

Clan MacLaren Society of North America (CMSNA)

Scotch-Irish and The Plantation of Ulster



About Clan MacLaren Family Names

An ancient clan with origins that predate the use of surnames, Clan MacLaren derives its name from Labhran (Laurin or Lawrence) of Ardveche, the hereditary Abbot of Achtna in Balquhitter in the 13th Century. Many variations have been accumulated through translations from Gaelic as well as transcribed records. Other surnames adopted by Clan families trace to others though not in all cases.

The collection of surnames of a clan are known as *septs*. The word, which means branches or divisions, was originally used to designate a small group affiliated with a clan and acknowledging the authority of the clan's chief. The word is used much more loosely today.

The previous Chief of Clan MacLaren was the late Donald MacLaren of MacLaren. Donald, who was a retired member of the British Foreign Service, succeeded his father as Chief in 1966. The former Chief's family holds property that includes Creag an Tuirc, the hill overlooking the village of Balquhitter, and the ancient rallying point of the Clan.

The CMSNA continues to follow the process of the Lyon Court relative to establishing a new Chief for Clan MacLaren. Establishing a new Chief and the granting of Arms is a lengthy process.

The Scotch-Irish

"Scotch-Irish" is an American term generally unknown in Scotland and Ireland. It is rarely used by British historians. The term refers to people who descend from Scottish families that came to the North American colonies after living for a time, often several generations, in the north of Ireland. At the time of American independence, at least one out of every ten or fifteen Americans was Scotch-Irish. The earliest of these immigrants went to the frontier areas of the colonies from Pennsylvania to Georgia.

They were generally enthusiastic supporters of the rebellion. Afterwards, they were among the vanguard of pioneers who crossed the Allegheny Mountains as the United States expanded into the Ohio Valley. Newcomers readily intermarried with neighbors, with little or no concern about ancestral heritage. By the early 19th century few families, except in certain Pennsylvania and Virginia communities, remained wholly Scotch-Irish.

History

In the September 1607 Flight of the Earls two Irish chiefs and about ninety followers fled to mainland Europe following the Nine Years' War (also called Tyrone's Rebellion) against English rule to seek support for a new uprising. The 1603 Treaty of Mellifont had ended the war and confiscated much of their land holdings. The Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir Arthur Chichester, had been limiting their freedoms and enforcing new freeholds.

On 28 March 1609, an act was passed establishing the Plantation of Ulster comprising an estimated half million acres of arable land in five counties. Land in three neighboring counties had been privately colonized. King James VI (of Scotland) and I (of England) was involved in planning and overseeing the Plantation. The goals were controlling, anglicizing and "civilizing" the almost wholly Gaelic and Catholic region that had been most resistant to English control. Colonists (British tenants) were from northern England and Presbyterians from Scotland; requirements were that they

be English-speaking, Protestant and loyal to King James VI and I. Irish tenants were specifically banned. The Irish reaction to the Plantation of Ulster was generally hostile. Centuries of ethnic and sectarian animosity ensued, lasting through the end of the 20th century. By 1622, a survey found 3,700 Scottish adult males (of 6,402 total) on Plantation lands with another 4,000 settled in Antrim and Down, giving a total of over 14,000 Scottish tenants living in northern Ireland.

Their families might have continued their tenancy had they not endured serious hardships, including reprisals both from Ulster Catholics and the British seeking to suppress support of Jacobite rebellions in Scotland. Between 1714 and 1719, a series of droughts devastated farm production and crippled the flax industry. Widespread blight also struck the sheep of the area.

Beginning around 1725, leases were expiring. With land holdings vastly more desirable than they had been at the commencement of leases, rents were doubled or tripled. Some landlords put leases up for auction but made them available only to the English with mass numbers of evictions following. Also, the English Parliament enacted a series of staggering tariffs upon Irish exports and imports.

Families returning to Scotland found economic and social conditions untenable then soon departed for Australia, Canada, America or South Africa. Others travelled directly from Ireland. The American colonies were chosen by greater numbers due to the shorter journey and the promise of large

tracts of available land. They are considered to be Scotch-Irish whether their journey was directly from Ireland or included a brief return to Scotland.

MacLaren Genealogy Project

The Clan MacLaren Society of North America (CMSNA) maintains a vigorous program to research the genealogy of Clan families. Society members are encouraged to contribute their own research to our growing database to preserve their family histories or, if they are new to genealogy, use our members-only genealogy website as a starting point for their work. The online database holds records on tens of thousands of individuals spanning centuries from the 15th through the 21st. The numbers will increase as family lines are connected and documented, more information becomes publicly available and ongoing research efforts produce results.

To augment our efforts in genealogy, CMSNA participates in a Y-DNA project at FamilyTree DNA. The project is open to all males bearing a Clan surname regardless of spelling or CMSNA membership. The goal of the project is to gain a better understanding of the deep ancestry forming the Clan's origins and history.

Clan MacLaren's Genealogist is Arthur D. Lowe.

genealogist@maclarengenealogy.org

About CMSNA

The Clan MacLaren Society of North America was chartered in Georgia in 1981. The CMSNA set broad goals in support of Clan MacLaren and the Scottish community in general. The CMSNA has a multifaceted purpose:

- 1) to support, promote, and publicize the Clan MacLaren in the US and Canada;
- 2) to promote celebration of the family heritage of MacLarens;
- 3) to inform members and others about the history, traditions, and accomplishments of Clan MacLaren;
- 4) to provide a vehicle for interaction and a common bond among North American MacLarens;
- 5) to promote education.

Eligibility for Membership

One automatically becomes a member of Clan MacLaren by birth, marriage, or adoption. Joining the CMSNA enables full participation in Clan activities and celebrations. To become a member, simply visit a CMSNA tent at one of the many Highland Games in the US and Canada, or contact the Membership Secretary Debbie Patterson.

Email: membership@clanmaclarenn.org

(Revision: 01 Feb 2026)