

## LAW/LAWSON/LAWRENCE GENEALOGY

The Clan MacLaren Society of North America has an active genealogy committee. Robert McLaren is the Chairman and is the point of contact for all spelling variants of MacLaren (see the Society Genealogy Brochure for more details). The committee has genealogists for each of the different groups of surnames associated with the Clan MacLaren. For the Law/Lawson/Lawrence/ Laurence group, the genealogist is:

James Randall Lawson, Sr.  
44 Tenney Hill Road  
Kittery Point, ME 03905  
(207) 439-8531  
email: jrlfirefly@aol.com

He has detailed information on the Lawsons of Georgia; information on Lawsons of Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia; and scattered information on Lawsons who are members of the Clan MacLaren Society of North America.

Randy is interested in expanding his information on the Law/Lawson/Lawrence/Laurence group. He would like to collect family histories, family sheets, articles in commemorative local publications, census data, court records, newspaper clippings, magazine stories, and obituaries (both old and new). Also of interest are pictures of individuals and groups which can be identified. One of the best finds is a hand written story by some ancestor about some event or history of his family. Send a "copy" and keep your originals. Of course, if you are a Law/Lawson/ Lawrence/Laurence member of the Clan MacLaren Society of North America, send Randy information on your family.

## MEMBERSHIP

If you are a Law, Lawson, Lawrence, or Laurence, and are of Scots descent, you are eligible to join the Clan MacLaren Society of North America. Drop by the Clan MacLaren tent at a Highland Games, or write the membership secretary, to join. Don't forget -- when you join, give Randy a copy of your genealogy so he can add to his records.

Our membership secretary is:

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## Clan MacLaren

AND  
THE SURNAMES

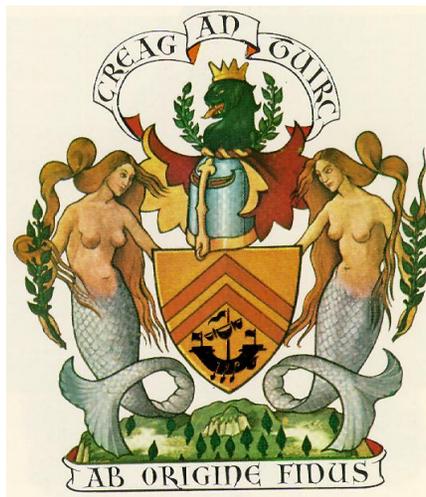
LAW

LAWSON

LAWRENCE

by

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ARMS OF THE CHIEFS OF CLAN  
LABHRAN

It is apparent that the original MacLaren chiefs were hereditary Celtic Abbots of Achtoch in Balquhider and derived their patronymic from the clan's apparent founder, Abbot Lawrence or Laurence [1][2][3]. The name Lawrence did not originate in Scotland but was first recorded in Roman history.

In 258 A.D., a Christian Deacon known as Lawrence was brutally slain by the Romans because he wouldn't give them treasures thought to be hidden in his church. Deacon Lawrence claimed that the only treasures possessed by his church were its people. The Roman governor, Valerian, gave Lawrence an ultimatum, give up the church treasures or die. Lawrence delivered himself to the governor with his treasures, his people. Valerian was not amused, and he had Lawrence burned in a public execution. As the execution took place, Lawrence used his last words to joke with the governor [4].

Stories of St. Lawrence traveled throughout the Roman Empire and eventually arrived in the Celtic "islands of the far West", which are currently known as the British Isles. At this time, Celtic tribes had begun settling the west coastal lands of the northern isles. In about 500 A.D. Loarn or Laurin, a son of Erc, had acquired the lands of his father [1]. These lands are currently known as Argyll. This is the first recorded occurrence of a name in this region that appears to be connected with the name of Lawrence.

The name Loarn is written in Gaelic as Labhran and is pronounced in Gaelic as Lawrin. Abbot Laurence established his Celtic church in Perthshire during the 1300's, and he is considered as the founder of Clan MacLaren.

From the discussion above, it can be seen how the surnames Law, Lawson and particularly Lawrence are connected with the surname MacLaren. The surname "Law" is a simple patronymic of the name Lawrence or Lawrin. The name Lawson is a more complex patronymic of the names Law or Lawrence, and it carries the same relationship as the surname MacLaren. Lawson includes the suffix "son" that means "son of". The suffix "son" may relate to a Scandinavian usage, Pict, or Viking connection. The term "son" is used in surnames throughout Scotland and is sometimes referred to as a means for Anglicizing a Scottish clan name.

Anglicized clan names, where Mac or Mc is left off, were relatively common as Highland Scots moved away from their homelands. In comparison, the prefix Mac or Mc in the surname MacLaren also means "son of". Referring to the name Lawson, Black says the following, "Lawson, Son of Lawrence, q.v. through the diminutive Law" [5]. In addition, Black refers to MacLaren as the "Son of Laurence" [5]. Minor differences in the spelling of surnames don't appear to be relevant. The spelling of surnames has been and still is an art form.

Early records of Perthshire show that as surnames came into use during the 12th century, the names Law, Lawson and Lawrence were not uncommon in the region. In addition, the names were found as far north as Inverness. Many families with these names also lived in the early counties Moray, Banff, Aberdeen, Kincardine, Angus, and Fife. Others lived on the borders of the highlands in the counties of Sterling and Kinross. The names were also found in Glasgow

and Edinburgh and as far south as Ayr, Dumfries, and Berwick.

The names Law, Lawson, and Lawrence were found in more than 20 counties in Scotland over the period from 1500 through the 1700's. And, the LDS International Genealogical Index shows that this population numbered in the thousands. As Scotsmen began leaving their home country, these names were found in the North of Ireland, North America, and other parts of the world.

#### References:

- [1] MacLaren, Margaret of MacLaren, "The MacLarens, A History of Clan Labhran", The Pentland Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, Second Edition, 1984.
- [2] MacThomas, Seumas, "The Royal Clans of Scotland", Scotpress, 1988.
- [3] Adam, Frank, Revised by Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, "The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands", Johnston and Bacon, 1984.
- [4] "Collier's Encyclopedia", Volume 14, Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., 1963.
- [5] Black, George R., "The Surnames of Scotland, Their Origin, Meaning and History", The New York Public Library, 1993.