

Clan Leslie Society INTERNATIONAL



Clan Leslie Septs: *Moore*

The name has a variety of spellings: Muir, Moore, Moic, Moar. Mor and in Ireland, O'More. The name most probably is Gaelic (Celtic) in origin. The word mor means big. King Malcolm III, whose sister is believed to have married the founder of Clan Leslie, was called Cann Mor, "Big Head", and his family became the House of Canmore whose rule gave Scotland a golden age. The English meaning is one who lives by a heath or moor. It has been suggested that the spelling of the name was peculiar to a particular locality or area. For example, the spelling Moar is found in the North Isles and Moir is found around Aberdeen.

There is a hypothesis that the Mores first came to Scotland in the very early Middle Ages, when the Scottish left North Ireland and the Kingdom of Dalriada was founded in Western Scotland, during the 6th Century. Other Mores stayed in Ireland. Much later the Scottish Mores moved to Ireland, also down to England. To make the story more complicated, it is claimed that there were Anglo-Norman Moores indigenous to England. Some of these went to Ireland where they were called, according to one authority, de Mora. This authority (the former Chief Herald of Ireland) also stated that "the old Irish Moores are O *Mordha*, from the word *Mordha* (stately, noble)," and that the O'Mores were the leading sept of the seven septs of Leix. He noted that of thirteen Moore families listed as Irish Landed Gentry, only one was native Irish (O'More). The other twelve came to Ireland from Scotland or England. The Earls of Drogheda are Mores, descended from an ancestor who came to Ireland during the reign of Elizabeth I of England.

One of England's greatest Mores was the statesman and saint, Sir Thomas More, friend of King Henry VIII who made him Chancellor of England and later had him beheaded (1535). Recognized as one of the great humanists of the Renaissance, St. Thomas More was canonized in 1935. His family came to England from Ireland, having, however, according to one source originated in Scotland. Few other families offer the genealogical complexities of the Mores, as can be ascertained from this brief historical sketch.

A contemporary of Thomas More, Sir Anthony More, was a celebrated painter (he did the famous portrait of Mary Tudor) in England and on the Continent. But he was a fake More, actually being a Spaniard raised in Flanders, whose name was Antonio Moro which shows that even four centuries ago persons liked to assume Scottish names of distinction. There are many famous English Moores and Mores. Ruins of a Moore Hall grace the banks of the Thames. But we should return to the Scots.

The Mores appear in Scottish documentation from the Middle Ages onward. Thomas de la More was executor for the Celtic Lady Devorguillia, mother of King John Balliol (the unhappy "Toom Tabbard" of Scottish history) in 1291. When Donald More of Lennox, who was a Gael, was required to render homage to king Edward I of England in 1296, his name was recorded as Dovenal Ie fiz Michel More de Levenaghés, a bowdlerization. One of the Knights who witnessed charters of King Robert Bruce was Sir Adam More. A document of 1317 identifies one Robertus More as a burges of Aberdeen. One of the wealthy More families at that time was the Mures of Rowallan.

In 1347 King Robert II married the daughter of Sir Adam Mure, Elizabeth. This family remained important and prosperous until the beginning of the 18th Century, when it died out. In the 15th Century the name began to appear in the Orkney Islands, as Muir or Moar. The Muires of the tiny island of Wyre in Orkney in our time produced three distinguished brothers: Edwin, the poet, John, the Sanskrit scholar, and Sir William, historian and biographer of Mohammed.

For Americans perhaps the most important Scottish More was John Muir (1838-1914). He came to the United States in 1849 and settled in California. He is known as the Father of American Conservation. Much has been written about him lately, with the growing interest in protecting our natural environment. John Muir showed the way a century ago. He traveled around a good deal and discovered Muir Glacier in Alaska, named after him. He was one of the founders of the Sierra Club (Muir was the first to explore the Sierra Nevada) and influenced President Theodore Roosevelt to establish the American National Parks System.

An earlier Scottish More about whom much could be written here was General Sir John Moore (1761-1809). As a young officer he fought five years in the British Army in America during our War for Independence. During his long and illustrious career he became one of England's best field commanders; one English historian says General Moore "was the finest trainer of men the British Army has ever known." He served in many theaters of operation and campaigns. One of his unusual assignments was to the staff of the King of Sweden, in 1806, who was at war with the Russians. He disagreed so strongly with Gustavus IV's plans that the Swedish King clapped him into jail. Moore, however, escaped in disguise and got back to England. The climax of his career was the battle of Corunna, in Spain, where he fell mortally wounded. His victory over the French was a turning point in Napoleon's ascendance and began a series of events which five years later brought his downfall.

There have been, and are, many notable American Mores. Only one, to represent them all, shall be mentioned. John Basset Moore, jurist, born before the War between the States and whaled to a great age. He is a legendary figure in American diplomacy, one of the greatest authorities in International law this country has produced. For many years he was Professor of International Law and Diplomacy at Columbia University, writer of many works which remain authoritative. Among a wide scope of distinctions and accomplishments, he represented our country and was chairman of an international conference regarding aircraft and radio in time of war. A man of vision, he foresaw what role these then fledgling accomplishments of technology would play in future warfare. World War II as it turned out. This conference was held in The Hague, where he then was a judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice, and the year, 1922. He was around to advise his government during World War II, as he had for over half a century before then.

This writer has not yet uncovered documentary evidence as to when and why More became a Leslie sept; perhaps a reader can do so. Nor is there but scant documentation linking a More with a Leslie. In 1700 one Francis Moir was granted a concession by the Sheriff of Aberdeen "for taking judicial resignation of Teresa Leslie of five ploughs of land." Patrick Leslie Duguid, 21st Baron of Balquhain, a complicated man who led a most adventurous life (at age 15 he fought for the "Old Pretender" in the 1715 Rebellion), was a close friend of James Moir of Stoneywood. They fought "the Hannoverians" together at Culloden. According to this account the two men promised each other that if one of them survived the battle, he would look after the other's widow. Moir was killed and the 21st Baron kept his promise. There-after he and the Widow Moir "became exceeding friendly." True or not, those words characterize the relationship of Mores and Leslies in the ACLS today.

- Alexander Leslie Klieforth

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT: www.clanlesliesociety.org