

KENNA or McKENNA

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From a letter written by our Aunt Annie Kenna, Dated August 8, 1920, I quote as follows:

" There were two 'tribes or clans' of the name in Ireland, one of which was descended from King Kenneth of Ulster. His seat of Government was TRUAGH in Monaghan County, and his descendents settled in Leinster. Kenneth in Gaelic means 'King or Chief' of a clan. I have heard father (our grandfather) say, distinctly, that his father (our great-grandfather) came from TRUAGH (pronounced TRUE) in Monaghan County".

" Kenneth would be pronounced KENNA in Gaelic, as the letter 'h' is not one of the alphabet, but merely a mark of aspiration, which renders the -t- silent. There are but seventeen letters in that alphabet. So you see we get our name and family inheritance from royalty. I have seen the Coat of Arms

"Dan, the oldest, and William (our great-grandfather) next, had educational opportunities denied to the younger ones on account of losing their father".

"The 'Mc' was an honor in the day it was needed, but we never heard of it till we were well grown up, and my father said he never heard of it at home, nor did his father have it. No doubt they all had the 'Mc' in King Kenneth's time when people did not have surnames as now. 'Mc' means son, and a daughter was signified by NI, pronounced NEE".

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From cousin James McKenna (first cousin to our father) I quote the following in regard to the 'Mc':

" I guess all of the family were known as KENNA in Ireland, but my Uncle William, father's brother, (our great-grandfather) always insisted that there should rightfully be a 'Mc' to the KENNA. He was the educated one of the family -our branch - and he called himself 'McKenna' ".

" In 1855 the three brothers, John, Patrick, and William, with their families, were living in Lee, Mass., ten miles south of Pittsfield. My father was employed in a marble quarry there at that time. A Catholic priest came there and my father was introduced to him as 'Kenna'. The priest said to him, "There is no such name as KENNA; its McKENNA; don't you allow anyone to call you 'KENNA'," and that settled the matter with all the families in Berkshire. The Boston branch stuck to 'KENNA' - Annie, Margaret, in fact all your aunts stuck for the 'KENNA' idea, but the boys were all McKENNA".

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The History of Ireland by Martin Haverty includes a map of Ancient Ireland showing the Five Kingdoms of the Pentarchy. In Monaghan County is shown 'M A C K E N N A' of Truagh, and the name is marked with an -L- meaning the family had the title of 'Lord', thus making it one of royalty.

This history is among the books of our late father, Captain William McKenna.

Anne McKenna Morgan, April 1939