

FROM THE PROVINCE OF ULSTER TO THE PROVINCE OF CONNACHT: THREE McMANUS ‘STRAYS’ FROM THE 1700s.

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Historically, there are two principal and genetically separate Irish clans that bear the name McManus; one from the Maguires of Ulster and the other from the O’Conors of Connacht (MacLysaght, 1978:222; O Muriale, 1998:63-64). Until the 17th century there had been little population movement in Ireland and what did occur after that time was notable but hardly monumental. I set out below three instances where McManus families, found settled in the Province of Connacht for two hundred years or so, are actually of Ulster origin. The source of this claim in two of the families, settled in County Leitrim and County Roscommon, rests with word of mouth within each family - that an earlier generation ‘came down from The North’.

The third family provides a unique example here of the application of science to family history. They had no such word of mouth but their DNA analysis has proven they are from an Ulster family emanating from the Maguires of Fermanagh.

Why does all this matter? As many McManus families world-wide attempt to locate their original ‘place’ in Ireland, it is important to make distinctions between the McManuses of Connacht and the McManuses of Ulster because of their genetic difference which, of course, is highly important to those seeking their historical origins. Accordingly, it has become increasingly important for family historians to supplement their historical records with DNA evidence of origin (The McManus YDNA Project). Historical records and YDNA evidence are, indeed, mutually exclusive in providing certainty for family historians.

1. Straying unawares in County Roscommon

The first example occurred in the 1990s, when genetic genealogy was beginning to take off in a big way. I was contacted by a couple in Georgia, USA who asked me if I was interested in creating a McManus YDNA Project with a testing company here in England. The lady was a McManus (hereafter Pattie), as indeed I am, and we had been acquainted for some years through a common interest – our respective Irish great grandfathers’ had both migrated from different parts of County Roscommon around 1848; hers to the USA and mine to England. Other than a name in common, neither family had any evidence that we were closely related, but based on the evidence we hypothesized that we were. So, relatively recently in genealogical terms at least, we appeared to have common origins in a name and an Irish county. Pattie now proposed that her brother and I could be YDNA tested for the purpose of comparing our genetic closeness – in a sense, a kind of project with the intention of bringing our

families back together again. From historical records, we both knew the identity of the specific, yet different, parishes in County Roscommon where our great grandfathers' families had been settled - mine in Kilronan in the north east of the county and Pattie's in Ballintubber, sixty miles further south. Agreeing to take this test created an exciting prospect for us both.

The samples were taken and sent for analysis. You can imagine how surprised we both were when the results came back to show a spectacular genetic distance between us both of eight genetic markers – the probability that we shared a common ancestor in the last 24 generations was as low as 1.26%. Genetic markers are simply positions on the DNA chain, each of which relates to a specific number for the individual tester. As an aid to identifying origin at a glance I later calculated some primary distinctions between the genetic markers of Kilronan and Ulster McManuses as follows:

Name of Marker	Kilronan	Ulster
DYS 385b	13	14
DYS 392	14	13
DYS 437	15	16
DYS 444	13	12
DYS 452	31	30
DYS 459b	11	10
DYS 461	12	13
DYS 464c	16	17
DYS 464d	17	18
GATA A10	15	16

Comparing each of our results separately against other McManus YDNA testers, however, it was clear to see we both had close genetic matches with other McManuses. These comparisons clearly showed our individual family origins were, as I had expected in my case, the Province of Connaught and Pattie's, unexpectedly, the Province of Ulster. To be even more specific, Pattie's had an historical association with the Maguires in County Fermanagh and mine with the O'Conors, a line of which had settled around the ninth century in Kilronan Parish. Genetic genealogy provides many surprises and this one requires some explanation of why a Northern family found itself settled in a Southern place. The explanation is somewhat given in my next example.

2. Straying awareness in County Leitrim

The great Irish writer, John McGahern, was brought up in County Leitrim and also in adjoining County Roscommon - within ten miles of my great grandfather's place in Kilronan. John's mother, Susan, was a McManus and it was common knowledge in her family that they had at some time in the distant

past, migrated to Corraleehan, County Leitrim, from the North of Ireland. Corraleehan is only a few miles from the Leitrim border with County Fermanagh, a county hotspot for the name McManus in the North. So, it would seem possible, that Susan's family may have migrated only a short distance from the North into the now Irish Republic and County Leitrim.



Map showing location of Corraleehan

According to John McGahern, whereas his father's family could be bad, violent and of an angry disposition, his McManus family were, conversely, all:

.....intelligent, hard-working, kind, humorous, sociable and disciplined. They were, above all, rooted in their own lives and helped one another in spite of the hostilities and irritations, competing self-interests and differences of personality that come into play in all close relations (McGahern, 2005:43).

On leaving the north, John McGahern's McManuses had settled on land, 'worse than poor' on the Iron Mountains above Coraleehan Church, County Leitrim:

A few boggy meadows below the house gave them potatoes, turnips, cabbage and the winter's fodder. All the names on that part of the mountain were Northern – McManus, McGovern, McGirl, Maguire – many of them related. Generations earlier, some had been weavers in the North who were undercutting the established Protestant weavers. In organized violence, their looms were broken, their houses burned, and they fled west and south. Before they settled on the mountain, these slopes were thought too poor to support a people, though its thin seams of

coal and iron had been mined sporadically for generations. As a people, they were resourceful, thrifty, careful: they had to be (McGahern 2005:44).

3. Straying awareness in County Roscommon

My last example relates to the Parish of Drum, Athlone, County Roscommon. We learn from the Irish Folklore transcripts of Kieran McManus (1874-1973) of that Parish, that the first McManuses to settle there were from the North of Ireland – The Province of Ulster.

The McManus's of Ardnanure and Nure. The arrival of a number of McManus families to settle in Ardnanure and Nure would have gone unnoticed and indeed unrecorded were it not for Nure's great local Historian the Late Kieran McManus (1874-1973) who related to Folklore Collector James Delaney in 1961 that several centuries ago, the McManus's in Nure and Ardnanure hailed from the North of Ireland. Kieran's story went on to say that two brothers settled in Nure and two more went to Ardnanure, but he wasn't sure of their relationship. The surname McManus has continued to be maintained to this day in both townlands (Edward Egan, 2013).

Religious and Economic Migrants

The esteemed Irish historian, Noel O Muraile, reminds us that many Irish Catholic families, seeking a more settled and peaceful life, migrated south from Ulster during times of religious upheaval. Distinguishing between the two McManus families (from the Maguires of Ulster and the O'Conors of Connacht), O Muraile states:

It is probable that a majority of the people named McManus in present day Cos. Roscommon and Sligo belong to that family (*i.e. McManus/O'Conor, North Roscommon*). But when we come to Cos. Mayo and Galway, not to mention Leitrim, the situation is more complex. Where the surname MacManus has been in place prior to, say, the year 1700, it is likely to represent the north Roscommon family. But after that date the picture becomes confused – mainly because of extensive migration from this part of Ulster into Connacht from the late 17th century onwards.....But the really big migration (mainly into Co. Mayo and north Galway) took place after the Battle of the Diamond, in north Armagh, which led to the formation of the Orange Order. Large numbers of Catholics fled from south Ulster at that period.....(O Muriale, 1998:63-64).

We also know that some of these Northern Irish families became economic migrants at certain historical moments, for instance, during the relaxation of the Penal Laws in 1771, Catholics were allowed to take leases of up to fifty acres of un-reclaimed bog land for sixty-one years (The Catholic Encyclopaedia, 1905).

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