

ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER SCOTT

"for freedom's holy light"

For Frances White Mertins, without whose love and
inspiration this paper would not have been written.

Emmaline Bell Cockrill
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S C O T T

Slogan:-- "A Bellendaine ! "

UCHTREDUS filius Scoti lived in 1130. He was father of Richard, who is said to have had two sons -- Richard, ancestor of the Scotts of Buccleuch, and Sir Michael, ancestor of the Scotts of Balweary. From Richard, the eldest son, descended Sir Richard, who married the heiress of Murthockstone, and died 1320, leaving a son, Michael, father of two sons, Robert and Walter of Synton. Robert's great-grandson was Sir Walter, who had two sons -- Sir David of Branxholm and Alexander of Howpaisley. Sir David had two sons: (1) David, whose great-great-grandson, Sir Walter, was created Lord Scott of Buccleuch, 1600; and (2) Robert, ancestor of the Scotts of Scotstarvit. The 1st Lord Scott died in 1611, and was succeeded by his son, Walter, who was created Earl of Buccleuch, 1619. Francis, 2nd Earl, left two daughters successively Countesses of Buccleuch. Mary, the elder, married Walter Scott of Highchester -- of the Harden line -- who in his right became chief and was created Earl of Tarras for life. She died without issue when the peerage and chiefship passed to her sister, Anne, Countess of Buccleuch, who married James, Duke of Monmouth. On their marriage they were created Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch, 1673. The Duke was beheaded, but from them the present line of Buccleuch derives, as the titles of the Duchess were unaffected by her husband's rebellion and execution.

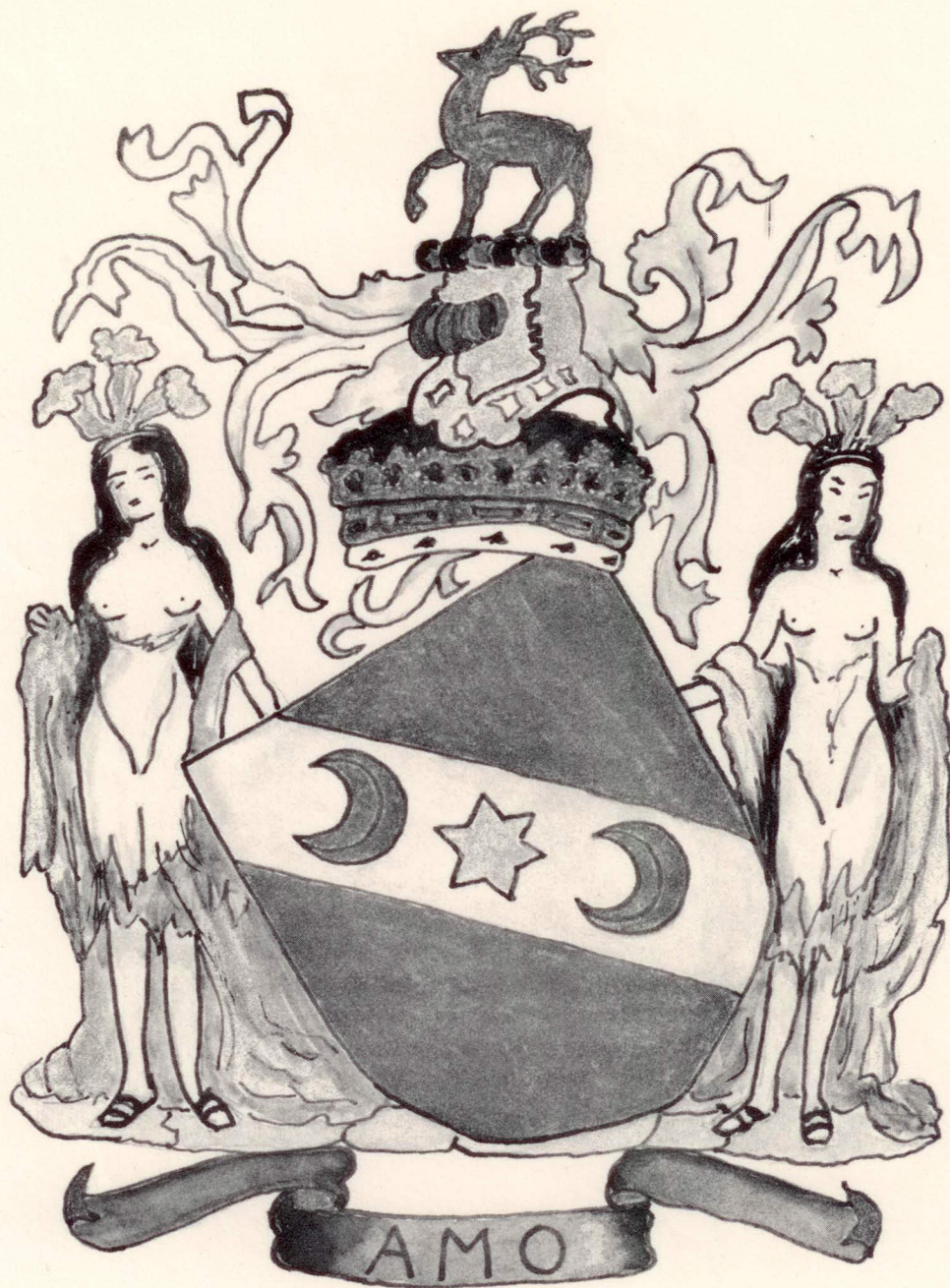
Sir Michael Scott of Balweary was great-grandfather of another Sir Michael, who was known as "the wizard". Sir William Scott, 7th Baronet of Ancrum, died in 1902, when the Baronetcy became extinct (or dormant).

Bellendean, near the head of the Borthwick Water in Roxburghshire, was the gathering-place of the Clan Scott in times of war; for which purpose it was very convenient, being in the centre of the possessions of the chiefs of

this name. "A Bellendaine!" is accordingly cited in old ballad books as their gathering word or war cry, and as the slogan of the Clan Scott appears upon the standard of the "Bold Buccleuch", and is still displayed by his successor the present ducal chief.

Hugh Scott, 11th of Harden, succeeded in 1827 to the Lordship of Polwarth, and his successor, Walter George, is 9th Lord Polwarth and 14th Laird-Baron of Harden, and chief of the Synton branch of the clan.

The present chief of the Clan Scott is Walter, 8th Duke of Buccleuch, K. T., whose border seat is still the Castle of Branxholm.



Scott

Archibald Alexander Scott married Frances Ramsey
(Born in Scotland about 1747)
(Died in Augusta County, Virginia, 1799)

I

Sarah Elizabeth James Mary William Archibald Andrew Matilda

Matilda

Married

John Sproul of
"Locust Grove", Augusta
County, Virginia

I

Archibald Emmaline Frances Martha Ann

Frances

Married

William White of
Lexington, Virginia

The information in this paper has been drawn largely from two sources. First, BETHEL AND HER MINISTERS 1746-1946 a book which was written by Herbert S. Turner, D.D. for his congregation on the 200th anniversary of the Bethel Presbyterian Church. Secondly, THE SCOTCH-IRISH IN THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA by Colonel Bolivar Christian, an address given by Colonel Christian before the Alumni Association of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia in July 1859. (A copy of this address was given to me by my Aunt, Mary Hall Christian of Walnut Hills, Virginia, on a visit to her at Walnut Hills in October 1953, a few weeks before her death. Mary Hall Christian was a neice of Colonel Bolivar Christian.)

E.B.C.

ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER SCOTT

For "freedom's holy light"

There in the Valley of Virginia, that Saturday afternoon in early June, the sun shone warm and bright. Inside the little log church a group of small children, sitting on long, log benches, led by their much loved young minister, Dr. Scott were reciting in unison from the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever". A bee buzzing in the window drew the eyes of some of the smaller boys.

Suddenly all eyes lifted straight to the tall, wiry redhaired Scotsman standing there back of the pulpit. A sound of hoofbeats came through the windows. There was something in the swiftness of the galloping horseman that could mean news, alarming news. The young minister closed his catechism. At once he spoke to the little ones: "Be still, my children", he said. Already the rider was at the door of the church.

"Tarleton's men are coming", the shrill, imperative voice rose above the children's heads direct to its destination, the man standing so still there at the pulpit. As quickly as he had come the rider left throwing his long legs across his sweating horse and hastening on with his perilous message.

"Go at once to your homes", said the minister. But there at the door of the church he held them back for a moment, and in quiet, clear tones continued: "Tell your fathers that I am on my way to Rockfish Gap".

Rockfish Gap was the pass through the Blue Ridge Mountains by which Tarleton's redcoats would enter the Great Valley. As a leader and exemplar for his flock Archibald Alexander Scott would be among

the first men there. "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God", said Thomas Jefferson.

In the county of Augusta in the Valley of Virginia there stands today a historic old brick church known through generations as the Bethel Presbyterian Church. Stalwart oaks surround it, and in the cemetery closeby spread their branches above stones so old that there are epitaphs which cannot be read. The bell in the tall brick tower above the vestibule rings out its summons each Sunday morning as of old.

Inside, the morning sunlight shines through stain-glass windows above the long wooden pews. In some of these pews sit members of families who for six generations have worshipped here.

Many of the windows have been placed there as memorials to ministers of the past whose love and service to their congregations will not be forgotten. Other memorials are for fathers and mothers given by loving sons and daughters. One of the loveliest of the windows fills the arch back of the chancel and has this inscription in old English lettering: IN MEMORIAM ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER SPROUL EUGENIA SPROUL. This was placed there by a son, Hugh Bell Sproul.

Archibald Alexander Sproul bore the name of his grandfather, Archibald Alexander Scott, the first minister to this historic church. Archibald Sproul's father was John Sproul who married Dr. Scott's youngest daughter, Matilda. Soon after accepting the call to the new church Dr. Scott bought land nearby.

Today, on part of this land, stands Locust Grove an English colonial brick home surrounded by boxwood. Closeby is a garden in which old fashion flowers grow. At the entrance on one of the gate posts is the date 1779. The first Sproul to live in Locust Grove was John who married the minister's daughter, Matilda. Today Sprouls continue to live at Locust Grove, direct descendants of Archibald Alexander Scott.

A log building just below the site of the present church was the first Bethel. It was the year 1779 that the logs were hewn there in the wilderness by members of the congregation, and the first church built. This church was an outgrowth of North Mountain Church which was organized in the year 1746. The young minister, Dr. Scott, recently called, would serve Bethel and Brown's Meeting House.

The young Scotsman in his early twenties looked older. But those who knew of his early life could understand this. Quietness of manner and a reserve that bordered on shyness marked him. From the beginning and throughout his twenty years of service to Bethel his deep love of all children and his continuous work for their welfare and happiness was to be one of his contributions to his country and to his God. This deep concern for all children might also be traced to his own childhood experiences.

In that same year of 1779 when the young minister purchased land he married Frances Ramsey a sister of a friend he made in Pennsylvania in his student days soon after his arrival from Scotland.

These were Revolutionary War days. There would be a number of years yet before Thomas Jefferson's Ordinance of Religious Freedom would be passed by the Virginia Legislature. Bethel Church's link in each of these events is part of its history.

In the Great Valley on the frontier young Archibald was ready both by training and experience for the perilous days. As a leader for his flock nothing in the future could require more courage than had already been his.

Tradition has it that as a lad he came alone from Scotland to the New World. While we know little of his personal history in Scotland it could well be that his father and mother had been killed there and that this sensitive lad had witnessed sufferings unbearable for one so young. For we do know that the persecution of the unflinching Covenanters in Scotland was both intense and continuous.

In the archives at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, there is a manuscript entitled, THE SCOTCH-IRISH SETTLERS IN THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA. This is an address given by Colonel Bolivar Christian to the Alumni Association of the then Washington College, on July 1, 1859. In this he has written: "The history of these people while yet in Scotland, written in the blood of their sufferings, illustrates a character which bore fruit for their descendants in later years in other land... Many of them, men of high estate of the nobility of Scotland, sacrificed everything for the common cause... Proclaiming in a loyal petition to a perjured king 'that the only desire of our hearts is for the preservation of true religion amongst us, which we hold far dearer than our lives or our fortunes,' they resisted to the bitter end the canons and the liturgy prepared by the impious Charles without the sanction of any church; driven from their time-honored kirk, they still gathered in conventicles like Maybole and Ayr and Renfred renewing, ever and anon, with heartiest zeal, their fealty to their fathers' SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT, that Magna Charta of Scottish rights... and rallying under their brave banner, emblazoned at once with the ancient thistle of Scotland and the shibboleth of their own faith in the famous golden letters, 'For Christ's Crown and Covenant' they awaited undaunted the wrath of tyranny defied."

We do know that once in the New World this fair lad of so great a courage drew to him older men of distinction and learning who became for him true friends and counsellors. It must be that even then this youth showed unusual promise of mind and spirit. One of these men encouraged Archibald to study for the ministry. In those days to study for the ministry one must begin with a "thorough grounding in the classics". And good fortune was with the boy for he began this training with a famous classical teacher, Mr. Finley.

And in those days the ministry and teaching went hand in hand. From the beginning Archibald had the inquiring mind. And this mind, and the continuous training of it was to carry him far in service to his country.

Through another of his close friends, Mr. Ramsey, he learned that there was a need for classical teachers in the Great Valley of Virginia. So he journeyed to his new home in the Valley. Here, while teaching school, he began the study of theology at Liberty Hall which is now Washington and Lee University. Again fortune smiled... his teacher this time, the brilliant Dr. Graham.

In 1778 he received and accepted the call from the North Mountain Church and Brown's Meeting House. From these two sprang the Bethel congregation of 1779.

And though Tarleton's men turned back that June afternoon long, long ago and did not attempt to enter the Valley the hardships and the suffering continued throughout the Revolutionary War for these first settlers. Dr. Scott became known as "The Fighting Parson". Many of the men from the Bethel congregation crossed over the Blue Ridge and fought at Cowpens and at Yorktown.

When the War had ended there were other battles to be fought and won in freedom's name. It was here at Bethel Church that the great fight for religious liberty in Virginia was spearheaded. The log church became famous as the place where two historic documents in connection with this struggle were prepared and adopted. In 1784 Hanover Presbytery met at Bethel and a committee was appointed to prepare a petition to the General Assembly of Virginia relating to certain infringements of religious liberty which existed in the State. The following year, August 1785, the Presbytery gathered again at Bethel. This time a document drawn up by Dr. Graham of Liberty Hall was adopted and delivered to the General Assembly. It was this history-making document that was followed on December 17 of the same year by the passage by the Assembly

of Thomas Jefferson's "Ordinance of Religious Freedom". The principles of this Act, under the leadership of James Madison, were embodied in the Constitution of the United States, which provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". Thus one cornerstone of the freedom of our nation came about.

Archibald Alexander Scott and his congregation at Bethel in their daring and most courageous actions had indeed contributed in that everlasting battle for the freedom of the mind of mankind.

Yet for Dr. Scott and other leaders there was still further work to be done in this same cause of freedom. With the Scotch esteem for learning, they set about soliciting funds to establish a classical school in nearby Staunton. Because of the rise of prices of farm products due to the French Revolution the money was available, and the Staunton Academy was incorporated by an act of the Legislature on December 4, 1792. Dr. Scott was one of the first trustees. At a meeting of the board of these trustees in May 1793 the tuition fees were fixed as follows: "For the learned languages or mathematics, one guinea the quarter, writing, arithmetic and rudiments of English, 10 shillings; teaching English grammatically, one pound". For many years this was a famous school in the Valley.

Here on the frontier just as had happened in the East at Harvard and Yale and other Universities the first institutions of learning were founded by the clergy.

The esteem in which Archibald Scott was held by his fellow ministers is indicated in the fact that five times he was elected Moderator of the Presbytery; four times elected Commissioner to the General Assembly.

That he was deeply loved and of great influence with the two congregations which he served is part of the records of Bethel Church. That greatest of all gifts, according to St. Paul, was his... the loving heart. His courage was

matched only by his love. It must be that this courage sprang from this love. Someone has written, "To care exceedingly for others is to make true prayers for them".

The salaries of the clergy during the War and for sometime afterwards were small and indifferently paid. It was necessary for Dr. Scott in order to make a livelihood for his large family to supplement his income with work on his farm.

Suddenly, while still a young man, after a brief illness he died in the spring of 1799.

Shortly afterwards his wife, Frances died. Again according to the record, the oldest daughter, Sarah kept the children together. For these children... Elizabeth, James, Mary, William, Archibald, Andrew, Matilda... Sarah, with the advice and aid of her father's friends in the ministry and some of the men of the congregations who loved the children for their father's sake, provided education. The boys were given classical educations, and the girls courses of instruction in English.

There in the Valley of Virginia in the old Hebron Cemetery on the stone at the head of the grave of Archibald Alexander Scott a Bible and a sword are carved. Beneath these the epitaph reads: "He laid down the Bible to take up the sword".

A fitting epitaph indeed. For this Scotsman, life from the beginning had been a continuous fight for "freedom's holy light". Not to see merely, but to do. He had learned his lesson well: "By their fruits ye shall know them".

We have no copies of his sermons. We know his deeds... but not his words. No sermon is needed. Someone has said of Emerson that his life was his sermon. Truly Archibald Alexander Scott's life was his sermon.

For always, just as he had closed the catechism that June afternoon and stepped from the pulpit when the words rang out, "Tarleton's men are coming",

action was his way. One wonders if his most earnest prayer could not have been something like that of the poet, John Drinkwater:

"Knowledge we ask not,
knowledge
Thou has lent,
But, Lord, the will... there lies
our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed."

His was the mind to see, the heart to love... the will to do.