



Scottish Given Name Conventions for Children

In the 1700s and early 1800s, Scots often but not always named their children after family members following a simple set of rules.

The old church parish records often do not include a lot of details about the parents, making it difficult to connect individuals across different kinds of records. In our case, we were lucky that the family was associated with the Smithy, Old Dailly for a few generations, although not all of our Smithy era birth records actually mention the Smithy.

There is another clue we can sometimes use. The Scots often named their children after their grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, and often but not always in a specific order, such as

- 1st son named after father's father
- 2nd son named after mother's father
- 3rd son named after father

- 1st daughter named after mother's mother
- 2nd daughter named after father's mother
- 3rd daughter named after mother

Some variations of these conventions also included great grandparents.

By comparing the names of a person's known children to the names of their known relatives, we can assess some degree of likelihood that the person is part of some specific family, assuming, of course, that the family followed some variation of these conventions.

There were gaps in the early Dailly Parish records. For example, in earlier years, the mother's name was typically left off of the birth record. That can make it more difficult to connect a person to his or her parents using the names of their children, but it can sometimes suggest possible names of the mother.

To be clear, this convention was not universally applied. Some families followed this pattern strictly, others used it occasionally, and still others completely ignored it.

Variations of the convention were used to honor deceased members of the family, including an older brother or sister who died young. Similarly, people outside the family were often honored, such as the minister, employer, close friend or others.

The use of the traditional naming patterns declined and eventually fell out of favor during the 1800s.

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