



ClanDonnell:

A Storied History of Ireland

*American David McDonnell released his new book, **ClanDonnell: A Storied History of Ireland**. It is a collection of true stories of an Irish clan, carried forward to more modern descendants of the clan. It is illustrated with current and historical photographs and artwork. Here is how David tells of his motivation for writing **ClanDonnell: A Storied History of Ireland**.*



“This adventure began with my pondering of two simple questions. Why was I born an American? And why is my last name McDonnell?”

I’ve always had a passion about history, particularly American history and Irish-American history. But my pondering led me to Ireland. I was driven to discover how people lived in Ireland – in ancient times through modern times. I wasn’t concerned about kings or queens, or major political or social trends, or economic theories, or the other fodder for history books – except to the extent that they provided clues about the lives of real people.

My search for McDonnells and the origination of the family name led me to the Irish clans – clan life in general but ClanDonnell in particular. Once I started

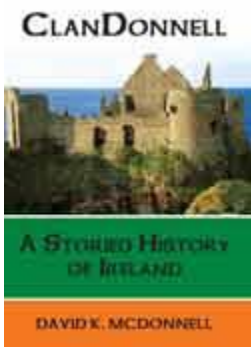
looking, I found story after story. Some of these were the stuff of fiction – Viking maidens, political intrigue, power struggles, murders, hangings, witch’s curses. These were all true stories, or at least well established and oft repeated legends.



It didn't take me long to realize that ClanDonnell was unique among the Irish clans. McDonnells were mercenaries who fanned out across the island as their services were required. For centuries, they were embroiled in nearly every Irish conflict. But at the same time, the clan was quite typical of Irish clans. The clan was a close-knit extended family with a shared and cherished history. And descendants of the clan

faced the same issues and pressures faced by all Irish – conquest by the English, religious persecution, land confiscation, oppressive landlords and rack rent, famine and starvation, diaspora, and struggles for independence.

I ultimately realized that the McDonnell clan provided a wonderful opportunity to tell the story of Ireland in a unique way. Stories of the McDonnell clan tell the story of all Irish during the Celtic clan era. And stories of clan descendants tell the story of all Ireland after the clans crashed. ClanDonnell is not a history of the McDonnell family, nor a McDonnell family genealogy. Rather it uses one clan and its descendants to tell the story of the entire island.



I designed the book to be an easy read. The reader need not have any prior knowledge of Ireland or Irish history. The stories flow one to the next, with frequent illustrations to help illuminate the stories. I was blessed (or cursed) with a dry sense of humor and I often find humor in strange places. And I wrote the book in the first person – the reader will share in my adventure in uncovering so much information (which may be helpful in their own search of Irish heritage) and will get to know more about me on a personal level (for better or for worse).

I hope the reader finds book witty and entertaining, with the history lessons simply a bonus.”

There is more on ClanDonnell: A Storied History of Ireland, including sample stories, at the book's website, www.clandonnell.net. The book may also be purchased at this site.

(Photograph above is of Carrickfergus, County Antrim, by Linda McDonnell)