

The Sgian Dubh

Clan Morrison Society of North America

<https://clanmorrison.net/>

Morison, Murison, Gilmore, Gilmour, McLemore, Brieve, MacBrieve, Judge

The Morrison Tartan in Red or Green?

By Peter Morrison

I have always been captivated by the legends and myths associated with Scottish traditions and history, and I take pride in the role Morrisons have played over the ages and in my own family's heritage.

At the Virginia Scottish Games, I help tell the story of the Morrisons and Gilmores. One of the most frequent questions I am asked is, "Which tartan should one wear, the green or the red?" My response typically is, "Choose whichever one you prefer; they're both beautiful and handsome!"

But what are the myths and facts surrounding these two tartans? Why are there two ... and why are they so different?

First, let's remember that the Morrisons with whom many of us associate are descendants of Vikings who settled on the northern tip of the Isle of Lewis. According to Morrison legend, Olaf the Black, son of the king of Norway, was shipwrecked there in the 13th century and established a dynasty. Life was harsh for him and "Chlann Mhic-Ghille-Mhuire;" but as the clan grew, it had to embrace more of the Scottish culture and dress to facilitate trade and acquire goods.



Freya ,6, and Saoirse, 3, daughters of the society chairman, and the two Morrison tartans at the Stone Mountain games

The early tartan was very likely what we call today the "Ancient red," woven from available natural wool and dyes. The wool probably would have come from domesticated sheep that withstood the rocky terrain of the northwestern Atlantic isle.

The kilt probably evolved from the Norse "kjalta," meaning a "fold of a gathered skirt," which early Morrisons likely wore. The "great kilt" or "big wrap" (feileadh mor) emerged in the late 16th century as an all-weather dress to handle the harsh weather conditions. This 9-yard woven wool cloth could be wrapped over a person's head, while one was huddled in the crotch of a tree, to keep warm and relatively dry, even in the worst rainstorms. The shorter belted kilt, known as the "little wrap" (feileadh beag), only appeared in the first quarter of the 18th century, more as a fashion statement and for ease of wear.

Red conveys royalty, magic

But why red? Norse culture likely holds the truest reason. Red conveys notions of royalty, magical might, and offers protective powers, enhancing one's spiritual life and vigor, possibly adding an element of aggressive force. It's also said that red tartan wouldn't show blood, whether from butchering or battle, whether your own or your foe's. The Morrison red tartan also featured green and white, with green symbolizing the land and white likely representing purity and nobility.

The red tartan was "officially recognized" as the Morrison clan tartan and recorded by the British Register of Arms, Lord Lyon, on January 3, 1968, based on a cloth artifact wrapped around a family Bible. This artifact was recovered in 1935 from a grave in a traditional Scottish black house on the Isle of Lewis. The Bible contained a handwritten reference from 1747, essentially stating, "When I pass, wrap my Bible in the Clan Tartan and place it with me."

Now, what about the green one? Well, the green tartan is known as the 'hunt' or 'Society Morrison tartan.' The story I offer about the green tartan's origin is as follows: As the Morrison and McCloud clans grew on the limited island of Lewis, natural skirmishes occurred. Over time, Morrisons began to migrate east to trade with highland clans on the mainland of Scotland. One of those clans, the McKays, warmly received the Morrisons and established a strong trade alliance in the 1600s. It's said that Ay Mac Hormaid (Morrison) married the daughter of the Bishop of Caithness in the McKay Clan in the late 17th century. The bishop bestowed a dowry on the couple - the whole of Durness, with Ashir. To manage this betrothal gift, the Morrisons moved in about 60 families. During this time, significant issues with the McCloud clan occurred back on Lewis regarding land use & ownership.

The McKays often fought alongside the Morrisons, and as a sign of support, it's said that the Morrisons started wearing the green McKay tartan rather than the "traditional" red tartan. The reasoning was also simple - it was far easier to spot a Morrison in the red tartan across a field, than the green McKay tartan - which was far less conspicuous. As the tradition grew, Morrisons added a distinctive but muted red stripe to the McKay tartan to delineate their true clan affiliation, traditionally recycling the less commonly worn red tartan wool for the added stripe. It became so popular that the red tartan was rarely worn and eventually became "lost."

Which one should I wear?

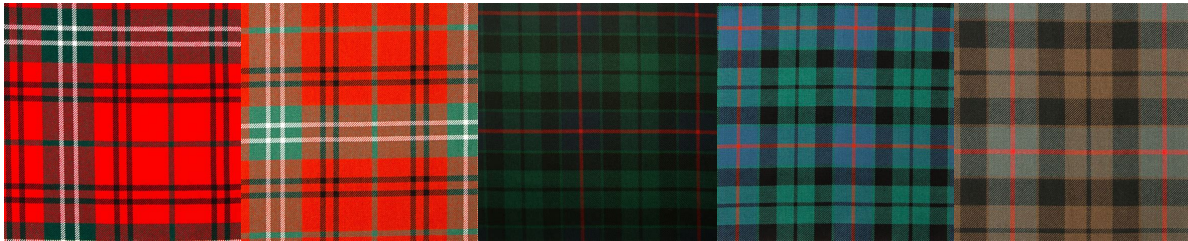
Another possibility is that the red tartan's color was too similar to other common tartans, such as those of the Stewarts and McDonald clans. It's also suggested that red colors in tartans during the Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745 indicated collaboration with the Catholics and were less popular compared to green and blue tartans associated with Protestants. The Act of Proscription in 1832, which outright forbade the wearing of tartans, could have also contributed to the temporary "loss" of the red tartan that occurred until the official re-recognition in 1968.

So, which one should you wear? I simply say, "Whichever you prefer!" Personally, I enjoy standing out in the bright red tartan, using modern dyes in a medium-weight kilt. My wife and teenage daughter prefer

the ancient "muted" or natural dyed Morrison Society green tartan for their outings, both at games and formal affairs.

I hope you've enjoyed this first brief article on Morrison clan history and tartan mythology from my perspective. In future writings, I will delve into sharing what I know of clan badges, mottos, coats of arms, flags, and other aspects of our shared history. If you have suggestions, corrections, or just want to share a friendly message, feel free to drop me an email at rollieindc@gmail.com. Sailte!

Peter Morrison, a physicist awarded the Navy Meritorious Civil Service Medal, is a life member of Clan Morrison and has traveled to Scotland many times. He lives in Alexandria, VA, with his wife Cindy, and daughter Alexis.



Two tartans in five hues: (l-r) the modern red; ancient red; modern green; ancient green; weathered green

Outside the Box

A Morrison's journey into his past and how he can help you

By Buddy Morrison

As a kid who loved history, I began to gather the facts about my wonderful family. I could sit for hours until I bored people to sleep, recounting the intricacies of my family tree with its deep roots in Scottish history.

I have traced my ancestors back to the Isle of Lewis in Scotland. I recently found through DNA that my fifth grandfather on my mother's side was a prisoner who was transported to New England as part of the Dunbar Scots, the survivors of a failed uprising against the English in 1650. I live in North Carolina and recently completed a master's class based on today's genealogy. I am a member of several Genealogical societies and organizations, including the Mayflower Society.

In the tapestry of our lives, threads are woven through time, connecting us to our ancestors and shaping the narratives that define us. This exploration into the past began with a curiosity about history and how my family history eventually led me to unravel the fascinating story of my Morrison ancestors.

On the journey through genealogy, I was captivated by the mystery surrounding my roots. The quest to trace the Morrison lineage unfolded as a labor of love, filled with discoveries and revelations that added rich layers to my understanding of self and heritage.

The Morrisons, a name whispered through the annals of time, led me on a compelling journey back to the rugged landscapes of Scotland and its islands. The endeavor to trace their footsteps became a tapestry of meticulous research and storytelling passed down through generations, along with the invaluable guidance I found from another study.

The allure of Scotland, with its ancient castles, misty moors, and storied history, resonated deeply with me as I uncovered the Scottish roots of the Morrisons. The journey wasn't just about

tracing names on a family tree; it was a pilgrimage to the heart of a heritage that resonated through the centuries. The pursuit of my Morrison ancestors ignited a passion for Scottish and Icelandic heritage. Immersing myself in Scotland's history, traditions, and cultural nuances, I discovered a profound connection to a land steeped in resilience and tradition.

As I delved into the depths of my family records, I found a treasure trove of information awaited. Birth certificates, old letters, and faded photographs vividly depicted the Morrisons who came before me. Through the lens of my Morrison ancestors, I have uncovered the layers of my identity and gained a profound appreciation for the stories that bind us to our roots. In the ever-evolving narrative of our lives, the echoes of the past continue to resonate, inviting us to unravel the threads that connect us to generations gone by.

To learn how I can help as a genealogist, I dig "outside the box" and find your story that can be shared for many generations. Feel free to contact me at SouthernShoresGenealogy.com (my website) or my (email) at [SouthernShoresGenealogy@gmail.co](mailto:SouthernShoresGenealogy@gmail.com)

From Chairman Michael Morrison

Spring has arrived and with that, the highlands games season is well underway in many parts of the country.

Much of my social life revolves around CMSNA and attending the games. Over the last decade I've developed close friendships with others who like myself can be found up and down the East Coast representing their respective clans and sharing drams with the other conveners. Even though these individuals are not family, I have developed close relations with many. My children have taken to calling a few of these friends "aunt" and "uncle." I wish to encourage all of you to find a local festival and make it an annual outing for your family. Eventually you may feel drawn to represent CMSNA in your area. It can be a daunting task at times but the personal rewards can be quite fulfilling.

Among the many games that I'll attend this year, the two major events are Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in North Carolina in July and Stone Mountain Highland Games Atlanta, GA, in October. These two events specifically are among the best in the nation and will prove to be a wonderful weekend for your family. Tentatively the CMSNA annual general meeting is set to occur at Grandfather Mountain. At these meetings, we usually discuss the society's prior year's activities and current and upcoming projects. This is also your best opportunity to meet members of the clan such as myself, other members of the board of directors. Often the Chief can be found in attendance.

This website https://clanmorrison.net/highland_games-near-you offers an exhaustive list of games and festivals throughout the United States and Canada.



Send us a Sign

Morrison, Gilmore places and things

Every day on his way to work in Portland, Ore., Terry Morrison crosses the Morrison Bridge and turns on Morrison Street to get to his office at Stifel investments. Close by are the Morrison Apartments, the Morrison Market, Morrison Place and other businesses all bearing the Morrison name.

So who was this Morrison who is so popular in Stumptown?

John L. Morrison, a Scotsman who came to America in the early 19th century, traveled over the arduous Oregon Trail and in 1842 settled in what would become Portland. Morrison was one of the four pioneers credited with establishing the town.

He built houses along what would later be named Morrison Street. The Morrison

Bridge, which connects both sides of the Willamette River, was named after him.

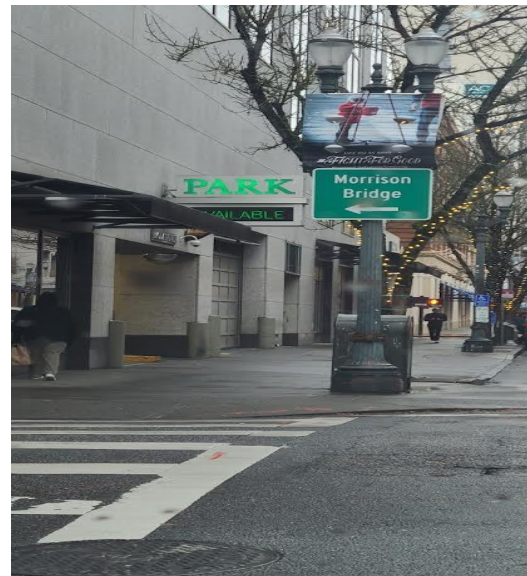


Photo by Terry Morrison

This is a regular feature about Morrison/Gilmore places and things. Send your photos to [jamesellismorrison@gmail](mailto:jamesellismorrison@gmail.com)

We Welcome New Members

You joined a society that John Wayne joined

Life Upgrades

Margaret Ann Ellsworth	Oro Valley,	AZ
David F. Guy	North Windham	CT
Alan Lee Morrison	Winchester	VA

March Membership Report

Life USA: 395
 Annual USA: 170
 Life Foreign: 15
 Annual Foreign: 10
Total Members: 590

New annual members

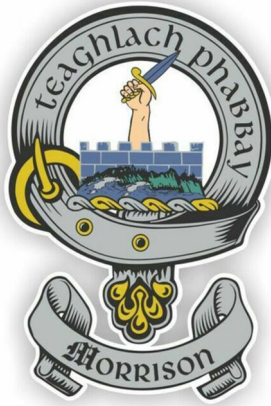
James Hill McLemore	Montgomery, AL
Andrew Morrison	Northwood, England
James A. Morrison	Ontario, Canada
Joanne Ellen Morrison	LaGrange, NC
Karen L. Morrison-Huebner	Shorewood WI
Leslie Ann Morrison	Huntington Beach, CA
Megan Danielle Morrison	Ellsworth, MN
Patti L. Morrison	Wellsville, NY
Ryan Keith Morrison	Adamsontown, MD
Sean Warren Morrison	Hubert, NC
Susan Jane Morrison	Cheboygan, MI
William Michael Morrison II	Springfield, OH

John Wayne, born Marion Michael Morrison, joined in 1970.

[Application \(clanmorrison.net\)](http://clanmorrison.net)

Flowers of the Forest

Edwin F. Holcombe, Sr.	Hendersonville	NC
Herbert Andrew Morrison	Port Ludlow	WA
James Edward Morrison	Christiansburg	VA
Joan E. Shugar	Lauredale	PA



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Clan Morrison Society of North America

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