

**THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED  
SURNAME  
SOLAN**

The surname Solan comes from the Irish name O Sochlachain. Irish culture has had a large impact on world history, a contribution which is totally disproportionate to the population of that beautiful but tiny Emerald Isle. This culture has produced many world leaders, statesmen, artists, clerics and scholars. And it is from here that comes the Solan family surname.

The history of the name Solan is woven into the fabric of Irish history. Researchers, consulting such books as those by O'Hart, McLysaght and O'Brien, the Four Masters and Woulfe; as well as church baptismals, parish records, and ancient land grants, have determined that the Solan family name was first found in County Mayo (Irish: Maigh Eo) located on the West coast of the Republic of Ireland in the province of Connacht, where bearers of the name were erenaghs of Cong.

Your name, Solan occurred in many references, from time to time the surname was recorded as Solan, O'Solan, Solahan and these changes in spelling even occurred between father and son. Unfortunately, church officials and scribes spelt the name as it sounded, and it was not uncommon to find a name spelt several different ways during the lifetime of the same person, when he or she was baptized, another when that person was married, and yet another appeared on the gravestone.

The legendary Kings of Ireland some 1500 years B.C., were descended from King Milesius of Spain, the grandson of Breoghan (Brian), King of Galicia, Andalusia, Murcia, Castile and Portugal. King Milesius turned his attention northward to Ireland to fulfill an ancient Druidic prophecy. He sent an army to explore this fertile island. On finding that his son had been murdered by the three resident Irish Kings (the Danans), Milesius gathered another army to take his revenge on the Irish. He died before he embarked on the trip. His remaining eight sons conquered Ireland.

Heremon, eldest son of Milesius, reigned in Ireland for fourteen years, along with his brothers Heber, Ir, and Ithe. They named the land Scota or Scotia, their mother's name, the land of the Scots. This name would later be taken by the Irish King Colla in 357 A.D., when he was exiled to the Scottish western Isles, leaving the name 'Ireland', land of Ir, the youngest of the four sons of Milesius, to the Emerald Isle. The four Irish kingdoms eventually broke into five separate nations under the High King, or Ard Righ. These royal lines would later produce such great Kings as the 2nd century King Conn of the hundred battles, the 4th century King Niall of the Nine Hostages who died in France while cutting off the retreat of the Romans from Britain, and King Brian Boru who died in the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, finally

expelling the Vikings from Dublin and Ireland.

This great Gaelic family of Solan emerged in later years in County Mayo. Notable amongst the family at this time was Donlevy O Sochlachain, who was a renowned harp maker in the 13th century.

In 1172 A.D. Dermott McMurrugh, King of Leinster, in his struggle for the position of Ard Righ, King of all Ireland, had requested King Henry II of England for assistance. Many proud native Irish families lost their chieftainships, territories and possessions following the 1172 invasion and the spoils were divided amongst the Norman knights and nobles. This was followed by Cromwell's invasion in 1640, when further loss of land befell the unfortunate Irish people. Later, Ulster in the north was seeded with Protestant Scottish and English. Again, many Irish families abandoned their ancient territories and many moved south. Each successive invasion had brought new family lines, new names to add to the native Gaelic race.

In 1845, the great potato famine caused widespread misery and poverty, and the exodus from Ireland began. Within fifty years the population was reduced to less than half.

Many Irish joined the armada of sailing ships which sailed from Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Holyhead, Liverpool, and Glasgow, bound for the New World or to Australia. Some called these ships the White Sails, designed originally to hold 100 persons but which frequently sailed with 400 and 500 people on board. Others, more realistically, called these vessels the "Coffin Ships," when 30 percent to 40 percent of the passengers died of cholera, small pox and the elements.

In North America some of the first migrants which could be considered kinsmen of the sept Solan and of that same family were Pat Solan and his family, who landed in New York in 1847; John Solan and his family, who immigrated to New Orleans in 1849; Sarah and Jane Solan and Alice Solaghan, who arrived in New York in 1851; Lewis Solan, who was naturalized in Indiana between 1852 and 1861; Mary Solan and her family, who arrived in New York in 1862; James Solan, who was naturalized in Washington State between 1853 and 1883; Patrick Solan, who was naturalized in Colorado in 1888; and John Solan, who was naturalized in Illinois in 1902.

In the 'Colonies' the Irish played an important role in building nations, the railroads, coal mines, bridges and canals. They lent their culture to the arts, sciences, commerce, religion and the professions. Typically, during the unsettled times of the 19th century, 9 rebellious Irishmen were sentenced to death. Their sentence was

commuted to banishment to the "colonies." In 1888, a surprised Queen Victoria learnt that all nine had become prominent statesmen, prime ministers, high court judges, generals, mayors or bishops.

The Irish moved westward with the wagon trains, and settled the mid west, some trekking as far as the west coast. During the American War of Independence some were loyal to the cause, joining the Irish Brigades. Others were loyal to the Crown, and moved north into Canada, becoming known as the United Empire Loyalists and being granted lands on the banks of the St. Lawrence and the Niagara Peninsula.

Prominent bearers of the family name Solan from recent history include Lawrence M Solan, Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Brooklyn Law School; Eilon Solan, School of Mathematical Sciences, Hebrew University; Gregory A Solan, PhD, Department of Chemistry, University of Leicester; and Peter Solan (b.1929) Film Director and Writer from Czechoslovakia.

The most ancient grant of a Coat of Arms found was:

Per fess, base per pale, in chief or a dexter hand couped at wrist gules grasping sword erect blade entwined with serpent proper between two lions rampant respecting each other of the second, on dexter base vert stag trippant or, on sinister base per pale

The Crest was:

On a ducal coronet or a robin red breast holding in the beak a sprig of laurel all proper.

The coat of arms found for a bearer of the Solan surname did not include a motto. Under most heraldic authorities, a motto is an optional component of the coat of arms, and many families have chosen not to display a motto.