s (and North America’s) piping skills. Wilson writes,

I came to Canada twenty-five years ago. I started teaching right away in Hamilton, Ontario and pupils of mine have really done me proud and have been a great credit to me.

Back in the 1950s, the very idea of comparing the North American pipers with the Scottish pipers would have been laughed at, and competitors from overseas rarely competed in Scotland.

The real break-through came in 1953 when Billy Gilmour of Toronto, Canada won the Inverchapel Trophy for Junior Piobaireachd playing at Cowal.

Many years passed by until, at Rothesay Games, another young pupil of mine, Garry Hall from Toronto, astonished the piping fraternity by winning the Open March, Strathspey and Reel event.

Competitors from Australia and New Zealand started to win prizes in Open competition in Scotland and then in 1973, Ed Neigh of Stratford, Ontario won first prize in the Open Piobaireachd at Portree, Isle of Skye. Ed, by the way, isn’t one of my pupils.

This year, 1974, I heard Ed Neigh play a fine strathspey and reel at the Argyllshire Gathering in Oban to win second prize. I also heard Jim McGillivray of Kitchener, Ontario who is a pupil of Ed. Neigh played his march in fine fashion and he also won second prize. Then came the Cowal Gathering and Bill Livingstone Jr. of Whitby, Ontario won first prize in the

³⁹ ‘Canadian Pipers at Oban’ initially appeared in the *Oban Times*. This portion of the article was published in *The North American Scotsman*, St. Thomas, Ontario, 1972, p 33.

Open Piobaireachd competition and second prize in the Open March event. As he had the highest total of points at Cowal, he also won the Bryant and May trophy. At the Portobello Town Hall competition (one event) Bill won fourth prize in the March, Strathspey, Reel, Hornpipe and Jig...

We have other pipers in N. America who have demonstrated that they can be equally as good as the successful prizewinners in Scotland. They all deserve great credit for their dedication and patience, and I hope they will continue to strive for an ever-higher standard of excellence.

Who knows, in time to come the Gold Medal competition at Ottawa and the Bratach nam Beann competition at Coeur D'Alene, may become the chief events of the solo piping season and replace Oban and Inverness as the great meccas for pipers from all over the world.⁴⁰

Perhaps the state of the art during the 1970s was healthier than Livingstone gave it credit for. Wilson's tone invoked a clairvoyance predicting that soloists might one day see their crowning achievements at a North American venue. History has yet to bear this out. Nonetheless, Livingstone over-stated his argument by professing a primitive piobaireachd state in Ontario in the 1970s.

Livingstone continued to compete in as many major solo-piping competitions as he could and confessed, "I tried hard, I competed hard and I was as bad a loser as you could want".⁴¹ Livingstone did not achieve the initial successes he anticipated during his early treks to Scotland. He grew bemused by his abortive attempts. Livingstone recalls speaking to his summer school instructor, John MacFadyen, about his dilemma:

⁴⁰ "The Great Breakthrough" by John Wilson in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, September, 1974 p 5.

⁴¹ Interview with author.

I was getting enough knowledge and insight to know that my technique was as good as anybody's over there and my bagpipe was as good or better than most of them at that point (the bagpipe standard in those days was really not what it is now). But I couldn't figure out why I couldn't win a prize...MacFadyen said 'Well I know exactly what's wrong. I know exactly what they're [the adjudicators] talking about. They're just talking about music. Musicality; and you're not doing it.'⁴²

Livingstone pursued other avenues of knowledge. "It's one of those elusive things that's really hard to articulate," Livingstone remarks. "For me, the solution was to tape record all of the very best players over there [Scotland] and then I brought the tapes home and mindlessly cloned what Iain Morrison, Iain MacFadyen or Pipe Major Angus MacDonald - my heros - did until I finally got the feeling...It was pure downright copycat until I got the sense of what was going on. And that led in 1974 to my big breakthrough at Inverness."⁴³ In addition to mimicking his competitors, Livingstone began lessons with Captain John MacLellan and Pipe Major Donald MacLeod (via cassette tape) who he credits with "putting the polish on it [his playing]."⁴⁴ What does this say about Livingstone? Or the manner in which he felt he was required to compete on par with his Scottish counterparts? Further, was it necessary to look towards the current prize-winners and adopt their style of performance, "music" in John MacFadyen's words, in order to gain a prize? Perhaps Livingstone's remarks reveal more about the Ontario piping ethos than is evident upon initial investigation. Obviously, Livingstone felt a deep compulsion to mimic the playing of MacDonald, Morrison and MacFadyen. From Livingstone's perspective, something was awry in his style of performance; otherwise the awards he sought would have come earlier than they did. Based on this fact, what sane

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

musician would be willing to spend countless hours learning and rehearsing an unaccepted or foreign performance style, a style that was bound to yield little success from an adjudicators' panel? Livingstone's musical satisfaction must be considered here. It was true that he was comfortable with his playing prior to his Scottish debut. But, at what cost would he proceed to Scotland before adopting the contemporary style of music? The expense of travel and accommodation? What of the intangible costs? The numerous personal hours spent in the vein of practising to lose? Was he prepared to sacrifice the prizes for his style of play? Absolutely not. And perhaps this is where we find the *raison d'etre* behind the Ontario piping community. Ontario piping has always taken its lead from Scotland and likely will continue to do so in the future. Ontario does not remain static like the Cape Breton style described by Gibson. The Ontario genre is subject to the ebbs and flows of the Scottish competitive style because the system continues to perpetuate itself as such. Just as John Wilson altered the prevailing competitive style in the late 1940s through Gilmour, MacKay and their contemporaries, Livingstone altered his own style gaining his ultimate prize-winning achievements that in his own right, have subtly altered the performance style of piping in Ontario.

A few years after his return to piping, the big breakthrough for Livingstone, and indeed, for Ontarians and Canadians, resulted with the awarding to him of the Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting, Inverness in 1977. Livingstone's victory commanded front-page status in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* which proudly reported:

STOP PRESS NEWS ITEM - This issue was held and remade to include the following item and commentary on it: *NORTH AMERICAN PIPER WINS INVERNESS GOLD MEDAL*. The Gold Medal for Piobaireachd was awarded to William Livingstone at the Northern Meeting.

This was the first time a native North American won so prestigious a piping prize in Scotland.⁴⁵

Certainly, this was a crowning achievement for the Canadian community. Yet, how significant was that victory for the Canadians? From a soloist's perspective, it was an accomplishment only a select few pipers ever achieve; *it* was the award they strove to achieve. Interpreted within the greater context of the competitive piping community, there was no doubting that Livingstone was the undisputed champion who would, in time, come to represent the quintessence of the Canadian *movement*, not by choice but by circumstance.⁴⁶ Since then, the dark haired barrister from Whitby – now, in 2005, with a few characteristic grey hairs of a man in his sixties - has gradually assumed a persona which directly links him to what is best in competitive Canadian pipe music. This deference to Livingstone's personality took hold during the 1970s, a period when he was triumphing on the Scottish highland games circuit. Interestingly, the 1970s (and 1977 in particular) were years in which a significant number of Ontarians competed at numerous Scottish games; their successes were record breaking for their sheer numbers. *The North American*

⁴⁵ *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, 1977, p 3.

⁴⁶ Throughout the course of over two decades of performance experience in several piping communities across the globe, I have been charmed to find that Livingstone's (as well as other Canadian pipers) persona has assumed a celebrity status. This status is particularly prevalent among competitive pipers in the eastern United States. When I lived in South Carolina between 1996 and 1998, numerous pipers I spoke with at various highland festivals in Virginia, Georgia, Florida, North and South Carolina spoke respectfully of Canadian pipers and pipe bands, particularly Bill Livingstone and the 78th Fraser Highlanders. This has not always been the case. While living in Edinburgh, the attitude amongst the pipers I interacted with there was markedly different. One evening while socializing with several pipers and drummers in the British Army after the Glencorse Beating (the British army's drummer's competition) I was vaulted into a conversation with the senior Piping Instructor of the Army Training Regiment, Pipe Major WO I Brian Donaldson (a noted competitor during the 1980s and 1990s). Pipe Major Donaldson, with great confidence and clarity of syntax, informed me that Canadian pipers 'only played the notes' but did not actually perform the music. In fact, as memory serves, Donaldson also informed me that Canadians such as Livingstone only serve to misconstrue the art of piobaireachd (pejoratives do exist in army vernacular; however, motivated by consideration for the reader I have not included Pipe Major Donaldson's word choice. Additionally, I would think the inclusion of profanity would be most inappropriate in this academic

Scotsman reported their accomplishments in prose bursting with national pride.

Livingstone's small feature article resonates this pride and serves to reveal the obvious joy over his successes: "Bill Livingstone of Oshawa, Ontario, racked up the most impressive piping performance of the Canadian pipers in Scotland...Bill is such a dedicated and talented competitor that it must only be a matter of time until one or both of the premiere prizes return to Ontario."⁴⁷ Also representing Ontario in 1977 were Ed Neigh of Wellesley, Pipe Major George Robertson of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, Amy Gobel, who was described as "a very talented and young Miss", and John Mackenzie from Toronto "a young piper with the Cabar Feidh Pipe Band" who placed fifth in the Strathspey and Reel competition held at the Cowal Games.⁴⁸ Mackenzie was later described by Pipe Major Sandy Dewar, 48th Highlanders, as one of the "best march players" he had ever heard in Ontario during the 1980s.⁴⁹ Livingstone and his fellow colleagues gelled in their overseas environment.

Livingstone's solo career drew attention to himself and his community. Pipe Major Sandy Jones, former pipe major of the United States Air Force Band and now retired director of piping and drumming at The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, comments that Ontario "always had very good piping though it

dissertation). Whether by choice or circumstance, Livingstone remains the object of attention in many piping circles as evidenced by my observations over the last several years on two continents.

⁴⁷ *The North American Scotsman*, "Canadian Pipers in Scotland", Published by A.J. MacLeod and G.S. Tuck, St. Catherine's, Ontario, p 18. The last portion of this statement was written by John MacFadyen and appeared in the *Piping Times*. Another successful competitor at Oban in 1977 was Bob Worrall of Burlington, Ontario. A small article written about his achievements also articulates the Ontario piping community's pride in itself. Thus, "Bob Worrall of Toronto, Ontario, made an impressive showing at the competition he entered this year. At the Oban gathering, in the March competition", *The Piping Times* commented, "Second prize went to Robert Worrall from Canada who showed the brilliance of his fingering with 'Capt. Carswell' and again with 'the Highland Wedding.' His style of the latter tune is one not heard often nowadays, and he had some unsteadiness of tempo within the parts, but otherwise this was also a good performance." Ibid. p 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p 17.

⁴⁹ Sandy Dewar, interview with author, January, 1999.

seems...that Bill [Livingstone] seemed to be the most persistent at winning those medals in Scotland”.⁵⁰ Did Ontario enjoy a maturation, so to speak? *The Piper and Drummer* thought so, but, not only through the likes of Livingstone, though he was a significant contributor to this evolution who perhaps more than anyone aided in shattering the Scottish stereotype that North American pipers were second-rate musicians. Now, it was a point of pride for Ontarians to include themselves in a community of musicians who did not “take a back seat to anybody”⁵¹ according to one elder in the Toronto piping community. The emotion articulated in *The Piper and Drummer* (after the successful staging of the John Wilson Memorial Recital in 1981) bear witness to this ripening. Though *The Piper and Drummer* boldly declared a “Coming of Age” for Ontario through the John Wilson Memorial Recital, interestingly, the absence of any highlighting of the performers’ competitive accolades is revealing: there was no requirement to inform their subscribers of the successes of MacKay, Livingstone and Worrall because they were renowned musicians within and without the competitive arena. Thus follows the *Piper and Drummer’s* account of Ontario’s musical ripening, encapsulated in one evening’s performance.

There was something in the air, that cold night in February at Thistletown Collegiate in Toronto, something like the sense that finally we had come of age.

For here were 300 or so gathered in an actual theatre, not squatting on the dusty fields of Fergus. And it wasn’t just another contest, no matter how prestigious, but a concert. And it wasn’t a concert given by one of the Scottish masters to a flock of adoring fans.

It was a concert given by three Canadians, as qualified as anyone in the world to be on such a stage, playing for a group who had come to listen,

⁵⁰ Telephone conversation with Sandy Jones, March, 2001.

⁵¹ Don Pringle, interview with author, January, 1999.

not to judge, to remember and appreciate.

The Toronto branch organized the first John Wilson Memorial Recital during the fall. And when Bob Worrall began those three 6-8s, there must have been a considerable sigh of relief. For they had done it...brought out a considerable number of people, on a frigid night, to listen to some Canadians play the bagpipe.

Worrall, dressed in formal attire, set the tone for the evening.

The music was interspersed with a good deal of conversation about the player and teacher honoured by the evening. Worrall recalled first meeting with Wilson, his feelings of intimidation, then being put at ease. The audience was given two retreats, two hornpipes, then another story or two.

Wilson was remembered, sitting listening to a record of bagpipes and an organ, and saying "when I go to Heaven, as I surely will, they are going to throw those harps out, and replace them with bagpipes and church organs."

Next came a slow march and a reel, then a set, then the *McFarlane's Gathering*, and finally a pair of jigs including the John Burgess quickfingered setting for *Paddy's Leather Breeches*.

Toronto branch president, and one of the organizers, John Elliot, then introduced Reay MacKay, a Wilson student for 21 years and Pipe Major of the 48th.

But when Reay started playing there was a slight gasp from the audience. To put it mildly, his chanter reed was not quite up to par with Worrall's. Reay had an unfortunate accident the previous night, his best reed broke.

His nervousness was obvious. But he soon won his audience.

After a warm up on some smaller tunes, he reeled off a set that was nothing less than overwhelming, four big 2-4 marches, four big strathspeys and four big reels including *The Little Cascade* and *Mrs Macpherson of Inveran*.

The sound of his chanter reed improved during the performance, and he dazzled the audience with a devastating display of fingerwork.

Next came, *I got a Kiss of the King's Hand*, and from all accounts it was the best piobaireachd of the evening.

Bill Livingstone didn't change for the evening. He came to play. And he showed an expanded repertoire, including *Cameronian Rant* and *the Smith*, to his audience.

He also gave some 6-8s, he mentioned that one had been a Wilson composition called *The Judging Was Bad*.

"A lot of us have thought that, but only John had the audacity to write a tune called that."

Bill played his gold medal winning tune, *The Lament for Mary MacLeod*.

He ended with a few jigs, but before going into them remembered the early 70s, when OBEs were being handed out to some pipers.

"Surely John," he recalled saying, "you are due for an honour like that?"

"Bill," Wilson replied, "I would take nothing less than a

knighthood.”⁵²

Perhaps Ontario had “come of age.” If *coming of age* meant staging a recital of this magnitude, Ontario surely had had the capability to organize and stage such an event two decades prior to this. Archie Cairns, Chris Anderson, Gord Tuck, and a half-dozen others were successfully competing in the Open in Ontario and were, by all accounts, equally skilled in their craft as the Scots (one has only to read “Around the Games with John Wilson”⁵³ to gain an understanding of the capabilities of these competitive pipers in the 1960s). But this 1981 recital contained perhaps the three most respected pipers Ontario had produced in the latter half of the 20th century, one of whom was now a Scottish gold medallist and all of whom were taught by one man: John Wilson. We have not seen the likes of the Wilson recital since 1981. The following year, 1982, the Toronto Branch of the Piping Society held the first annual John Wilson Memorial Solo Piping Competition. But, both the recital and the contest were doomed to an untimely death due to lack of interest and determination on behalf of the PPBSO’s Toronto Branch. The capacity to stage “home grown” events of such renown was evident: apathy and lack of organizational skill (or special events management) were the ingredients which combined to contribute to the recital’s downfall. Nonetheless, a burgeoning world class piper’s society mustered around some of the brightest musical talent had emerged by the time of the 1981 recital and the Toronto branch were only too willing to showcase this.

For Bill Livingstone, the post-1981 period saw his solo career continue on its successful path; however, his band career altered with the formation of the 78th

⁵² *The Piper and Drummer*, March 1982, p 10. Pipe Major W.J. Gilmour was also invited to participate in the John Wilson Memorial Recital; however, his military duties precluded him from performing on that cold, blustery evening.

⁵³ Published by the Pipers Society of Ontario in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*.

Fraser Highlanders in the autumn of that year.

10.3 - Bill Livingstone and the 78th Fraser Highlanders: 1987 World Champions

I'm really blessed with an enormous number of really talented pipers and drummers. There are good composers in the band and first-class solo players. My job, really, is awfully easy - in truth - compared with many pipe majors. I've often said that this is a pipe major's dream – *this* pipe band. When we decided to start coming to play in this Championship I knew from my personal experience in the solos that it would be a difficult thing to do in a short period of time, that one had to serve one's apprenticeship, and not only that, get simply good enough to do it. We had a five-year plan and as luck would have it, this is the fifth year of the five-year plan.⁵⁴

So remarked Livingstone to the British Broadcasting Corporation after his band was announced the World Pipe Band Champions of 1987, unseating Pipe Major Iain MacLellan and the Strathclyde Police band from their record-breaking six consecutive championships. The coveted pipe major's banner, the leading drummer's sash (Drum Sergeant Reid Maxwell's drum corps also won "Best Drum Corps") and the World Champion Trophy were destined to cross the Atlantic to be publicly housed in Toronto's City Hall, for one and all to view and bask in the 78th's feat. A lot had changed in the piping world with the Canadian victory⁵⁵. The victory was remarkable for it acknowledged that Canadian pipe bands were worthy of the

⁵⁴ Bill Livingstone, recorded by the BBC after the 1987 World Championships, printed in *The Piper and Drummer*, Fall 1987, p 3.

⁵⁵ The 78th's victory in Glasgow was not the first occasion when a Grade 1 Canadian pipe band vanquished their Scottish competitors. For example in 1978, the MacNish Distillery Pipe Band under Pipe Major Gord Tuck took first place at the pipe band competition held in Peebles. In 1971 this group (then titled "St. Thomas" Police Pipe Band) under Tuck's direction, placed 10th at the World Championships, re-affirming the Ontarians' sense of confidence. Several Canadians felt that it would only be a matter of time before a band from this region of the country would secure the premiere prize. In fact, Bill Livingstone conceded this fact. "Quite frankly," he says, "but for some very bad luck, they [The Clan MacFarlane] could easily have won a World's Championships for that era before 1980 because, I think, they were as good as anything in the world at the time. They certainly, I thought, were as good as anything playing anywhere but, going to Scotland, as you well know from over here, is such a shock to the bagpipe that everything that you believe and know about setting up a bagpipe goes out the window." Interview with author, February, 2001. Information concerning the St. Thomas Police Pipe Band was selected from the *Historical Update*, unpublished manuscript, 1992,

distinction “World Champions.” Indeed, Andrew Berthoff, editor of the *Piper and Drummer*, implied this when he wrote

Gone are the days when we [Canadians]⁵⁶ could shout “Discrimination” when we lost. More than anything, this year has been a revelation for equal opportunity in piping. We have been re-introduced to the idea of winning by a band that was willing to wait...and wait; that never gave up; that finally were victorious when it seemed to matter most of all to those who can turn around the telescope and catch a glimpse of the distant, glorious future.⁵⁷

The roots of the 78th’s victory can be traced to the 1960s. Although we have documented the evolution of regimental pipe bands in Ontario and the key roles that teachers such as John Wilson played in the development of the art, a brief examination of the Caber Feidh pipe band and their stunning return at the World Championships in 1966 will provide an historical foundation for the subsequent, albeit brief, account of Bill Livingstone’s 78th Fraser Highlanders pipe band.

By the mid-1980s, bands from across Canada made the habitual journey to Scotland to compete at the World Championships. Previously, this trend had been established by numerous individual soloists and bands and thus developed into a musical pilgrimage, as it were, for the Canadians. Perhaps the most significant group that imbued Canadian bands with a prize-winning impetus (ie. bands that ranked with the prize winning Scottish bands) was the City of Toronto (Caber Feidh) Pipe Band under the musical direction of Pipe Major Chris Anderson. In their inaugural performance at the 1966 World Championships in Inverness on June 25, the City of Toronto placed fifth overall in Grade 1 competition - a remarkable achievement. According to Pipe Major Chris Anderson (an expatriate Scotsman and prize winning

provided by Gord Tuck, St. Thomas, Ontario.

⁵⁶ A curious label employed by the editor, as he is an American expatriate now living in Toronto. Perhaps Berthoff meant that the “we” was supposed to capture and represent the essence of the North American pipe band community. This statement may thus excite debate for years to come given Berthoff’s controversial role as the former editor of *The Piper and Drummer*.

soloist) the success was “something we will all remember for a lifetime”.⁵⁸ Bass drummer Luke Allan, commenting on his band’s 1966 performance said, “It was a great performance, and, we introduced piobaireachd, *The Glen is Mine*, to our medley. It was a great band”.⁵⁹ A lengthy article about the band’s successes in Scotland appeared in the Canadian National Exhibition’s Scottish World Festival publication, six years after their achievement. The author elucidates a proud moment in Canadian music history. Curiously, the City of Toronto’s inaugural performance went virtually un-noticed in the Ontario piping press.⁶⁰

Toronto Band Made Big Leagues

Whatever new triumphs await the City of Toronto Pipe Band in the ‘70s, the year 1966 will always be remembered as the breakthrough year, the one in which the rest of the world was made conscious of Toronto being a major force in pipe band competition.

The World Championships were held in Inverness that year, and, to many at that time, it seemed this band was merely making a sentimental gesture by going to Scotland; the realization of a dream rather than an effective challenge to the top pipe bands in the home country.

⁵⁷ Andrew Berthoff “Front Row Centre”, *The Piper and Drummer*, Fall 1987, p 3.

⁵⁸ *Highlanders ‘72*, Toronto Star Reader Service, 1972, p 9.

⁵⁹ Luke Allan, interview with author, May 26, 2002, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

⁶⁰ The July 1966 edition of the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin* reported the following overseas successes in a rather even-tempered spirit. “Canadians Win Pipe Band Honours. The City of Toronto Pipe Band became the first foreign entry ever to place in the world pipe band championships in Inverness, Scotland, June 25th, by taking fifth place. The Toronto band, in gaining the fifth spot, beat out the Worcester, Massachusetts, Kilties who beat Toronto five times in a row to take the North American championship. The Kilties did not place. Champions for 1966 is a band sponsored by the distillery, Muirhead and Sons. Second was the City of Glasgow’s Police Band and third was another distillery sponsored entry. Among other overseas entries was Clan MacFarlane of St. Catherines and Niagara Falls, Ont. A handsome drum-major’s staff went to William Courage of St. Catherines of the Clan MacFarlane. He placed first among overseas drum-majors.”

When the judging was over, however, the City of Toronto band ranked number five in the world, the first band in history from outside Scotland to obtain a prize in Grade 1 competition.

From Scotland, the band moved on to Cork to beat the top Irish competitors in the "All Ireland" Championships. It also recorded a special programme for the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Technically and emotionally, the mission to Britain was an emphatic justification of the band's boldness. Financially, however, the results were hardly rewarding.

Pipe -Major Chris Anderson recalls: "Our prize money in the world championships was 25 pounds (\$62) and we got the same amount from the BBC. Winning in Ireland was fine, except that we were not eligible, they said, to receive any prize money. The cost of the entire trip was \$7,000, which we raised ourselves but it was still something we will all remember for a lifetime..."

Tragedy rocked the band three years ago. David Adamson, who had become pipe major the previous year, was killed in a car accident while driving to work. Ronald Rollo, now president of the band, took over the band for the remainder of the year and Chris Anderson returned as pipe major in 1970 for another challenge.

The results last year were particularly gratifying. The band became "Champions Supreme" in Canada, having won more Grade 1 contests in 1971 than any other Canadian pipe band.

"We are attracting men who really want to compete," said Pipe Major Anderson. Toronto has the highest potential for competition and the concentration of talent is the greatest outside Scotland."

There are 23 players in the band of 1972 and of the 14 pipers, five are Canadian born, as are two side drummers..."clear evidence," says President Rollo "that teaching standards are as high here as the continued interest in Scottish traditions."

The City of Toronto Band also has the distinction of having attracted three members from the United States.

Two 24-year-old pipers, Gerry Quigg and John McNaughton, were members of the United States Air Force Pipe and Drum band until it was disbanded. They could have remained in the air force, but preferred to be discharged and head north to join the City of Toronto Band and build a new life around piping in Canada.

With them came a friend, Eoin McMachane, Belfast born, who had learned to be a drummer in the States with the Kenmure Band.⁶¹

Thus began Ontario's drive to win the coveted championships.

For Bill Livingstone the formation of the 78th Fraser Highlanders was something representing the best and brightest talent residing in and around the

Toronto region. Indeed, the band was that. As Livingstone admits “A band that has been as innovative and creative as the 78th doesn’t exist by the cleverness of one person. All the people...have had an enormous influence on what goes on in the band and in what is selected and the music that is put forward and how it is arranged...One tune after another comes from these people [Bruce Gandy, Michael Gray, John Walsh, Jerry Quigg], and great compositions.”⁶² At the dawn of the 21st century, Livingstone sees those qualities - creativity and technical ability - as the continuing strength of the band. For the 78th Fraser Highlanders of the 1980s (which history is judging as their summit period, until Livingstone leads them to another World championships victory) Bruce Gandy, Michael Gray, John Walsh, Jerry Quigg, J. Reid Maxwell and a host of other musicians in the 78th were the protagonists behind the sheer force of their music and their standard of performance while Livingstone provided the necessary leadership to unite a musically talented yet philosophically disparate group of people to change the musical landscape of the pipe band world wide. Admittedly, Livingstone self-consciously set out to alter pipe band music with the band’s formation. In his 1993 interview with Andrew Berthoff, Livingstone revealed the “real creativity and fertile musical minds [that define the 78th]. We’ve created an environment that fosters that, I want that, I look for that, and the whole band thrives on the idea that there’s more and we can always find some fresh way to express pipe band music.”⁶³ In 2001, Livingstone reinforced the idea of his band’s singular uniqueness by stating “In terms of avant-garde approaches, there’s nobody in the world who can do what we do. And, it’s preposterous for anybody to compare

⁶¹ *Highlanders '72*, Toronto Star Reader Service, 1972, p 9.

⁶² “Bill Livingstone - The PD Interview” *Piper and Drummer*, August 1993, p 19.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p 19.

any other pipe band as a concert band compared with us.”⁶⁴ Thus in terms of approaches to competitive pipe band music, the 78th Fraser Highlanders were possibly the quintessential pipe band pioneers by exercising their influence through a radical introduction and application to medley construction: they took what was perceived to be traditional pipe band music and rotated it upside-down, as it were.⁶⁵ Bruce Gandy, one of Livingstone’s key pipers in the 78th band, underscored Livingstone’s philosophy through his reminiscence of the band’s staging of the 1987 ‘Live in Ireland’ concert which, for all intents and purposes, altered pipe band approaches to concert performance for the remainder of the 20th century. Gandy’s enthusiasm seeps through his reminiscence,

We worked for a year to put this Ireland thing together and it was a risk-taking stepping stone to put on a concert [two days prior to the World Championships]. No band ever put on a concert before that was even more than the *Green Hills of Tyrol* or any other walking around street stuff. We designed sets of reels and jigs and sets of hornpipes....all that kind of stuff had never been done. We didn’t know how it was going to be received and more importantly, we had this *Journey to Skye* thing that we thought was beautiful. Bill [Livingstone] and I and Michael [Grey] developed it and made it better. It took a lot of encouragement for the drum corps to go along with it because it didn’t follow the rhythm; bizarre notation. I remember playing that night and having great tone and having goose bumps up my arm thinking

⁶⁴ Interview with author, February, 2001.

⁶⁵ The band’s creative approach to medley construction was merely a cross pollination of differing yet complementary musical cultures. For example, Livingstone readily admits that the 78th’s famous *Mason’s Apron* medley was a product of piper Jerry Quigg’s imagination. Quigg heard a recording of the Boys of the Lough performing an Irish hornpipe and envisioned the band constructing a medley with the Apron as its signature tune. “It was obvious,” Livingstone admits “that it was a tremendous idea for a pipe band.” The 78th Fraser Highlanders would not be the only band in which Quigg would apply his creative talents. In the 1960s, Quigg was a member of the United States Air Force Pipe Band, Washington, D.C. where Pipe Major Sandy Jones skillfully employed Quigg’s natural abilities to transcribe innovative non-bagpipe tunes and construct them into non-traditional pipe medleys such as can be heard on the 1968 recording of the USAF pipe band’s *Mist Covered Mountains*. Quigg’s medleys were characterized by compilations of Irish and other Celtic melodies not previously heard on the Great Highland bagpipe. Also characteristic of Quigg’s medleys (in consultation with Drum Sergeant John Bosworth) were drum salutes in the midst of these pipe arrangements and what was perceived as unorthodox introductory music such as an eight bar drum introduction into sets of jigs followed by slow airs, hornpipes etcetera which were new innovations to the North American Pipe Band community. The USAF pipe band recording was not available for mass consumption; it was a United States Department of Defence production utilized solely as a public affairs tool. Nonetheless, the roots of the 78th’s early 1980s medleys are clearly heard through Quigg’s arrangements on the USAF recording.

“Oh man. This is a rush. I hope they like it!” And then the crowd went ballistic when that thing ended. To pull that concert off *was* it. I mean there were 850 people there who filled this place in Belfast. We’d never filled a place like that before. There was a “who’s who” of the piping world there. And all these Irish people; everybody knew something about music and what was going on. These people knew what was going on. That was the best concert we ever did. Easily. It had so much adrenalin and doing it was ground breaking worldwide. The accomplishments of that concert have led to pipe bands in general becoming better and the worldwide attention of the music is so much better and it all goes back to Graham Memorial Pipe Band staging this extravaganza. It’s as much a highlight as a proud moment because I was so heavily involved in doing that and we all believed we could make this work. And it was that whole bending the envelope that the Frasers did that I got easily sucked into. I was into it. You had Bill who was making musical sense of the things that I was doing and Michael Grey who would go to the ends of the earth if you want to talk about bending an envelope. He convinced us it would work. And we said “You’re nuts. It can’t work.” And he convinced us.⁶⁶

For the equally enthusiastic yet reserved pipe major, ‘Live In Ireland’ was historically significant given the piping world’s reaction to their musical extravaganza. “Oh yeah, it was thrilling.” said Livingstone,

It was 2 ½ hours of non-stop playing in the most God-awful conditions before a really, really discerning audience. But it wasn’t a concert. It was the pipe band playing everything we had learned over the last seven years! It was not really well presented. We just stood on stage most of the time and played. What really, of course, turned the crank was the last three cuts on the album. Nobody listens to anything else on the album. All they listen to is ‘Journey to Skye’, ‘The Clumsy Lover’ and things like that. And that’s fine. It [the concert] did change things forever. It changed things, really, forever. Those last three selections changed things forever.⁶⁷

Lismor Records, who recorded and produced ‘Live In Ireland’, lauded the efforts of the Toronto musicians and made the most of their historic victory in Glasgow three days later.

This [concert] is an historic recording on many counts, the most important and certainly the point most will remember is that less than 72 hours after the

⁶⁶ Bruce Gandy, interview with author, DAT cassette recorder, November 20, 2001, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

⁶⁷ Interview with author, February 2001.

concert finished the 78th became the first band ever from outside Scotland to win the World Championship in which they did on Saturday 15 August at Bellahouston Park...this was a great concert and an ideal rehearsal for the big day which went well for all concerned with the 78th. That equally celebrated solo piping competitor, P/M Bill Livingstone took the long walk to the platform to collect 'the worlds' and was followed seconds later by D/M J Reid Maxwell whose team won the world drum corps championships. So, as you listen to the concert through to the encore, just think that less than three days and a short flight later the World Pipe Band Championship left Scotland for Canada very firmly in the hands of the 78th Fraser Highlanders Pipe Band.⁶⁸

For Livingstone, the championship was tantamount to the thrill of leading his band to victory and enjoying the euphoria at the post-game's party. "I recall Michael Gray and I sharing a few drinks and watching the rest of the band party as we celebrated the day; and Michael turned to me and screamed 'This is awesome.' It was the most incredible feeling I have felt in any solo piping or pipe band competition. To win a championship of that magnitude with a group of people who are working as a team is just incredible."⁶⁹ Observing the competition that memorable day was Ed Neigh. Neigh commented "The Scottish media billed the victory of the 78th Fraser Highlanders this August as at best a shock to the national pride and at worst a disaster. But was it?" Neigh continued, "In my view, the victory was inevitable and in fact, long overdue. Canadian bands have been turning in world-class performances both at home and in Scotland for more than a decade. This year's victory, convincing though it was, amounted to merely recognition of the quality of band playing on this continent."⁷⁰ Neigh then gave his critical account of the entire

⁶⁸ 'The 78th Fraser Highlanders Pipe Band Live in Concert in Ireland', Lismor Recordings, recorded 1987.

⁶⁹ Interview with author, February, 2001.

⁷⁰ Livingstone would agree with Neigh's argument here. In fact, Livingstone thought the Clan MacFarlane pipe band from St. Catherine's, Ontario could easily have won the World Championships "but for some bad luck" in the era prior to 1980. Interview with author, February, 2001. For Bruce Gandy, the victory was "like the writing on the wall. Our first year competing at the Worlds was in '83. We were 7th. And then we were 3rd in '84 and we were over the moon. 'Right, here we go.' we

world championship contest and prefaced the 78th's performance with his comments about the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Scotrail Vale, and the Toronto and District Caledonia pipe band's performances by stating "None of these fared as well in their performances."

The stage was now set for the 78th Fraser Highlanders. Their medley, "Up to the Line" was brilliant with aggressive tempos well controlled showing to full advantage their rhythmical superiority in the pipe band world. The sound produced was full and rich with drones and chanter blend unrivalled on the day. The set started almost out of character with a measured sophistication in "Brigadier Cheape" and an unusual element of over control in "Blair Drummond" but it finished with a "Charlie's Welcome" which would have incited even a piping judge to dance. The challenge was there, and had been met with competence, with musicality, with flair.⁷¹

The 78th Fraser Highlanders' pursuit of another Grade 1 victory at the World Championships has continued since 1987. The band experienced setbacks in the early 1990s with the departure of leading drummer Reid Maxwell, Pipe Sergeant John Walsh and several other key members from the 1987 crew. The band survived several lean years continuing to attract bright and talented musicians to their ranks. They continued to dominate the Ontario championships supreme titles throughout the 1990s although they gave up their North American Championships title to the Metropolitan Toronto Police Band under Pipe Major Jake Watson (a member of the 1987 edition of the 78th Fraser Highlanders pipe section) in 1994. On several occasions at the World Championships, the 78th did not figure in the top 10. In 2001, they finished a disappointing 6th place (their performance in the March, Strathspey

thought. We thought we would never break 6 places but we vaulted up. The next year was depressing; it was 4th and we didn't agree with it...We were 5th one year and we were second in '86. I have no doubt in my mind we should have won that year. And then we won in '87. It was like a political thing I felt, at that time. You moved up enough notches; like the damn figure skating. That, if you do it again, they have to give it to you." Interview with author, November, 2001.

⁷¹ Ed Neigh, "1987 World Pipe Band Championships" in *The Canadian Piper and Drummer*, PPBSO, Fall 1987, p 4.

and Reel, according to my observations, would have placed them in one of the top three places; however, their medley was marred by a poor attack, note errors and on occasion, a lack of unison playing in the pipe section). Livingstone remains confident in his team's ability to win another championship. "My view", remarks Livingstone, "is that this edition of the band is as good as anything there has ever been. It's as good as it ever has been and I think it will win it given all the lucky things that have to happen. You just have to be lucky in a whole lot of ways and many things have to come together at the right time but, I think that's more likely than not to happen."⁷² In 2002, the 78th crept up a notch to 4th place and in 2003, they placed 5th. In 2006, they slipped back to 6th place.

At the time of interviewing, in February 2001, Livingstone continued to lead the 78th Fraser Highlanders. Today, the band continues to compete at the dozen-or-so highland games held throughout Ontario during the summer months and they continue to cap their season by travelling to Scotland in their quest to re-capture the World Championships. Livingstone also pursued his solo contests as vigorously as ever throughout North America and Scotland, winning the overall banner at the Dan Reid Memorial Competition in San Francisco, California in April, 2002, competing against Roddy MacLeod, Micahel Cusack, Jack Lee, William McCallum and Michael Rogers. Perhaps Livingstone is, in Andrew Berthoff's words, the most successful piper in the history of the art in North America. Livingstone has been awarded 15 clasps to the Piobaireachd Society Gold Medal (Canada), the Glenfiddich Piping Championships in October 2000, the Clasp at Inverness in 1981, 1984 and 2000 and a host of Ontario Supreme provincial championships, North American

⁷² Ibid.

Championships and professional piper of the day awards and of course, the World Pipe Band Championships. It is a remarkable record. At 63 years of age, Livingstone has no plans to retire from active competition, which he says, “annoys a whole lot of people”.⁷³ Undoubtedly, Livingstone will continue to excite the competitive piping world wherever he plays whether as a soloist or leading his band.

10.4 - Conclusion

For many observers, the victory of the 78th Fraser Highlanders at Bellahouston Park in 1987 was the ultimate recognition of Canadian talent by the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association. However, as this study has chronicled piping traditions in Ontario throughout the 20th century, Canadian pipers and pipe bands have demonstrated their skill in numerous piping competitions in Scotland and Canada. The Canadians have been exceptionally successful throughout this period and chronology plays a significant role here. Prior to the 1970s, air travel was a luxury few enjoyed. With the single exception of the City of Toronto’s journey to Scotland in 1966 to compete at the World Championships, Canadian pipe bands did not routinely compete in Scotland until the Clan MacFarlane and St Thomas bands began their annual sojourns to the competitive scene in the early 1970s. And perhaps during this period of the World Championships the competition did truly assume the mantle of a world class, world-wide competition. In the words of Bill Livingstone “Our presence has made their [contest.] Because up until we started going over in the 1970s, it was just another one of the major championships [in Scotland] and it is now really significant [a ‘world championships’ in the strictest sense of the term] because

⁷³ Ibid.

we go.”⁷⁴ So, whether a self-conscious assumption on behalf of the winners of the World Champions prior to the 1970s was seriously considered by the victors remains a point of conjecture for as we have seen, there was limited Canadian, and international, participation in those competitions. The aura with which a band now wears the title ‘World Champions’ is a seal of approval, which, rightfully, has gained the respect of the international competitive community as witnessed by the number of international bands now participating in the championships.

From a Canadian perspective, the 1987 victory, followed up by Simon Fraser University’s second placing, was a maturation of Ontario’s, and Canada’s, performer community. The victory was a clear demonstration of the gelling of a musical skill-set that was integral to the Scottish communities in pre and post Confederation Canada (1867). Interestingly, this study’s chronology concludes with the 1987 victory of the 78th Fraser Highlanders. It is ironic that their Scots predecessors, the 78th Regiment of Foot (Fraser’s Highlanders) may have been the first pipers in Canada to sound their chilling wails as they electrified their comrades in the British assault on Quebec in September 1759. It would be difficult to imagine the 78th regimental pipers comprehending a concept like the World Pipe Band Championships. As such, the competition had not been conceived then. Nor had any recorded piping competition been instituted in Great Britain - Scots highland folkways were still being persecuted under the Act of Proscription. As such, the development of the art was under attack⁷⁵ and it would be another 22 years until the

⁷⁴ Interview with author, February, 2001.

⁷⁵ The 1746 Act did not specifically mention that bagpipes were not to be played nor does contemporary evidence suggest that they were publically forbidden. See William Donaldson’s *The Highland Bagpipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950* and John Gibson’s *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping 1745-1945*. Gibson argues that the evolution of piping was not stalled under the Proscription Act.

first competitions were sponsored by the Highland Society of London at the Falkirk Tryst in 1781. And these piping competitions were a “sideshow” in comparison with the demanding social commitments expected of the highland patrons. To assert that it was inevitable that the Canadian descendants of the 78th Regiment would come to vanquish all their competitors in global competition in 1987 is far-fetched and misleading at best. Perhaps Ed Neigh summed it up best when he wrote “Are we in danger of misreading the success of our best and constructing that our piping communities are healthier than they really are? Remember, that as Hardie, MacLeod, Weatherstone, McAlister and the like retired, we on this side received our chance for glory. We have been fortunate to have Livingstone, Maxwell, Lee, Troy, Elliot, Eller and Rennix to snatch it from them.”⁷⁶ Fortunate indeed.

⁷⁶ Ed Neigh, “1987 World Pipe Band Championships” in the *Canadian Piper and Drummer*, Fall 1987, p 4. ‘Lee’, refers to Pipe Major Terry Lee of the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band, ‘Elliot’ was Pipe Major of the Toronto and District Caledonia, ‘Eller’ refers to Pipe Major Ken Eller of the Clan MacFarlane and ‘Rennix’ refers to Joe Rennix, also of the Clan MacFarlane. All of these bands hailed from Canada and all competed in Grade 1 during the 1970s and 1980s.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Scottish World Festival 1972-1981: The Scottish Pipe Band Experience in Ontario

The following chapter discusses the history of one of the most significant Scottish entertainment shows held in Canadian history: The Scottish World Festival. The ramifications of the Scottish World Festival were far-reaching for the pipe band world in general, and Ontario in particular. It was the first time that Ontario bands were pitted against the most successful Scottish competitive pipe bands in their own country, thus creating a home field advantage for the Canadians. The Scottish World Festival also marked the first time a significant portion of Ontario's competitive pipers and drummers witnessed the world's leading competitive bands. This was an opportunity of unparalleled proportions previously unknown in the provincial music community. Outwith the wartime experiences of Canadian pipers stationed in Britain during the Second World War, this was the first large scale integration of both Scottish and Canadian communities firing something approaching fanaticism in the Ontario musicians and their approach to the art. Also, the festival had the unique effect of boosting the confidence of those Ontarians who hitherto doubted their own musical capabilities when measured against those of the Scots. This proved to be one of the most important long-term implications behind which Ontario competitive pipe bands benefited from the festival. These bands would come to know their own strengths and appreciate that they were not far off the competitive mark and thus a subtle maturation in the art transformed Ontario piping.

1972 was a monumental year in the history of Ontario piping. After years of painstaking planning and preparation by various commercial and social magnates in the greater Toronto region, “the greatest highland gathering ever held anywhere in the world”¹ - the Scottish World Festival, took place at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE)² in Toronto. Entertainment highlights in the week-long festival held at the 350-acre Exhibition grounds included military recruiting displays, historical re-enactments, a daily Changing of the Guard Ceremony, Scottish variety entertainment shows, the staging of the largest military tattoo in North America, the Canadian National Exhibition Highland Dance Championships, the much anticipated *Parade of Pipers* through the streets of downtown Toronto and the largest pipe band contest ever held outside Scotland, the Inter-Continental Pipe Band Championships. One hundred and twenty-three pipe bands from Scotland, England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada met in competition on a blazing hot day on the open air 110 yard-length football pitch at Exhibition Stadium, home of the Canadian Football League’s Toronto Argonauts³. On this, the second last day of the festival, in August 1972, over two thousand four hundred pipers and drummers witnessed Pipe Major Iain MacLeod’s recently crowned World Champion Edinburgh

¹ Glen Warren, *The Scottish World Festival Tattoo*, Video Cassette Production, 17 min., Pat Murray Narrator, A MacDonald Stewart Presentation, 1972, Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) Archives, Toronto, Ontario.

² Held annually between mid-August to Labour Day in early September, the Canadian National Exhibition is the world’s largest annual exposition located on the 350 acre grounds on Toronto’s waterfront. The Exhibition was opened on September 5, 1879 under the auspices of the city council and local trade and arts associations. Initially called the Industrial Exhibition of Toronto, the name was changed to the CNE in 1904. *Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada* article.

³ Canadian bands outside the membership of the Pipers Society of Ontario included bands from as far a field as Vancouver, British Columbia on Canada’s west coast, as well as bands from the Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Indeed, the thousands of miles logged by these musicians, in many cases at their own personal expense, was an incredible feat of stamina,

City Police take top honours at the first Inter-Continental Championships (see Figure 6 at Appendix Six pg. 351). Canadian pipers and drummers, in large measure, were provided with an eyewitness experience of the world's best pipe bands from Scotland and, not only in the premiere Grade 1 category but in all four competitive grades. This festival was one of the most significant piping celebrations ever witnessed in Ontario. It not only brought together the best musical ensembles to perform in concert as it were, but, it also brought Scottish pipe bands to compete against each other and test their mettle against those of Ontario. The lessons learned by the Canadian bands through their experiences at the Inter-continental championships became deeply ingrained in the Canadian competitive psyche and would continue to remind these pipe majors and drum sergeants throughout the decade of the 1970s right up to the world championship victory of the 78th Fraser Highlanders in 1987 that the Scottish standard of musicianship was not un-beatable in competition. In fact, this may have been the most valuable lesson the Ontarians (and the rest) would take away from the Scottish World Festival - that the Scots could be vanquished in competition.⁴ And although two Ontario pipe bands were successful in the World Pipe Band Championships in 1966 and 1971,⁵ the festival's magnitude could not help but demonstrate to the Ontarians that perhaps their standard of musicianship was much closer to the world's best than they had previously thought. And not only were the Ontario bands demonstrating musicianship of a world class calibre in parity with the Scots, the music these *New World* bands performed served to remind themselves

determination and dedication to their beloved art form.

⁴ It could be argued that those musicians who participated in the festival who remain active in the Ontario competitive pipe band scene today are still reminded of their experiences from the 1970s.

⁵ The City of Toronto Pipe Band who secured 5th place in Grade 1 while the St. Thomas Police

and their visitors from overseas that their roots ran deeply in North America, perhaps more so than initially anticipated by the visiting Scots.⁶

11.1 -The Antecedents of the Scottish World Festival

The Scottish World Festival, undoubtedly, drew its inspiration from the military tattoos and beating retreat ceremonies that played such an important role in the daily routine of the British armed forces throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. As a direct descendent of the British army, the Canadian army was an institution imbued with the traditions of the British regimental system and thus the Canadian version of the military tattoo became a common cultural occurrence in Canada by 1972.

Lieutenant-Colonel David Murray, an extensive researcher and writer of British regimental music, has pinpointed the development of the military tattoo through the influences of the Prussian army. Murray writes, “The first massed Tattoo took place in Berlin in 1836 with 2000 musicians on parade. The ceremony, known as ‘Grosse Zapfenstreich’ involved massed military bands, drums and fifes, cavalry trumpeters, and torchbearers. During the Victorian age the German influence on the British army was strong and the beating of Tattoo by massed bands became well established.”⁷

Association Pipe Band received 10th six years later.

⁶ Ed Neigh speaks of a *World Piping Community*, which he credits to Seumas MacNeill. MacNeill, beginning in 1948, authored numerous articles in *The Piping Times* about the art in Canada, the United States, Australia and other piping friendly countries though Neigh contends the Scots looked upon these fringe communities with a dubious glance. This attitude was immediately reversed in 1972 at the Festival when the Scottish bands quickly realized the depth of the piping tradition in Ontario revealed by a high calibre of musicianship. Interview by author, February 6, 2001.

⁷ *The Piper's Day: Regimental and Duty Tunes of the Queen's Own Highlanders*, Published by the Regimental Headquarters, Queen's Own Highlanders, 1991, p ix.

Although military music in the form of band concerts and parades was the most effective medium to showcase martial talent (such as a concert in the park at the Public Gardens in Halifax or on the grounds at Rideau Hall in Ottawa) Canadian military tattoos developed in the early 20th century where audiences were treated to large massed band performances. It is believed that the first military tattoo featuring massed bands in Canada was held at the Canadian Army training facility at Camp Borden, Ontario (approximately 100 kilometres north of Toronto) in August 1916. At that time, the commanders of the Canadian Corps were greatly concerned about their soldiers' off-duty activities. Sports and games were played during the training day but it was a challenge to the training staff to keep soldiers from falling into disrepute during the evening hours. Outdoor concerts were arranged by various regimental bands - when weather permitted - not only to provide the opportunity for military musicians to perform in front of live audiences but additionally (and perhaps in a circuitous fashion) to facilitate a more salubrious lifestyle for the soldier (alcohol consumption was an activity enthusiastically embraced by the Canadian soldier in his personal time and only too readily supplied by military messes and canteens at Camp Borden)⁸. The soldiers received these outdoor concerts warmly and finally Captain John Slatter, Director of Music of the band of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, organized a grand military tattoo in August 1916. A journalist from the *Orillia Packet* witnessed one of the evening performances; he was suitably moved by the performance of the massed bands.

One of the features about Camp Borden is the succession of

⁸ Jack Kopstein and Ian Pearson, *The Heritage of Canadian Military Music*, Vanwell Publishing Limited, St. Catherines, Ontario, 2002.

calm and majestic evenings. The rich colours of the sunset stand behind the line of the blue hills that deepen into purple with the closing in of the night. In the foreground stand scattered pine trees of oriental appearance, with tall clean trunks and bushy tops, leaning away from the northwest, because the strong winds blow from that quarter. Out toward the sunset stretch the plains that roll away to the Blue Mountains...darkness gathers, the different regimental bands stood ready to move each accompanied by torch bearers. At the proper signal, when the time appointed arrived, these bands moved out into place, the torches shining out against the regimental march. As each new band approached the assembly ground, the bands already in position took up the march of the newcomer. The result of this was gradually to increase the volume of sound so that when the last of the 28 bands marched forward, the effect was very marked. It seemed to me that especially impressive were two - "O Canada" and "We'll Never Let the Old Flag Fall" and it was not quite easy fully to analyse the emotion that swept over the throng. But certainly the wells of devotion to our own country and to Empire were revealed to be deep and strong under the influence of the music that touches these patriotic chords.

In the second part of the programme the playing by the twenty-eight bands "Keep the Home Fires Burning" brought out the love of home in these men, whose faces are turned toward the east and toward the day of battle. The love of home is surely as strong among those who are going as among those who are staying at home, and one could feel it in the air. But perhaps the most impressive of all the programme was the rendering of "Abide with Me." At this time the evening glow had died out of the west and the deep blue sky above our head, dotted with bright stars, was the stately roof, our open-air cathedral. All the torches except four were put out, the band played the air, and then for the second verse the men's voices carried the words. The effect of it all was very impressive. I was at this time sitting apart from the crowd in order to see the whole picture, and as the voices of these strong men carried the words, it was not easy to define or analyse the effect. But one could not help feeling that for men who are facing the stern duties of a soldier, much of the essence of war is summed up in the words "Help of the Helpless Oh Abide with Me," which thus floated in such solemnity.⁹

Massed band performances in and around the Toronto area had become a

⁹ *Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Forces Part 3: Bands and Music*, Published by the Directorate of Ceremonial, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, Ontario, 1990, pp. 67-68. The authorized establishment for battalion bands in the Canadian Expeditionary Force stood at 24 musicians and one bandmaster; thus the massed bands at Camp Borden numbered approximately four hundred musicians.

well-established practice in the local militia garrison by the time of the first Scottish World Festival Tattoo. In fact, it would have been highly unusual for a massed military performance of some type not to have taken place during the summer months either at the CNE or at the Fort York Armouries before 1972. Live musical performances then (with an emphasis on military band music) were common cultural manifestations widely available to and enjoyed by the public through the support of the Canadian military and the CNE¹⁰.

From the early 1920s, the Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music helped to organize CNE music events which were of three kinds: 1) Entertainment 2) Exhibition and 3) Competition.¹¹ A *Music Day* was organized by the Bureau and became an annual attraction at the fair but gradually, several music events were held throughout the period of the exhibition. Featured military bands, such as the Canadian Grenadier Guards, were the main attraction throughout the early 20th century. In 1928, for example, 19 bands performed 108 two-hour concerts on two bandstands that were located on the site¹² and in 1929, a “Highland Bag-Pipe Band Competition” was sponsored by the Royal Clan, Order of Scottish Clans featuring the Burns Club Pipe Band, the 48th Highlanders, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, the Canadian Shredded Wheat Company Pipe Band and the Toronto Scottish Regiment.¹³

¹⁰ One need only look through the band scrap books of the pipes and drums of the 48th or the Argylls to gain an appreciation through the numerous photos and newspaper articles detailing their activities in these community outreach events prior to 1972. These photographic narratives are exceptional resources.

¹¹ *Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada*, p 209.

¹² *Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada*, p 209.

¹³ According to the 1929 programme, the participating pipe bands performed a March Strathspey and Reel set of tunes. Perhaps the most technically difficult pieces were performed by the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders under Pipe James R. Fraser who submitted “The 74th’s Farewell to Edinburgh”

Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Forces records that a high point for Canadian military bands was enjoyed in the summer of 1934. In August of that year, over ten thousand World War One veterans gathered in Toronto for the Canadian Corps reunion. Twenty-five bands appeared in a drumhead service and military tattoo under the baton of the old wartime stalwart, Captain John Slatter. The tattoo was held in Riverdale Park (the “Don Valley” as it is known today) and according to printed sources, the tattoo brought together “the greatest number of people ever assembled to watch a single event in Canada; three hundred thousand saw the performance.”¹⁴

Other large-scale spectacles under the auspices of the Canadian military were produced during the height of the Cold War when the expansion of the Canadian defence establishment underwent dramatic increases in both human and financial output. According to Major Archie Cairns, a flurry of shows was staged during this period at the Toronto waterfront venue Exhibition Park. One of Cairns’ fond tattoo memories was the 1956 CNE’s production “Salute to the Tartan” featuring four regular battalion pipe bands from the Regiment of Canadian Guards and the Black Watch joined by the pipes and drums of the 48th Highlanders. Other military productions staged by the CNE throughout the 1950s and 1960s generally featured military and pipe bands from Central Command of the Canadian Army Militia.¹⁵

“Maggie Cameron” and “Duntroon.” Not to be outdone, the Canadian Shredded Wheat Company Pipe Band would also perform the demanding “Leaving Glenurquhart” “Monymusk” and “Pretty Marion” suggesting that the standard of piping must have been respectable in order to ‘pull-off’ credible performances. One is left to ponder what these bands must have sounded like.

¹⁴ *Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Forces*, p 8.

¹⁵ For example, the Massed Bands concert at the CNE Grandstand in May 1961 featured ten military bands, one trumpet band, two bugle bands and six pipe bands. The pipe bands were drawn from the 48th, the Argyll’s, The Irish Regiment of Canada, the Lorne Scots, the Toronto Scottish Regiment and the 133 Company Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. Programme published by the Queen’s Printer

Perhaps the most memorable tattoo in terms of numbers of performers and cross-country venues staged in Canadian history was the Canadian Armed Forces Tattoo of 1967 celebrating the 100th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. This military spectacular under the command of Major Ian Fraser¹⁶ and the Canadian Forces Supervisor of Music, Lieutenant-Colonel Cliff Hunt brought together the combined musical resources of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force gathering over 1,700 musicians, soldiers, sailors and airmen who travelled from coast to coast presenting what has been described as an awe-inspiring showcase of exalted Canadian military talent. Perhaps it was from this show that Cliff Hunt drew his inspiration to stage a similar production like the Scottish World Festival Tattoo at the CNE. Undoubtedly, the lessons learned from the Canadian Forces Tattoo were applied to the staging of the Scottish World Festival.

We can draw from this all too brief history of Canadian military tattoos their impact on the cultural landscape of the country. Additionally, we can see how these productions established a precedent for military extravaganzas throughout the 20th century. Unique to our circumstances though, is how the Scottish World Festival Tattoo became the focal point for the staging of the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships, demonstrating to Ontario pipers not only how crucial the tattoo was in order to orchestrate the band contest but also, perhaps more importantly, how the Ontarians and the Scots were able to musically demonstrate their similarities as revealed in surviving amateur recordings and demonstrated in the final results of the

and Controller of Stationery, Ottawa, Ontario, 1961.

¹⁶ Colonel (retired) Ian Fraser was an infantry officer in the Canadian Army during the staging of the 1967 tattoo. He retired in 1983 and is now the Director/Producer of the Nova Scotia International Tattoo.

first Intercontinental Championships (please see below for comprehensive list of the results drawn from the 1972 Championships).¹⁷

11.2 - The First Scottish World Festival

Acting in concert to organize, administrate, supervise and execute the Scottish World Festival, the CNE Board of Directors lead a highly effective team of membership associations including the Scottish Pipe Band Association and the Pipers Society of Ontario in order to see the successful staging of the first annual affair. Festival Chairman, Lieutenant-Colonel Clifford Hunt, a retired Supervisor of Music in the Canadian Armed Forces, was selected “as the man at the helm of the most exciting and colourful Highland Gathering ever to take place in North America.”¹⁸ When Hunt retired from the Canadian Forces in 1968, he was appointed Music Director of the CNE. By virtue of the fact of his employment, he became deeply involved in the organization and planning of the first of ten annual festivals. Hunt, a tireless worker who enlisted a team of dynamic individuals associated with military and pipe band music, was the visionary behind the extravaganza. Where the love for the bagpipes developed in this former Salvation Army trumpeter is unknown; however, as the Star Reader Service proclaimed on Hunt’s behalf “there is no question that the bagpipes play the sweetest music this side of Loch Lomond”.¹⁹ Hunt would oversee the painstaking detail that was required to stage this Scottish extravaganza (See Figure 11 at Appendix Six, pg. 356).

¹⁷ *The North American Scotsman*, Published by G.S. Tuck and A.J. MacLeod, January 1973, pp 34-41.

¹⁸ John H. MacDonald and Peter Robertson *Scottish Festival Official Programme*, Star Reader Service, 1973, p 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p 9.

By all accounts, the maiden Festival was a resounding success. Perhaps the *Mercury Advance* from Renfrew, Ontario, provides the most accurate reflections of the festival.

Two thousand pipers and drummers...When they marched down staid old Yonge Street in the staid old city of Toronto, en route to the Canadian National Exhibition, it turned out that an additional five hundred had come from somewhere, making a grand total of twenty-five hundred...as columnist Bruce West observed, probably they didn't have a single Mac in the family tree for scores of generations back. Nonetheless, they cheered themselves hoarse (an estimated 250,000 of them) during that glorious march past...All over the huge exhibition ground, for those four opening days, the atmosphere was as Scottish as auld Scotia herself. Scottish flags and kilts were everywhere, and everybody who happened to process anything in the line of Scottish dress, from a tartan shirt, jacket or tie, to a small piece of thistle or cairngorm jewellery, wore it with an air...There were daily competitions for piping, drumming, marching, Highland dancing. There were open-air Scottish concerts every so often in front of one of the large band shells, and incredibly, they were free!...But of course the climax of the whole affair was the spectacular tattoo, on each of the four nights, taking place before the immense grandstand...From all over the world they had come, with the big majority, naturally, being the widely famed bands from Scotland. But there were also bands from England and Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, several from the United States and plenty of Canadians, all the way from Vancouver to the Maritimes...Ah, but it was a gr-r-and show...Tradition, it would seem, is dear to the hearts of many, many people.²⁰

What kind of tradition is the writer alluding to? When employing the term *tradition* we encounter numerous esoteric perspectives the term engenders, creating an interpretive dilemma of immense proportions; these cannot be resolved here. Our writer means to convey her concept of Scottish *tradition* (however she defines that term), that 'authentic clan tartans' and 'checkered shirts' embody images of Scotland's past which the CNE festival re-created for mass consumption. But, is it authentic? Only we can interpret this for ourselves. I would posit that neither

garment is far from the writer's true identification of Scottish culture, even if both the checkered shirt and the kilt are constructed from an unidentifiable set of colours supposedly representing a tartan. And the *tradition* analysis extends to the writer's concept of the pipes and drums: that they parade in massed formation behind "jaunty drum majors" marching and countermarching "as good pipe bands do" affixed with "glittering gear" says nothing of the quality of the music or of the true nature of the Festival for the competing pipe band (which was, in effect, far removed from the tattoo). Rather, this image of massed formations awakens visions of victorious British soldiers on the battlefield conquering the enemies of empire. And perhaps, in an un-subtle and sub-conscious way, the production staff was re-creating the glories of empire on the astro-turf of CNE stadium through the military tattoo. Conceivably it is here that the Scottish *tradition* concept is firmly embedded outwith the pipe band community (and co-incidentally, acceptable in the journalist's perception). And perhaps her recognition of a single pipe tune, *Amazing Grace*, succinctly connected her audience with the aforementioned images of imperial glory, as a direct co-relation to her interpretation of Scottish *tradition*. It is interesting to note how *Amazing Grace* – then actually a brand-new tune as far as the pipes were concerned – became the most readily identifiable melody many non-pipers link to the instrument, reinforcing its ethereal yet martial foundation. If this is the modern concept of Scottish tradition, it is far removed from the domain of John Gibson's interpretation of Gaelic piping in rural Cape Breton. Still, the writer's commentary says nothing of the quality of music; we are left wanting a true musical critique. However, the

²⁰ Margaret Hamilton, "Countryside Musings" in *The Mercury Advance*, 1972.

historical record has left musical and written evidence for us to review and analyse. One piper of note, who witnessed the final show, was embarrassed by the massed pipe bands' performance for their lack of unison (see John Wilson's commentary). To one witness, the tattoo was the glory of empire replayed in splendid fashion with swaying tartans and skirling bagpipes embodying true Scottish tradition; to the other, the tattoo revealed the deplorable shortcomings of a loosely co-ordinated massed band representing mediocrity of the first rank which the public perhaps assumed to be the natural setting of Scotland's musical tradition, albeit, loosely defined.

11.3 – The Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships

From a piping perspective, the main attraction of the Festival was the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships. Indeed, the championship was the opportunity of a lifetime, not only to play against the largest field of pipe band entrants anywhere in North America, but also to listen, to watch and socialize with the "who's who" of the piping business. This was truly a unique Scottish cultural event held on a global scale at Ontario's doorstep. In his retrospective of the Scottish World Festival - 20 years after its last production - Ed Neigh commented on his experiences at the annual Scottish pipe band extravaganza in Toronto between 1972 and 1981.

Phenomenal. Literally, there were bands from all over the world, all going out and doing the same thing. And all going out drinking together; and you were there standing in the hot sun beside Muirhead and Sons or Frank MacKinnon's Band from New Zealand. And we were being yelled at by Captain John MacLellan. I mean we were standing there working together with people like Donald Bain and Jimmy Young; names you'd heard of but you didn't know what they looked like. You were talking with them, developing friendships and it couldn't have been done if it had only been staged for one year. Because it went on for years was why [it was so enduring]. It wasn't nearly as small a world as it is today...Even as

a solo player, you were down there at the campus [York University in Toronto] and you'd hear somebody playing *Lament for the Children* and you'd go over and see who it was, and it was some guy from New Zealand playing it basically the same way you'd been taught to play it, except, it was coming from another line from the same thing. I hesitate to use the word diaspora but, there has been a Scottish diaspora over centuries which connected us back to Scotland and connected us with the other people and everybody was conscious of this...Toronto's not just the second largest Italian city in the world, it's probably the third largest Scottish city in the world. So when these bands came in, not only did you get a chance to hear bands that you'd only seen records of as a kid but, you got to stand beside them in the massed bands and talk with them and party with them - these bands were only names to you until 1972... 'And there was Bob Hardie!' you'd think. [Pipe Major of the Grade 1 World Champions Muirhead and Sons Pipe Band] The guys in my band [The Guelph Pipe Band] reacted to it. They all developed friendships...Christ! And it was that business where we'd never seen people [the visiting bands] behave like that! I thought we'd behaved badly in the Guelph pipe band. Some of the Scots were away from home for the first time in their lives! It was great stuff. You see for us, it was that you got involved in understanding their politics for the first time; their band politics... And, we just sort of traded what our worlds were like.²¹

Interestingly, Neigh reveals some discomfort when employing the term *diaspora*.

For what reason? The Scots were responsible for settling in most regions of the British Empire and while they brought their cultural traditions to the furthest reaches of the empire, they proudly adhered to those old-country rituals. Perhaps recognizing the global effect of the Scottish piping movement at the CNE was a concept not immediately embraced by the perceptive Ontario piper. Ontario is one of the closer colonial destinations to Scotland so perhaps Neigh was not willing to concede that Scottish tunes (*piobaireachd* to be accurate) could be performed by native New Zealanders in similar fashion to that with which Neigh was familiar. Neigh's passage also acknowledges the reciprocity enjoyed by the Canadian and Scottish

²¹ Ed Neigh, interview by author, digital audio tape recording, Wellesley, Ontario, February 3, 2001.

communities, likely, the first time in the history of the artistic movement. Hence, the Scottish World Festival could be interpreted as a catalyst for discussion while the Exhibition grounds provided the forum encouraging this international dialogue in the global piping community. The Scottish World Festival was also personal in nature: life-long friendships were cultivated from the yearly shows; new opportunities (music and professional) were sought out by the Scottish visitors who used their Canadian contacts to secure job leads in various sectors of the industrial, commercial and service industries. The Festival, in fact, convinced some Scots that Canada offered an appetizing alternative to life in Scotland, convincing some to emigrate to Ontario during this period.²²

William Livingstone, practising law in Whitby, Ontario, was a piper with the Grade 1 General Motors Band from Oshawa. General Motors were invited to participate in the Festival, providing Livingstone with his first memorable live experience of the Scottish pipe band movement. Livingstone - who would eventually flower into one of Canada's most popular and recognizable competitive pipers - neatly articulated the following sentiment for the Ontario piping community when he said the Scottish World Festival "Was our golden moment. It really was. And there's been nothing like it since. Nothing even close."²³ Recalling the first time he participated in the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships Bill continued,

I will never, ever, forget the experience of standing behind the
Edinburgh Police Pipe Corps with George Campbell. They were

²² Pipe Major Tom Anderson of the Renfrew Pipe Band and drummer Reid Maxwell of the Dysart and Dundonald Pipe Band were two Scots who moved to Toronto during this period. Both musicians joined Bill Livingstone's 78th Fraser Highlanders and were members when the band won the World Championships in 1987.

²³ William Livingstone, interview by author, digital audiocassette tape, Whitby, Ontario, February 2, 2001.

tuning up behind the south grandstand and I believe they were in a circle, and there was a lot of concrete around because of the construction. I'll never forget the feeling of my chest, clothes; everything just vibrating [pounds chest]. 'Oh My God!' I thought. I'll never forget the feeling of sixteen pipers, perfectly in tune. And that was probably the first time I ever really heard what a pipe band was able to do. It really drilled it home. It's funny how we all have those experiences. The benchmarks that stick out.²⁴

Bruce Gandy, a Gold medalist and North American solo-piping champion, was a boy piper with the Grade 1 Triumph Street band from Victoria, British Columbia. He and his fellow band members travelled over 2000 miles to Toronto - nearly the same distance as the Scottish bands - to participate in the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships. Gandy fondly recalled,

I was star struck. It was the first real exposure to the top bands. It wasn't just the local bands: Triumph Street and Port Moody. We had no respect for them. Well, it wasn't that we didn't have respect for them, it was because they came from the same area and we spent all our days with them. And I remember we had all these [Scottish] bands we had to see and map out a timetable. 'At ten o'clock over on that field will be Shotts and Dykehead and at ten-thirty, over there will be Muirheads' and you spent your time running around listening to the Glasgow Police, Edinburgh Police, Dysart and Dundonald. It was a smorgasbord of all the top bands and you spent your time trying to hear them all; what they were playing, what they sounded like. It was great.²⁵

News of Toronto's global pipe band competition was released to the piping world in October 1970 through the publication of a press release authored by the CNE. The fevered pitch in the Canadian piping community was instantaneous as the CNE publicists deliberately aimed at creating a 'buzz' about the Festival. That 'buzz' was reinforced, in large measure, by the announcement that Scotland's top competitive

²⁴ Ibid.

pipe bands were participating, a fact immediately picked up by pipe bands throughout Canada, the United States and as far afield as Australia and New Zealand. Achieving the maximum impact of the CNE's message was paramount to the success of the festival so it was imperative that the press release should focus on the collaborative efforts of the Scottish Pipe Band Association and their participation in this event. Having the participating bands from Scotland compete in the Intercontinental Championships created its own publicity while conveying the determination of the organizers to stage "the largest event" of its type in North America. In this way, the organizers were able to marshal their communication resources so the message reached as many competitive pipe bands across Ontario (and by virtue of the underground culture within the piping community, across Canada, the United States and beyond) virtually ensuring their participation. Recalling his days living on the Pacific west coast and playing with the Triumph Street Band, Gandy said when news of the CNE event reached him,

[Jamie] Troy [pipe major] knew the exposure was something that we had to have. That was it. 'Lets save up the money and go see these bands.' The news was out about the festival. At that time, it was nowhere near expensive to fly to Toronto. It was feasible and we said 'Let's go to Toronto. We're still on our home turf and let's have a crack at these guys from Scotland. Let's see where we stand.' ...And seeing all these guys play the pipes. There were a lot of good players. Especially when you're not used to it and seeing the locals all the time, and only one recitalist per year. And then seeing one after another [at the Festival] and saying 'Holy! Man, these guys can play'.²⁶

Neigh recalled similar experiences. Having listened to several Scottish pipers at numerous ceilidhs at the Fort York Armouries and around the CNE during the

²⁵ Bruce Gandy, interview by author, digital audiocassette tape, November 20, 2001, Halifax, Nova

Festival, Neigh said “Here were all these people that could play like holy Jesus; and, every time you heard some guy blow up a bagpipe. And these were guys who talked about playing and talked about the people who were teaching them.”²⁷

The Scottish World Festival’s 10-year run ensured its lasting impact upon the Ontario piping scene. For several years Scotland’s first-rate bands competed in Canada’s back yard, providing the opportunity for homegrown bands to test their abilities against what was considered the world’s leading standard. This, in effect, provided the Ontarians (and others) with the necessary models to focus their efforts towards narrowing the performance gap²⁸ differentiating them from their Scottish competitors. This the Festival did and thus its musical contribution to the Ontario competitive band scene is only too apparent; however, a host of other socially fascinating occurrences added an intriguing dimension to the festival melange. Ed Neigh, while leading his band during one of the many massed band rehearsals, witnessed, with surprise, the reactions of his pipers and drummers while interacting with the Scottish musicians. “I had been travelling to Scotland for several years by that point so my attitude about performing alongside the Scottish bands was quite blasé. For my guys, I realized the impact this festival had on us when I saw the guys reacting to all of this, in a really positive way. I mean, when these bands came over, they were just names on records for most people but here they were in Toronto. And, you couldn’t get enough of it.”²⁹ Friendships were engendered between the Canadians and Scots moulding the camaraderie between the two communities which

.Scotia.

²⁶ Bruce Gandy, interview by author.

²⁷ Ed Neigh, interview by author.

²⁸ Whatever that may have been perceived at the time.

continues today.

For some participants, there were “downsides” to the Festival but these were relatively minor compared to the advantages. Perhaps Bruce Gandy voiced one of the more enjoyable down-sided reminiscences. Gandy was a supporter of the Festival but he did not recall the *Parade of Pipers* so fondly. In fact, for him, it was an ordeal to be tolerated to gain entry into the pipe band competitions at the CNE Grandstand.

Gandy carped,

That parade was one of the longest... It wound downtown along all the streets...and when you don't know where you're going... Like I didn't know University Avenue from Bloor Street to the next place. So every time you looked up you saw a street and a building and you felt like a mouse in a maze. You finally saw the gates to the Exhibition and you'd think 'finally, I think we're getting close' and *then* it was like you had to march through there. Holy! It took hours. And it was so hot and humid. I wasn't used to that. You know, I'm from Victoria where the climate is the world's best. And we came to this place, which was a bloody Bombay sauna! And the pipes going freaky. You know, your pipes were soaked [from moisture] and then they were dry and all the logic you came with, went out the window. We were all dying. And of course it was military-like and too darn proper and completely stupid to have someone on the side to bring water to anybody. So you were gasping by the end. And then it just bucketed down rain like I'd never seen before. The typical Ontario summer storm and I remember thinking “What is going on here!?!” And of course [Pipe Major] Troy is yelling at us “Stand to attention! Play right! Look good! Do this! Keep your pipes going! And hang your kilts up tonight I want them looking good tomorrow!!” And I remember thinking “What?! I'm fifteen man! Give me a break!!”³⁰

The memories of Gandy's adolescent piping days were slightly tarnished by a rather lengthy parade route though, Gandy agreed, the Festival was a significant moment in Ontario piping history.

Perhaps John Wilson provides us with one of the more balanced accounts of

²⁹ Ed Neigh, interview by author.

³⁰ Bruce Gandy, interview by author.

the Festival. In his complimentary yet backhanded style, Wilson recalled that

The Great Scottish World Festival has come and gone and we can now analyse our reactions to all the various events. Speaking for myself, I can truthfully say that I enjoyed the whole 'shooting match' with strong reservations about the tattoo on Sunday night...The parade and march on Thursday was magnificent and I had nothing but praise for it. The terrific blast must have blown every cloud out of the sky for the weather from then on was just perfect.

On Friday afternoon I witnessed the Trooping of the Colour by the Toronto Scottish Regiment and I thought the Bands, Officers and Men did a really splendid job.

Saturday saw the contests of pipe bands Grade 2 and 4. I was asked to judge Grade 4 along with McCroskie and drumming judge Tim Orr. It was a glorious day and the tartan turf was nice to walk on.

On Sunday I had the same partners for the Grade 3 Pipe bands, of which we heard and judged 27. I thought the playing very good and I was much impressed by some of our Canadian bands who played better than usual. I didn't take note of the time, but we finished in time for me to listen to the last four or five Grade 1 bands, including the Edinburgh Police. This must have been a great competition.

[After the massed bands] the final results were given out. In Grade 1 the first four were Scottish then our own City of Toronto followed by Clan MacFarlane. Pretty good for Canada in such strong competition.

At night I attended the last performance of the tattoo. I thought that by then all the bugs would have been ironed out, for my youngest boy attended the Thursday night show and told me that the massed pipe bands were terrible. To my dismay, they were still all that and more. I never felt so humiliated in all my life. To know that all those thousands of people were hearing such a degrading rabble of discords made me want to crawl under the seat. It could easily have been avoided, but whoever planned the thing was obviously not up to the job. This is one single part of the performance I wish to forget. I like to think instead of the fine show the Innes Tartan Pipe Band put on and the wonderful musical ride of our own Police Department. Yes, altogether it was a really excellent Scottish festival and I'm sure everyone enjoyed it as much as I did.³¹

The staging of the Scottish World Festival Tattoo continued to 1981 while the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships ran its final competition in 1980. By then, the costs of transporting the Scottish pipe bands to Canada were

³¹ 'John Wilson Recalls the First Scottish World Festival' in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, Published

financially prohibitive for the Canadian National Exhibition to sponsor their massed participation. By 1981, the Festival had “worn out its welcome”³² with the citizens of Toronto as the return on investment for the Exhibition was not considered worth endorsing and the Scottish World Festival came to a rather abrupt conclusion.

11.4 - Conclusion

The final results of the 1972 Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships are listed on pages 309-312 below. As already noted, Ontario band placements were high. After the first four prizes in Grade 1 went to Scotland’s most experienced bands, the City of Toronto and Clan MacFarlane bands gained 5th and 6th respectively. An American band from Boston, Massachusetts, The Worcester Kilties³³, followed behind the two Ontario bands and ahead of 13 bands from Great Britain, while two Canadian military pipe bands, the Highland Fusiliers and the 48th Highlanders, were placed 10th and 15th respectively. The Ontarians had thus acquitted themselves well in the first annual Intercontinental Championships; their confidence was boosted for greater challenges in the future. These would come. And, it would be a short time after this inaugural festival that the Ontario pipe band scene shifted its attention towards competing in Scotland for the premiere prize at The World Pipe Band Championships, considered by many as the most coveted pipe band prize in the world. Interestingly, a curious event may have preceded the eventual awarding of *The Worlds* to the 78th Fraser Highlanders in 1987: one week

by the Pipers Society of Ontario, April 1973 p 18.

³² Reay Mackay, Interview with author, Toronto, December 2001.

³³ The Worcester Kilties took 8th place - a foreshadowing of future successes in American pipe band musicianship.

after the 1972 Intercontinental Championships, the City of Toronto band under Chris Anderson beat the Edinburgh Police in the hot, sticky weather conditions at the Fergus Highland Games.³⁴ For such an achievement, the City of Toronto received little fanfare in the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*. Why this event received so little attention has yet to be determined. In the broader context of the Ontario piping tradition, the results of the Scottish World Festival were so fitting a culmination, it led one observer to trumpet, “Our boys didn’t have to take a back seat to anybody.”³⁵ The community grasped the notion that they were competitive with their overseas brethren. With good leadership, discipline and determination, bands from Ontario could count themselves on a par with their Scottish counterparts. And in the 1970s with airline costs decreasing, Ontarians’ access to the major Scottish championships now became a realizable goal. It was a mere matter of time before bands from southern Ontario began travelling regularly to participate in the World Championships. As we have seen, the trend started in the late 1960s with the solo competitors journeying to the contests held in Inverness and Oban. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ontario’s Grade 1 competition bands included Scotland on their annual list of highland games, especially the World Championships. The Scottish World Festival created their drive and determination to participate in ‘The Worlds’. The final variable enumerated in the lengthy historical equation that secured Ontario

³⁴ George Lumsden, a piper with the Edinburgh City Police Band during their Canadian Tour, recalled Pipe Major Iain MacLeod’s response after the result was announced. “Oh, MacLeod was wild!! I remember Macphee was one of the judges, later apologized to Iain...It was warm; terrific heat. And we didn’t come off too well. Our pipes had never been going as good as they were here [Scotland] and we had been playing under the trees before we played in the sun. The Canadians had a way to combat what you could do with your pipes in the sun.” George Lumsden, interview with author, Edinburgh, Scotland, February 2002.

³⁵ Don Pringle, Interview with author, Toronto, Ontario, January 1999.

a World Championship victory - the successful staging of the Scottish World Festival
- was sealed by the final results of the Intercontinental Championships for one and all
to see.

**Final Statement of Results of the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships
1972**

Toronto, Ontario

Grade 1 Pipe Bands

<u>Band</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Edinburgh Police	1 st
Shotts and Dykehead	2 nd
Muirhead and Sons	3 rd
Red Hackle	4 th
City of Toronto(Ontario)	5 th
Clan MacFarlane (Ontario)	6 th
Worcester Kilties	7 th
City of Glasgow Police	8 th
Polkemmet Colliery	9 th
The Highland Fusiliers (Ontario)	10 th
Renfrew	11 th
Invergordon Distillery	12 th
Bilston Glen Colliery	13 th
Robert Armstrong Memorial	14 th
48 th Highlanders (Ontario)	15 th
Clan Macrae	16 th
Mount Carmel	17 th
St. Patrick's Donaghmore	18 th
Bucksburn and District	19 th
Kenmure Pipe Band	20 th
153 rd Regt. Royal Corps of Transport	21 st
Innes Tartan	22 nd
Kelty and Blairadam	23 rd
Musselburgh British Legion	24 th
Guelph Pipe Band (Ontario)	25 th
410 Wing	
Royal Canadian Air Force	26 th

Grade 2 Pipe Bands

<u>Band</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Paisley	1 st
Dysart & Dundonald	2 nd
General Motors (Ontario)	3 rd
Dunbarton	4 th
St. Andrew's	5 th
Glasgow Skye Association	6 th
Denny and Dunipace	7 th
Milngavie	8 th

400 Squadron	
Royal Canadian Air Force (Ontario) 9 th	
2 nd Battalion	
Royal Canadian Regiment	10 th
Dromara	11 th
Metro Toronto Police (Ontario)	12 th
Torphichen & Bathgate	13 th
Manchester	14 th
Toronto Scottish Regiment (Ontario)	15 th
Inis Fada Gaelic	16 th

Grade 3 Bands

<u>Band</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Cumbernauld	1 st
Erskine (Ontario)	2 nd
Canadian General Electric	3 rd
Monktonhall Colliery	4 th
Howard Memorial	5 th
Charlotte Scottish	6 th
Dingwall Royal British Legion	7 th
Kansas City	8 th
Ingersoll (Ontario)	9 th
Sault Ste. Marie (Ontario)	10 th
London City Police (Ontario)	11 th
Overseas Irish	12 th
Antigonish Legion	13 th
Heather Legion	14 th
St. Laurent	15 th
Rob Roy (Ontario)	16 th
Belleville-Cobourg	17 th
Caledonian Society	18 th
Hespeler Pipe Band	19 th
Gaelic Pipe Band	20 th
Cameron Highlanders	
Of Ottawa (Ontario)	21 st
City of Transcona	22 nd
Thunder Bay (Ontario)	23 rd
Fredericton Society	24 th
Ulster Scottish	25 th
Stamford Kiltie	26 th

Grade 4 Bands

<u>Band</u>	<u>Rank</u>
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Kilsyth Thistle	1 st
Birmingham Scottish	2 nd
Branch 50 Royal Canadian	
Legion Pipe Band (Ontario)	3 rd
Dalzell Steelworks	4 th
Ballykeel Moneyrea	5 th
MacGillivray	6 th
Toronto Girls (Ontario)	7 th
Hawick British Legion	8 th
Hopedale Pipes and Drums	9 th
MacDougall Girls	10 th
Branch 212 Royal Canadian	
Legion (Ontario)	11 th
Sudbury & District	12 th
500 Gordon Pipers	13 th
Selkirk Kiwanis	14 th
Charlotte Caledonian	15 th
1 st Hawkesbury	16 th
Windsor Police (Ontario)	17 th
Dofasco Pipe Band (Ontario)	18 th
Levack-Onaping	19 th
Clan Macrae	20 th
Southern Victoria	21 st
Houston Highlanders	22 nd
London Ladies (Ontario)	23 rd
Branch 120 Royal Canadian	
Legion (Ontario)	24 th
City of Brockville (Ontario)	25 th
Capital City	26 th
Douglas Regiment	27 th
Thos. J. Connor	28 th
City of Transcona Jrs.	29 th
Dunedin High School	30 th
Earlscourt Legion (Ontario)	31 st
Gordon Highlanders (USA)	32 nd
Granite State	33 rd

CHAPTER TWELVE

Conclusion

This study has chronicled the historical development of the Great Highland Bagpipe in southern Ontario during the 19th and 20th centuries culminating with the victory of Toronto's 78th Fraser Highlanders at the 1987 World Pipe Band. In essence, the 78th's victory at Bellahouston Park, Glasgow, was symbolic of the journey of an emigrant musical tradition germinating in Scotland prior to the conquest of New France (latterly British North America and today, Canada). To a greater, or lesser degree, I have presented and commented upon the historical trends of the southern Ontario piping community from the post-conquest period (after the British took control of New France in 1760) to 1987. What I have not attempted is to analyse the quality of the music over the last two and one-half centuries; nor do I wish to assess the victors' performance at the 1987 World Championships. This study reveals how this Scottish musical tradition transformed itself from a largely non-competitive based art (prior to the 1950s era) to a competitively-driven art. This transition was key in presenting the context behind the 1987 victory of the 78th Fraser Highlanders at the World Pipe Band Championships.

To say that the 78th adhered to a disciplined approach, exhibited superior musicianship on the day of the competition, were inspired by charismatic leadership and maintained a stubborn determination throughout the long journey to the 1987 World Championships would be far too simplistic an explanation of their success. Although these aforementioned traits are considerable factors contributing to any world championship title, the historical dimension must not be overlooked for it plays

such a considerable and necessary role in the run-up to the championships of 1987. As the historical considerations have never been examined in any systematic way, we come to the aim underlying this study: to identify and present key historical facts and personalities in the history of piping in southern Ontario. From this perspective, we begin to uncover a long and colourful history incorporating a litany of common themes throughout history.

Of course, this study can be placed firmly within the literature of immigrant traditions in Canada focusing on the Scottish musical experience. It also furthers our general knowledge about the bagpipe in its central Canadian setting for no such study has ever been published. This study stands as an original work and is therefore a contribution to our knowledge about the flow of tradition, and in particular of the dynamics and processes involved in the development of a supplanted tradition. Certainly, John Gibson's seminal works on Cape Breton bagpipe traditions remain the *tour de force* in historical research and writing in Canada, but his history confines itself exclusively to the east coast of Canada (excluding the musical cultures of Canada's most populous province) and his subject matter deals primarily with what he defines as *traditional Gaelic piping* (that branch of pipe music thriving in the Scottish highlands before the British army and the competition system amended what he believes was an artistically freer form of music ie. before standardization). What Gibson accomplishes in the Cape Breton context, I have attempted to accomplish in southern Ontario. The notable difference in the evolution of Ontario's art form is that 'modern' bagpipe performance was already underway in both Scotland and Ontario during the period under study. While the evolution (i.e. modernization) of the art in Ontario closely mimicked the fountainhead of the tradition in Scotland, this was not

the case in Cape Breton and thus this study complements and contrasts with that of Gibson's history.

In many ways, the research for this study has resembled an exploration of piping memories in the last half of the 20th century. I will re-iterate here that I came to it in 1998 having played the pipes for over 18 years. I cemented numerous relationships within the competitive piping fraternity that provided an easy database of informants. They provided a starting point for my enquiry into this history through numerous oral interviews. These informants were also generous in their suggestions of uncharted source material to explore. Some were only too pleased to reveal their vast collections of photographs, manuscripts and other source material that interested me as a researcher. Given the sometimes questionable authenticity of oral history, I attempted to conduct a thorough examination of all available primary materials in order to produce a balanced, historically accurate interpretation. This study highlights the complex interplay between the two data sources. Interestingly, as enlightening as my informants were in their contributions, there is something to be said for the historical figures who cannot speak to us today - their prints and photographs evoke a noble air that transcends the passage of time. Unearthing some of their anecdotes through some of my elderly informants helped to fill the historical gap that continues to affect our analysis today.

Perhaps most important in Ontario's desire to be a leader in the field of bagpipe performance is the large number of immigrant Scots who settled this province. Without the Scots, their war pipes would never have been brought here in the first instance. And the likes of Robert Ireland, Norman MacSwayed, Farquhar Beaton, James Fraser, Charles Dunbar, John Wilson and others, would not have made

the impact upon the resident piping community had there not existed successive generations of immigrant Scots to the region.

As stated previously, the aim of this study was to identify the historical roots of piping in southern Ontario. For us, one of the key thematic players in this study was the military (British and Canadian). In fact, the military's role is tied to the immigrant Scots who settled Canada. As we have seen, the Canadian army was, for all intents and purposes, modelled after the British regimental system. Of course, intimately connected with the regimental system were the Scottish regiments and it should come as no surprise, given the number of expatriate Scots living in Canada, that this community successfully lobbied for the creation of Canadian- Scottish regiments. Thus at the turn of the 20th century, we see the emergence of such militia units such as the 5th Royal Scots of Montreal¹, the 48th Battalion Highlanders and the 91st Canadian Highlanders. Naturally, these units would have been incomplete without the addition of the necessary cultural ingredient to any Scottish unit - the pipe band. As we have seen, their officers passionately supported the bands.

Also prominent is the role of the luminaries or the teaching and performing gurus. We examined how Charles Dunbar, James Fraser and John Wilson were contemporaries of the highest musical standards produced in Scotland during their formative years and how they directed their musical efforts, moulding the course of musicianship in southern Ontario throughout the span of the 20th twentieth century. Perhaps most notable about the evolution of the art in the new world context takes place during second half of the 20th century. Canadians exhibited the musical

¹ Formed in 1862 as the 5th Battalion Royal Light Infantry.

expertise passed onto them by their teachers. Here, we see the emergence of the Canadian virtuosos such as Gilmour, Mackay, McGillivray, Livingstone et.al.

We cannot forget the role of the highland games throughout the course of this history, culminating in the largest of all highland gatherings outside of Scotland, the Scottish World Festival and the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships. These games brought together the most successful competitors from across the world to perform in Toronto during the 1970s and early 1980s. It is interesting to note throughout this study the similarity between Canada and Great Britain in the colonial and post-colonial period (and to a much lesser extent in 2004). In short, the development of Canadian society was a microcosm of British society. Although differences in economic, social and political circumstances were apparent from the arrival of the first settlers, the colonists throughout the nation's history actively sought to imitate various aspects of British society and culture. This is not surprising given the origins of the population outwith the province of Quebec. The playing of bagpipes by the colonists was no different from any other aspect of British culture: cricket, football, literary societies, religion, public houses and the like. Because the colonists (and native born Canadians) were as receptive to British immigrants as they were, the cultural characteristics which were British in origin were easily transplanted within Canada and thus it was easy for the Canadians to attach themselves to whatever cultural undertaking they became involved. In this case, that would be the playing of the pipes.

We also see throughout this study how the Canadians actively sought to imitate the Scottish pipe band paradigm and eventually the Scottish style highland games and piping competitions. Ontario pipe bands and their participation in the

highland games developed in a natural way given the steady flow of Scottish immigrants to southern Ontario as well as the natives' enthusiasm to imitate the fountainhead of the tradition. Given the Ontario pipers' desire to better themselves in the art of bagpipe performance and given the various immigrant flows which contained some of the leaders of the Scottish piping community, Ontario pipers were destined to win significant victories at the major solo and pipe band championships on offer in Scotland. Of course, these victories became a realization in the 1970s and 1980s. The trend continues today.

Inasmuch as a comparative study of the evolution of the art is concerned, it is interesting to note how the Ontario community differs, still, from its cousin on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. We have already determined Cape Breton's geographical isolation from Scotland and Ontario and how it remained culturally unaffected by numerous mainland influences until well into the 20th century. Additionally, relatively few Scottish immigrants settled in Cape Breton in the 20th century, undoubtedly contributing to its 'piping communities' "freeze-frame mentality": Cape Bretoners were not exposed to the latest trends emerging in Scotland which were transplanted and imitated in Ontario. This is no longer the case today, particularly from the late 1970s onwards. Since 1938, the island has been home to the Gaelic College at St. Anne's, sparking the interest of the island's young people - primarily from industrial Cape Breton and Victoria county - to take up the music of their forebears in the more recent traditions of competitive piping and drumming². In this way, the Cape Breton tradition has evolved in similar fashion to Ontario and now, the

² According to Nova Scotia native piper John (Jack) MacLean, 78th Highlanders, Seumas MacNeill taught the highland pipes at the College during the 1950s in an attempt to stimulate the evolution of the competitive standard on the island. Interview with author, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Spring 2003.

domain of the art revolves around the annual highland games and various indoor meets throughout the entire maritime region.

Ontario has evolved in leaps and bounds in the competitive art of piping. But what remains? Where does the art go from here? It seems to me that the community is stifled by its own success. By this, I mean it has been so seduced by the strictures of competition that it now seems reluctant to step outside of the competitive boundaries. Surely the milestone in the competitive art was the 78th Fraser Highlanders 1987 victory but how does the music grow after this? The Ontario piping community (not unlike the rest of the piping community in North America and indeed, Scotland) is frozen by its own institutional complacency. Unison piping and drumming in conjunction with near perfect pitch intonation are incredibly inspiring musical experiences; however, these remain staid when the genre (or the context) of the art does not move with the times. Competition band piping today is becoming lack-lustre: bands march into the competitive circle performing march-style hornpipes, breaking into predictable slow airs or jigs depending upon the stylistic preferences of the pipe major or drum sergeant. It is all too predictable. Granted, bands such as the 78th Fraser Highlanders have attempted to extend the music of the pipe band to the concert platform. However valiant their attempts to break the tradition away from the competitive circle, they realise that their success on stage is somewhat ordained by their success on the competitive stage. Yet, here lies the dilemma; competition serves to stifle the musical potential of the art. And as long as the Scottish pipe band society continues to hold its annual world championships, Ontario bands will remain seduced by the competitive system.

Given Ontario's influence in the North American pipe band community - it boasts one of the largest memberships and continues to attract the highest number of bands to its sanctioned highland games - I do not think the Ontario community is emboldened to strike out on its own and introduce a new format to competition. What this would be is purely speculation on my part; perhaps 30 minutes on a concert stage with pipes and drums and any other combination of instruments? The possibilities are limitless. I hope the Ontario community will take the artistic lead in transforming the art for it does require a paradigm shift. This is not to say that band playing is becoming boring: far from it. But, the strictures of the competition circle are limiting the musical possibilities and we must continue to evolve in order for the community to remain healthy and vibrant.

The history of southern Ontario piping is far from complete. Many historical avenues still remain unexplored. However, we have a proud history that has hitherto been unavailable for general consumption and it is hoped this thesis has filled a small gap in this historical void. The highlights of Ontario's piping past have been explored and it is hoped that this study provides the basis for further research. With future studies, increased interest and quality leadership, it is hoped that the Ontario competitive community will evolve from its present format.

Appendix One

Chronology – Canada and the Piping Movement

1621 – King James I grants Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to Sir William Alexander with the idea of establishing permanent Scottish settlements in North America

1622 – Expedition to Nova Scotia led by Robert Gordon

1670 – Hudson's Bay Company formed and the granting of the Canadian North West ("Rupert's land" which now roughly encompasses North-West Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon and the North-West Territories) given to the company for their exclusive use.

1739 – Formation of the first Highland regiment in British military history, the 42nd Highland Regiment, the Black Watch.

1746 – Suppression of the Jacobite Rebellion and the systematic persecution of Jacobite sympathizers; the erosion of the Scottish highland clan system begins. This signals the beginning of the large-scale Scottish immigration movements to the New World; with them would come generations of bagpipers.

1756 – Commencement of the Seven Years War (French and Indian War in North America) and the deployment of three Highland regiments to fight the French and their Indian allies in North America. These regiments were the 42nd, 77th and 78th Highlanders (Black Watch, Montgomerie's and Fraser's Regiments).

1759 – Fall of the fortress city of Quebec led by British General James Wolfe. Wolfe, a veteran of the Battle of Culloden, admired the tenacity of the Scottish soldiers under his command. The Scottish troops, predominantly the 78th Fraser Highlanders, played a crucial role on the battlefield.

1768 – First Scottish settlers arrive for permanent settlement in Prince Edward Island.

1773 – The transport ship, *Hector*, arrives in Pictou, Nova Scotia, marking the first Scottish settlement in that province.

1812 – American President James Madison declares war on Great Britain. American forces invade Canada. Hundreds of Scots join the Upper and Lower Canadian Militia; one unit, the Glengarry Regiment of Light Infantry Fencibles (a Scottish unit raised in Glengarry County, Upper Canada) distinguish themselves at the Battle of Lundy's Lane.

1838 – 71st Highlanders arrive in Montreal, Quebec, for service following the Lower Canadian Rebellions. The pipers of the 71st would perform a significant role in the cultural life of the city.

1854 – 42nd Black Watch departs Halifax, Nova Scotia for service in the Crimean War.

1862 – 5th Battalion Royal Light Infantry of Canada (Montreal) formed. Through a series of name changes, the 5th Battalion would become the Canadian army's senior highland regiment, the Black Watch. The regiment continues to serve in the Canadian militia. The regiment also lays claim to having the longest serving pipe band in North America.

1867 – Canada becomes an independent nation with the passing of the British North America Act, signed July 1st. Inverness Gold Medalist Pipe Major Ronald Mackenzie and the 78th Highlanders (Ross-Shire Buffs) transferred from Gibraltar to Montreal, Quebec for garrison duty. The unit was transferred to Halifax, Nova Scotia, two years later. Private Robert Meldrum, who was a soldier in the ranks of the regiment while stationed in Halifax, was also a piper under Mackenzie's tutelage. Meldrum went on to win the Gold Medal at Inverness and became a pipe major with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

1878 – Sir John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, 9th Duke of Argyll and the Marquess of Lorne, arrives in Canada accepting his post as the Governor General. He is accompanied by his wife, Princess Louise, 4th daughter of Queen Victoria. The Duke's retinue included his personal piper, Pipe Major John MacDonald, 72nd (Duke of Albany's Own) Highlanders, a former winner of the Gold Medal at Inverness who was now the resident piper in Canada's capital city.

1891 – Formation of the 48th Battalion "Highlanders" of Canada – Ontario's first Scottish regiment. The regiment's first pipe major, Robert Ireland, a leading soloist at the time, was formerly a soldier with 93rd Sutherland Highlanders. He was the first in a long succession of pipe majors with gifted musical abilities.

1903 - Formation of the 91st Regiment, Canadian Highlanders (latterly the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada), Hamilton's first Scottish regiment.

1910 – Formation of the 79th Cameron Highlanders of Canada (later to become the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada) in Winnipeg, Manitoba under Pipe Major John Duke (ex-British Regular Army piper).

1911- Pipe Major Charles Dunbar, Gordon Highlanders, moves to Montreal, Quebec then onto Hamilton, Ontario, shortly thereafter. Dunbar assumes command of the Pipes and Drums of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's). Dunbar was to become Canada's (and the British Empire's) first "Piping Officer" after he returned from overseas service with the

Canadian Corps in 1917. Lieutenant Dunbar led the Argylls until his death in 1937.

1913 – Lance Corporal James Fraser, recently retired from active service with the Gordon Highlanders, arrives in Toronto at the invitation of the commanding officer of the 48th Highlanders. Fraser assumes command of the Pipes and Drums retiring 39 years later in 1952. He would be the Canadian army's longest serving pipe major.

1914 – Canada is at war with Germany. Canada's *First Contingent* raised for overseas service, consisted of over 30 thousand soldiers, and was predominantly made up of the recent boom of British born immigrants, many of whom were Scots. The First Contingent was only the first of five infantry divisions (although the fifth was broken up in England and used to reinforce the other four serving in the front-lines) and made up the originals of what was to become the Canadian Corps. Fifty units of the Canadian Corps formed pipe bands of their own; 29 of these battalions wore kilts.

1916 – Piper James Cleland Richardson, 16th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, pipes his comrades to victory at Regina Trench. Richardson is killed in action and posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

1917 - Canadian Corps takes Vimy Ridge during an all-out Allied offensive in the greater Battle of Arras. All Canadian Highland battalions present at the battle. Over 3,000 Canadians were killed in the offensive. Later that summer, the Canadian Corps would march past Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, led by their massed pipes and drums numbering over 500.

1948 - Ontario Pipers Society formed in Toronto under the Stewardship of several leading pipers from Toronto and Hamilton.

1948 - North American Pipe Band Championship established at the Glengarry Highland Games in eastern Ontario.

1949 – Pipe Major John Wilson immigrates to southern Ontario

1953 – Piper William Gilmour of Toronto's 48th Highlanders takes first place at the Scottish junior piping championships at Inverchapel; he was the first Canadian to accomplish this feat.

1951-1953 – Canada's Regular Army forms 2 regiments, the 1st and 2nd Battalions Black Watch and the Regiment of Canadian Guards. Each regiment is allotted their pipe bands. The Guards' pipe band were led by Pipe Major Archie Cairns, one of the leading competitive pipers of the day.

1966 – City of Toronto Pipe Band under Pipe Major Chris Anderson take 5th place at World Pipe Band Championships.

1968 – Canadian Forces Reorganization Act is passed in Parliament, disbanding the Regiment of Canadian Guards and the Black Watch, Royal Highland Regiment of Canada from the regular army. Their pipes and drums were transferred to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment.

1971 – St-Thomas Police Association Pipe Band under Pipe Major Gord Tuck take 10th place at the World Pipe Band Championships.

1972 – Pipe Major Archie Cairns establishes the Piobaireachd Society Gold Medal (Canada) competition in Ottawa, Ontario. Canada's first gold medalist was Pipe Major Ed Neigh of the City of Guelph Pipe Band.

1972 – 1st Annual Scottish World Festival hosted by the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Dozens of pipe bands from Scotland, England and Ireland are flown to participate in the military tattoo and the Intercontinental Pipe Band Championships. Pipe Major Iain MacLeod's Edinburgh City Police Pipe Band take first place in the largest pipe band competition in North America.

1977 – William Livingstone of Toronto is awarded the Gold Medal at Inverness, Scotland. Livingstone is the first Canadian awarded this prestigious award.

1979 – Pipe Major John Wilson dies in Toronto.

1987 - Toronto's 78th Fraser Highlanders wins the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, the first Canadian band to score the victory. Also of note is that Simon Fraser University Pipe Band finish in second place while the Strathclyde Police Pipe Band under Pipe Major Ian MacClellan finish 3rd, ending the band's six consecutive victories within the championships.

1995, 1996, 1999 and 2001 – Simon Fraser University Pipe Band wins the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow.

1999 – Major John Cairns, son of Pipe Major Archie Cairns, wins the double Gold Medal at Oban and Inverness. Cairns is the first Canadian to achieve such distinction in competition and one of only a handful of pipers in the history of the competition to reach the milestone.

Appendix Two

The Edited Letters of John Wilson

1. Letter of Helen Howie to the Editor of the *Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, September 1960

Dear Sir: In reading the August Bulletin from cover to the last page, as I have for years, I happened to think that the readers might get the wrong impression of the Round Hill games from an article written by a judge of the piping.

Having a dancer and a piper in the family, we have had the pleasure of enjoying the Round Hill games several times, and I want to say without any more space, we think that Round Hill games are anything but stingy.

They charge no entry fee and they pay the highest prize money. Now what about that?

Helen Howie, Toronto, Ontario

September, 1960

***Author's Note:* The following letters appeared in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* outlining the course of events that lead to Wilson's Suspension from the Judges' Panel of the Ontario Pipers Society**

2. WELL KNOWN PIPING JUDGE SUSPENDED BY THE PIPERS SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Note: We understand that both George Duncan of Detroit and Alex McNeil of

Montreal also received a letter from the Pipers Society, but John Wilson, as the admitted instigator, undertook to reply, as he knew all the facts of the case. - Editor

Copy of Letter from the Pipers Society:

August 26, 1961

Mr. J. Wilson

4611 McRoberts Avenue

Toronto, Ontario

Dear Sir,

Early in 1961, this Society made an agreement with the people who operate most of the highland games in Ontario. A portion of this agreement clearly stated that the Executive committee of the Pipers Society would approve and engage all judges for the games. The stipulated fee for piping judges was \$50.00 plus expenses. A verbal acceptance of these conditions was received from you before the first games.

The Maxville Games Committee is protesting to the Pipers Society that you charged a fee in excess of the agreed amount without any notification whatever in advance to either party.

The executive recently held a meeting to deal with this matter and you are hereby informed that until such time as you furnish us with an acceptable explanation, either in person or in writing regarding this matter, your approval as a piping judge is suspended.

Your Truly, J. Wakefield, President

3. Copy Of Pipe Major John Wilson's Reply:

Toronto, Ontario,

September 13, 1961

Mr John Wakefield, President

The Pipers Society of Ontario

Rexdale, Ontario

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of you letter of August 26, 1961, re. Piping Judges Fees at Maxville, Ontario, and I regret if any action of mine may have caused you embarrassment. I have always believed, and I still believe, that I am perfectly free to put whatever value I please on my services. Each year, the various Games Secretaries who write asking me to judge, always request me to state my fee and this I do. It is an elementary business procedure, and it implies that fees are not the same from year to year and that they are liable to change at any time. I received no such communication from the Pipers Society.

If your representatives at Maxville had spoken to me in a reasonable way instead of in a bullying and hectoring manner, I believe I could have settled the whole thing amicably right there and then on the field. As it was, I am afraid I told your representative in no uncertain terms, what both he and the Pipers Society could do. I regret such deplorable bickering but I had great provocation. Incidentally, I telephoned the president of the Pipers Society of Ontario after Maxville Games and

registered a strong complaint about the manners of its representative.

Now here are a few points of interest which all your members should know: I arrived in Canada in January 1949. I was asked to judge that year at Lachine Games, Montreal, and the fee I asked and the fee I received was \$50.00, plus all expenses. The following year, 1950, I was asked to judge again for the same fee plus all expenses. During the past number of years I have been campaigning for higher prize money for solo pipers and pipe bands. My efforts, ably backed up by Mr. Robert Hutchison and Mr. Bruce Falconer of the Pipers Society, have met with considerable success. Although I have been receiving higher judging fees in the USA, for some years back, I did not intend to increase my fee in Canada until next year (1962). I certainly threatened (two or three years ago) to increase my fee or judge in civilian clothes or rather ordinary suits. At Caledon East, at Embro, and St. Catherines Games this year, I charged \$50.00 plus expenses, but then something happened which made me change my mind. The chairman of Cleveland Games telephoned me from Cleveland and asked me to get a drumming judge for the annual Scottish Highland Gathering in Cleveland. In the course of our conversation it transpired that the fee paid at Cleveland Games last year to the drumming judge was \$50.00 plus expenses. When I recovered from my surprise and had time to think the matter over, I realized that the gentleman concerned was perfectly correct. (Fortunately, I had charged \$75.00 plus expenses. If I had judged the whole day for the same as the drumming judge I would never have recovered from the shock. I know for a fact that George Duncan only charged \$50.00 plus expenses. I felt keenly aware however, that I was away behind the times in the evaluation of my services as a piping judge. The fee that was good in 1949 is only mediocre in 1961. In short,

the \$50.00 fee for piping judges is as out of date as the \$15.00 first prize for solo piping and \$200.00 first prize for Grade "A" pipe bands. I made up my mind there and then that I would never judge for \$50.00 again. I notified the president of the Toronto branch of the Pipers Society of my intention to raising my fee at Maxville, and I also notified the treasurer of the Ontario branch or parent body.

If the Pipers Society thinks that I was the instigator at Maxville, it is perfectly correct. I was the instigator, just as I have been the instigator in every worthwhile improvement at the Games in recent years. I was also one of the chief instigators of having the Toronto indoor games held this year instead of being allowed to lapse through sheer apathy on the part of the Pipers Society. If some of the Pipers Society officials dislike being prodded and pushed into getting things done, then let them wake up and do the job properly, or get out and let others who are really interested in doing the job. Either that or fold up the Pipers Society altogether. George Duncan and I have demonstrated on several occasions at Games in the USA that efficient judges who are keen on their job can run the various piping competitions and reckon up the pipe band points without any assistance from the Pipers Society or any other kind of society. What is more, we feel satisfied that the final points are absolutely correct.

The hasty and ill-considered action of the Pipers Society has shown me clearly that there is a strong element in the society, which, far from appreciating all I have done and am doing for piping, is definitely antagonistic to me. Forewarned is forearmed. The society can co-operate with me, or the society can be antagonistic to me. I am ready for either eventuality. Whether I am suspended or not, the Society can rest assured that I will never judge for a \$50.00 fee again, and it can hardly

expect me, after this, to judge again free, gratis, and for nothing, at any of its little winter competitions.

The action of the Pipers Society has caused so many rumors in the Piping World that I am compelled to publish this correspondence to the Piper and Dancer Bulletin. This will ensure that all interested parties will know the facts, and that false rumors and malicious scandal mongering will be, if not nipped in the bud, at least corrected.

Yours Faithfully,

John Wilson

Author's Note: The following two letters appeared in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin*, November 1962, as a consequence of Wilson's published response (see above) to the Pipers Society.

4. John Wilson versus The Pipers Society of Ontario

Dear Sir: I have read with interest the letters referring to John Wilson v. Pipers' Society of Ontario on fees and judging. From the text of both letters, it would appear that the organization is not all that it could be. I hate to put our Scottish Pipe Band Association on a pedestal, but, may I suggest that both sides get together and adopt a similar way of working to that of the SBA - have set rules, agreed by all, covering procedure, including fees.

In my opinion, the same judge or judges should not be engaged to judge the same games yearly. The aim of all should be to improve the standard of pipes and

drums. I know the country is large and distances are great, but organization need not be held back because of this. A once-yearly meeting by one representative from each of the organizations involved would go a long way to improving conditions. One thing certain, all must try and unite, otherwise, why hold competitions at all. If the organizational side was better, John Wilson and the Pipes Society of Ontario would not be exchanging letters as they are doing at present.

I know John Wilson and his playing and judging are both held in high esteem. As a judge I cannot voice my opinion as I have never attended any competition judged by him. John may have been instrumental in improving certain conditions, but I feel he should have someone else to praise him on that score. He may have been annoyed at the very thought of the past, causing him to drop a little of his decorum. For my part, I will excuse him on that.

During my stay in San Francisco I came in contact with many Canadian pipers and drummers. It was considered opinion that both John Wilson and George Duncan had the monopoly on judging piping. It was felt that, despite the trustworthiness of both men, they should not have been invited to judge so many games yearly - a change of thought is a good thing. I admire the British Columbia Pipers Society in Vancouver for trying to change their judges around yearly. Others should follow this example.

Referring now to judging where John Wilson spotted a piper sway to the ground. John was judging in the open, as opposed to judging under cover in Scotland. The rules covering judges should have given John Wilson the answer there and then. If, on the other hand, he was without any rules covering such incidents, he should have disqualified this band with a note on his points sheet stating why he had

taken this action. No band should ever expect to win under such circumstances. It makes no difference whether this incident had any apparent effect on the playing; a piper broke down and that should have been sufficient to disqualify the band. However, here again I must underline the fact that John Wilson as a judge should have been in possession of a book of rules covering him in this case, and many other likely instances.

I would suggest that bands and associations get together soon and have this state of affairs rectified. I am sure John Wilson acted honestly that day, but, in my opinion wrongly. It was not the judge to blame, but the organizational end.

Sincerely,

Donald Shaw Ramsay

Stirling, Scotland.

5. Author's Note: The following letter was drafted by the President of the Pipers Society of Ontario, Mr. John Wakefield, as a retort to John Wilson's letter dated 13 September, 1961, and was published in *The Piper and Dancer Bulletin* in November, 1962.

Dear Sir,

I would like to take this opportunity to express the views of the Executive body of the Pipers Society of Ontario regarding the article published in the September issue of the Piper and Dancer Bulletin concerning our action in suspending three piping judges from our approved panel. At the outset, I should like

to make it quite clear that we do not care to “air our dirty linen in public” but the action taken by Mr. John Wilson in publicly expressing his own views through the medium of your publication has left us with no alternative but to take off the gloves and state what we can prove are the true facts on several points contained in Mr. Wilson’s letters.

In Mr. Wilson’s opening paragraph, he states that the Pipers’ Society *did not* communicate with him to obtain his services at various games this past summer. The truth is that all of the committees who stage Highland games in co-operation with the Pipers’ Society of Ontario authorized the parent body Executive to engage all of the judges for their games last summer. I personally contacted Mr. Wilson by phone and informed him of the various games our Executive had selected him to judge. Although he denies this, he agreed not only to accept the Pipers Society choice of games, but also to judge at the games for a \$50.00 fee, plus expenses.

The action taken by our vice-president at Maxville games was endorsed unanimously by the Executive in spite of what Mr. Wilson feels was done in a “bullying and hectoring manner.”

Mr. Wilson next states that he was paid \$50.00 in 1949. While this may be true, we have in our files records indicating that Mr. Wilson was paid \$35.00 for judging in Ontario as recent as 1954.

When Mr. Wilson spoke to the Executive members about the proposed increase in fees at Maxville, they both advised him to contact the president, which he most emphatically *did not* do until *after* Maxville games.

The figures quoted by Mr. Wilson are those paid by operators of games in the United States and since our organization has no connection with these games, it

would seem that a comparison of piping and drumming judges fees, as they apply in Ontario, would be more reasonable. (It would also appear that Mr. Wilson has a strongly biased opinion what a good drumming judge is worth).

The article which appeared in the August 1960 Piper and Dancer Bulletin made reference at Round Hill, Connecticut, and it seemed that Mr. Wilson's fee was thought, at that time, to be so high that they could not afford to have him back again; so we are not the only people that have a problem with Mr. Wilson over fees.

His statement that he has been the instigator of every worthwhile improvement at the games is Mr. Wilson's own rather egotistical opinion and, I would like to assure your readers, is not necessarily endorsed by too many others who have contributed to bettering the games.

Mr. Wilson had nothing whatever to do with the running of the indoor games in Toronto this year, as he insists. I think what he is referring to is the fact that he was one of seven or eight gentlemen whose efforts resulted in the indoor games being held in 1960, but even on that occasion he was the only one of that seven or eight who made any money out of it. He was paid \$50.00 to judge.

The slanderous remarks directed at some previous officials of the Pipers Society cannot go unanswered. When Mr. Wilson came to Toronto, it was our officials who assisted him in establishing classes for instruction on the pipes. Students' fees were collected for Mr. Wilson and through the courtesy of our members he obtained free use of band rooms for instruction purposes. Apart from paying his membership dues in our association, we very seldom see Mr. Wilson at any our monthly meetings when many items are discussed which could be of special interest to him.

Men such as James Fraser, Archie Dewar, Archie Findlayson, as well as many others well-known pipers, have done every bit as much over the years for piping in Ontario as Mr. Wilson, but they do not go around pompously boasting of their accomplishments.

It seems that the Pipers' Society catered too much to John Wilson and it is now obvious that he has not appreciated it. He says that the society can co-operate with him or not. This is like the old story of Mohammed and the Mountain. Since so much has been done by the Pipers Society to assist John Wilson, it would only seem fair to expect him to co-operate with us.

Mr. Wilson closes his letter by stating that by publishing the facts with The Piper and Dancer Bulletin, "false rumors and malicious scandal-mongering will be nipped in the bud or corrected." While he does not state what rumors or scandal he is referring to, I have herein attempted to set the story straight by checking first and then putting it in writing. One rumor that I would like to establish is that nobody thinks that John Wilson's services are worth more than \$50.00. What we are trying to do is to negotiate fee increases in a business-like manner and for this reason Mr. Wilson was suspended by the Pipers Society. Mr. Alec McNeill and Mr. George Duncan were suspended for the same reason, at the same time. Mr. McNeill has provided us with a satisfactory explanation for his action at Maxville and has been reinstated as an approved judge. We have received no such communication from Mr. Duncan and so his suspension, along with Mr. Wilson's, still stands.

Thank you for this opportunity to express the view of the Pipers Society of Ontario on the foregoing subject.

Yours Truly,

John Wakefield

6. Author's Note: The following letter was composed by Donald Hatley, North Hatley, Quebec, as an outgrowth of his emotions regarding the trivialities of the two aforementioned factions.

Dear Sir

I have read with considerable misgivings the letters of John Wilson, John Wakefield and Donald Shaw Ramsay concerning the Pipers Society of Ontario's unfortunate suspension of three piping judges. It seems to me that this affair has reached ridiculous proportions, and that the Society has perhaps lost sight of certain fundamental facts about piping in eastern North America. Mr. Ramsay may never have been aware of them.

The first of these facts is this: now that Donald MacMillan has returned to South Uist, if Alec McNeill, John Wilson and George Duncan do not act as piping judges who will replace them? Competent and experienced judges are either rare or carefully hidden in North America. The only men who have in recent years demonstrated a possible capacity to adjudicate piping events, are still active competitors (with bands or otherwise) and can hardly be expected to relinquish that status. Moreover, since the judges are clearly the most important personages at highland games, and any attempt to increase their number by lowering the qualification requirements is an invitation to disaster for the games and the art of piping.

In recent years, many of us who have competed at certain gatherings south of the border have been thoroughly disgusted by the judging of men with highly questionable qualifications. I have heard pipers say that they would never return to these games and I have wondered at the inefficiency or incompetence of games committees, which did not take pains to secure able judges. Often it happens that the same committees are willing to go to considerable expense to bring non-competing bands to the games as special attractions for the attraction-loving, camera-carrying, Bermuda-shorts-wearing clientele. There are many, including some pipers, who regard the music of the bagpipes as something for the amusement of the culture-innocent masses. If this attitude ever becomes widespread, and if highland games, no matter what the reason, become unwilling or unable to obtain the services of the few capable judges available, then piping is not an art, it is an abomination.

I and many other pipers have on occasion disagreed with the decision of Wilson and Duncan. But that is only normal; we have never reached the disconcerting conclusion that these judges were operating on guesswork and hearsay. It would appear, therefore, that the pipers Society of Ontario is indeed fortunate to have three men such as Wilson, Duncan and McNeill in the judging circuit, despite whatever personality conflicts arise. These men are guaranteeing the ART of piping, and since they cannot be replaced the Society cannot afford to play with them as with pawns on a chessboard, its principles and pride notwithstanding. The furthering of the area of piping must be the pre-eminent and all-existing purpose for the Society and everyone concerned. And speaking of personality conflicts, it is to be expected that these will occur again and again in the realm of musicians and their associates. Even pipers fail to realize that if George Duncan, John Wilson and Alec McNeill had

chosen (God forbid!) to take up the violin, piano, trombone or trumpet instead of the Great Highland bagpipe, they would now most probably be leading the comfortable existences of celebrated virtuosos. Mr. Wakefield speaks of "Mr. Wilson 's own rather egotistical opinion" - but if Mr. Wilson's opinion is in fact, egotistical, then it perforce must be excused in view of his artistic accomplishments, just as the eccentricities of Glen Gould or the tantrums of Maria Callas have been excused. It is high time accomplished pipers were considered as musicians and the customary allowances made. If other pipers and their associates refuse to accord such treatment, how can outsiders be expected to do so.

I can recall, for instance, an occasion when I was asked to play for a commercial undertaking. Being a student and in need of money, I consented to attend the rehearsal. No mention of a fee was made at the beginning but during the rehearsal I had the opportunity of talking to two female models who, in "kilts" which would have made Gordon of Glasgow weep in despair - they were about five inches long and left nothing to the imagination - were to walk before me and unveil the product being boosted. In the course of the conversation I found out that these girls were each receiving \$25.00 for a rehearsal and \$50.00 for the actual performance. Eventually the official in charge came over to me and asked how much I wished to be paid. I repeated the figures mentioned by the girls. The official was visibly shocked.

"I don't understand," he said, "we have never paid more than five or ten dollars for a piper."

Then I carefully explained to him that although my unshaven legs were scarcely as attractive as those of his models, my time and competence were infinitely

more valuable. I concluded by suggesting that he hire someone to play the violin or accordion. Immediately he saw the point, and my simple requests were satisfied.

Now if this commercial gentleman could be made to realize that pipers must be treated as are other musicians, then how much more should the Pipers Society of Ontario and the various games committees realize that people of the caliber of Messrs Wilson, Duncan and McNeill deserve special consideration. The Society, in fact, should revise its unrealistic minimum on judges' fees, which ought to be at least double the present stipulation. And there should be no maximum. If a judge can reach an agreement with games officials to be paid more than the minimum, then it is no-one else business. The Society, furthermore must be prepared to accept the idiosyncracies of the men who justify its very existence. The ideal, of course, would be mutual understanding and goodwill, but human beings in concert have never been able to achieve that ideal; consequently, someone must have patience and forbearance. If piping is to be fostered in eastern North America, then the pipers societies must be strong in their support and protection of the pipers rights, but pliable in their dealings with the individuals upon whom they depend for artistic quality.

I should be happy to learn that the Pipers Society of Ontario had without further ado dropped its continuing suspension of John Wilson and George Duncan and broadened its views on judge's fees, thus proving its magnanimity, its singular concern with the art fo piping rather than with personalities, and its recognition that musical ability is of greater importance than mere functional regularity.

Yours faithfully,

Ronald Sutherland

North Hatley, Province of Quebec

7. Author's Note: The following letter, authored by John Wilson, appeared in the November 1962 edition of the Piper and Dancer Bulletin, one year after Wilson had been suspended from the Ontario Pipers Society Adjudication Panel. By this time, Wilson had been graciously reinstated by the Executive; he had fulfilled his judging commitments throughout the 1962 highland games season. However, characteristic of the Polemicist, Wilson refused to put the manner to rest and was compelled to write one last opinion piece, vindicating his position of lofty righteousness, as it were, while vanquishing the Society's fee policy and personally degrading their character.

Dear Sir:

I have one more item of information which I think might interest and perhaps astonish your readers. At the Glengarry gathering, Maxville, in 1959, my fee and expenses as piping judge came to a total of \$95.00. My fee was \$50.00. The drumming judge's fee and expenses came to a total of \$115.00. Where did I get those figures? From no less a person than the secretary of the Glengarry Highland Gathering, Maxville, himself. A return rail ticket for the drumming judge would have cost \$5.00 more than mine. Did the Maxville committee complain? As one Maxville official said to me at the games this year: "You know, John, we never complain." Did the Pipers Society make a fuss? As Eliza Doolittle says: "Not bloody likely." I am not condemning the drumming judge; in fact I am grateful to

him. What I do say, is that in maintaining the *status quo* for so many years, the piping judges were, as I have stated before, away behind the times. When I say that the Pipers' Society showed a colossal and lamentable ignorance of the facts of the situation, I am being charitable. I don't know what George Duncan and Alex McNeill think, but, speaking for myself, I consider that the Pipers Society of Ontario owes me an unqualified apology. I don't suppose I'll get it, because I don't think there are enough gentlemen on the Executive of the Society to pass such a motion.

I am happy to have been able to give your readers all the facts of this ridiculous business, and I am sure your readers appreciate getting the inside story on matters which, after all, concern a large number of them vitally.

Some good may result from all of this. It may cause people to pay more attention to what people like myself have to say, rather than to what is said by individuals who are motivated more by jealousy and/or ignorance than by any real desire to helping piping or drumming.

I am always willing to give advice if I am asked for it, on matters pertaining to piping, to individuals, games committees, societies, etcetera. I have done so in the past, and nothing has changed my willingness to help.

Thanking you for your patience.

John Wilson

Appendix Three

List of Canadian Scottish Regiments (Active Order of Battle and Supplementary Order of Battle)

1. 48th Highlanders of Canada
2. Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders
3. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's)
4. The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada
5. The Calgary Highlanders
6. The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa
7. The Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's)
8. The Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment
9. The Lake Superior Scottish Regiment
10. the Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)
11. The 1st and 2nd Battalions, Nova Scotia Highlanders
12. The Perth Regiment
13. The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada
14. The Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada
15. The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada
16. The Toronto Scottish Regiment (Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother's Own)

Canadian Forces Units with Pipe Bands

Canadian Air Force

1. 12 Wing Shearwater (Halifax, Nova Scotia)
2. 4 Wing Cold Lake (Cold Lake, Alberta)
3. 14 Wing Greenwood (Greenwood, Nova Scotia)
4. 19 Wing Comox (Comox, British Columbia)
5. 8 Wing Trenton (Trenton, Ontario)
6. 400 (Toronto) Tactical Helicopter Squadron
7. 401 (Montreal) Squadron Pipe Band
8. 402 (Winnipeg) Squadron Pipes and Drums
9. Air Command Pipes and Drums (National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Ontario)

Canadian Army

- 1.) 2 Combat Mechanized Brigade Group Pipes and Drums (Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, Ontario)
- 2.) 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment (Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick)
- 3.) Combat Training Centre Pipes and Drums (Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick)
- 4.) The Ceremonial Guard (Ottawa, Canada)
- 5.) Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) (Canadian Forces Base Edmonton, Alberta)
- 6.) 1st Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery,

Appendix Four

Pipe Major W.J. Gilmour Extract From Piper and Dancer Bulletin May 1965 (pp 4-5)

CANADIAN PIPE MAJOR WINS BRONZE STAR

Pipers, drummers, buglers and dancers of the several Scottish regiments at present stationed in Germany and also those of the 2nd Bn. The Royal Highlanders (Black Watch) of Canada, were the guests recently of the 1st Bn. Queen's Own Highlanders at Mercer Barracks, Osnabruck for the battalion piping competitions.

The competition follows the practice of the Queen's Own Highlanders while they were in the Far East, and indeed that of their forebears the Seaforth Highlanders and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, of throwing the annual battalion competitions open to competitors from other regiments and corps in the district.

The competition was pretty well representative of the Army and in the circumstances it was most appropriate that the overall champion, who was Pipe Major. W.J. Gilmour, of the 2nd Bn. The Royal Highlanders of Canada, should receive a bronze star presented by the Royal Scottish Pipers Society. A prize was also presented by the Piobaireachd Society for the winner of the open piobaireachd event - this was also won by Pipe Major Gilmour. A number of attractive prizes had also been donated by bagpipe manufacturers whose generosity, as on previous occasions, added to an impressive prize list.

The piping events are perhaps the most important and the Queen's Own Highlanders had invited Lt. Col. DJS Murray, Maj. L. Cameron, Capt. GB Murray, and Pipe Major MacLellan to come out to Germany to act as judges. Despite the "loaded" bench (Maj. Cameron was the Queen's Own Highlanders medical officer in the Far East), the judges decisions were unbiased and well received by the competitors. Those competitors who had attended the pipe major's course at the Army School of Piping and who held the certificate of proficiency were only allowed to enter for the open events.

Pipe Major W. J. Gilmour (Toronto) won first prize in all three major competitions and gave an outstanding performance in every respect. Among the younger players two young Queen's Own Highlanders who have recently passed through the Highland Brigade Junior Soldiers Wing showed promise, Pipers Iain Morrison (Stornoway) and Kenneth Griffin (Drumnadrochit). Every piper is a learner at some stage and the judges were impressed by the standard of instruction given to the young pipers of the Royal Scots Greys... Lt. Col. A.G. Findlay, Commanding Officer of the 1st Bn. Queen's Own Highlanders, addressed the company before they dispersed. He said that he hoped this competition would be continued in future years as it gave the competitors something to work for, an opportunity to meet together and exchange ideas...He concluded by congratulating Pipe Major Gilmour on an outstanding performance.

Appendix Five

List of Pipe Bands Registered with the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, 2007.

The list below is not a comprehensive record of all pipe bands in the province of Ontario. For example, there are 11 Highland militia regiments based in Ontario but only six units have registered their pipe bands with the PPBSO.

Bands

Metropolitan Toronto Police
78th Fraser Highlanders
Peel Regional Police Pipe Band
Niagara Regional Police (Grade 2)
Niagara Regional Police (Grade 4)
Glengarry Pipe Band (Grade 2)
Glengarry Pipe Band (Grade 4)
Glengarry Pipe Band (Grade 5)
Strathroy Legion Pipe Band
Ingersoll Pipe Band (Grade 4)
McComb Memorial Pipe Band
Bowmanville Legion Pipe Band
Guelph Pipe Band
Fraser Highlanders of Ottawa Pipe Band
Ottawa Police Service Pipe Band
Brighton Legion Highlanders
Durham Regional Police Pipe Band (Grade 3)
Windsor Police Pipe Band (Grade 3)
Windsor Police Pipe Band (Grade 1)
Dofasco Pipe Band
Georgetown Pipe Band
Hamilton Police Pipe Band
Sons of Scotland
Sons of Scotland (Grade 5)
Laurel Highlanders
Halton Regional Police
Strathnaver Pipe Band
400 Tactical Helicopter Squadron
8 Wing Trenton Pipes and Drums
Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment of Canada)
(Montreal, Quebec)
Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)
Toronto Scottish Regiment (Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother's Own)
2nd Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders
48th Highlanders of Canada

49th Field Regiment (Royal Canadian Artillery)
Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa
Jack Dunbar Memorial Pipe Band
Brantford Pipes and Drums
Penetangore Pipes and Drums
Penetangore (Grade 3)
Arnprior MacNab Pipes and Drums
Sam Scott Memorial Pipe Band
Braemar Pipe Band
The Robert Whittle Memorial Pipe Band
Rob Roy Pipe Band
Rob Roy (Grade 5)
Paris/Port Dover Pipe Band
Fergus Pipe Band
Grand Celtic Junior Pipe Band
McComb Memorial Pipe Band
Kempfenfelt Pipes and Drums
Sarnia Legion Pipe Band

Appendix Six
Visual Illustrations



Figure 1 - Pipe Major Ronald MacKenzie, (1842-1916), 78th Highlanders (Rosshire Buffs). MacKenzie was widely recognised as one of the finest pipers of his day. See Chapter Four, pp 87-88.

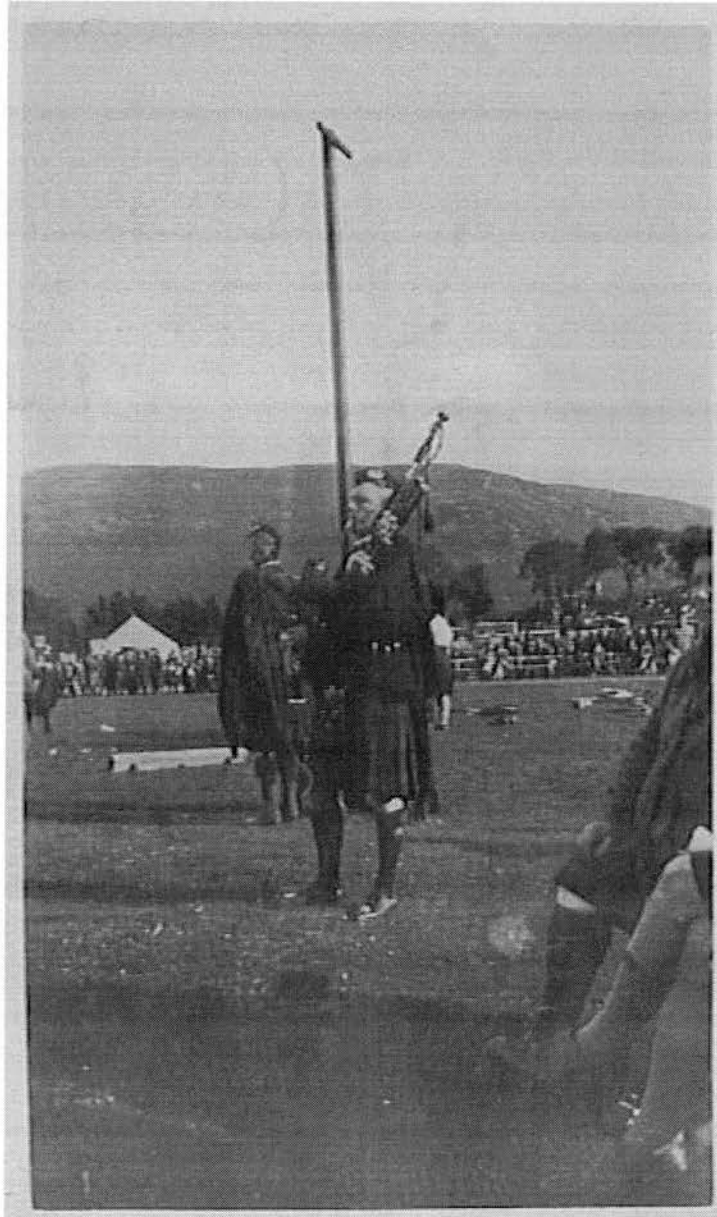


Figure 2 - Pipe Major John Wilson (1906-1979), competing at Braemar Gathering, Scotland, 1931. Wilson emigrated to Ontario in 1949 where he became a key figure in the onward development of piping. See Chapters Seven and Eight.



Figure 3 - 78th Highlanders Troop the Colours, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Summer 2003. As in Scotland, ceremonial performance continues to be a key part of the modern day pipe band movement in Canada, despite the increasing emphasis on concert- and competition-based activities.



Figure 4 - Pipes and Drums of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, circa 1915. The Regiment was founded during World War One. See Chapter Five, p 123.



Figure 5 - 72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion Pipe Band plays troops out of trenches, World War One. As was the case with the Scottish regiments within the British Army, the pipe band served key functional roles in times of conflict within Canadian Scottish Regiments also, both as a pace setter for troop movements and as a musical boost to morale.



Figure 6 - Pipe Major Iain MacLeod, Edinburgh City Police, receives the Intercontinental Championships Cup at the 1st Annual Pipe Band Championships, Toronto, 1972. These Championships played a key role in the onward development of Canadian pipe bands within the competitive sphere, providing the chance to gauge their standards of musicianship against their Scottish peers. See Chapter Eleven.



Figure 7 - Pipe Major James Fraser hands over command of the Pipes and Drums of the 48th Highlanders to Pipe Major Archie Dewar, Toronto, 1952. The event was newsworthy enough to attract the attention of the national media, as indicated by the presence of the CBC Radio microphone. See Chapter Six.



Figure 8 - Trooping the Colours, 48th Highlanders of Canada, Varsity Stadium, Toronto, circa 1950.



**Figure 9 - Piper James C. Richardson V.C. 16th Canadian Infantry Battalion.
Photo taken prior to attack at Regina Trench, October 1916.**

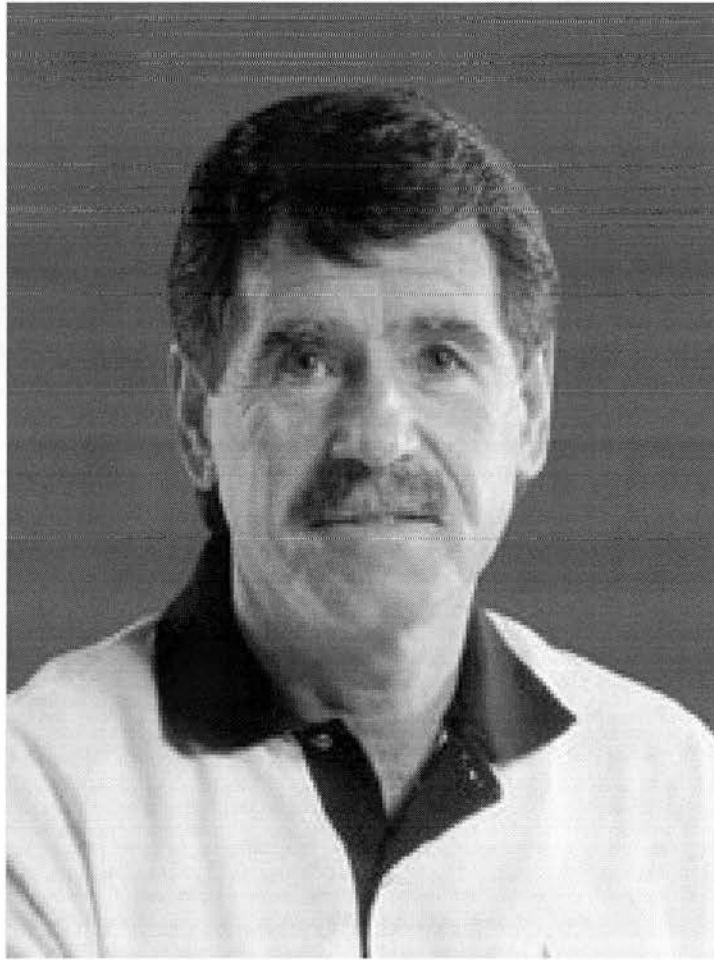


Figure 10 – Pipe Major William (Bill) Livingstone, Gold Medalist and Pipe Major of the 78th Fraser Highlanders who in 1987 became the first non-Scottish band to win the World Pipe Band Championship. See Chapter Ten.

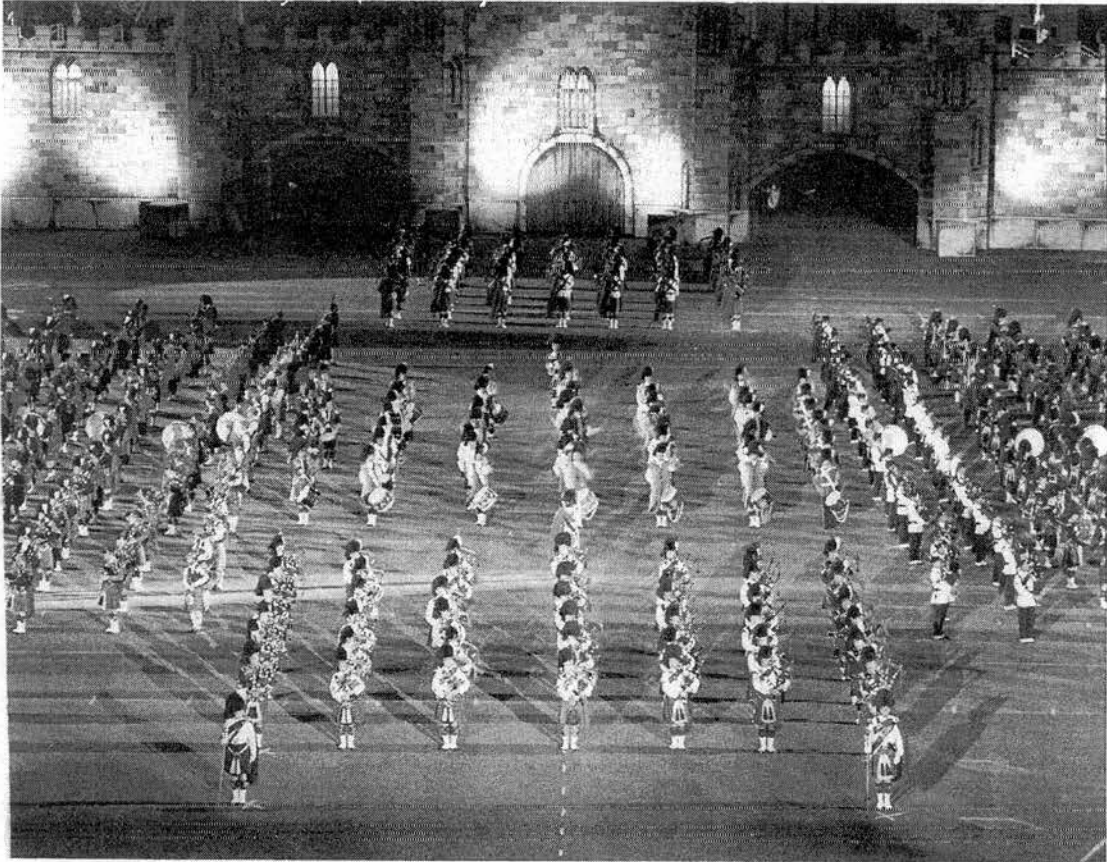


Figure 11 - 1977 Scottish World Festival Tattoo. The Massed Pipe Bands of Scotland, Canada, and Northern Ireland. Pictured in the foreground are from left to right: Pipers of the Lothian and Borders Police, 48th Highlanders (P/M Reay Mackay), Toronto Scottish Regiment (P/M John Wakefield), Metropolitan Toronto Police (P/M John MacDonald) and the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (P/M Tony Crease).

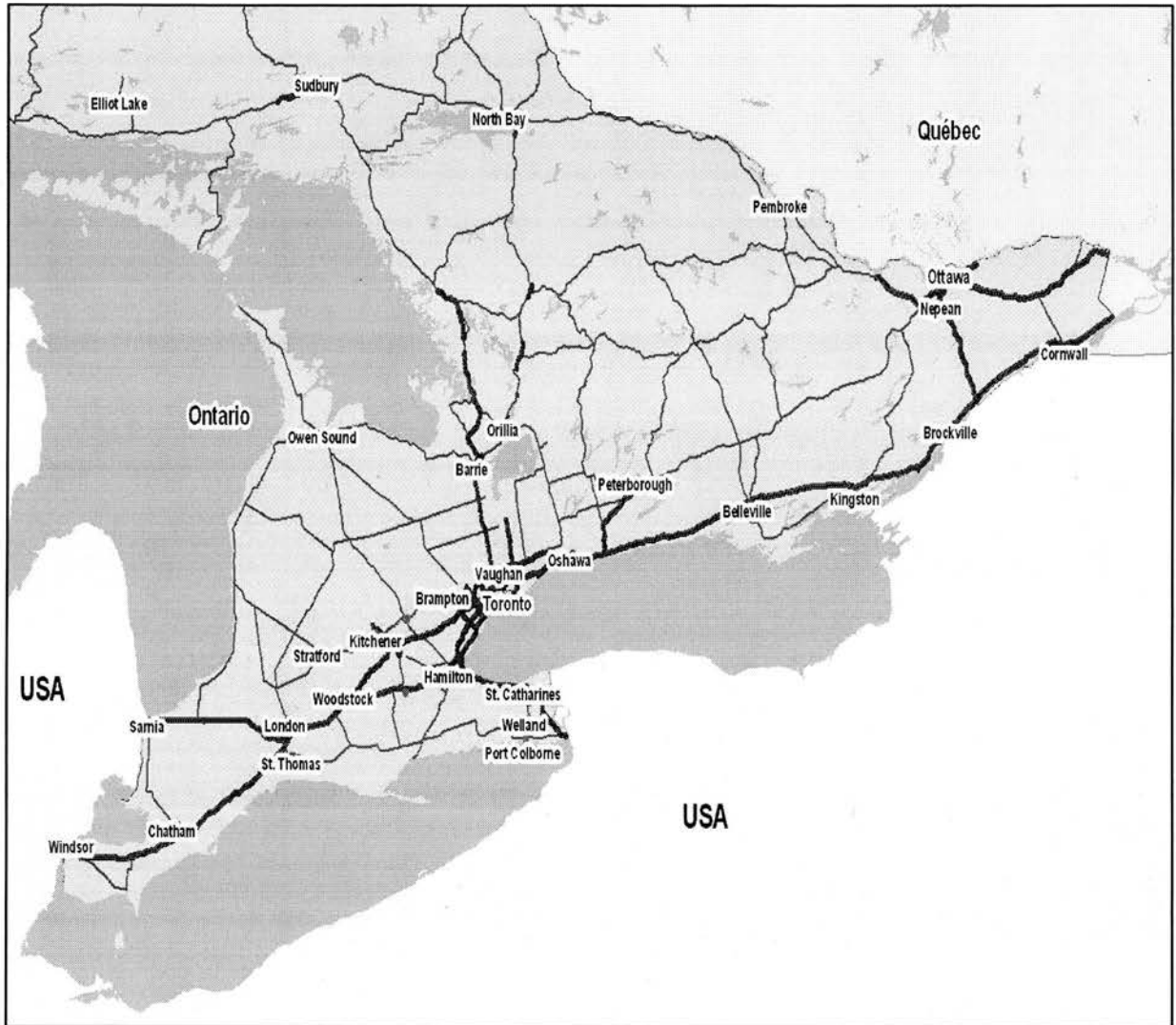


Figure 12 - Map of Ontario Showing Main Settlements and Principal Places Referred to in the Text.

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