

VINCERE VEL MORI

CLAN MACDOWALL NEWSLETTER

October 2015

"In very old age we tend to philosophize, "to meet trouble with equanimity", rather than to flex our atrophied musculature with targe and claymore in hand.

In Canada and Scotland we are still contending with the inflationary recession that came like an epidemic or other natural disaster, and it is threatening further international aftershocks.

The popular contending pre-occupation is in the instant virtual cyberspace on the Internet, so disruptive of diplomatic thought and printed publication. Yet we have valuable historical traditions that support bloodlines hanging on by surname and DNA against democratic hordes and developing robotic "intelligence".

Rather than sink into oblivion let us reflect on the strengths of our past principles, and rally to survive for the record as MacDowalls."

Best regards and good fortune,

Fergus (Garthland)



Amanda McDowell Family Diary from the American Civil War

Note From the Editor

I believe every family generation has defining moments. When we choose our paths, make our stands, where we love laugh and cry. History alone, records our deeds if we were so blessed to have ever told them...

This is one such history written in Amanda McDowell's diary between 1861–1865.

Curtis McDowell had ridden to obtain supplies for the school and to hear the latest news of events that threatened the peace of this Tennessee mountain community. From a row of dormitories that curved against the mountainside a young man in tight homespun pants came sprinting across the road to stable and feed his schoolmaster's horse. The school had been stirred into action by the clatter of hoof beats upon the frozen road. The horse was jaded by the long trip to Sparta.

The young student who anxiously met his master led the fretful horse to its stable. Anxious faces peered from the dormitory cabins where preparation for the evening meal was well under way. Professor McDowell turned away from the young man without a word save his muttered "Thank you". Usually he was filled with pride at each return from the outside world, but not today.

The heavy door of the double log house flung open before him, and two sleek brown heads were turned toward him. As they saw him the younger of the two girls gathered her heavy woolen skirts in her hands and lifted them to the shoe tops and ran gaily down the path toward him, hailing him with delight. He smiled at her affectionate and almost Boisterous manner, and the smile deepened when he saw that her sister had arrived almost as quickly, but without haste or the least a lift of her purplish gray soft wool skirt. Amanda the older took the saddle bags from her father's tired hand and walked on the opposite side of her younger prettier sister. "Are you tired Father"? asked Amanda the older. He was slow to answer "More discouraged than tired, daughter" he answered. She knew immediately that he had bad news from the war. The girls attempted to cheer their Father, with news of the students that day, but he did not respond as usual.

Finally he groaned "Girls—girls" he said The finest of our young men to be sacrificed to war ! It is here, daughters, there is no escape !

A quiet moment before the storm

As Mary attempted to close the heavy wooden door and slip the latch a hand pressed against it. and the voice of the young man that had stabled his master's horse asked to come in. "Are you too tired to tell us what you have heard, Mr. McDowell?" he asked, "We are anxious to know how it looks on the outside."

"Will you come back after supper and bring all the young men who want to come with you? It is your right to know what I have learned and My Opinion on the matter, for you are the ones who will suffer on the battlefield. I shall suffer here !" Answered the tired school-master.

The two girls without a spoken word moved swiftly to pull an easy chair to the fireside and a small table set beside it, upon which they placed the simple evening meal bringing it from the kitchen hearth, where it had been set to warm. They had fresh hominy, fresh sweet milk, bread, a pat of butter, a bowl of honey, potatoes, baked in the oven and dried fruit pies. Mary took off her father's shoes and put on easy slippers instead, and while they were working they keep up a lively stream of chatter, trying to cheer him before the meal. Amanda told him of the meat that had been brought by the Shelby girls and their brother on tuition, of feather and wool brought by the new students from Buffalo Valley, and some good yarn socks knitted by Mrs. Hickman which Jane brought to pay her way. It was the beginning of the January school term and Amanda had received the scholars as they had come in during his absence. Now finally left alone, the father and daughters ate their meal beside the fire almost in silence. They scarcely cleared away the tale, making swift trips in and out of the room to carry food and dishes to the kitchen, when the first knock at the door testified to the eagerness of the young men to hear the war news. They came with anxiety and with enthusiasm, most dressed in their homespun clothes in heavy boots many were homemade but all were cleaned and well greased.

The young men were mannerly, well behaved and courteous to their schoolmaster. After the young men had seated themselves as best they could, many were forced to stand or hunker down together in the door. Mary put out a basket of chestnuts and peanuts. and the two girls quietly withdrew to the adjoining room. The door was left slightly ajar, Mary said " I think I heard Father say the boys would not have to go for some time, even if Tennessee secedes. "Yes but would they wait? Do you hear the excited voices in Fathers room now? There is something about war, Mary that gets into the blood of young men—and breaks the hearts of women," Amanda added sadly. The girls were so busily engaged that they scarcely heard the shuffle of heavy shoes and the moving of chairs that told the conversation was over in the master's room.. When the door shut behind the last of there visitors, the girls went in to prepare the bed and have the usual good-m\night talk with their father. Amanda took the brush and began brushing her fathers thinning hair as she usually did, while he tactfully began telling them of the trip to Sparta. Mary turned down the covers on his bed and took the smoothing iron from the fire and wrapped it for his feet. "Governor Harris has called an extra session of the legislature to meet tomorrow to try to make some settlement about this war agitation" he told them Both girls tried to comfort him saying "maybe they could settle without war , if not surely if not it won't be a long war" His answer came sadly "Even the thought of war is too Long"

A quiet moment before the storm

The Bible chapter was short and soon two rooms were quiet and dark except for flickering firelight from the half covered coals. Mary slept soundly and did not know that after a fitful nap her father sat long by the fire on his hearth, even adding a log from the hoard in the corner. Curtis McDowell was greatly disturbed by the rumored war that threatened to destroy his country, his school built up by long and tireless efforts, the lives of his two sons, and the security he desired for his daughters. It was long toward morning before he went back to his bed and a few hours of troubled sleep. Amanda too had been sleepless. She slipped from her bed and opened the shutter to the window that looked out upon the double row of log cabins that sheltered the residing students. She saw no sign of light or life, she softly closed the shutter against the cold night air that rushed in. She wondered if war would shatter the peace of this mountain settlement where they had lived in such contentment. She could not sleep.. Working students had already swept the huge recitation building and fires were blazing high in the four fireplaces in the front room. Now the schoolmaster took his place in the front room then Amanda in her room and the room next to it was for Mary's new room. In each room there were blackboards on the wall, a table and a chair for the instructor and split log seats for the students to use in recitations and in study.

Each room was filled with gloom because the cold morning kept the shutters closed upon the window openings that had as yet no glass panes. Each room greeted its teacher with respect. The school was favorably known throughout White surrounding counties. Curtis McDowell had let everyone know that no man or woman who desired knowledge would be refused entrance because of poverty. There would be work to do if no cash or produce could be brought in. Each year the school had grown and the children of Curtis McDowell had almost as much pride in Cumberland Institute as their father. But now it was threatened by war between the states. The threat was almost undermining the health of the master; he had become troubled and saddened. The girls too felt the threat to their happiness,

After school the girls took a short walk, when they returned to the house they found their brother Jack who was considerably agitated and was repeating to his father threats he had received because in the paper he was editing at Cookeville he had printed editorials against secession. The girls hastened to the kitchen to prepare some things Jack liked to eat. Then Jack joined them and they became merry and gay. He told them Fayette would be there for supper and before they could voice their pleasure, he killed it by saying "Fayette is coming to lecture me,

He wants me to stop printing editorials against secession.” “Has he written you that” Amanda asked. “Yes and he has written to Father Too.” “he has his own opinions, hasn’t he?” “Yes and I must have mine!” “

Oh let’s talk of something else!” cried Mary with tears welling in her eyes. The conversation turned to more pleasant channels, until their brother Lafayette came in having ridden on horse back from his school in Fentress county. It was a merry gathering with the two sisters and the two brothers gathered around their father. He had always been proud of the small flock

He had cared for much of their lives without the assistance of a mother. But tonight he was more sad than proud the boys would bring news of the war that appeared imminent, and from the present appearance looked like they would fight on opposite sides.

Nothing was said of the war when supper was finished and the dishes put away. Then in the living room Mary Brought out a fiddle and gave it to Fayette. He had hardly drawn the bow across the strings before a knock came on the door., and students gathered to hear him play. Now days Fayette was teaching a days journey away and Jack was editing a newspaper. They all laughed and talked ,telling riddles and conundrums and eating the apples that Jack had brought .The girls withdrew to the kitchen to rinse their fingers as many of them would now knit or make tatting. At the approach of ten o’clock when lights put out on the Hill shawls were gather up and good nights were spoken “Father is it alright for me to walk down in the valley, with some of the girls ?“Fayette asked.

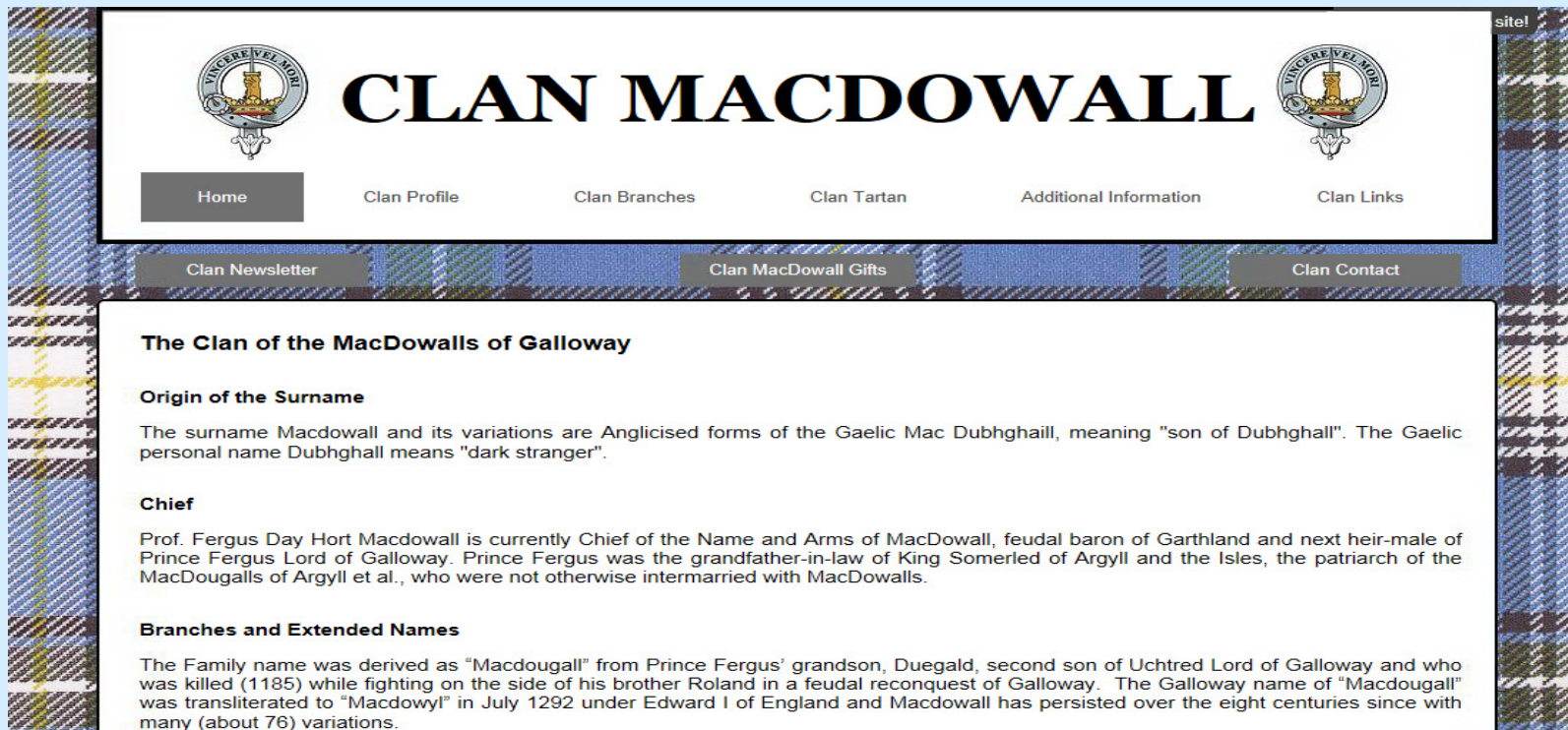
Mary slipped off to her bed while Amanda the oldest girl drew her chair near her father and Jack and they began conversation that lasted far into the night , as Mary spelt sweetly in the adjoining room. ”I will let you know father as soon as I hear what the extra session of the legislature does” Jack had just said when Fayette swung back the door and entered the room. His smile faded when he heard what Jack said. “why we shall secede, of course,” he said “there is nothing else we can do. “ “ I think thati is the last thing we should do,” calmly stated the older brother.” we have no right to secede” We have every right to protect ourselves!” “ Protect ourselves from what?” he asked Fayette did not answer but asked a question instead. “ Are you trying to be a damn Yankee, Jack?”” I am trying to be sensible, “Jack answered. “You are being carried away by a lot of excitement that will never do any good.” “I am loyal to the South and I do not mean to sit idly by and have a bunch of Northern men tell us what we are to do about anything! You are so smart Jackson you set yourself up to tell other things you know no more about than they. You are going to get your paper destroyed and yourself killed by your smartness” said the younger brother hotly. He continued: I want you to understand that I am a Rebel, if that is what you call us, and I mean to fight for my principles when it becomes necessary!” ” I hope I do not have to fight for mine,” sighed Jack.” too many of your kind are afraid to back up their sentiments,” taunted Fayette in a threatening manner, that brought their father into the argument. ”You are not addressing one another in a brotherly manner,” he said sadly. ”it is a bad thing when brothers disagree on little matters, and this is not going to continue to be little. Regardless of who is right or who is wrong can you not forget this strife when you enter your home and keep unnecessary grief from your sisters?

I have tried to teach you to do your own thinking, even though it takes you on different sides in this war.” “Father I do not think Jack really understands the situation as well as I do, and I know he could not fight against his neighbors and relatives” His answer was silence.

To be continued. In November 2015...

Introducing the Clan MacDowall Website!

It is with great excitement that we announce the launch of a new Clan MacDowall website this year!



Screenshot from: <http://macdowall.wix.com/clan-macdowall#>

this website is intended to connect MacDowall history and information into one place. Here you will find information about Clan MacDowall, family branches and extended names, the clan tartan, books and various publications that provide further information, clan links, and much more. **We invite you to visit the website for more information!**

WEBSITE ADDRESS: <http://macdowall.wix.com/clan-macdowall>

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NOTE: As always to contact the Editor or to submit an article for review

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