

The History Of The Surname Duffy

"Duffy is a name which comes from the Old Irish word "dubhthaich" which means "of the dark house". The Irish Duffys are a sept of the Scots Clan Macfie or McFie, which originated on the Island of Colonsay. The Scots Gaelic form of the name is "MacDubhsithe", which means "son of the People of Peace", or the faeryfolk.



"This name is now the single most common name in County Monaghan, where it originated. Its (modern) Irish version is Ó Dubthaigh, which means black, probably referring to hair."

We know that our particular Duffy clan came from County Monaghan, Ireland, thanks to Greg Coombs, Grandson of Margaret Catherine Duffy.

- Margaret was the daughter of James Francis and Mary Eleanor Purtill Duffy.
- James Francis was the son of Jerome & Ann Elizabeth Williams Duffy.
- Jerome was the son of Patrick & Armina Collins Duffy and brother of James Munroe Duffy. (James Munroe and Harriet Allen Duffy are responsible for changing the spelling of our name to "Duffie".)

History of County Monaghan, Ireland

In the old Gaelic system of land division, Monaghan was part of the Kingdom of Oriel. It was also known as McMahan's country after the dominant family of the area. The McMahan's and their allies, the McKennas and O'Connollys, maintained effective domination of the county even after the arrival of the Normans in the twelfth century. The county boundaries were not established by the English administration until the late sixteenth century.

After the defeat of the rebellion of O'Neil and the Ulster chieftains in 1603, the county was not planted like the other counties of Ulster. The lands were instead left in the hands of the native chieftains. In 1641 the McMahan's and their allies joined the general rebellion of Irish Catholics, and following their defeat there was some plantation of the county with Scottish and English families.

Analysis of the Hearth Money Rolls of 1663 shows that the commonest names in the county at the time (in descending order) were McMahan, McKenna, O'Duffy, O'Connolly, McCabe, McWard, McArdle, McIlmartin, O'Byrne, O'Callan, McCallan, O'Kelly, O'Murphy, McNancy, McTearnor, O'Gowan or McGowan, O'Boylan, McIlcollin, O'Finnegan, O'Cassidy, and McPhilip.

The McCabes were a gallowglas, or mercenary, family probably brought into the county by the McMahan's following the Norman invasion. The O'Byrnes, who are relatively numerous in the county, are probably descendants of the Kildare or Wicklow O'Byrnes. This family was driven from its Kildare territories by the Normans in the late twelfth century. It is suggested that part of this clan may have migrated into Monaghan.

The major settlers in the county were Scottish farmers brought over from the area of Strathclyde. Common names among these settlers were McAndrew, Mackay, Sinclair, Stewart, Buchanan, McKenzie, Davidson, Ferguson, Blackshaw, McCraig, Walker, Cameron, Gordon, Patterson, and McCutcheon.

A general indication of the proportion of the population of Irish or Norman extraction, or of English or Scottish descent, can be derived from the statistics on religious persuasions of the inhabitants. These groups were, respectively, predominantly Catholic, Church of Ireland, or Presbyterian. In 1861, when the census first determined religion, the respective proportions were 73, 14, and 12 percent."



From Pat Traynor, in California's Gold Rush country

1659 Census: In the census of 1659, the total population of Monaghan was recorded as 4083 - 3649 Irish and 434 English. In the section called Annie there were 11 persons. [perhaps a Floody relative?]

from Lewis Topographical Dictionary of Ireland. pub. 1837

Famine: The direct impact of the famine was almost entirely confined to the cottier classes. They hired land on conacre (for eleven months) on which they grew their potatoes. Generally they lived in a cabin constructed of sods, or mud, erected on waste ground or on the roadside. Their children married young, as the only capital required to start a family was a spade and a basket of seed potatoes. The husband would spend the summer working as a "basket" or migratory farm laborer. The wife and children often took to the road begging. This was possible because potatoes were a low maintenance crop, not requiring much attendance after planting. It was necessary because by that time the last years crop would have been gone, so the critical period was the months before the new crop was ready.

The famine hit hardest in the west where the land was poorest, the population highest, and alternative sources of employment were lacking. It can also be associated with economic changes; Irish agriculture was moving away from tillage, which was labor intensive, towards livestock farming which was not. The flax industry would have provided employment and an alternative source of income for many, but there would still have been a significant number of cottiers who depended totally on the potato on Aughnamullen.

The name Aughnamullen is an Anglicization of the Gaelic Achadh an Mullen, meaning the field of the mills.
From Kevin Sweeney in County Cavan, Ireland

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