

MOUNTAIN ECHO ONLINE

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



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There's an old cowboy song, that could have been sung by Texans like Noah McCuiston - "Give me land, lots of land under starry skies above, don't fence me in."

This song could be the theme song for the Scotch-Irish, or even for our family, since most of the major events in our history were triggered by the need to protect our current land or to settle in a new land, from Scotland to Ireland, to America.

Mark Twain once wrote, "All the territorial possessions of all the political establishments in the earth - including America, of course - consist of pilferings from other people's wash. No tribe, howsoever insignificant, and no nation, howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land that was not stolen."

Whether the land was stolen or not, our family seems to have moved across time and territory for the most part by invitation.

As far back as the family of Conn of the Hundred Fights, Irish settlers came to the Hebrides as "scotti", through a marriage to the princess of Alba, (an early name for Scotland). Their "Scotti-land" became the inspiration for the name Scotland.

There, they became the largest clan in history, Clan Donald, and its sept, Clan Uisdean. Their lands were almost always given to them through official charters or by marriage.

That's not to say there weren't many battles over land during the heyday of Clan Uisdean, especially after the death of Hugh of Sleat.

This part of the story really begins with Robert the Bruce and William Wallace. While Wallace is called *Braveheart* in the movie by the same name, it was Robert the Bruce who first wore that name. His heart was taken to the Holy Land and when Sir James Douglas found himself surrounded by Moors, he

cast a vessel containing Bruce's heart at the enemy asking Robert's "Braveheart" to lead his Scottish knights one last time in battle.

Though Wallace was certain, from the moment of the death of his wife, what he wanted - the complete eradication of the English from Scottish land - the central character of *Braveheart* was really Bruce.

The movie begins and ends with Bruce's narrative. He is the one faced with the decision to play it safe, like his father, or defend his land, at all costs, like Wallace. He is the one who leaves us all with hope for Scotland and freedom, at the final battle scene of Bannockburn.

Alongside Bruce, at this battle, was Angus Og McDonald. About 1299, Angus was married to Agnes O'Cahan, daughter of Guy O'Cahan, leader of Dungiven, where our family would find itself, 400 years later. John McCuiston, father of the 1735 immigrants to America, lived in Dungiven at least by 1699.

The dowry of Agnes O'Cahan was that 140 Scots would marry 140 Irish to bring peace to these anciently-related people.

This could be considered the beginning of the Scotch-Irish race, although it is most often overlooked by Scotch-Irish historians.

The end result was a renewal of the ancient Dalriadic link between Ulster and the Highlands.

In fact, the so-called "Highland Way" survived in Ulster long after it

was eradicated by the English in the land of Clan Donald. Even the title “of Sleat” is an Irish title now despite Sleat being located in Scotland.

Angus’ son was known as Good King John of Islay (I-La). His second marriage was to Margaret Stewart, great granddaughter of Robert the Bruce.

Robert II gave John title to much of the land in the Western Isles. This allowed Clan Donald to expand and soon they held reign over much of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, all legally.

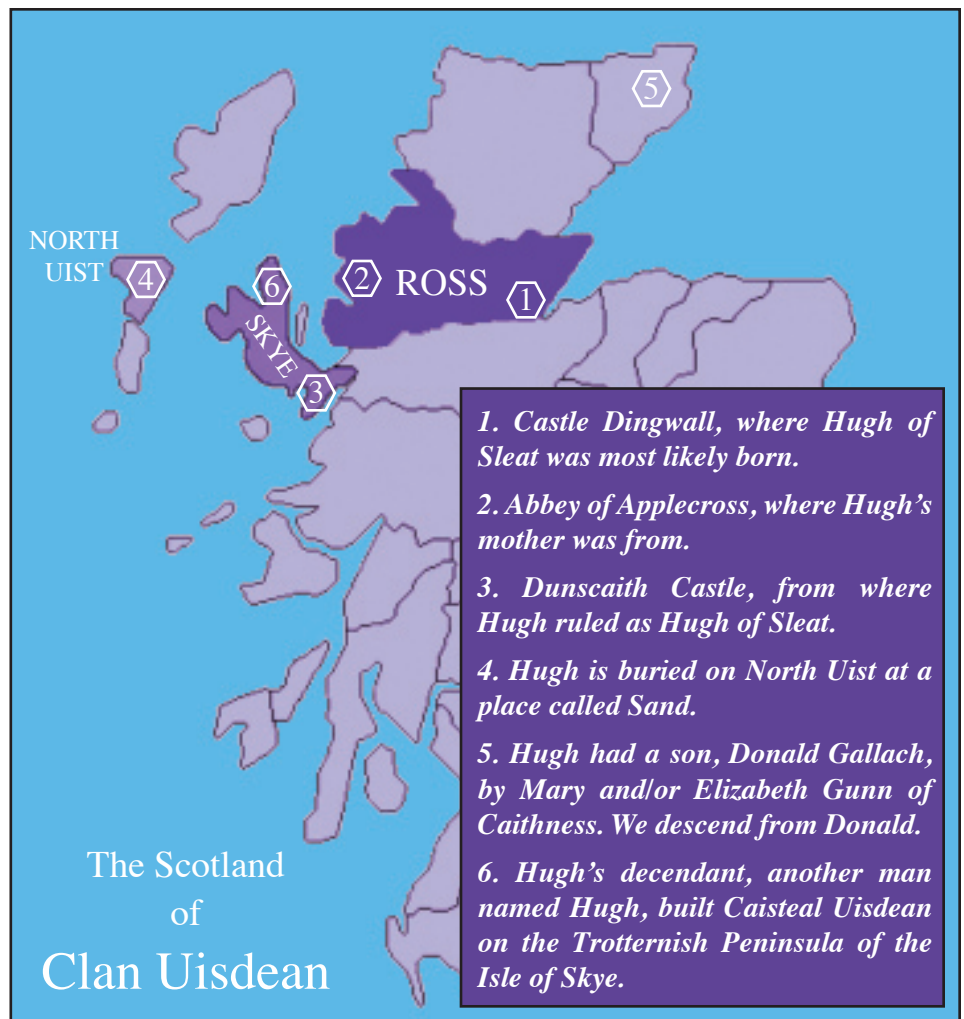
Many other clans became vassals of Clan Donald and the clan itself eventually became the largest clan in Scottish history and also the most apparent competition for the Stewart family. The next several generations saw conflict between the Kings of Scotland and the Lords of the Isles.

The trouble began with a dispute over the territory of Ross. Most, if not all, of the first Earls of Ross were the descendants of the ancient Viking *maormor* leaders, or earls.

All the old authorities concur that the Gaelic name of the original Earls of Ross was O’Beolan - a corruption of *Gilleoin*, or *Gillean, na h’Airde* - or the descendants of Beolan.

The oldest Norse Saga connected with Scotland mentions a powerful chief in the North of Scotland named O’Beolan, who married the daughter of Ganga Rolfe, or Rollo the celebrated Earl of Normandy.

Ross was once known as North Argyle and consisted chiefly of the possessions of the ancient Celtic monastery of Applecross. Its inhabitants had always maintained a kind of semi-independence, but in 1222 they were, by their leader, Ferchair Mac an t’Sagairt, linked more strongly to the Scottish crown. The lay abbots, of which Ferchair was the head, were the hereditary



Hugh of Sleat’s father was Alexander, Lord of the Isle, Earl of Ross, and Sheriff or Justiciar of the Highlands. The dark purple area is Ross. To the left is the Isle of Skye, where Hugh of Sleat ruled and where Clan Uisdean was formed. To the left of that is North Uist. Hugh owned most of this island, and is buried there at a place called Sand. In Ross, the abbey of Applecross was located on the western shoreline and that is where Hugh’s mother came from. Also, the beautiful Eileandonan Castle is located here. On the eastern side of Ross was Castle Dingwall, where Hugh was most likely born. The famous Macbeth was also born in this castle. The name McDonald and the Galloglas warriors are mentioned in Shakespeare’s play about Macbeth, in Act I, Scene II. All that now remains of Dingwall is one tower. Another castle built nearby Dingwall was called Dunscaith, similar to the Dunscaith Castle on the Isle of Skye, where Hugh ruled from.

possessors of all the extensive territories which had for centuries been ruled and owned by this old and powerful Celtic monastery. Ferchair led most of the western tribes, and for his prowess, the Celtic earldom, which was then finally annexed to the Crown, was given to him, with the title of Earl of Ross. He is so designated in a charter dated 1234.

In Celtic Scotland, it is stated that the hereditary lay priests of which he was the chief, according to tradition, bore the name of O’Beollan; and MacVuirich, in the Black Book of Clanranald, says that from Ferchair was descended “Gillpatrick the Red, son of Roderick, and known traditionally as the Red Priest, whose daughter, at a later date,

married and carried the monastery lands of Lochalsh and Lochcarron to the Macdonalds of the Isles.”

This is the same “daughter of Gillepatrick Roy” that was the mother of Hugh of Sleat.

Hugh’s grandfather, Donald, son of Good King John, married Lady Margaret Leslie, the Countess of Ross, daughter of Sir Walter Leslie by Euphemia, Countess of Ross.

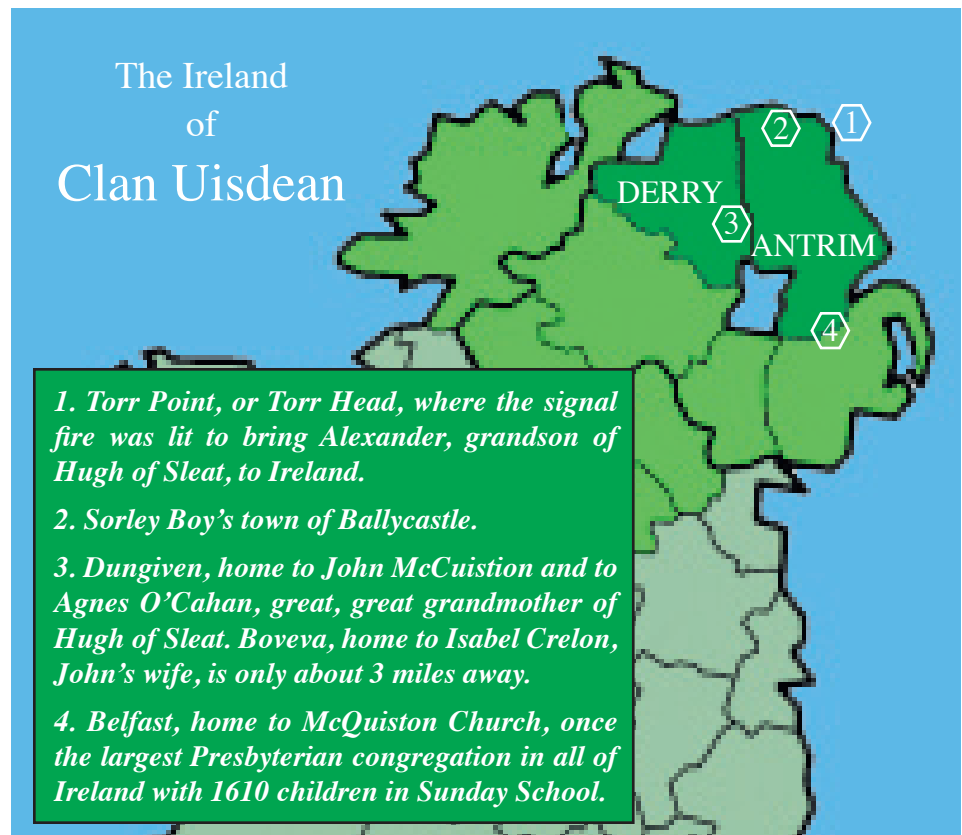
Donald was a renowned chieftain. He was educated at Oxford. He tried to claim the Ross Highlands after his cousin gave up title to them, when she joined a nunnery. He fought against Black Angus Mackay (Earl of Farr in the Ross Highlands), defeated him, and forced him to marry Donald’s daughter Elizabeth.

Donald was eventually stopped at the battle of Harlow by his distant cousin Alexander Stewart, who was fighting for the Scottish Crown. This battle was called Red Harlow and is said to have been the bloodiest battle ever fought on Scottish soil.

Donald led 10,000 Highlanders against a lowland force, for the first time in Scottish history. Much like the battle of Guilford County, NC, there was no clear victor. Donald retreated to the Isles and his son, Alexander, was eventually titled Earl of Ross.

Alexander took over Dingwall Castle, where he later died. Hugh of Sleat was most likely born there around 1436. In 1469, Hugh’s brother, John, invested him in the lands of Sleat and Dunscaith Castle, and he became officially known as Hugh of Sleat.

After a battle with the Earl of the Orkneys, Hugh stopped at Caithness in the northeast corner of Scotland, perhaps to purchase absolution from George Gunn, Crouner or Coroner of Caithness. Hugh fell for Gunn’s daughter and by her had Donald



Gallach, also recorded as Donal VicHuiston and as Dohmnail mac huistiuin. The McDonalds say his mother’s name was Elizabeth, while the Gunns say her name was Mary.

Donald Gallach married Agnes, daughter of John the leader of the McDonnells of Antrim, Northern Ireland. Donald followed his brother, John, as chief of Clan Uisdean or *Clan Donald North*. The Antrim McDonnells were known as *Clan Donald South*.

Donald’s son, Alexander Gallich (also given as Galta and McHugh) went to Antrim to help his first cousin, Sorley Boy McDonnell, fight against the English.

Our family members show up in “Sorley’s Town” called Ballycastle for the next few generations, including Alexander’s son, Donald, circa 1601; a James McQui_ton, circa 1620,; and John and Alexander MkQuestion, circa 1631.

By at least 1699 John McCuistion was living in Dungiven. His apparent father, Daniel, fought at the nearby

Siege of Londonderry, ten years earlier, in 1689. It is likely Daniel also lived in Dungiven.

Our family was invited to Ireland by a signal fire, the “fiery cross” said to have been invented by Clan Donald. Alexander was there to protect his mother’s and his cousin’s land from the English, once again.

Members of the family may have been part of a group of Sorley’s soldiers sent to Dungiven to aid allies there. The family had gone full circle from Angus Og McDonald and his wife Agnes O’Cahan of Dungiven, who married about 1299, to John McCuistion of Dungiven, and Isabel Creton of nearby Boveva, who married in 1699.

Sorley was the first man ever known to be called Scotch-Irish in a manifesto by Queen Elizabeth of England referring to “Sorley Boy and others who be of the Scotch-Irish race.” Our family was part of those “others” and our history proves we were the Scotch-Irish for several hundred years.

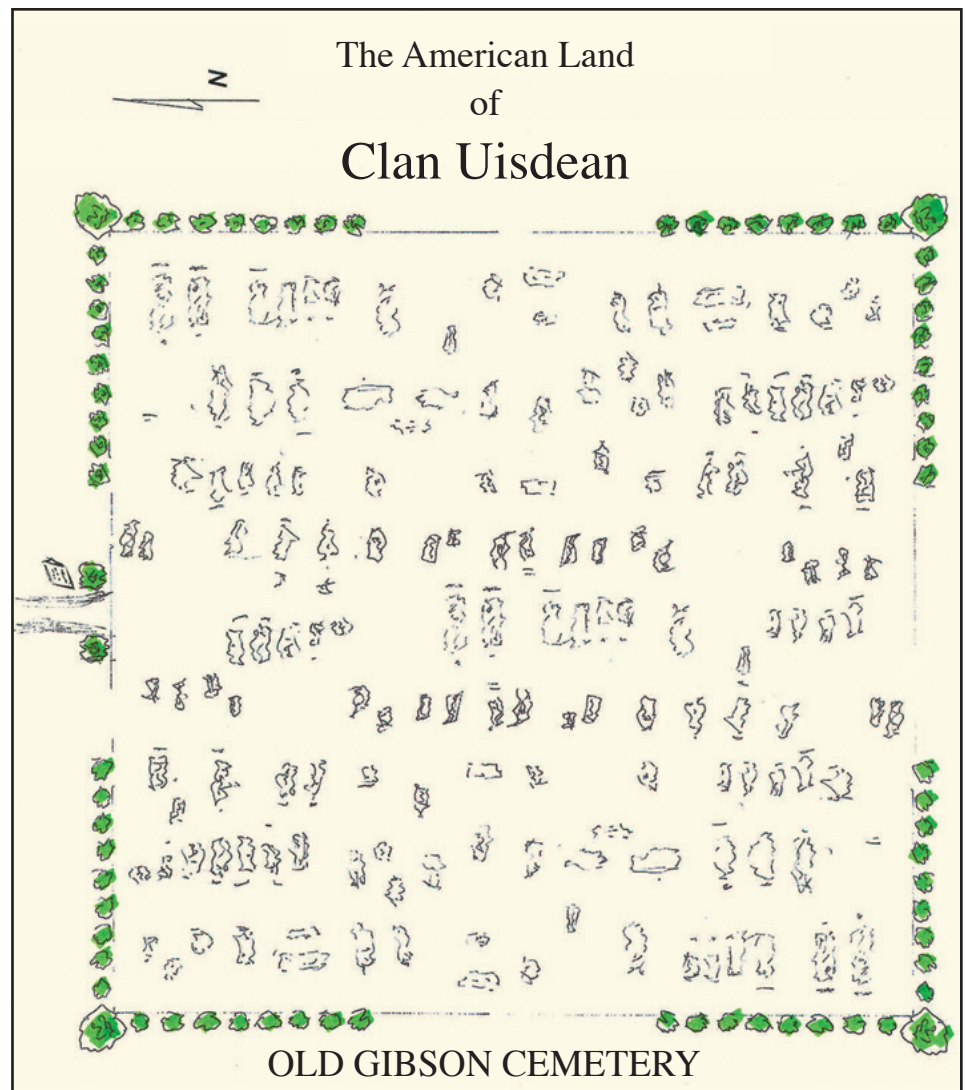
In 1720, land in Pennsylvania, and a part of Maryland that was in dispute between Pennsylvania and Maryland, was set aside by James Logan, Provincial Secretary for Pennsylvania, for the “families of the brave defenders of Londonderry.”

Logan’s ancestor may have been at the siege as there was a Logan on the same list that had the name Daniel McCuiston mentioned.

Robert McCuiston and his brother Thomas McCuiston are proven to have landed at New Castle, DE on August 6th, 1735. Their brother James may have been here already waiting for them. More research is needed in this area but there are indication James signed a request for a road just the day before, on August 5, 1735, 40-50 miles from New Castle, where he lived. Also, a David McCuiston died in this area in 1732.

These brothers were living in the Susquehanna settlements which were set up to protect Philadelphia and New Castle from Indian attacks. The men were part of a great number who were invited to this land by the family of William Penn. By 1751, Robert moved to Carlisle, PA most likely for protection from Indian attacks. In 1753, James and Thomas headed for Guilford County, North Carolina, probably for the same reason, as 1752 saw severe attacks.

Back in 1743, the Scotch-Irish at the Middle Octoraro Church, led by Rev. Alexander Craighead (whose grandfather was the minister at the Siege of Londonderry) raised their broadswords and declared independence from the English king, once again. Our family was most likely there, that day, as Robert McCuiston attended Middle Octoraro, and other neighboring Presbyterian congregations were also invited to the event.



Above is a drawing by Greenboro historian, Gary Brown, showing the parameters of Old Gibson Cemetery and the approximately 102 gravesite located there. Several stones have already been uncovered including those of Sarah McCuiston and her husband, Walter McCuiston.

Author Joan Didion says, “I think nobody owns the land until their dead are in it.” This quote reminds me of one of the stated purposes of Clan Uisdean, USA, Inc. - to preserve our family cemeteries. These burial plots spread across America, for the most part, were carved from the very land settled by members of our family.

In 1781, many of these same families got their chance to make this dream come true as they fought Lord Cornwallis’ best troops at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, which led to his surrender at Yorktown.

The courthouse battlefield is now part of the city of Greensboro, NC, and in that town is an old, old cemetery, predating Greensboro by 50 years. It is called Old Gibson and it is a piece of our history, a piece

of our family’s land in America, as well as the burial ground for perhaps as many as 100 family members.

Once again, we will do what it takes to protect our land as deeded to the family “forever” by James McCuiston, junior.

As we preserve ground sacred because of those who are buried there, we also preserve a small part of the land our fore bearers fenced, farmed, and fought for.