

Genetic Analysis of the McMurtrie | McMurtry Family

Final Report
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Introduction

For decades, McMurtries, McMurtrys, McMurtrays, McMurtreys, etc. have wondered about their family origins. Some asked whether their families came from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales or England. Others wanted to know their connection to the first McM in their lineage to come to Canada, the United States, Australia, etc.

In 2004, the MacMurtrie Clan Family Records learned that one could use DNA genetic testing to tell which McMurtrys shared a common ancestor and which ones didn't. So for the first time in history, it seemed that some of those perennial questions might at long last be answered. For those of us who had been studying the family history for most of our lives, we were excited!

This report is a summary of the highlights of a longer more detailed report (in case you are one of those interested in the details).

Between 2004 and 2008, almost 50 DNA samples were collected from 37 McM families around the world – the USA, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, and Australia. We sought to tell how the McM of America were related to the McM of Ireland and Scotland, how the various Scottish and Irish families were related to other McM families across the Irish channel and within their own countries, and how the McM of America were related to each other. The results were astounding! The report that follows summarizes what we have learned and what still remains a mystery.

DNA Study Results

The most important discoveries were:

1. All McM families studied to date are descended from only three different individuals who lived sometime back in the 1400s or 1500s or perhaps earlier. This is reflected in the fact that all these families have only 3 basic DNA patterns.
 - **“Antrim” pattern** common to McM in Co. Antrim, Ulster Ireland and most of the parishes of south-central Ayrshire where large numbers of McMurtries are found.
 - **“Derry” pattern** common to Co. Derry in northern Ireland and to one family in the parish of Dailly, Ayrshire.

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- **“Dalmellington” pattern** common to families originating in the town of Dalmellington in eastern Ayrshire.
2. The Irish McM all share an ancestor with families in Scotland. The McM of Co. Derry share an ancestor with a family that lived in Dailly Parish, Ayrshire, Scotland. The McM of Co. Antrim share an ancestor with the McM who lived in most of the parishes of south-central Ayrshire where the McM were concentrated by the 1700s.
 3. All but one of the McM who migrated to colonial America came from northern Ireland. They all share a common ancestor with each other, and they share a common ancestor with families in Scotland.

DNA and the Colonial McM Emigrants

During the colonial period of American history, 5 McM families crossed the Atlantic to settle in the New World. One of these was from Dalmellington, Ayrshire and had the Dalmellington DNA pattern. The other four were from Ireland and all had one variant or another of the Antrim DNA pattern.

The Dalmellington immigrant was David McMurtrie born in 1721 in Dalmellington who migrated to London by 1747 and then to Philadelphia by 1752.

The Irish immigrants were:

1. Alexander McM d 1761 who settled in Hunterdon County New Jersey by 1747.
2. Joseph d 1762, Robert d 1775 and Thomas McM d 1788 who settled in Somerset County, New Jersey by 1735 with Joseph and Robert moving on to Sussex County, New Jersey by 1750.
3. William McMurtrey d 1808 Laurens County, South Carolina migrated from Larne, Northern Ireland in 1772
4. John McM 1738-1790 and Samuel McM 1745-1796, sons of Alexander and Sarah McM, who came to Augusta County, VA prior to 1751 and were raised by their mother and their step-father James Young.

There are slight variations in the DNA patterns of the various families having the Antrim Pattern. The original DNA pattern of the McM is the subpattern that is shared by the the Hunterdon Co McM, and most of the Ayrshire McM and one family in Ireland. From the original pattern, the other sub-patterns are offshoots that occurred about the time they came to Ireland or after they had been in Ireland for a while.

So the answer to the question about whether the McM are Scottish or Irish is that they are both! The McM of New Jersey, Virginia, and South Carolina had origins in Northern Ireland before coming to America, but their Irish ancestors had Scottish ancestors before that. It is possible that those Scottish ancestors lived in the Ayrshire parishes where the Antrim pattern continued to dominate.

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Family historians have often wondered whether the Somerset-Sussex Co NJ family and the Hunterdon Co NJ family and the Augusta Co VA families might be close cousins. The Somerset-Sussex County family had a branch which settled next door to a branch of the Augusta Co VA family when they both migrated to Kentucky in 1780. The Hunterdon Co NJ and the Somerset-Sussex Co NJ families lived only 25 miles from each other and arrived in NJ about the same time. Since the DNA tells us they share a common ancestor, it is intriguing to wonder how long before coming to America these families shared a common ancestor and whether they were close cousins or distant cousins. Given that there is only one mutation of difference between the original pattern of the Hunterdon Co family and the patterns of the Somerset Co NJ family and the Virginia family, the common ancestor could have been only a generation or two before coming to America OR the common ancestor could have been 100-150 years before. So the common ancestor could have been in Ireland in the 1600s, but it could have been in Scotland prior to that.

McM of Scotland

The McM name in its various spellings is said by some to have evolved from the conversion of the Gaelic name Muirheartaigh or Muirheartach to an English form of the name. One Scottish genealogist thought the McMurtrie name evolved from the Muirheartaigh of Bute and that the McMurtries were a “sept” of the Clan Stewart of Bute. However, some McM historians doubt the Bute origin and think the name may have evolved from Muirheartaigh elsewhere in Scotland. The name appears in various forms in various places in the 1500s - McMurthre in Wigtonshire, McMurthe in Kintyre (where it became McMurchy), McMurrarty in Bute, McMuryte elsewhere. As Murtrae, Mowtrie, Mutrie (derivatives of Moultrie) it appears in eastern Scotland, particularly in Fife north of Edinburgh and is reported to have derived from an Anglo-Norman knight.

But as far as names that we would recognize as McMurtrie, it is Ayrshire in the lowlands of southwest Scotland that we find its origins. The McM name is found in Barr Parish, Ayrshire as early as 1538 when a Robert Makmurtre is listed as occupying the farm of Bailleballoch (which is Gaelic for "farm in the pass"). It appears in Maybole, Ayrshire in 1575 when the widow of John McMurtre received payment of a cow from the estate of Sir Thomas Kennedy. The first mention of the name in its modern spelling is in a Testament dated 1604 for a Thomas McMurtrie who died in 1592 in Culzean, not far from the village of Kirkoswald.

Regardless of its origins, by the early to mid-1600s, references to them are found in all the “heartland” parishes of Ayrshire: Girvan, Barr, Kirkoswald, Maybole, Kirkmichael, Dailly and Straiton as well as some isolated references in Kilmarnock 20 miles north of Maybole. By the 1700s, they are found in Ayr and Dalmellington. As the 1700s progress into the mid-1700s, we begin to see migrations northward to Kilmarnock (3 families in the 1730s) and to Glasgow (one family in the 1730s and 3 families in the 1750s), one Falkirk, half-way between Glasow and Edinburgh (one family in 1750s), and a family of McMutrie in Edinburgh in 1750s.

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In the last half of the 1700s, there were migrations too numerous to list here. Of note were some migrations to the Glasgow area, to areas just west of Glasgow, namely Paisley in Renfrewshire and New Kilpatrick in Dumbartonshire, and in some cases from the Glasgow area back southward to Kilmarnock and to Maybole.

In Wigtonshire, south of Ayrshire, around 1803, a John and Robert McMurtrie who had been living in Co Down, Ireland moved back to Scotland and settled in Inch Parish, and then Glenluce Parish.

Scottish McM Families DNA

Most of the McM families of Ayrshire (Ayr, Maybole, Kirkmichael, Kirkoswald, Barr, Dailly) and Glasgow and Wigtonshire all share the Antrim DNA pattern. In addition to being the dominant pattern in the Scottish families, this pattern is common in Co Antrim in Northern Ireland and is the pattern of the Irish migrants to colonial America.

Only 1 or possibly 2 families have the Derry DNA pattern common in Co Derry, Ireland, namely, John b 1714 Dailly Parish and Andrew b 1775 Kirkmichael Parish. This family is thought to be the ancestor of the McM of Co Derry.

A number of families share the Dalmellington DNA pattern. This pattern does not exist in Ireland. Some of these families can either be traced to Dalmellington in the 1700s and others are thought to have derived from that family or a shared ancestor before coming to Dalmellington.

For more details on the specific families, see the listing at the end of this report.

McM of Ireland

There were McM in Ireland by 1630 in Dunluce in the far NW corner of Co Antrim adjacent to Co Derry and in the 1660s along the SE coast of Antrim in Carrickfergus and Glynn. There are isolated references in the 1700s in Co Down by 1712, in County Derry by 1765 and in Dublin in 1752. In Antrim, Derry and Down, the early references are followed by increasing numbers of McM families suggesting descendants of the first arrivals or additional waves of migration. In Dublin, the early entry is a merchant whose family either died out or returned to his origin, probably Scotland.

By the early 1800s, McM families were concentrated in:

- County Antrim, in the coastal and near coastal parishes of Ballylinney, Carrickfergus, Glynn, Raloo, Larne and Island Magee, lying between 10 and 20 miles NE of Belfast, but there was also a family in Belfast and a family in Clontifinnan in NW Antrim near the Dunluce area where the McM settled in the 1630s

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- County Derry, along the eastern edge of Co Derry from Coleraine and Aghadowey and Kilrea in the north to Artrea in the south.
- Co Down at unknown location, There had been a family in Comber, Co Down in 1758 and 1787, but they seemed not to have remained there into the 1800s.
- An Antrim family had three brothers that went to southern Ireland. One went to Co Carlow in southern Ireland by 1800 to work the mills of John Alexander, a wealthy Belfast merchant. Another brother settled there also at an unknown date. A third brother went to Tipperary about 1837 to work the mills there.

The McM of Ireland have two DNA patterns – the Antrim pattern characteristic of those families that lived in Co Antrim and the Derry pattern characteristic of those who lived in Co Derry (to the west of Co Antrim).

Attached to this report are maps showing the locations of the McM families in Co Antrim and Co Derry in the 1800s.

Co. Antrim

The DNA shows that the Co Antrim McM shared a common ancestor with the McM of the central Ayrshire Scotland parishes where the McM had lived for centuries, ie. Maybole, Kirkoswald, Barr, Dailly, Kirkmichael. So we suspect that those parishes were the origins of the Co Antrim McM.

As the map of Co Antrim shows, the McM were concentrated in the southeastern coastal parishes of Co Antrim, but also lived further inland to the west and north.

The DNA suggests that the Co Antrim families are descended from the Ayrshire Scotland McM who came to Ireland. The DNA of the Antrim families seems to be a variation from the Scottish DNA pattern and possibly reflects a mutation that occurred about the time or shortly after the migration to Ireland.

The McM who migrated to America also have slight variations from the Scottish pattern that are slightly different from the pattern of any of the Antrim McM that have been sampled. They are thought to be independent mutations from one of the Scottish families who migrated to Ireland, rather than mutations from the other Antrim families.

Co. Derry

The Derry pattern families appear to have originated in Scotland, possibly in Dailly Parish, Ayrshire, and to have migrated to Derry possibly prior to 1765 and become two branches – one in northern Derry and one in southern Derry.

The Derry pattern appears in Scotland only in two families (that might actually be the same family) – one in Dailly Parish, Ayrshire by 1714 and one (possibly a descendant of the Dailly family) in nearby Kirkmichael by 1775.

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There is a Thomas McMurry who appears in Derry by 1765. We suspect that he was the progenitor of the various Co Derry families and shared a common ancestor with the Dailly Parish McM and possibly came from Ayrshire.

Some of these Derry families remained in the vicinity of their ancestral residences (see the map of McMurry residences in Derry); others migrated, for example:

- From Artrea Parish in southern Derry to March Twp, Ontario in 1820s and to Massachusetts by 1850
- From Coleraine to Ontario prior to 1851 and later to Saskatchewan
- From Kilrea to New Brunswick by 1847 and then to Nova Scotia

DNA shows that four McM families of Kilrea and Coleraine and Aghadowey in NE Co Derry had the same or nearly the same DNA; two families of Artrea Parish in SE Co Derry were the same as each other but slightly different from those in the north.

They all seem to derive from the pattern shared by two families in Dailly and Kirkmichael Parish, Ayrshire, Scotland.

Conclusion

We have made many discoveries using the DNA that give us a better picture of the migrations and interrelationships between the various McM families.

Hopefully some enterprising family historian will come along in the decades after this report and complete the DNA study. The detailed version of this report contains a list of families that have yet to be sampled for DNA.

Meanwhile, below is a listing of all the families that have been sample and the DNA pattern to which they correspond. Elsewhere on the MacMurtrie Clan Family Records website can be found a search engine that can help you locate one of your ancestors and thereby identify the family number of the family you are descended from. Once you know the number of your family, you can identify its DNA pattern in the listings below.

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McM DNA Patterns and the Clan Family Numbers that Correspond to that Pattern

Antrim Pattern

Sub-pattern 1:

- CF 28 John McMurtrie of Balwhirn, Kirkmichael, Ayrshire, children b 1720s
- CF 37/38 Matthew McM of Kirkoswald, children born abt 1700
- CF 39 James md 1800 Maybole, prob s of James b 1743 Barr md 1768 Dailly (CF4)
- CF 56 James McM md 1791 Jean Glen in Paisley (5 mi w of Glasgow)
- CF 57 John McM md 1839 Margaret Nicolson in Fredericton, New Brunswick
- CF 30 Thomas md 1796 Eliz Neill in St Quivox, Ayr
- CF 24 Thomas McM md 1781 Elizabeth Gardner in New Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire
- CF 7 Thomas McM md Margaret Gemmell, Maybole
- CF 22 Thomas McM md 1720 Margaret McM, Mackrillkill, Dailly Parish, Ayrshire
- CF 112 Alexander McM d 1761 Hunterdon Co NJ
- CF 202 William McM 1775-1855 Co Antrim/Carlow & Bowmanville, Ontario Canada

Sub-pattern 2:

- CF 110 Joseph d 1761 Sussex Co NJ, Robert d 1775 Sussex Co NJ, Thomas d 1785 Somerset Co NJ

Sub-pattern 3:

- CF 201 Matthew Mc M 1750-1813 Island Magee, Co Antrim
- CF 204 James b 1820 r Carrickfergus, Co Antrim
- CF 117 William McM d 1808=>Laurens Co SC about 1772
- CF 121 Archibald McMurtry 1754-1830, Bruslee, Ballylinney, Co Antrim
- CF 15 John and Robert McMurtrie born in Co Down =>to Wigtonshire ca 1800
- CF 103 John b 1810 & Jane b 1816 Ireland, James b 1836 Ireland md Isabella Car =>Philadelphia pr 1858

Sub-pattern 4:

- CF 111 Samuel McM 1748-1796 and John McM 1738-1790 of Augusta Co VA

Derry Pattern

- CF 1 John b 1714 md 1744 Park, Dailly to Agnes Ferguson Bellymore, Barr, Ayrshire
- CF 12 Andrew b 1771, son of John of Pleasant Park, Kirkmichael, Ayrshire
- CF 203 James McM 1794-1878 Artrea, Co Derry to March Township (Ottawa area), Ontario
- CF 211 Alexander McM 1790 Atrea, Co Derry to Boston Massachusetts
- CF 210 Thomas McM b 1818, r Coleraine, Co Derry =>Ontario abt 1840
- CF 208 John McM b 1805, r Kilrea, CoDerry =>Nova Scotia prior to 1839
- CF 221 Hugh 1797-1887 r Aghadowey, Co Derry
- CF 243 James b 1791, r Aghadowey, Co Derry

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Dalmellington Pattern

- CF 19 William McMurtrie b abt 1690 of Dalmellington, Ayrshire
- CF 23 John McMurtrie b 1733 Dalmellington md 1766 Coylton, resided Craigie and Sorn, Ayrshire
- CF 104 David McMurtrie b 1735 Dalmellington, md 1762 Kirkmichael Ayrshire
- CF 45/46 William b 1766 Dalemellington md 1805 Mary Hoet Barr/Maybole; children=>Edinburgh
- CF 47 Thomas McM and Mgt Gibson had natural son Thomas b 1798 Galston =>Edinburgh 1825
- CF 18 Thomas md 1781 Marion Bole, resided Dam of Barnshean, Kirkmichael
- CF 16 Thomas md Janet Murdock 1785 Paisley=>Maybole 1795/1797