

THEY CAME FROM TIREE

TIREE AND THE FAMINE EMIGRANTS
A HISTORY, 7000 B.C. – 1851

GENE DONALD LAMONT
REVISED EDITION
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Lamonts, 1979

The Lamont and Gage Families, 1981

Donald Lamont and Sarah MacDonald: Their Ancestors and Descendants
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The Lamont/Gage Family Album, 2001

German, Celt, and Slav, 2001

The Ancestry of Roger Wilcox Hartman, 2003

Tales Are Told, 2004

The Lamonts of Tiree, 2004

WITH HELEN LAMONT, LINDA KAY BRYANT, AND JEANNE GOHLKE

Children of Croit Pharaic

IN MEMORY OF MY TIREE ANCESTORS
CUIMNICH AIR DAOINE O'N D'THAING THU
(REMEMBER THE MEN FROM WHOM YOU ARE SPRUNG)

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This book is a more comprehensive history of Tiree than the one I wrote for *Donald Lamont and Sarah MacDonald: Their Ancestors and Descendants* in 1992. At that time I acknowledged the part that Dr. Margaret Mackay and her colleague, the late Eric R. Cregeen had played in my understanding of Tiree's past, and thanked them for their assistance. I now wish to do the same again, since I will always be grateful for their help and encouragement. Dr. Margaret Mackay of the School of Scottish Studies in the University of Edinburgh first introduced me to the history of Tiree, directing me to the published information on the island, including her own articles on this subject. Both she and Eric R. Cregeen had published a number of works on Tiree, which gave me the start I needed to pursue this interest of mine. Over the last year I have been grateful for the many answers that Duncan Grant of An Iodhlann has provided. He also directed me to the publication *The Great Highland Famine*, by T.M. Devine, which filled in many gaps of my knowledge of the history of the famine years on Tiree. Murdo MacDonald, the archivist for Bute and Argyll, has also been helpful in providing me with information and directing my attention to publications of interest.

The tables in Chapters 5 & 6 from *The Great Highland Famine*, by T.M. Devine, are reproduced by the permission of the publisher, Birlinn Ltd (www.birlinn.co.uk).

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It is estimated that about 38,000 individuals alive today are descendants of emigrants from Tiree, spread across Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and even Mexico. The majority of these are descended from the emigrants of the famine years of 1846-1851, and this work the history of the island with emphasis on those emigrants who settled in Ontario, Canada.

This work does not pretend to cover the history of the Scottish Highlands and Islands during the years under discussion. It rather assumes that the reader has some basic knowledge of the subject, and only attempts to fit the history of Tiree into the larger fabric of these turbulent times. This work also does not include any of the rich history of Tiree after 1851, since those interested in this later period will find it well covered in print and readily available.

Anyone attempting to write a history of Tiree, and indeed the entire Highland region, is hampered by the scarcity of written records covering the centuries prior to the eighteenth. There is also much confusion among historians when describing events known to have taken place in those years. There are often several versions from which to choose and the timing is often in dispute. I have attempted to make a reasonable choice when faced with conflicting stories or different dates of the action, but will readily admit that some I have put down as fact can be open to question.

It was some seventy years ago when I, a boy of some nine or ten years, was sat down by my Great Aunt Hannah and shown a small blue book entitled, *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland* by Robert Bain. Opening the page to the Lamonts she said, "I want you to know that you are Scottish". Aunt Hannah then went to the inside cover which had a map of Scotland, pointed to the island of Tiree, and said, "And this is Tiree where your people came from". I suppose I knew vaguely that my father was Scottish, but I had no realization of just what that meant. Knowing the origin of my Scottish ancestors, however, put a much different twist on the matter. It allowed my imagination to work and ultimately lead me to research the history of my family and that of Tiree.

That day with Aunt Hannah so long ago is still very vivid in my memory, as is the island of Tiree which I have visited on two occasions. When asked about the origin of my Scottish ancestors I can proudly state, "**They Came From Tiree**".

Gene Donald Lamont
Bloomfield, Michigan
2004

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

This revised version of my history of Tíree was written to reflect the recent findings of geneticists as to the origins of the people of the British Isles. In my original work I presently what was then the orthodox view, long held by historians of the comings of the Celts into Ireland and Britain some time during the first millennium. Recent DNA analysis of Europeans, and in particular the present inhabitants of Ireland and Britain, has proved this to be nothing but a myth. The genetic make-up of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall, which we think of as the 'Celtic fringe', has essentially remained unchanged since the Neolithic Age. The contribution we believed the Celts played in the genetic make-up of the Celtic lands of the British Isles never took place.

While it can be proven that the gene pool of these regions was little altered by later invaders, this was not so in regard to language and culture, however. In rewriting Chapter Two on Ancient Tíree I have attempted to conform to the best current thinking on these prehistoric times. In doing so I have chiefly followed the views put forward by Stephen Oppenheimer in his book entitled, *The Origins of the British* and his magazine article published in *Prospect Magazine* entitled, "The Myths of British Ancestry".

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