

Alexandria Times

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Alexandria
COMMUNITY MEDIA

The Alexandria-Scotland connection

Alexandria celebrates the return visit of Lord and Lady Provost of Dundee, Scotland, Bill and Yvonne Campbell, at the Annual Scottish Walk in Old Town. The connection between Alexandria and Scotland is part of our city's origin story.

Despite the union of England and Scotland in 1707, Scottish merchants and businessmen found their English counterparts less than willing to share the tobacco industry with them. While English businesses owned the tobacco plantations in the tidewater regions, Scottish investors and businessmen established outposts in the Piedmont region.

As early as 1707, a factory owned by Glasgow merchants was operating on the Potomac River. Hugh West established himself as a tobacco

inspector at the Hunting Creek Warehouse, the predecessor of Alexandria at the foot of Oronoco Street, as early as 1732. By 1740, he was joined by fellow Scotsmen John Carlyle, William Ramsay and John Pagan in exporting tobacco hogsheads to Glasgow.

Carlyle built his house on 121 N. Fairfax St., where you can still visit the house that General Braddock took for his headquarters in 1755. Ramsay was named the first honorary mayor of Alexandria in 1761.

Ramsay built a house on the northeast corner of King and Fairfax Streets, which has been reconstructed and now serves as the Alexandria Visitor's Center. The Maryland Gazette reported in 1761 that Ramsay led the city's celebration of St. Andrew's Day, in celebration of

Scotland's patron saint.

William Hunter Jr., our mayor from 1789 to 1790, founded a fraternal organization in Alexandria known as the St. Andrew's Society. The society consisted of both native Scots and those of Scottish descent, which raised money for charitable purposes.

It met quarterly at various local taverns, and their annual highlight was the St. Andrew's Day feast on Nov. 30. The Society remained active until the 1840s in Alexandria, and one of its offshoots was incorporated in Washington, D.C. in 1855. It is still active today.

In part due to its historical connection to Scotland, Alexandria and Dundee have been sister cities since 1993. Dundee is the fourth-largest city in Scotland, and is also its sunni-



Bill and Yvonne Campbell.

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est city. This year will mark the third time the Lord and Lady Provost Campbell have visited our city to observe the Scottish Christmas Walk festivities.

Their visit, and the annual Christmas Walk, are an enduring reminder of our town's long connection to Scotland.

Learn more about this year's 54th Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade at visitalexandria.com/holidays/scottish-walk.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.