

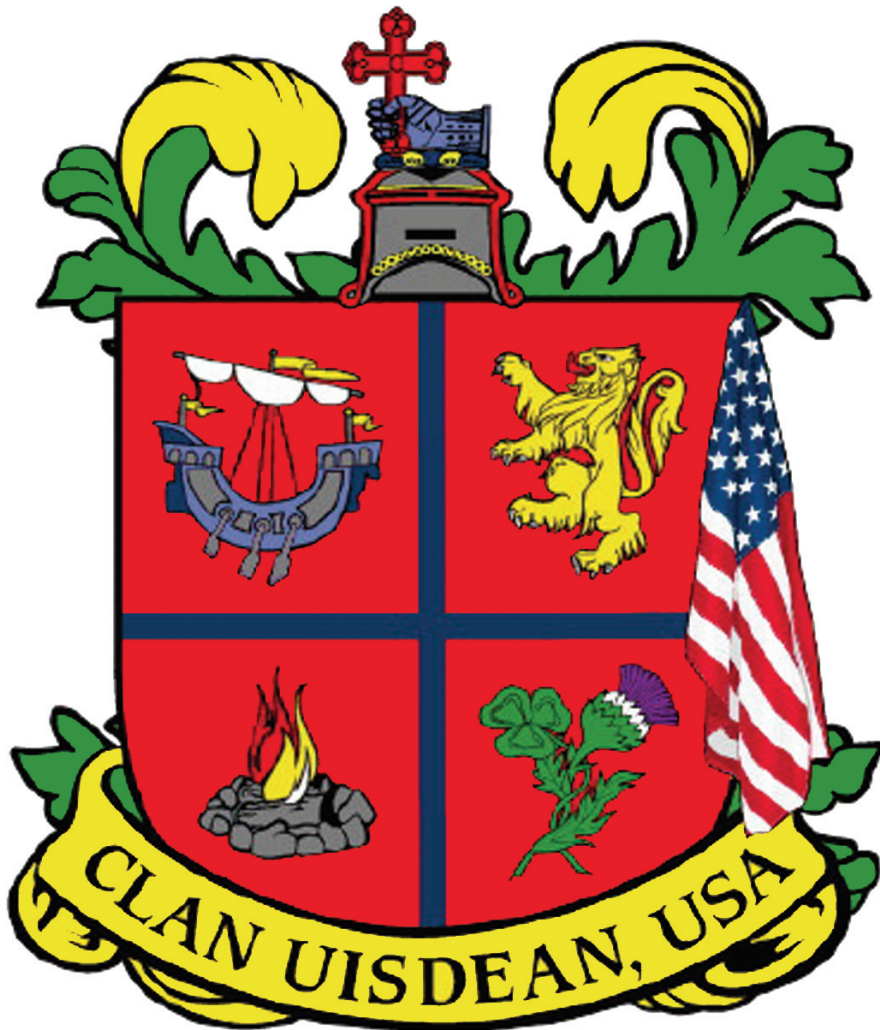
MOUNTAIN ECHO ONLINE

McQuiston, McQuestion,
McQuesten, McQuestion,
McCuiston, McCuiston,
and other related names



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What's in a name?



On an island called Skye, off the western coast of Scotland, there once was a small library hidden among the gardens of the Sleat (slate) Peninsula. In that library, on February 2, 2000, I celebrated my 50th birthday. The celebration included a sun-filled alcove, with

stacks of family history, and a visit from the most venerated of Skye historians, John Macdonald, otherwise known as Johnny Ivy. Also present were Maggie Macdonald, archivist of the *Clan Donald* Centre Library, and Margaret Robertson of the nearby Gaelic College of Skye.

This informal committee of experts on the Gaelic culture, and the history of Skye, presented me with some incredible gifts. I was taught the correct pronunciation of the name Uisdean (the root of our family name). I was given numerous books and records to read that have helped complete our lineage from Uisdean to our current generations. Finally, when I asked Johnny Ivy if I could be sure that my name, McQuiston, came from Uisdean of the Isle of Skye, his answer was, "Ach, I wanna' have a doubt."

When I first met Johnny, in April of 1999, I introduced myself by saying, "My name is McQuiston, it comes from *Clan Uisdean*." He answered, "I know, I know, but we are all McDonalds over here."

He immediately turned away to choose books from a large selection that would help in my research. His comments and actions were so direct it was obvious he was well aware of the connection of our family to the Isle of Skye, and to the McDonald family of Sleat, *Clan Uisdean*.

In 2000, Johnny Ivy graciously returned again to the library, to my complete surprise. The previous night I had a visitor at my dinner table – Lord McDonald, the Chief of *Clan Donald*, our parent clan. He asked about my research at the library and we shared information on our common family. I have also had contact with Sir Ian McDonald,

the current Chief of *Clan Uisdean*, the McDonalds of Sleat. Both the Chief of *Clan Uisdean* and Lord McDonald are descended directly from Hugh of Sleat and there is a good possibility that Johnny Ivy is too. These three men are probably the most important people we could reach in connecting our name to the great *Clan Donald* history. All three showed an interest in my research and in what *Clan Uisdean USA, Inc.* is all about.

The small, quaint library is gone now, it's archives being absorbed into the larger *Museum of the Isles*.

During a 2006 visit to Skye, I looked up at the now-empty cottage, to the window where I had enjoyed the warm February sunlight, in the heartland of my family.

The times they may be a-changin' but, like the old *Clan Donald* motto says, "The Blood is Strong, the Heart is Highland."

Some of this article repeats information I first published in my now out-of-print book, *McUisdean*. I have added considerably to this with what I have since learned.

*Sir Alexander Macdonald
1744 - 1795*

*9th Baronet of Sleat and
1st Baron Macdonald of Slate*

Sir Alexander MacDonald was the head of Clan Uisdean, one of the branches of the extensive Clan Donald, and heir to the ancient Lordship of the Isles. He had estates on Skye and North Uist and is shown here standing on Cnoc an Eireachd, the Hill of the Assembly, the place where the Clan Chiefs had held their Courts of Justice before the imposition of a centralised state.

In the background is Duntulm Castle, the former family seat. Sir Alexander had chosen to be portrayed as chief of his ancient Celtic clan, in the traditional heart of their lands.

Sir Ian MacDonald is the current head of Clan Uisdean. The Slate barony is now an Irish title based in County Antrim, home to Clan Donald South or the McDonnell family of the famous Sorley Boy, while Sleat is the original Scottish title. Sir Ian is also Premier Baron of Nova Scotia. Lord Godfrey McDonald is the Chief of all Clan Donald. The English Prince Charles is the current Lord of the Isles.



Mac Dhòmhnail: *The Right Honourable Godfrey James Macdonald of Macdonald, 8th Lord Macdonald and 34th High Chief of Clan Donald.*



Mac Uisdean: *Sir Ian Godfrey Bosville Macdonald of Sleat, 17th Baronet of Nova Scotia and 24th Chief of Sleat.*



Lord of the Isles: *Charles Windsor, Prince of Wales and current Lord of the Isles. Heir to the throne of Great Britain.*

McCuison, McCuistain, McCuiston, McCuistion, McQuesten, McQuestion, McQueston, McQuision, McQuistan, McQuistin, McQuistian, McQuiston, McQuiston, McQuisyon, and even McChristian are derived from the same source - a man named Uisdean McDonald who was first Chief of the Sleat McDonalds. The names Houston, Hustan, McHutchin, Hutchinson, and the like, also stem from this source.

Experts on Scottish genealogy name Uisdean as the progenitor of all these families. When coupled with historic timelines and family traditions there can be no doubt that our family name begins with this single Scottish chieftain.

The “official” list of the names considered septs or branches of *Clan Donald*, stemming from Uisdean, includes Hewison, Houston, Hughson, Hutcheon, Hutcheson, Hutchinson, Hutchison, Hutchon, Huston, McCuithain, McCutcheon, McHugh, McHutchen, McHutcheon, McQuistan, and McQuisten. And of course, we know there are several more spellings beyond this, such as McCuistion, McCuiston, etc.

We had a very close DNA match with a man named McCaistlain. A variant of his name was given as McCastain. On the Isle of Man our name became McCostain, only one letter off, so here are three more variations of the name – McCastain, McCostain and McCaistlain.

In the official sept list is the name McCuithain. During our 2006 visit to Skye we drove through a very small town called MhicCuithien.

This village was just a short ride up the road from Caisteal Uisdean and we were kind of shocked and surprised to see it. It is a very small village along the shoreline.

The Gaelic *Mhic* has become *Mc* in most Scots names, so this would become McCuithain.

McCuithain - McCuiston, pretty darn close. Add an *s* before the *t* and you have our name, hands down.

It seems like the sign makers are translating it into English as closer to McQueen. I looked up McQueen in our DNA project and there were only 10 entrants. We matched one at 5 and one at 6 which are outside the accepted range, although, with some historical evidence we’d be allowed to move the 5 to a 4 which would be inside the accepted range. This would mean we matched 10% of the McQueens who entered.

Regardless, the Gaelic name is so close to the McCuiston spelling and the town is right next to Caisteal Uisdean, and to land that we absolutely know *Clan Uisdean* owned, that it seems very likely that this town was named for our family. If not, it is another one of those remarkable, if not impossible coincidences.

One name that doesn’t appear on the sept list for those originating from Uisdean is the name Harris.

However, it is known that Hugh of Sleat had a son who lived on the Isle of Harris and some of his descendants took the Harris name.

Other members took the name of MacUisdein. We match about 33% of the Harris men entered into the DNA project, which is a significant number.

What is of most interest is that some of these Harris MacUisdeins moved back to Skye and located on the Trotternish Peninsula, where Castle Uisdean and the town of MhicCuithain are located.

It is almost certain that it was these MacUisdeins from Harris that settled the town of MhicCuithain. Another option is that the Uisdean who built Caisteal Uisdean, was a descendant of Hugh of Sleat and he had one son, of whom nothing is known except his name, Alexander. Perhaps it was his family who founded the town of MhicCuithain.

Either way, all logical evidence points to this small Skye town as being named after our family.

Let’s look at our more modern versions of the name and clues to their development. According to my friends from the library, Uisdean was pronounced in Gaelic as somewhere between “Oosdn” and “Ooshdn”.

I asked the question of Maggie Macdonald who has long served as the archivist for the *Clan Donald* Centre Library, the repository of the official clan records and of many other books that relate to Scottish history.

Independently, I asked Margaret Robertson whose family is from Skye and who was then a student at the premier Gaelic school in the world, the Gaelic College of Skye. Margaret gave an identical answer to Maggie’s of a pronunciation of Oosdn or Ooshdn.

Finally, as I met with Johnny Ivy, he confirmed what I had been told. I suspect there are no better sources available in the world that could give us a more accurate or official



I believe it was Lynn McCuistion who took this picture during our 2006 Clan Uisdean visit to the Isle of Skye. The sign points to a small village located just north of Caisteal Uisdean, which is named for our family.

interpretation of the name Uisdean, unless, of course, that person actually had the name Uisdean.

Recently, I received a request from a man who worked for Hunt Petroleum asking for the correct pronunciation of Uisdean. He was meeting a Scotsman named Uisdean Vass, and wanted to be able to say his name correctly. I told him all I knew about it and asked that he let me know how the man, himself, pronounced it.

We have some good confirmation now, as this gentleman pronounced his name as Ooshdn or Ooshtn.

In 2006, I met a man in a pub on Skye, nearly in the shadows of Dunscaith Castle. His name was Angus McLean. He told me that Uisdean was a name meant to sound like the ocean waves hitting the shoreline. He repeated the correct pronunciation, but as with the other Scots whom I've heard say it, it is hard to phonetically capture the sound.

The extensive book by George Black, entitled *The Surnames of Scotland*, gives the pronunciation of Uisdean as *Ocean*. Black goes on to say, "This spelling (Uisdean) is due to the fact that Gaelic lacks the sound of *ch* as in *church*, so that in names borrowed from English it renders it *sd* (pron. *sht*). This last statement does contradict Black's earlier explanation of the word being said as *Ocean*.

Based on this information the correct original pronunciation seems to be Ooshtn. The *shtn* would better explain the more modern *ton*, *tion* endings we commonly use.

As much as I would like to say "Clan Ocean", I think we should officially adopt the pronunciation of Clan Uisdean, as "Clan Ooshtn, USA" - which is the way many have already been pronouncing it.

In Leona McQuiston's book she had apparently found a source which gave the pronunciation as Whisdon but the Ooshdn/Ooshtn pronunciation makes better sense when you consider that English writers translated Uisdean as Hugh. I suspect the Whisdon pronunciation developed later, along with others, due to the unique spellings of our name.

The word *Uis* translates as spirit, breath, or life as in *uis gebeatha*, or *usquebaugh*, which means "water of life" and is the Gaelic name for whiskey.

The islands of North and South Uist, located very close to the Isle of Skye, seem to have been named before Hugh of Sleat's day.

He owned a good chunk of North Uist and is buried there. Also Dun Uisdean is a castle ruins on North Uist. Hugh may possibly draw his name from these islands, or at least from the same Norse origins.

Uist, often written as Wist in old records, is thought to mean one of three things:

- 1) The Norse word for West;
- 2) The Norse word for habitation - "ivest"
- 3) The Norse word for small island or sandbar - "ifriest" with the *f* being silent and the *r* being dropped through the years.

Uisdean, from whom our name derives, is known historically as Hugh of Sleat. In early records he is also called Hucheon. One might, at first, be tempted to pronounce Hucheon as Hutchin but I believe it was meant to represent Ooshtn.

Early English attempts to spell our name lead me to believe Ooshtn most closely represents the original pronunciation.

We are fortunate to know the very first person to use our family name. Hugh's first son, John, is referred

to as John Roy Makhuchone, in 1494. He would, in fact, be the very first to use our family name. Makhuchone is a name very close phonetically to our modern name as pronounced by some family members. He was also referred to, by English speaking writers of his time, as John Hucheson, in a record dated August 23, 1505, and as "John Huchosoun, the English form of his name . . . given in 1497", according to the New York Public Library sponsored book, *The Surnames of Scotland*.

His father is referred to as "Hucheon of the Ilis of Slet", in a list of members of the Council of the Earl of Ross, February 1474-5. This is just one of several mentions of Uisdean and represents only one of several different spellings of Hugh's Gaelic name.

Recently, I found John's name spelled much closer to our modern spellings. In an article in a Scottish magazine from 1880 his name is given as "John MacHuistean, or Hughson". The article goes on to say that John made a submission to James IV in 1495 and was followed by Donald Gallach, issue of his father by Mary Gunn. Clan Donald always said it was Elizabeth Gunn, and the Gunn's said it was Mary.

One site that talked about Mary and Elizabeth, said that Elizabeth moved off by herself and wasn't heard from since. I have wondered if either it was actually one person - Mary Elizabeth Gunn, a common combination of first and middle names, even today, or if one of the sisters gave birth to Donald Gallach, but the other raised him.

Donald was listed, in one record as Nein Donle VicHuiston, the Nein referring to Donald's daughter. This phrase means "the daughter of Donald, son of Uisdean" and

Donald, himself, would have been recorded as Mac or McHuiston. The record was found at Thurso, Caithness, where Hugh of Sleat landed on his journey from the Orkneys, and very close to where he met Mary and/or Elizabeth Gunn.

So we have two very early versions of the name as MacHuistean and McHuiston for the first two sons of Hugh. I think there can be absolutely no doubt where our family name originated.

Further, Donald Gallach's son was recorded as Donald McAuchin. Hugh of Sleat's name is also given as Austin in a few records, and many an Austin came to America from the Isles of Harris or Skye.

When I say, "recorded as", I am quoting references written by English speaking authors. Our early family did not speak English as a native tongue. They spoke Gaelic, the language of the tribes or clans of Ireland and Scotland. In *Clan Donald* papers our name is spelled a few different ways but generally as Uisdean or Uisdein. I have chosen to spell the name Uisdean as it seems to be more commonly used. Sometimes a second N is added as in Uisdeann. I will, however, refer to the name as Uisdean throughout this article for simplicity.

We have some ideas where Uisdean got his name. Near Skye are the islands of North and South Uist - a name similar to the "uist" sound in Mc-uist-on. Uist is pronounced phonetically as "You-ist" and this supports the theory that our name was pronounced similar to "You-iston" or "Ooshtn." It is possible he was named for the islands, or that both share a common Norse source for their name. There are other possibilities.

One of his distant ancestors was Eystein (similar to Uisdean), King of

Norway in the 8th century. Another ancestor of Uisdean was Unuist, King of the Picts, also in the 8th century (again, the "uist" sound).

Our name, so prone to a variety of spellings and pronunciations, has retained its basic form for over 500 years. Branches of our family still use a pronunciation very similar to the original "McOoshtn." A few McCuistion families in America use the phonetic pronunciation of "Mic Hughs-chone", which is very similar phonetically to the earliest forms of the name. Others, like mine, use "McWhiston" as the pronunciation, supporting Leona's writings.

The name Uisdean can mean *spirit*. The prefix *Mhic*, in Gaelic, means "son of" although even the daughters used the name. A much more appropriate translation would be "children of." The prefix *Mc*, or a form of this word, was added to nearly all Highland and Island clan names. The family of Uisdean became McUisdean and it literally means "Children of Spirit." This name is very much in keeping with Highland history. In his book, *Clan Donald*, Donald J. McDonald says, "In a word, the Celt deals with the things of the spirit."

I am reminded, again, of the words of Sir Walter Scott, quoted in Leona's book, taken from Scott's poem *Lord of the Isles*. I take these words to refer not to wine and a wine chalice, but to the very bloodline of Somerled of the Isles and his descendants, including Hugh of Sleat, and to the Highland spirit which we still carry forward in our daily lives.

*Fill me the mighty cup, he said,
Erst owned by royal Somerled:
Fill it, till on the studded brim
In burning gold, the bubbles swim.
And every gem of varied shine
Glows doubly bright in rosy wine.*

The prefix *Mc* was not originally used in lowland Scotland or for that matter southern Ireland, or anywhere else in the world. It is unique to the clans made up principally of Gaelic people living in the Highlands or Islands of Scotland. Typical Irish families were Catholic and did not use the *Mc* prefix in their names. They used *O'* as in O'Brien to signify "son of." *Mc* or *Mac* families like ours, although originally Catholic, became the Presbyterian Irish, and nearly always had their origins in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

In Scotland, attempts were made to eliminate the Gaelic language and the Highland way of life but these traits survived in Northern Ireland a while longer. In the 16th Century many of these *Mc* families began moving to Northern Ireland where the Highland way was still strong. They were the beginnings of a race which, on April 14, 1573, was referred to as Scotch-Irish. This is the oldest known reference to the race called Scotch-Irish and our people were part of those being spoken of.

John Roy Makhuchone, or MacHuistean, first son of Uisdean, was born in Scotland, so officially our name is Scottish. Our race would more accurately be called Scotch-Irish. John was born sometime before 1460 and so our name would have begun around the middle of the 15th Century.

The more modern spellings seem to have developed in Northern Ireland and in lowland Scotland, in the Wigton and Paisley areas. The *McQ* version of the name is strong in Scotland and modern Northern Ireland, whereas the *McC* version seems to have developed in Ireland. Further study has revealed a good reason for this difference, as we shall see.

John's name was written as Makhuchone in 1494. Very similar names were also found in 1550 (Adam MacHutchoun in Murthlac), and in 1600 (Murdow McHuchone, a pirate along the Forth of Firth).

You might think this was the original spelling but this was only an English attempt to spell something that sounded like McOoshtn.

Leona found a Kennedy (or Kenneth) McHustan, in 1542, in the Ross Highlands at a village called Farr. Elizabeth, the sister of Donald (the grandfather of Hugh) and also granddaughter of Robert II, King of Scotland, was wed to Black Angus McKay, Earl of Farr, around 1415.

Hugh's father was Earl of Ross and since his great aunt, Elizabeth, was married to the Earl of Farr, this is a very likely place for one of the first McUisdeans to be found. McHustan was, no doubt, an English attempt to phonetically spell the "McOoshtn" sound.

During the early years of our name, deeds and wills sometimes contained two or three spellings when referring to the same person. The McQuesten spelling generally comes from the New Hampshire branch but in those records the name is often spelled differently.

The McQuiston and McQuiston versions seem to come from the Pennsylvania and South Carolina lines while the McCuistion and McCuiston spellings come from the North Carolina branch. I spell my name McQuiston and yet I descend from Robert McCuiston. I've found many records of Robert's son, James, with his surname spelled at least four different ways.

The family is the same no matter how the name is spelled. Clerical errors or unfamiliarity with the name are the most likely causes for all the various spellings.

Occasionally, a very conscious decision was made to change the spelling or the pronunciation.

For example, some family members pronounce McCuiston as McChristian, most probably due to one McCuiston man who was inaccurately listed as McChristian in his Civil War military records and liked it so much that he adopted the pronunciation. It appears some members of this branch adopted both the pronunciation and spelling of McChristian. Another branch, as an answer to the question, "How is your name spelled?" may have adopted the spelling McQuestion.

It appears that some type of decision was made to change the McQ prefix to McC. Other than records of a few Makhuchone type spellings, most of the earliest versions of our name used the McQ spelling including those who first came to America. The branch that arrived in 1735, however, used the McC version. Family tradition of this branch does, however, say that the original name used a *Q*, which was later changed to a *C*.

I have uncovered some data in regard to the use of the *Q* versus the *C*. My interest in this issue began with Johnny Ivy telling me that the Gaelic language originally contained a *Q* which was, for a time, replaced with a *C*. Since then I have found some interesting references on this subject. This information is quite detailed but it is important to us in understanding our beginnings as a family.

Once our name became part of early official records, variations include one James McQuiston in Antrim, Northern Ireland (N.I.) about 1620, and John and Alexander MkQuestion near Londonderry, N.I., around 1631. In Scotland from 1620 and on, we find John M'Quiesoun

(also spelled Jon M'Quieftoun and Johne MacQuieftoun) and Bryce and Gilbert M'Queistein - all these versions using the *Q*.

Many records follow in Scotland using the *Q* but in Ireland, at least by 1689, the family seems to begin using McCuistion as the common spelling. Daniel McCuistion (also spelled MonsCuistion in the same reference) is found in that year.

These variations in spelling, even when referring to the same man, seem to have started early with our unique name.

Two other early versions of the name, that contain no *Q*, are found in 1688. They are MacCuiston in Fernaig, in the Lochalsh district across the water from Skye, and MacUisthon, in Argyll. Fernaig and Argyll would still be in the heartland of the Gael so it makes sense that a version without a *Q* would be used, in accordance with the new law.

The switch from a *Q* to a *C* seemed to be explained by Johnny Ivy when he told me that the *Q* was removed from the Gaelic language for a time. In Ireland, Scots were still keeping the Gaelic language and lifestyle alive whereas in Scotland, the English were fast taking over the language and lifestyle of the Highlander. There would be much less reason to change the *Q* to a *C* if you were no longer using Gaelic as your everyday language.

Logic would say we could accept this as the reason why the *Q* became a *C* in the Irish part of the family, while staying principally a *Q* in the Scottish part. However, this begs the question as to why there was ever a *Q* in the first place.

Qu, in our current understanding, is pronounced *Kw* as in quaint or quick, but this was not always the case. In a book on the history of England, Scotland, and Ireland

I found a reprinting of the story of MacBeth which was written a century before Shakespeare, and which gives us a different understanding of *Qu*. Originally the tale was told by a man named Boece who wrote a true history of Scotland in Latin. In the 16th Century, the MacBeth story was translated into the Scottish vernacular of that time. Keep in mind that this was the very period our name was taking on its more modern form. Hugh didn't die until 1498, and his family didn't begin leaving the Isles and using English surnames until the 1500's.

In the translation of Boece's MacBeth into the Scottish language of the time, words such as "where" and "when" are written as beginning with a *Qu* instead of *W*. If a Scottish writer of that era were trying to emulate the sound of Ooshtn with a slight inflection of a *W* sound to begin it, he might well begin the spelling with *Qu*, as in writing words like "quhere" and "quhen." If the writer was, in fact, trying to capture the sound of "Whisdon" he would have also used the *Qu* to begin the name, in order to follow the rules of grammar of the time.

I've also seen a copy of a letter to Queen Elizabeth, from 1600, which uses "quhereas" for "whereas", and many other reproductions of writings from that era using the *Qu* sound for *W*. This practice of *Qu* replacing *W* was very common.

There is another reference in the book, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland*, by Gerard A Hayes-McCoy. On a page following the mention of our name, the word "wherever" is spelled "quherever." This proves that, at the exact time our name was developing, the *Qu* was used to replace the sound of *W*.

The Scottish name, Calhoun, was written as "Colquhoun" by the

early Scots and this demonstrates, specifically, the double-*O* sound, in a Highland name, having a *Qu* beginning. Calhoun is pronounced as Ca-hoon in the old country. I am sure there are many other examples of this phenomenon and it seems our name is one of those.

If an attempt was made to have a slight inflection of a *W* sound beginning the "Ooshtn" pronunciation, then the Gaels may have added a *Qu* to the beginning of our name because there wasn't a *W* in their alphabet. "Quisdean" would be pronounced as "Wooshtn" (or even "Whisdon") and the sons of Quisdean would be McQuisdeans. The Gaelic "MhicUisdean" would easily become "McQuisdean" or "McQuistion" in all its variations.

Considering how often many of us have had to spell or repeat our name to people unfamiliar with it, there is little wonder that in its early formative years the name would go through many variations. The wonder is that it survived to this day as a recognizable name from 1494. John MacHuistean was born before 1460, so our name, as of this writing, is around 550 years old!

A book entitled *Iona* was written by Fiona Macleod who grew up on the remote island of Iona, near Skye. He recounts many a Gaelic tale in his book but more importantly to us, in our attempt to understand development of our family name he talks about the Celtic alphabet.

Johnny Ivy also grew up on nearby Skye and is the premier McDonald historian in the world. Between these two men, both native to the heartland of the Gael, both historians, and both Gaelic speakers, we have some hints as to how our name spelling developed.

The old Celtic alphabet contained only 17 letters and each letter was

named after a tree. Today's Gaelic alphabet follows the western *A-B-C* order, but the old Gaelic alphabet, instead of being called the *ABC*'s, was known as Beth - Luis - Nuin, being named after the three letters *B, L, N*; the original first three letters of this alphabet. The words stood for the three trees Birch, Rowan and Ash. According to Fiona, an *H* was added later. The letters of our western alphabet that aren't accounted for are *J, K, V, W, X, Y, Z* and *Q*. But according to Johnny Ivy, the original Gaelic alphabet did, in fact, include a *Q*. There must be controversy over this because he seemed pretty defensive about his position and said he had old Gaelic documents that would "prove" his point to those who would argue with him.

Fiona says that each of the missing letters was represented by another Gaelic letter "having a like value or by a combination (of two letters)." In the old MacBeth text I referred to earlier, this is exactly what happened. The letter *W* was replaced by a combination of *Q* and *u* in the words "where" and "when", which were written "quhere" and "quhen." If we are to believe Johnny Ivy's account of the *Q*, then these Gaelic letters, *Q* and *u*, may have been used in combination to create a slight *W* sound in Ooshtn.

The early spellings of our clan name are usually Uisdean or Uisdein. I have seen Huisdean used but according to Fiona the *H* was added later (he didn't say how much later) so it is unlikely that Huisdean was originally used.

The reader should note that there is no soft *C* sound in the Gaelic language - *C* being pronounced as a *K*. Johnny Ivy indicated there was some controversy over the existence of a *Q* and that it was actually

removed from the Gaelic alphabet at one point, so it is not out of the question that some members would use *McQ* and others would later use *McC* in front of Uisdean.

As far as the “ton” vs. “tion” sound as an ending for our name, the phonetics of “shtn” in Ooshtn could be spelled either way (ton or tion) depending on whether the speaker ran the word into one sound or broke it into “sh” and “tn.” The “tn” could have made its way to “ton” (or tin, tan and ten), with the “shtn” turning into “tion” as in McCuistion. The early spelling of Makhuchone would indicate that “tion” better represents the correct ending sound. Another early spelling of our name, from 1532, is McAuchin, and this ends in letters that would also support the sound “tion” as being the closest sound to the original.

I was able to find more information on the *Q* usage in the Gaelic language in a book by Harold Peake, F.S.A., entitled, *The Bronze Age and The Celtic World*. Peake wrote, in 1926, about Sir John Rhys who established a theory regarding the Celtic language that he based on archeological evidence. According to Rhys’ theory, the Celtic language fell into two well-defined groups, one of these - Gaelic, spoken in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. Rhys referred to this language as Goidelic but Peake acknowledged it was Gaelic. The other Celtic language was called Brythonic by Rhys and was spoken in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany.

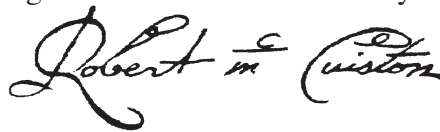
To quote Harold Peake, “There are several marked differences between these groups of languages, the most important being that the *C* in the Goidelic (or Gaelic), which represents an earlier *Q* or *Qu*, is replaced in Brythonic by a *P* or *B*.”

The important point here is that Rhys and Peake are saying that the Gaelic people first used the *Q* or *Qu* and later changed it to *C*, which is exactly what Johnny Ivy said.

Continuing to quote Peake, “In Latin, and the dialects most closely allied to it (including Gaelic), *Q* or *Qu* was found. The *Q* tongue was spread by invasion”, and he further states, “The *Qu* had changed into *C* in Goidelic.” Also Peake says, “There can be no question that in both these areas (Britain and Ireland) both the *Q* and *P* groups are or were in existence.”

All of these experts on Gaelic language and history have stated that the Gaels used the *Q*, and *Qu*, and later changed it to *C*, just as Johnny Ivy said, and just as our name history shows.

Shortly after Robert McCuistion immigrated to America, in 1735, he signed his notebook in this way:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert McCuistion". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

This may be the oldest known signature of our name in existence.

Note the method of writing the prefix “Mc”. Many family members, no matter how the name was spelled, used a unique method to write “Mc”. An equal (=) sign was placed under the small *c*. A few reasons have been given for the purpose of this sign.

The practice has been slowly eliminated, with time, due to the name being written on typewriters and computers.

Robert’s older brother, James, is recorded in Pennsylvania with both the *McQueston* and *McCuistion* spellings. In Guilford County, NC he is recorded with the *McCuistion* and *McQuiston* spellings.

Robert’s son, James, is recorded with the *McCuiston*, *McQueston*, and *McQuiston* spellings.

Most modern versions of our name have now been in existence for hundreds of years and each one is as correct as the next. The same is true for pronunciation.

John MacHuistean is always said to have died with no progeny. The MacAskill family has a tradition that the McDonalds raided Dunscaith Castle late one night killing all the MacAksills and sending their children running off into the night. One of those children went back 3 years later and secured a job as a nanny. She eventually killed 7 McDonald children by throwing them off the castle wall.

The time of the raid would be about 1469, when Hugh officially became Hugh of Sleat. Mary returned 3 years later (1472) to take a job with the McDonalds. She waited “for years” to carry out her plan. John was most likely born about 1455. By 1472 he’d be 17.

Since the youngest victim was just a baby, it is entirely possible that John had 7 children by the time of the murders. There is no record of where John lived in his early years but he is was definitely at Dunscaith at the end of his life. I have often wonder why he didn’t have children. His father had at least 7; his brothers Donald Gallach and Donald Hearach had children, too. The records say, unequivocally, that he died with no one to follow him.

This could be true if the historians knew he had lost all his children to Mary MacAskill’s revenge. If this proves to be true some day, it will mean that 7 of the very first McUisdeans to be born, all died a tragic death on the same night, in the middle of a storm, on the Isle of Skye.