



Carty is a common surname in County Wexford, which was once part of the Ancient Kingdom of Leinster in southeastern Ireland. The surname here is sometimes spelled as Carthy. Both name variations are also quite common in Counties Roscommon and Sligo, which were once part of the Kingdom of Connacht in northwestern Ireland. However, there is some evidence that the Wexford Cartys are a sept (i.e., a sub-clan or branch) of another clan, possibly Clan Moran, whereas the Roscommon and Sligo Cartys are thought to be a sept of Clan O'Rourke.

Interestingly, Carty and Carthy are not shortened forms of the more familiar MacCarthy and McCarty surnames. Nonetheless, these surnames, and their variations, all share a common origin. They derive from the personal name of King Carthaigh (d. 1045), who was one of the last members of a dynasty that ruled the Irish Kingdom of Munster from the 5th to 10th centuries. Carthaigh's name is said to derive from the ancient Gaelic word "Carthach", which means "one who loves".

Ua'Carty is thought to be the original form of the surname for both the Wexford and Connacht branches of the family. The "Ua" prefix means a "descendant of", as does the "O" prefix, which is probably just a different pronunciation of the same prefix from south Ireland. Ua'Carty in time was replaced by the O'Carty spelling, and many families later anglicized their last name during British rule of the 17th to 19th centuries by dropping the "O" prefix altogether. The "Mac" or "Mc" prefix of Clan MacCarthy differs in that it implies descent from a royal lineage, whereas a royal lineage is not implied by the "Ua" and "O" prefixes. Furthermore, Clan MacCarthy is associated with the former Kingdom of Munster in southwestern Ireland. Despite this, some members of the two O'Carty clans changed their names to McCarthy, thinking that it sounded more prestigious, and/or more Irish, than simply Carty or Carthy, despite their family origins being from the Leinster or Connacht kingdoms, and not Munster.

The first known appearance of the Carty surname is said by some to be from a marriage document dated March 27th 1692, which mentions a Jonathon Carty, who married his bride at St. Peter and St. Kevin Church in Dublin, during the reign of King William III of Orange. Irish surnames had become necessary only a few years earlier in 1659, when the British government introduced a personal tax on their Irish subjects known as the "Poll Tax", in which those being taxed were identified by both a personal name for the head of each family, as well as an additional name to identify the family belonging to that individual.

Although most Cartys who left Ireland and came to the United States did so during the Potato Famine of 1846 to 1848, there were a few who arrived even earlier. One of the earlier immigrants was James Carty and his wife Lizzie Neal, who came with their three sons Thomas, John and Patrick, and appear to have been in the United States by June of 1822, when a letter was waiting for James Carty at the post office in Burlington, Vermont. They most likely sailed first from the Irish port of Cork to Canada, which back then was an easier port of entry for British Citizens than other American ports. They then would have made their way south to enter the United States, and ultimately Burlington, which in the early 1800s had the largest Irish population of any North American city.

The Coat of Arms at the top of this page actually belong to Clan MacCarthy, as they are the same arms worn by the old Kings of Munster. However, some Cartys from Counties Wexford, Roscommon and Sligo (i.e., the Leinster and Connacht Kingdoms) informally display these same arms, despite having no real ties to Clan MacCarthy. Heralds describe the MacCarthy arms as a shield with a Field (background) of Argent (silver or white), representing peace and sincerity; and a Charge (symbol on the shield) of a stag of Gules (red), which is trippant (standing proudly), and symbolizes courage, strength, and leadership. The antlers and hooves of the stag are colored Or (gold), and signify wisdom, achievement, and nobility; and the helmet above the shield is topped by a Crest with an arm that is sheathed in Argent-colored (silver) armor, and grips a Vert-colored (green) lizard.