

Anderson Roots

Clan Anderson traces its origins to three Scottish traditions, the original prehistoric Caledonii (Picts), the Celts, and the Lowlanders.

The oldest are the original Picts. The powerful Pictish tribe of Anrias inhabited the peninsula north of Inverness. This tribe (later called "Clan" by the Celts) was married out of existence by Clan Ross. The last recorded documentation of "Clan Anrias" was in 1597 and 1600. The first few Earls of Ross were in fact named Anderson. As a matter of interest the Pictish royal line was a matriarchy with the lineage descending through their queens.

The second branch was the Celts— the MacAndrews, MacAndrias, Ghilleandrais, MacGhilleandrais, etc. They came to Scotland with the Celtic invasion starting around 225AD. They were one of the septs of Clan Donald of Glengarry and generally lived in the Moidart area. Of western Scotland. As the original Pictish tribes grew weaker from fighting the Britonii, the Romans, and later the Viking invaders, the Celts slowly took over their land.

The last group were the Lowlanders. The Surname Anderson is first documented about 1250AD some 125 years after the Vikings left Scotland. The Vikings were in parts of northern Scotland from 790 to 1125 AD. In 1053 king Malcolm III (Malcolm Canmore) decreed that landed persons should take surnames from their property (after a practice started sometime earlier in France). Because the Andersons were not generally property owners, their name, a patronymic, "Sons of Andrew", didn't really come into existence until about 150 to 200 years later when the use of surnames became common among the lower classes. Small surprise with Saint Andrew being the Patron Saint of Scotland since about 400 AD, there were a lot of his "Andrew" namesakes running around. The Lowlanders did not adhere to the "Chief" traditions of the Highlands, but rather to the "Royal" traditions of England and France.

Around 1400, a MacAndrew provided the bodyguard for one of the MacDonald daughters who was betrothed to the Chief of Clan MacIntosh. He and his family accompanied her on her trip across Scotland to the Strathdon area. His job completed he set up "Clan" Anderson in the hills above Nairn, east of Inverness. Shortly afterward, a fair number of the Clan Anrias left the Ross country and joined the Anderson above Nairn.

Because Clan Anderson was never a large clan, it banded together for mutual protection with about 13 other clans as part of the "Clan" Chattan Confederation, whose chief, incidently is also the Chief of Clan MacIntosh.

You might also be interested to know that the Anderson tartan is the only family tartan that has seven colors. All the others have six or less. Some of the newer tartans for organizations and possibly districts now have seven colors, but they are not family tartans.