

Clan MacLaren Society of North America (CMSNA)

Clan MacLaren Surnames



Origin of Clan MacLaren

In approximately 500 AD Loarn (or Laurin), a son of Erc, was reported to have acquired the lands of his father in the area currently known as Argyll. This was the first recorded instance in the region of Scotland connected with the name Labhran. MacLaren surnames were derived from Abbot Labhran (Laurin) of Ardeveche, the hereditary Abbot of Achthus in Balquhiddy in the 13th Century.

Major family groups include Law, Lawrence, Lawson, Low, Lowery, MacLaren and MacLaurin, including a multitude of spelling variations

Some Labhran Family Surnames

Lair	Larnach	Laurence
Laurensen	Laurie	Law
Lawrence	Lawrie	Laws
Lawson	Low	Lowe
Lowery	Lowis	Lowrey
Lowrie	Lowry	Lowson
MacLaren	MacLaurin	McClaran
McClaren	McClarran	McClarren
McClearen	McClearn	McClerren
McLaran	McLarin	McLarn
McLarren	McLarrin	McLaurine
McLearen	McLeran	McLerran

Some Sept Family Surnames

Faed	MacCrorie	MacFade
MacFait	MacFater	MacFead
MacFeat	MacGrory	MacPatrick
MacPetrie	MacPhait	MacPhater
MacRorie	McCrary	McCrory
McRorie	Paterson	Patrick
Patterson	Peters	Rorie
Rorison	Wright	

...and many other spelling variations.

Laurence, Law and Lawson

The name Lawrence was first recorded in Roman history and spread throughout the Roman Empire, eventually arriving in the British Isles. Law is a simple patronymic of Lawrence. The name Lawson is more complex. The suffix "son" may be derived from Pict, Scandinavian or Viking practice. The term "son" is used throughout Scotland, and is sometimes referred to as a method of Anglicizing a Scottish name.

Anglicized clan names were frequently used as Highland Scots migrated from traditional clan lands. Early Perthshire records show that Law, Lawrence and Lawson were common in the region. From 1500 to 1700 the names were found as far north as Inverness and in the counties of Banff, Aberdeen,

Kincardine, Angus, Fife, Sterling and Kinross. The names were also found in Glasgow and Edinburgh and as far south as Ayr, Dumfries and Berwick.

Laurie, Lowery and Lowe

The origins of the names Laurie, Lawrie, Lowry and other spellings appears to stem from the basic trend that most of the Indo-European languages share: foreshortening, called ellipsis. Lowry is simply a truncation of the name Laurin by dropping the final "n". This tendency toward dropping the final sound of a word, is constant in the evolution of language.

Lowrys are heavily identified with the Scotch-Irish. There is ample ground for speculation that several political factors at work in the 1600's hastened the foreshortening of the name. With the fortunes of Clan MacLaren in decline for many years in Balquhiddy, opportunity arose when the Ulster Plantation was opened to Scottish and English Protestants in 1609. A desire to obscure real or imagined highland ties may well have led to shortening the name. By 1685 the Lowrys were present in what is now Northern Ireland in large numbers.

Origins of Low and spelling variations is more difficult to define. The surname might be derived from the Scots word *lowis*, borrowed from Gaelic to denote places where multiple lochs are adjacent or connected, evidenced by Loch of the Lowes, a designated wildlife reserve near Dunkeld.

MacLaren and MacLaurin

The use of Mac or Mc at the beginning of a name is used in Gaelic to denote "son of" or simply "of". Historically, these prefixes were often used throughout Scotland and preferred by many families choosing to identify with Abbot Labhran. Only in relatively recent times has the widespread use of written records caused an emphasis on rigid standardization in spelling of the many and varied pronunciations.

Septs of Clan MacLaren

A sept is a branch or division. In Scotland the term was originally used to identify a family group affiliated with a particular clan that acknowledged the authority of the chief. The major septs of Clan MacLaren are MacRory, Patterson and Wright.

MacRory

The second largest sept of Clan MacLaren is MacRory. Clan Ruari was formed by the descendants of Ruaidhri mac Raghnaill, a principal member of Clan Somhairle, the 12th Century progenitors of Clan Donald. The MacRuari emblem was the “Black Galley of the Isles” which was added by MacLaren chiefs to the chevrons of Strathearn on their own shield, thus demonstrating that MacRory was an important name in Clan MacLaren. Clan Ruari disintegrated in the middle of the 14th century as a result of devastating internal warfare. It seems likely that at least some survivors transferred their allegiance to Clan MacLaren. Several MacRorys are listed in the Bond of 1573. The 1747 the Balquhiddier Baptism Registry lists the baptism of the child of a “MacLaren, alias MacRorie”— a perfect example of a double surname.

Patterson

The largest sept of Clan MacLaren is Patterson, which includes McFater, McFeat, and McPatrick. The earliest reference to a Patterson is to Duncan Patterson, who was implicated with other MacLarens in the murder of the Vicar of Balquhiddier in 1532. This individual may be Duncan, son of Patrick M'Ewyn V'Laurane who was mentioned in the Bond of manrent in 1559. Both Duncan and Patrick were favorite MacLaren names, so it is not possible to make a positive identification. Pattersons are also identified to a lesser degree with other clans, primarily Lamont, Campbell, and McAulay. The Pattersons from Balquhiddier and Strathearn belong to the MacLarens. Because the surname Patterson arose across Scotland, it is practically impossible to

trace the origins of each individual. Owing to this, the Clan MacLaren welcomes all Pattersons.

Wright and McIntyre

McIntyre is a trade name derived from the Gaelic Mac an t Soir, or carpenter. Wright is the Anglicized version of the name The Rental for Crown Lands for 1509 lists several McIntyres who were tenants at the western end of the Glen at Balquhiddier. There is a Clan McIntyre. While it is possible that several members of this clan settled at Balquhiddier it is more likely that these McIntyres were MacLarens distinguished by their profession or trade. McIntyres or Wrights whose ancestry is traced to Balquhiddier are regarded as MacLarens.

Chief of Clan MacLaren

The current Chief of Clan Labhran is Florian MacLaren of MacLaren, succeeding his late father as Chief in 2026. Florian studied Classics at St. Andrews University and trained as an arborist at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. He has worked in arboriculture ever since and currently runs a tree company in London. Florian and his wife Romilly have two children, William Wolf and Flora. The Chief's family holds property in the village of Balquhiddier that includes Creag an Tuirc, the hill overlooking the village. This was the ancient rallying point of the Clan.

CMSNA Genealogy Project

The Clan MacLaren Society of North America maintains an active genealogy program aimed at building the best, most complete data-set of information on Clan and Sept families. Society members can use our dedicated genealogy website as a starting point for their own research as well as for preserving their family histories. Submitted records are combined with those from others and ongoing research with the ultimate goal of producing a compilation that enables any MacLaren descendant to find connections to the Clan and relatives both near and far, CMSNA has information

stored in repository at the Ellen Payne Genealogy Odom Library in Moultrie, Georgia. This material is available for public access.

The CMSNA Genealogist is Arthur D. Lowe.
Email: genealogist@maclarengenealogy.org

MacLaren Surname DNA Project

To augment efforts in genealogy, CMSNA manages 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 to gain a better understanding of the deep ancestry forming the Clan's origins and history.

Eligibility for Membership

Anyone bearing a Clan surname, or is descended from someone who did, is eligible to join CMSNA. While one becomes a member of Clan MacLaren by birth, marriage, or adoption, joining 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@clanmaclarennna.org

Complete information about the Clan MacLaren Society of NA can be found at:
www.clanmaclarennna.org

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