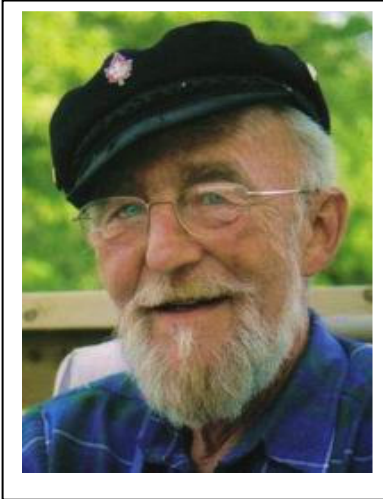


Confusing Scottish First Names



A few weeks ago we explored some problems with first names ('The Man Who Never Was'). Carol Bennett McCuaig sent me a fascinating e-mail about some confusing naming factors among the early Scottish settlers in the Valley.

Many of these were Gaelic speaking, as were some of their clergy and the translation of their Scottish names was a little uneven. She found 'Daniel' and 'Donald' being used interchangeably for the same person. Actually they are both translations of the Gaelic 'Domhnall'. The same holds true for 'Jean' and 'Jane', which both derive from the Gaelic 'Sine' (pronounced 'Sheena').

In some instances, 'Peter' and 'Patrick' were also used interchangeably although their Gaelic sources are quite different, viz. 'Peadar' and 'Padruig'. Was this calculated confusion or simply evidence of free spirits?

Some Scottish families stuck rigorously to traditional naming patterns and ended up with several living children bearing the same name as in "This is my brother, Donald, and this is my other brother, Donald".

All this got me to thinking about the problem of nicknames, that may have effectively replaced a person's first name. Certainly many of them are based on the original name, but others may be based on physical or emotional or social factors. I had schoolmates named 'Bucky', 'Happy', and 'Bunny'. There is lots of evidence for 'Lefty', 'Shorty', 'Baldy', and 'Red'.

There are some famous examples like 'Babe Ruth' (George), 'Rocket Richard' (Maurice), and 'Stonewall Jackson' (Thomas).

When I was a youngster just learning to speak, I was responsible for nicknaming my favorite aunt. Unable to say 'Auntie Vera', I called her 'Tee'. The name stuck and for the rest of her life the family knew her as 'Tee'. How many other nicknames came about in similar ways? Her husband's name was 'Memnon' but he was known all his life as 'Dick'.

Clearly we need to recognize the need to reconcile the social name and the name of record to ensure which records relate to whom.

Update on Scottish Records

Readers with Scottish Ancestors will be glad to learn that the rich website, ScotlandsPeople, <www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk> has added some new features.

Images of Old Parish Register (OPR) records are now available online for the first time. These include births and baptisms and banns and marriages kept by individual parishes of the Established Church of Scotland prior to the introduction of civil registration in 1855. The earliest records date from 1553.

These records can now be searched by county as well as by parish, which is a boon to researchers who cannot be sure which parish their ancestors attended.

Other new features include an extension of the session time limit from 7 days to 90 days. They have also introduced a new method of paying for credits for those who prefer not to pay over the internet. You can now order vouchers by post and pay by cheque or credit card. Further details are available at: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?r=551&1277.

Old Belfast Street Directories

It is so nice to find free information on Ireland and this website is loaded with it. They have street directories for Belfast going back to 1843 and they are searchable by name and by street. There are old Belfast Newsletters and Newspapers some going back to the 1700's, an index of death notices and links to a host of other free sites, some of which were new to me.

This site is worth a visit just to find out what is available. You can find it at: www.lennonwylie.co.uk/index.htm