

MacLeod, Martha: The Highland Scots ^[1]

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Martha MacLeod: The Highland Scots

by David Cecelski. "[Listening to History](#) ^[2]," *News & Observer*. Published 3/10/2002. Copyrighted. Reprinted with permission.

I visited with Martha MacLeod near Aberdeen, in [Moore County](#) ^[3], in a home built by her great-grandfather 200 years ago. Hers is the story of the [Highland Scots](#) ^[4], their great migration to the Cape Fear Valley in the 18th century, and an enduring bond to Scotland. More Highland Scots settled in the Cape Fear Valley than anywhere else in the American Colonies, and she makes the great events of the Highland Scot settlement -- the 1746 Battle of Culloden, the Highland Clearances, the American Revolution -- seem like yesterday. A teacher who moved home 50 years ago to take care of her parents, MacLeod has lived up well to the clan MacLeod's motto -- "Hold fast."



Martha MacLeod. Photo by Chris Seward, 2002. To request permission for that MacLeod story to purchase a print, please contact the News & Observer.

My great-great-grandfather, Neil MacLeod, came from the Isle of Skye in 1774 and settled in what is now Fort Bragg. He was in his 50s and he had two wives, and both of them had died, and he had four boys that he brought with him. To have Neil bought this land in 1777. It was a Highland Scot settlement all through this area: no towns, just settlement. They came up the Cape Fear, and they probably came up Rockfish Creek as far as it went. His house was on a hill over there. The clan MacLeod had a chieftain living in Dunvegan, on the Isle of Skye, for 700 or 800 years. It goes back that far. Up until the time of The Clearances, the clan chieftain took care of everybody. He saw to it that they were cared for and protected. After they got settled here, my great-great-grandfather Neil sent the boys over to the Clark place, which is about 6 miles across the woods, for an errand. There had been a massacre -- the Whigs and Tories, you know -- and while they were in the woods they just decided to kill whomever they could find. They killed two of Clark's boys and Alexander MacLeod, who was a young teenage boy then. He would have been my great-granduncle, the son of Neil. The women hid John, my great-grandfather. John grew up and married one of the Clark girls, Christian Clark. Squire John -- that's what they called him -- got married the first time in 1797 or '98, and he built this house for Christian Clark to live in. It's built out of heart pine. My grandfather and all of them in Scotland were Presbyterians, so they brought it with them and they were very dedicated to the church. My grandfather was born in September, and in the middle of the winter, Squire John took him out to Old Bethesda Church, where the preachers at Bethesda preached in Gaelic up until sometime in the 1800s. Even the slaves born here spoke Gaelic. Of course, in Scotland the English eventually told the Highlanders they couldn't speak Gaelic, but they did here. The first time I went to Scotland, when I went to Skye I had this strange feeling that I had come home. Every four years, when the clan MacLeod has a parliament in Dunvegan, the MacLeods come from all over the world: Canada and New Zealand. When I first went to the MacLeod castle, it was awe-inspiring. I had heard things ever since I was a child that made it special to me, like the fairy flag that hangs in the castle that is supposed to give good luck to the MacLeods. One of the MacLeods' whole lot of it is the land. It's very rugged and it's pretty barren, but it is very beautiful. There are so many lochs all over it, and the sea is close by. The weather, a lot of the places, is damp and cold and the strong wind blowing, and you know

For more on the Highland Scots in North Carolina, I heartily recommend the [Scottish Heritage Center](#) ^[5] at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg.

Additional information from NCpedia editors at the State Library of North Carolina :

Martha MacLeod lived from November 16, 1923 - October 27, 2013.

Obituary: Martha M. McLeod. *The Pilot*, October 29, 2013: http://www.thepilot.com/obituaries/martha-m-mcleod/article_979bdc86-40c1-11e3-a7f1-001a4bc6878. ^[6]

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