

## *Sennachie's Corner: the first story*

*(read the first of four short stories from the Sennachie)*

### **A Civil War Story**

Major General James "Birdseye" McPherson

(condensed from Urlar **Issue # 163 (Spring) 2017**, with thanks to Angus MacPherson)

James "Birdseye" McPherson (14 Nov 1828 - 22 July 1864) was a career US Army officer, who served with the Union Army during the US Civil War. He met Emily Hoffman of Baltimore in San Francisco in 1859, to whom he became engaged. Their wedding was postponed due to the Civil War.

He served under Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, and became Lt. Colonel under General Grant. He participated in the capture of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February 1862 and the Battle of Shiloh April 2-7, 1862. He was promoted to Brig. General on October 8, 1862, and commanded the XVII Corps, Army of the Tennessee. He was promoted to Major General and given command of the entire Army of the Tennessee.

He tried to get leave to finally wed, but was hindered by the urgency of the Georgia campaign and was never able to wed his beloved.

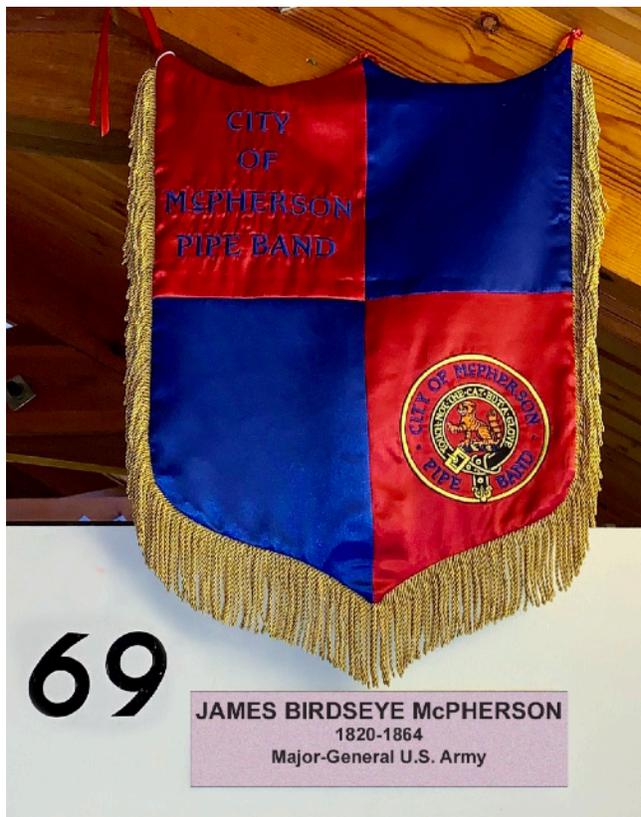
On July 22, 1864, the first day of the Battle of Atlanta, General McPherson was cut off by Confederate troops and was shot off his horse while riding between Union positions. According to reports, he refused to surrender and was trying to escape capture when he fell.

He was the second highest ranking Union officer killed in action. His aide was captured, and it has been said that when asked who the officer was who was killed, he said, "Sir, it is General McPherson. You have killed the best man in our Army."

Many lasting monuments to this Civil War hero remain, including a statue of the General mounted on his horse in McPherson, Kansas. He was memorialized with his picture on the \$2 McPherson "fancy back" currency note of 1890. There is a monument in East Atlanta at McPherson Avenue and Monument Avenue, marking the location of his death.

#### **Clan Macpherson Museum note:**

*In the Clan Macpherson Museum there hangs a banner in honor of Major General James "Birdseye" McPherson. Go to the Clan Museum webpages using the link here, take the tour, and find Panel 69, to read more about this McPherson.*



***Attached Photograph***

*The banner from the City of McPherson Pipe Band  
McPherson, Kansas*

---

***Sennachie's Corner: the second story***

*(read the second of four short stories from the Sennachie*

**King Robert I: Robert The Bruce**

a short story leading up to one critical confrontation

(condensed from a past Urlar issue, with thanks to Angus MacPherson)

The story of Robert's rise to become King of Scotland during the period called "The Wars of Independence" (1296-1357) is lengthy and complicated. King

Robert I "The Bruce" was born in 1274. He reigned from 1306-1329. For generations before, his family had been loyal to the English King. Robert supported William Wallace in 1297, and had re-aligned himself with Edward I "Longshanks" by 1302.

In 1306, Robert murdered his rival John "Red" Comyn in Greyfriars Church near Dumfries, greatly upsetting the English King and resulting in excommunication by the Pope. His rival gone, Robert was crowned at Scone on 25 March 1306.

By 1309, Robert I controlled over two-thirds of Scotland, but not the Lothians, Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee, and other southern power centers. Over the next few years, the Scots under Robert's leadership gradually unseated the English garrisons in these areas.

The Scots had laid siege on Stirling Castle which was held by an English garrison. In reaction to this aggression, Edward II assembled a huge army in Edinburgh, which marched on Stirling Castle to relieve them of the siege. Marching west along the Firth of Forth through Falkirk, and on toward Stirling Castle, came 15,000 infantry and archers, plus 2000 knights.

What happened was legendary. The vanguard of this great army was 600 heavy cavalry in full armor which reached Bannockburn (within sight of the walls of Stirling Castle) on 23 June 1314. A great knight, Sir Henry de Bohun, spotted Robert The Bruce on his Scottish pony drilling his troops. Riding a huge English war horse and fully armored, Sir Henry boldly rode forward alone to challenge the Scottish King in personal combat. The Bruce, wearing chain mail armor and armed with only a small war axe and riding a small grey palfrey pony rode forth to meet him in lone combat.

"Sir Henry charged the King with his great lance as in a joust. Robert rode fearlessly into the melee at full gallop to meet his adversary. Skillfully avoiding the lance, The Bruce plunged his axe through the helmet of Sir Henry, deeply penetrating his skull and brain, killing him instantly. The head of the axe broke off in Henry's head, causing Robert to later lament the loss of his favourite axe."

For a longer rendition of this story, see “**Sennachie’s History**” in the **Urlar Issue #157 (Autumn) 2015**.

For further reading, the **Bibliography** of this story follows:

- (1) **Robert The Bruce, King of Scots**, Scott, Ronald McNair, Carroll & Graf Publishers, New York
  - (2) **Collins Dictionary Scottish History**, Donnachie & Hewitt, Harper Collins Publishers, Glasgow
- 

*Sennachie’s Corner: the third story*

*(read the third of four short stories from the Sennachie)*

### **The Origin of the Cap Badge**

*with thanks to Richard Gillaspy*

The cap badge is a distinctive part of Highland dress. Used as identification within a clan, the cap badge has taken many forms over the centuries: *plants, colored ribbon or cloth, and finally the metal badges* worn today.

**The plant badge** is a sprig of the plant affixed to the cap or bonnet. Each clan used a specific plant to identify their members or clansmen. Some of the plant badges are officially recorded in the Lord Lyon Court. White heather is officially recorded as the plant badge for the Clan Macpherson.

**The cockade** came into use during battle. The cockade was a knot of ribbon or similar cloth worn on the cap or bonnet as a badge. It was the Chief’s ‘color(s)’

for identification as a clansman to his Chief. At times, the plant was affixed to the cockade.

*The metal cap badge* came into common use when technology arrived, facilitating mass production of the Chief's crest plate with the surrounding strap and buckle. The strap and buckle implies the clansman wearing his Chief's crest is the clansman of that Chief.

The use of a Chief's badge may date back to the 15th century. A silver badge was individually made, and not widely used. It was the custom for lords or chiefs to give their followers a silver plate of their crest to wear as a badge, to which was affixed a leather strap. When not in use, the strap was coiled around the crest creating 'the crested badge.' Thus, the strap and buckle around the crest came into being. The crest was a heraldic symbol. The Chief succeeded upon his predecessor's death to inherit the crest.

In Clan Macpherson, the crest is the cat, believed to represent St. Chattan. St. Chattan was a bishop, and led the tribe into Christianity. The Gaelic word Chattan means 'a small cat.'

---

### *Sennachie's Corner, the fourth story*

*(read the fourth of four short stories from the Sennachie)*

## **A Surname History**

Clark - Clarkson

(Clarke, Clerk, Clerke)

*with thanks to Richard Gillaspay*

The surname Clark(e) and its variations are one of the oldest associated family names of Clan Chattan and Clan Macpherson. The name Clark(e) is the anglicized form of the Gaelic name Cleireach (Chlerich) which means 'a man in a religious order' such as a cleric or clergyman. Cleric (Clerec) means a priest. Clergy in religious orders that could marry and have children would use this name. Mac-a'-chlerich means son of the Cleric or Clarkson. The names Clerk and Clark are ecclesiastical names going back to the ancestors of the Macphersons.