

**THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED  
SURNAME  
McCALLISTER**

The clan from whom the McCallister family descends began among the ancient Dalriadan tribe of the west coast of Scotland. Their name comes from the given name Alexander, which in turn was originally derived from the Greek name, which means defender of men. In the late 11th century, Queen Margaret introduced the name, which she had heard in the Hungarian Court where she was raised, into Scotland by naming one of her sons Alexander. The popularity of the name Alexander was ensured by the fact that it was born by three Scottish kings, the first being Margaret's son who succeeded to the throne of Scotland following the death of Malcom III. The name McCallister is one of the Highland families whose legendary spirit and valiance is a match for any. From the bleak, sea-swept Hebridean Islands and the stormy western coast, this surname has emerged as one of the great families whose history is romanticized by the skirl of the bagpipes, the broadsword, the swinging kilt and the highland games.

Historical researchers, using some of the oldest manuscripts including Clan genealogies, the Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, the Ragman Rolls, the Inquisitio, parish cartularies, baptismal records, and tax records found the name McCallister in Kintyre, where they were seated from ancient times.

The name, McCallister, occurred in many manuscripts, and was also spelled Alexander, Alistair, MacAlexander, Alisandre, Alischoner, Alsinder, Alastair, MacAlexter, Callestar, Aleckander, Alexandri, Alisdair, Alaisder, Alestare, Alistare, MacInalister, and these changes in spelling could occur often, even between father and son.

The surname McCallister is believed to be of Dalriadan origin, a tribe that invaded Scotland, along with other Scoti tribes from northern Ireland. The genealogy of present day clans and individual descendents of the Dalriadans, can be sometimes be traced back to King Colla da Crioch, who is said to have been banished from Ireland in 327 A.D., along with 350 clan chiefs. King Fergus Mor MacErc, first king of Dal Riada, defeated the Picts in 498 A.D. Scotland was to some extent united by Kenneth MacAlpin, a Dalriadan who also became king of the Picts in about 839 A.D.

The name McCallister emerged as a Scottish Clan or family in the territory of Kintyre. The Clan MacAllistair, Alisdair being the Gaelic for Alexander, are descended from the great King Somerled. Somerled had five sons, by his marriage to Ragnhildis, daughter of the Norwegian King of the Isles, Olaf Morsel. In the MacAllister line, Ranald had two sons, Ruari and Donald, and Donald had two sons,

Angus and Alisdair. Alisdair living about 1230 to 1295 claimed the territory in South Knapdale, Kintyre, the ancient Clan seat was at Ard Phadraid (Patrick's Point) on the south side of Loch Tarbot. Alisdair (known as Alisdair Mor (the big)) is the recognized founder of the clan. On his death, his estates were given to his brother and heir who was one of Bruce's supporters, Angus Mor. The Clan descended through three main branches, the House of Loup, the House of Tarbert and the branch in Arran, referred to as the Clan Allastair Beg. Conflict between the MacDonalds and the Crown became open warfare and when finally the Lords of the Isles submitted to the Crown in 1475, King James III re-granted some of the confiscated lands of the great MacDonald Clan. He formed the Stewardry of South Kintyre and granted Tarlach (Charles) MacAlexander the stewardship, at Dunaverty Castle. The MacAllistairs supported the clan Donald in their Feud with the MacLeans and at this time the MacAllistairs became quite a distinct Clan in their own right, sometimes known as the Vic-lan-Dhu. The clan was gradually shifting their allegiance to the Campbells and in 1602, they brought out the Clan with several Campbell lairds in a large scale raid into Bute with 1200 men. In 1605, the King sent an emissary to Kintyre to receive the obediences of the Clans but only the MacAllistairs and Angus MacDonald appeared. Two years later, Ranald MacAllistair, of Loup bound his clan in a bond to the Marquess of Hamilton that they would not harm the Isle of Arran. When finally in 1615 the Campbells acquired the MacDonald lands in Kintyre the MacAllistairs did not help their old neighbors being mainly engaged in maintaining law and order on the peninsular. But Alexander of Loup (MacAlistair) brought his men out against the Government and King James II at Killiecrankie and Cromdale, but suffering defeat, he took the remnants of his Clan and fought his cause in Ireland and was involved in the Battle of Boyne. In 1765, the 12th chief married the heiress of the Somervilles of Ayrshire. His son, Charles MacAlester of Loup and Kennox was recognized as chief of the clan by the Lyon Court of Scotland in 1846. A principal branch of the MacAlistairs was Alexander, Lord of Lochaber whose lands were forfeited in 1431. Alexander MacAlistair's posterity adopted the name of Alexander and the branch became known as the Alexander of Menstrie. Harold Rupert Leofric George Alexander, Viscount Alexander of Tunis, became Governor General of Canada in 1946. Notable amongst the Clan from early times was Sir William Alexander (circa 1570-1640), 1st Earl of Stirling, Scottish government official, knighted in 1614, appointed governor of the barony of Nova Scotia.

Once the Monarchy had become firmly established, the Highland Clans still remained detached from Scottish politics for several reasons. The Clans were closely knit groups related by blood, and intensely loyal to their customs and families. Under the clan system a man's first loyalty was given to his chief and not to a state or a ruler. The Clans were often quite isolated: Parliament at Edinburgh was far south of the Highland line and removed from the daily realities that the clans faced. Many battles were fought against the Scottish Kings who generally had difficulty uniting and controlling the clans no matter who was on the throne.

Many adventurous Scots moved to England, Ireland and the Colonies. For most, it was an economic necessity, as the industrial revolution consumed jobs, and landlords tried to free up land to raise sheep. A great number emigrated from Scotland to Ireland during the 17th and 18th centuries where they were granted the lands previously owned by the native Catholic Irish. In Ireland they settled in counties Antrim and Down.

Scots risked the difficult journey to the New World, crossing the Atlantic on ships that sometimes arrived with only 60 to 70 percent of their original passenger list, the rest dying at sea from a disease, malnutrition and the elements. In North America, the Highlanders settled in the New England states, the Carolinas, Nova Scotia and the Ottawa Valley. Early immigrants who could be considered kinsmen of the name McCallister include Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, who colonized Nova Scotia, in Antigonish, Pictou, the Carolinas, Virginia and Upper Canada. Richard H. Alexander, traveled from Ontario in a group called the "Overlanders" in 1862 and became one of Vancouver's most prominent businessmen and civic officials.

Settlers began to increasingly look westward, as opportunities arose. In America, the Homestead Act (1862) offered 160 acres of land for a minimal fee; while in Canada, the Dominion Lands Act (1872) offered 160 acres to any male over the age of 21 for a ten-dollar registration fee.

In recent history there have been many prominent people of the name McCallister and among them were: Earl Albert Victo Alexander (1885-1965) British administrator and first lord of the admiralty; Samuel Alexander (1859-1939) Australian born, British philosopher; William Alexander (1726-1783) known as Lord Stirling, general in the American Revolution; Sir Claud Hagart Alexander, of Ballochmyle; Harold Rupert Leofric George Alexander, Viscount Alexander of Tunis, who became Governor General of Canada in 1946; Prince Louis Alexander (1854-1921) Austrian nobleman, who married a granddaughter of Britain's Queen Victoria, became Louis Alexander

Mountbatten, 1st Marquess of Milford Haven, and was an officer of the Royal Navy; Gwen Wentz Cheeseman Alexander (b.1951) former field hockey goalkeeper from the United States; and Earl Albert Victor Alexander (1885-1965) 1st Earl Alexander of Hillsborough, British Labour and Co-operative politician.

The most ancient Coat of Arms attributed to a bearer of this name was:

A shield divided per pale black and silver with a chevron and a crescent in base, both counterchanged.

The Crest was:

An arm in armour holding a sword.

The ancient family Motto for this distinguished name was:

Per mare, per terras

Motto translation:

By sea, by land.