

## The Kavanaugh History & Meaning

Derived from the Irish Gaelic name *Caomhánach*, which means "a student of saint CAOMHÁN". It was the name used by a 12th-century king of Leinster, *Domhnall Caomhánach*, the eldest son of the historic Irish king *Diarmait Mac Murchada*. <http://www.behindthename.com/name/caomha10n>

*Kavanaugh* has 2 variant forms: *Cavanagh*, *Kavanagh*.

*Kavanagh* or *Kavanaugh* is a surname of Irish origin, *Caomhánach* in Irish Gaelic. It is properly *Mac Murchadha Caomhánach* (an example of an Irish agnomen; see *Ó Catharnaigh Sionnach* or *Fox of Fir Teathbha*), but is often now rendered 'Caomhánach' or rarely 'Ó Caomhánaigh'.

"Kavanagh" and "Kavanaugh" are anglicized variations of the Irish Gaelic surname *Caomhánach* (Caoimhánach in traditional Gaelic script).[2] The surname was first assumed by *Domhnall Caomhánach*, the eldest son of the 12th century King of Leinster, *Diarmait Mac Murchada*) in Ireland.[3] A

considerable number of anglicized variations of *Caomhánach* exist, with some of the most common being: "Kavanagh", "Cavanagh", "Kavanaugh" and "Cavanaugh".[1] The surname was possibly adopted by *Síl Fáelchán* clansmen in preference to the earlier name *MacMurrough*, given the prestige associated with the dynamic junior line that seized the chiefship of the *Uí Cheinnselaig* tribal group in the High Middle Ages.

[1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavanagh\\_%28surname%29#cite\\_note-variations-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavanagh_%28surname%29#cite_note-variations-1)

[2] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavanagh\\_%28surname%29#cite\\_note-family-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavanagh_%28surname%29#cite_note-family-2)

[3] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavanagh\\_%28surname%29#cite\\_note-3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kavanagh_%28surname%29#cite_note-3)

### Your Name Kavanaugh

By Joe T. Boyes

Okay, you can spell it, *Kavanaugh*, *Cavanaugh*, or *Cavanaugh*, too, as far as I'm concerned even *Keevan* and *kevane* in some instances.

Don't get mad at me, I didn't invent Gaelic. And in the original spelling of that rather formidable tongue it's *Caomhanach*, one of the few ancient Irish surnames which has neither an *O* nor a *Mac* for a prefix.

*Caomh* means "comely," however the family name denotes a descendant of the *St. Coamhan*, the first *Kavanaugh* having been fostered by a successor of that saint. Since there were 15 *St. Caomhans* in Ireland, it's a little tough to tell exactly which one.

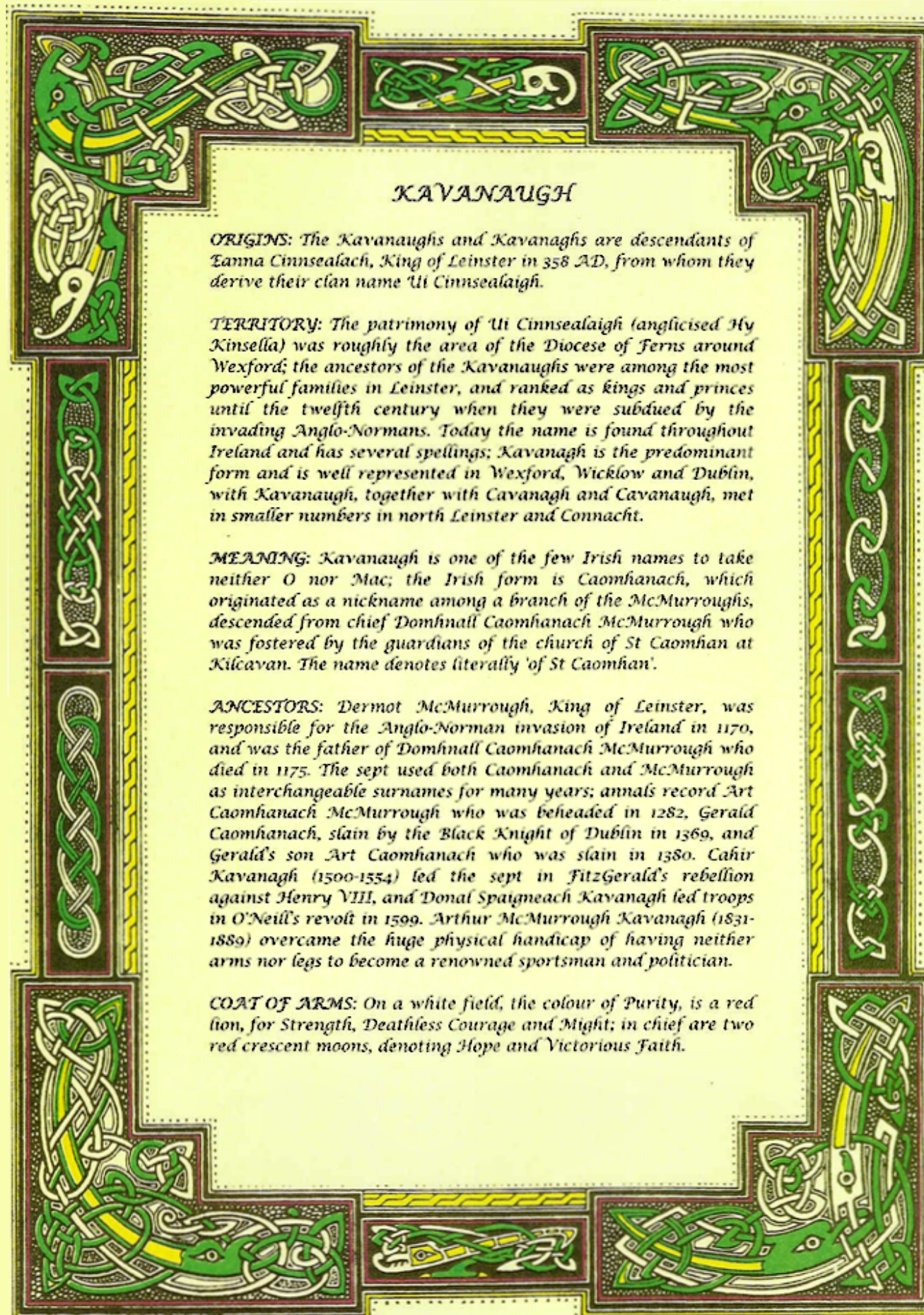


*The family is a branch of the MacMurroughs, the first Kavanaugh of record being Donal, son of Demot MacMurrough, the King of Leinster.*

*He, according to history was the immediate cause of the Anglo-Norman invasion of the 1100's, but I say there are no bad boys, just bad parents. It was probably just a teen-ager's prank. The well-known song "Eileen Aroon" was composed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century about a Kavanaugh daughter, but I don't think it's on the top 10 right now.*

*If you're looking for an Irish last name that moves beyond Casey and Cassidy, this one is pleasant sounding and worth considering. Kavanaugh, which can also be spelled Cavanagh, Cavenagh, Kavanagh, and Cavanaugh, is one of the few traditional Irish surnames not to start with Mc or O'. Kavanagh relates to the name first Kevin or Caomhan. Early kings of Leinster bore the name Kavanaugh.*





## KAVANAUGH

**ORIGINS:** The Kavanaughs and Kavanaghs are descendants of Eanna Cinnsealach, King of Leinster in 358 AD, from whom they derive their clan name 'Uí Cinnsealaigh'.

**TERRITORY:** The patrimony of 'Uí Cinnsealaigh' (anglicised Hy Kinsella) was roughly the area of the Diocese of Ferns around Wexford; the ancestors of the Kavanaughs were among the most powerful families in Leinster, and ranked as kings and princes until the twelfth century when they were subdued by the invading Anglo-Normans. Today the name is found throughout Ireland and has several spellings; Kavanagh is the predominant form and is well represented in Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin, with Kavanaugh, together with Cavanagh and Cavanaugh, met in smaller numbers in north Leinster and Connacht.

**MEANING:** Kavanaugh is one of the few Irish names to take neither O nor Mac; the Irish form is Caomhanach, which originated as a nickname among a branch of the McMurrroughs, descended from chief Domhnall Caomhanach McMurrrough who was fostered by the guardians of the church of St Caomhan at Kiltavan. The name denotes literally 'of St Caomhan'.

**ANCESTORS:** Dermot McMurrrough, King of Leinster, was responsible for the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1170, and was the father of Domhnall Caomhanach McMurrrough who died in 1175. The sept used both Caomhanach and McMurrrough as interchangeable surnames for many years; annals record Art Caomhanach McMurrrough who was beheaded in 1282, Gerald Caomhanach, slain by the Black Knight of Dublin in 1369, and Gerald's son Art Caomhanach who was slain in 1380. Cahir Kavanagh (1500-1554) led the sept in FitzGerald's rebellion against Henry VIII, and Donal Spaigneach Kavanagh led troops in O'Neill's revolt in 1599. Arthur McMurrrough Kavanagh (1831-1889) overcame the huge physical handicap of having neither arms nor legs to become a renowned sportsman and politician.

**COAT OF ARMS:** On a white field, the colour of Purity, is a red lion, for Strength, Deathless Courage and Might; in chief are two red crescent moons, denoting Hope and Victorious Faith.