



Septs & Allied Families
of
Clan Douglas

As accepted by Clan Douglas Society of North America

2016

*****WORK IN PROGRESS*****

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Introduction

How do you know you belong to Clan Douglas?

If your last name is Douglas (or any of its numerous variations), the answer is obvious. Others can trace their genealogy to a Douglas. But not everyone associated with Clan Douglas has the surname Douglas or can trace their genealogy back to a Douglas. The answer lies in having a surname or an ancestor with a surname that was an allied family of Clan Douglas. Many modern day Clan organizations, Douglas included, provide a list of allied family surnames, commonly referred to as “septs”, at their festival tents or on their websites.

What was and is a Sept?

The Wikipedia article [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sept>] states ...

in the context of Scottish clans, septs are families that followed another family's chief. These smaller septs would then comprise, and be part of, the chief's larger clan. A sept might follow another chief if two families were linked through marriage; or, if a family lived on the land of a powerful laird, they would follow him whether they were related or not. Bonds of manrent were sometimes used to bind lesser chiefs and his followers to more powerful chiefs.

And again, in Scotclan.com's “What's A Sept?”

[http://www.scotclans.com/my_clan_shop/whats_a_sept.html]

These were large and powerful families within a Clan. They did not share the native surname but in some cases their heads could be as powerful as the Chief himself. Smaller Clans could also bond together for protection, forming a larger confederation. The Clan Chattan, made up from several smaller member Clans was an example of this.

Dr. Phillip D. Smith, Jr. (FSA Scot), author of *Tartan for Me!* and several tartan books makes the case that “sept”, a borrowed term from Irish culture and “roughly synonymous” with Scottish “clan”, should be avoided in our modern usage stating it is better to “simply describe these names as what they are – surnames of a family and of allied or dependent families.” Dr. Smith suggests “it is preferable to speak of ‘The names and families of Clan X’ rather than to call a name ‘a sept of Clan X’.

Dr. Smith's suggestion is noted. In many ways, calling a name ‘a sept of Clan X’ places that name in a diminutive position to the larger, more important clan name and gives the impression, perhaps, that these allied families were less important. However, history and the politics of the day would indicate that the family of the chiefly name was able to gain power and prominence only with the assistance of its allied families. This is a lesson many of us moderns need to take to heart since it tempers the purpose of adding any allied family names to a particular clan. With a family as powerful as the Douglas family, several non-related families would have been supportive in exchange for favor and/or protection. These allied families may have intermarried into the House of Douglas several times but they truly could not be called septs. It makes much more sense, under these circumstances, to consider the list of names associated with the House of Douglas as a list of septs and allied families to acknowledge the historical and familial connections between these names and Douglas without ascribing any particular subordinate classification or attenuation to any name in the list.

Looking through a more modern lens, septs are a recruitment tool for modern Clan Societies and the means to an end for Scottish industries ... although this view does not and should not diminish the sense of belonging one has to a particular House or Clan; the sentiments and passions expressed in belonging

are very real. What such a view, sentiments, and passions do provide is a simple explanation for the controversies sure to arise as more and more surnames form their own Clan Societies. But how did all these Clan Societies come about?

Septs and modern clan societies

In the aftermath of the [Jacobite](#) Rising of 1745, the pro-Hanoverian Parliament of Great Britain passed the [Acts of Proscription](#) and other measures to assimilate the Highlands and crush the strong regional and familial connections of the clan system. Among the measures enacted were the disarming of the clans, the refutation of feudal authority of the clan chief, and the prohibition of wearing "[Highland dress](#)" (i.e., tartan). From August 1, 1746 until July 1, 1782, these harsh measures were in effect and all but extinguished the Highland culture. In this time, "Highland dress" was superseded by other fashion and was no longer considered everyday wear. Within a few years of the lifting of these acts, Highland aristocrats were setting up Highland Clan Societies "with aims including promoting 'the general use of the ancient Highland dress'. This would lead to the Highland pageant of the visit of King George IV to Scotland turning what had been seen as the uncivilized outfits of mountain thieves into national dress claimed by the whole of Scotland." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dress_Act_1746]

The success of Sir Walter Scott's historical novels and [the visit of King George IV to Scotland](#) in 1822 renewed enthusiasm for clans. This enthusiasm was fostered by both the tartan manufacturers and the Clan Societies (for their own reasons), resulting in attributing as many names as possible to particular clans as septs - too often with stretched and/or preposterous results.

Examples claiming relation by virtue of sharing a region (of Lanarkshire) or town ("de Moffat", for example) where anyone coming from the same place might use the descriptive, related or not, are untenable. Similarly, it is absurd to think that all Bowmakers and Fletchers should belong to Clan Macgregor or all Taylors and Clerks should belong to Clan Cameron or all Millers and Weavers to Clan Macfarlane when it is clear these were work or trade names found in almost every part of Scotland. The same enthusiasm triggered attaching as many names as possible to well-known clans -- often without real justification (and sometimes based on lively imagination and wishful thinking) or on a single recorded instance (ex: "Angus Marfell was a tenant of the Earl of Douglas, 1389") -- so that all holders of the name without a clan name of their own could connect to a Scottish clan and thus feel "entitled" to its tartan. In this way, Clan Societies gained members and prestige and the tartan manufacturers gained product sales.

Most people looking for a possible Clan affiliation will do a websearch of their last name. Or maybe, a person has been told "you belong to Clan X" and they look it up online. Any such search will likely present you with a number of sites listing "recognized" or "official" "septs" of Clan X.

The problem with most "sept" lists is that nothing is included with the list providing any documentation about **why** these names were considered septs. And few, if any, lists of names distinguish between "septs" and "allied families". Our own Douglas list of septs and allied families is by no means perfect. It is quite likely some names included on our list were based more on 19th century renewal enthusiasm than on historical accuracy and it is just as likely that the surnames of many loyal followers of the Douglas Chiefs have not been included.

For someone looking online to find their clan affiliation, undocumented and likely erroneous lists of names can be problematic at best and deceitful at worst. But where is such documentation found? Sadly, the answer is "on the internet."

Information is easy to find in this age of internet and the simplicity of *Wikipedia*. But many fail to realize *Wikipedia* is an “open source” webpage that can be added to or edited by **anyone**. As a result, many *Wikipedia* topic pages are filled with speculation and half-truths. While one should not hold much stock in *Wikipedia* and similar web-info services, they can be useful in gleaning other sources to research. And sometimes, even *Wikipedia* gets it right. However, more authoritative sources do exist. Volumes of Scottish history and other Clan related books, now mostly out of print for over a century, that have been converted to PDF format and placed on the internet.

Who decides whether a surname belongs to Clan X?

Determining which surnames are septs or allied families of a clan is one of the prerogatives of the clan chief. Clan Douglas, while an armerigious (arms-bearing) family recognized as a clan by the Lord Lyon of Scotland, currently has no standing chief.

Without a standing chief, CDSNA has selected certain guidelines in determining the surnames it accepts as Septs and Allied Families of our Clan Douglas organization. The criteria used for determining what surnames are (or can be) Septs of and Allied Families Clan Douglas (as published in the August 2005 Dubh Ghlase) are as follows:

[A] Those of the surname of Douglas, in all of its many and varied forms, are not Septs: they are FAMILY and are to be treated as such.

[B] Those families whose surname was originally Douglas but have suffered a change of name due to the conditions prevailing at some point in history; i.e. Drysdale.

[C] Those families who were known to be followers of the Douglas family in the past.

[D] Those families who are known to have served the Douglas family in times past as either estate managers, farm workers, men-at-arms, scribes, chancellors; i.e. Bell, Symington, Young, etc.

[E] Those descendants of a female line of the Douglas family who are able to prove their descent and do not owe allegiance to any other family or clan.

[F] Those descendants whose families originated within the known Douglas territories but were too small to have a family status and have no allegiance to any other family or clan.

[G] Those descendants of families who are known to have broken away from their accepted group and are also known to have re-settled within the Douglas territories.

The criteria presented here for Sept and Allied Families names are not listed in the CDSNA Bylaws. At this time, no “official” criteria exist but this list provides a reasonable basis for surname inclusions. It should also be noted that IF the day comes when Clan Douglas does have a standing chief, the Chief of Douglas will have the sole right to create a list of Septs and Allied Families of Clan Douglas and such list may or may not include many names CDSNA and other Douglas associations have accepted as septs and allied families.

Our CDSNA list of Douglas Septs and Allied Families

In 2009, CDSNA had an “official septs” list of 39 names other than Douglas. For CDSNA Regents manning the Douglas tents at festivals all over North America, the most common question asked by festival goers was **“Why is THAT name a sept a Douglas?”** Many Regents had no clue. What was needed was an explanatory guide to the names accepted by CDSNA as part of its “official” list. CDSNA member and Regent Harold Edington (Missouri) took on the responsibility of creating that guide.

Hours and hours were spent gleaning Scottish history and other Clan related books, now mostly out of print for over a century, that have been converted to PDF format and placed on the internet. Some information was provided by Sept Commissioners of CDSNA and by personal communications with others outside CDSNA. Some of the information was taken from *Wikipedia* and other common web sources. Some of the information was gleaned from the earliest years (1976 -1995) of CDSNA’s newsletters. The result of this research was a guide documenting those 39 other names. But a side benefit of the research was the discovery and documentation of 27 other allied families’ surnames that could be added to the Douglas list.

Based on the the research presented by Harold Edington to the CDSNA executive board in 2011, Clan Douglas Society of North America (CDSNA) voted in 2012 to accept the 27 new names found as Allied Families. The current list of CDSNA recognized Septs and Allied Families is as follows:

Agnew	Crockett	Harkness	Pringle
Bell	Dalyell	Home	Rowell
Blackadder	Dalzell	Hume	Rowle
Blackett	Deal	Inglis	Rule
Blacklock	Dick	Kilgore	Rutherford
Blackstock	Dickson	Kilpatrick	Sandilands
Blackwood	Dickey	Kirkpatrick	Sandlin
Blaylock	Dixon	Kirkland	Simms
Breckinridge	Drysdale	Lockerby	Soule
Brown	Forest	Lockery	Sterrett
Brownlee	Forrester	Lockhart	Syme
Carmichael	Foster	MacGuffey	Symington
Carruthers	Galbraith	MacGuffock	Troup
Cavan	Gilpatric	McKittrick	Turnbull
Cavers	Glendenning	Maxwell	Weir
Cleland	Glenn	Moffat	Young
Clendenon	Hamilton	Morton	Younger

It is important to note here that many of the names on the list have several spelling variations.

So what does all of this mean? It means... the research found in this booklet is not exhaustive or a finished product. The research presented here may not be the most scholarly or presented in the best way -- but this research is verifiable and represents two-plus years of effort that should be maintained by and expanded by other caring members of our extended Clan Douglas family. It is hoped this project will encourage all branches of Clan Douglas (North American, Australian, and European) ***to communicate with one another and decide on a common list of allied surnames.***

Officially Recognized

Septs and Allied
Families of
Clan Douglas

As accepted by Clan Douglas Society of North America

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ATTN REGENTS ...

If you would like to obtain a FREE PDF copy of this entire booklet (instead of this tease copy), contact the author. Your PDF copy will be ready to print and will contain all 113 pages of research pertaining to the septs and allied families as accepted by CDSNA.

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