

Others of That Ilk

The Tennant name, in a variety of spellings, appears in recorded history for many centuries. Researchers maintain that Edinburgh, Glasgow, Ayrshire, and into Northern England were the focal points of families bearing the name. Burke's "Family Records" gives lineage of the family of Tennant - originally Dunand or Tenant - long settled in Scotland.

In Black's "the Surnames of Scotland" (1946) page 766 I quote extracts which appeared in my 1963 history: "William Tennant of Crestone of County of Linlithgow 1296. His seal shows a large dog and the inscription S'Willie Tenant (Bain II, pages 202 and 581). Thomas Tenant was one of the witnesses in the inquiry concerning the Templars in 1309 (Wilkins' "Concilia", page 383). John Tenant was one of the garrison of Edinburgh Castle 1339 - 40 (Bain III page 241). Another source says he was commander of that force in defence of the Castle against English forces under Edward III. "Andro Tenant was charter witness in Ayr, 1500 (Friars Ayr, page 68). Andro Tenant and Bob Tenant were voters in Monkland, 1519 (Simon, 45). Andrew Tennend was burges of Ayr 1539 (i.e. a citizen or freeman of the borough) (RMS III, 849). Reversion (the right to future possession) was granted Kenthigern Tenende in Glasgow 1555 (Protocols). Prendergast's large text "Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland" page 698 includes the names Tenant, Richards, Hill in Names, of Cromwellian Adventurers for lands in Ireland in the 17th Century: (1642-1646). Under these auspices heads of some families went to Northern Ireland (there still is a Tennant Road in Belfast). Others, including our progenitors, moved to Dublin and vicinity in Southern Ireland.

The name Colin Tennant appears frequently in news of England. He owns property on the Caribbean island of Mustique where Princess Margaret and others of the Royal Family have at times vacationed. When Prince Charles and Lady Diana needed a governess they sought the advice of Lady Anne Tennant, lady-in-waiting to Princess Margaret.

I am sure many of us viewed the seven-part television series "The Winds of War" in which Victoria Tennant starred with Robert Mitchum. Her parents were a top theatrical agent in Europe, and his Russian-born wife Irina Baronova, a noted ballerina and movie star in England.

Our widely acclaimed ballerina, Veronica Tennant was born in London also. I found her a gracious young woman when I chatted briefly with her following a performance with part of her troupe locally a few years ago.

Jan Tennant, newcaster and anchor woman on Global television is of Scottish origin. In correspondence Jan told me that her grandfather (one of thirteen) was born near Paris, Ontario in 1855. His father was born in Ayr, Scotland. Ancestors were Huguenots who fled persecution in France and settled in Ayrshire. They were chemists involved in processing of cloth.

The whitening or bleaching of cloth is in itself an interesting subject going back to early Hebrew, Egyptian and Roman times. This reached Europe following the Crusades. The practice of the Dutch involved soaking the fabric

in an alkaline solution for several days, washing, and spreading in the sun. After repeating several times, the fabric was steeped in sour milk, washed and spread on the grass in the sun again.

In 1799 Charles Tennant at St. Rollax, near Glasgow developed a bleaching powder using calcium hypochloride as the active ingredient. From this evolved our bleaching products and chlorination of water for drinking supplies.

A few miles south of Paris and Brantford is the hamlet of Mount Pleasant. There you will find one of the numerous octagonal homes and buildings still found in Southern Ontario. This house was built in 1840's by a Richard Tennant. (see pages 204-206 of "Building with Wood" by John J. Rempel). The Ontario Motor League magazine "Leisureways", October 1983 (page 15) describes interesting homes to view when motoring, says that this fanciful octagonal house has been converted into a restaurant.

Through the Ontario Genealogical Society I have been contacted by Ronald R. Tennant of Burnside, Iowa, and by his cousin Edmund R. Russell of Emmett, Michigan. They have traced kin back to Allen Tennant and Oliver Tennant and a half-brother Benjamin Tennant. The earliest date was about 1766, Rhode Island. Some of them later lived in Pennsylvania where there is a community called Tennant Town.

Members of subsequent generations migrated westward to Michigan, Iowa, and Red Cloud, Nebraska in the 1870's. Several brothers moved from Nebraska to Red Deer, Alberta about 1900. By chance I contacted Paul Tennant, a Political Scientist in Vancouver who said his father moved from Red Deer to Kamloops, B.C. Paul told me that when he went to Vancouver about fifteen years ago the telephone directory listed about thirteen Tennants, and now there are over sixty. A clipping from the Sunday Star (Toronto) August 21, 1983 tells of a 65 year old Bob Tennant of British Columbia who landed a 71 pound chinook salmon while fishing at River's Inlet 200 mile north of Vancouver.

A 1971 clipping tells of the derelict town named Tennant in California fifty miles from the Oregon boundary. From 1920 to 1957 the hundred or more houses were home to loggers and their families. It became a ghost town but several senior citizens refused to leave. One had been head nurse at the town hospital. She had delivered more than fifty babies without the assistance of a doctor. Half the world away, in the Northern Territory, Australia is the community of Tennant Creek. I have never read an explanation of how it got its name.

In 1817 brothers William, James and Thomas Tennant drew lots in the vicinity of Caintown, between Mallorytown and Athens in Leeds County. They had been born in Dumfries, Scotland, and spent a couple of years in New Brunswick. Descendants of one bother (James) visited Scotland a couple of years ago. In their search of records they found another variation in spelling -Tinning- but were able to confirm that it was only a variation resulting from phonetics most likely.

A cousin of theirs, descended from William, lives in Toronto. She has devoted a lot of time in researching records for Tennant in the Ontario Archives. From this wealth of information we have been able to sort out what applies to our lines, and to other unrelated families. Her efforts have been of tremendous value to me in providing factual data and little vignettes of cousins in this history.

Within the past year I have been contacted by a young woman in Bowmanville whose great grandfather was Joseph Tennant, born in Ireland. This names appears frequently in our family - my brother, father and his uncle Joseph, as well as

used as a second name of several others. However, it does not appear in the family of Robert (brother of my great grandfather Thomas in the extracts received of the Old Register at Aghade Church).

Joseph and his wife Jane emigrated to the United States where five of their eight children were born. About 1845 they moved to Durham County, Ontario. They are listed in the 1861 Census for Darlington Township there. Their youngest son Thomas married Sarah Mills. They retired to Orillia. Sarah died in Ottawa at the home of a daughter, in April 1962 at the age of 104 years.

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