

## Introduction

I have worked diligently here to present this family story as a matter of fact rather than fiction. I started with what I may occasionally refer to as "family lore." These are the stories about our family passed down from one generation to the next. I have tried when ever I could to verify the family lore with actual genealogical research. Using this method, I have often found the family lore to be "fairly" reliable. "Fairly" means that I have found some dates to be incorrect, or a location reference not quite right, or a first name to not be right.

I have learned like many genealogists, that some family members can be very sensitive to how actual research can result in changes to the family lore. They rely on the family lore as the absolute truth. Otherwise, why would family members tell it? However, genealogists learn that actual records are the most reliable and to count on spelling variations in the surname and given names.

I have endeavored to provide in this book accurate and reliable information. But for some parts of the story I was unable to find the necessary sources or haven't the time to conduct the research necessary to verify a certain part of the story. Therefore, I occasionally use the phrase "most likely" to identify information I have not totally proven, but have enough evidence to include it in the story. I have also tried to specifically identify, in some cases, what leads me to believe a certain segment of a story to be true. I also use the word "may" to indicate the possibility of a certain event based upon known historical conditions of the time.

Our family has made no claims of being descendants of those who came over on the Mayflower, nor are we daughters of the American Revolution, or any other such claims to fame. However, the Icelandic branch

includes ancient pedigrees that include some Kings and famous Viking ancestors. One of which was Snorri Thorfinnson who was the first person of European descent born in North America in Vinland around the year 1000. (That was a little bit before the Mayflower!)

My research has found that for the most part we descend from rather common people who were farmers or small merchants. We have European origins and what is remarkable is that all four major branches of our family came from an Island environment. These are the Island of Ireland; the Inner Hebrides Islands of Tiree, Colonsay, and Islay of Scotland; the Island of Sjælland of Denmark; and the Island of Iceland.

Today, there is much discussion about preserving cultural diversity in our society. It would be easy to say that the ancestors of the McLanes were just white people from Europe. But that would lump all European people into the same cultural definition. Each culture becomes distinct based upon its ethnic origins, language, religion, customs, and social practices. The McLane ancestors come from four distinct, yet somewhat overlapping cultures.

The McLanes came from Ireland. The McLane surname is a spelling variation of McLean. The surname has its origins in Scotland. This book starts with a history of the surname with histories of Ireland and Scotland. In Ireland and Quebec the McLanes inter-married with persons with many traditionally Irish surnames. Their ethnic origin was primarily Celtic. Although, the Irish people also have origins related to the Viking and Norman invaders of the Island through the centuries. The McLanes spoke the Gaelic language, but probably had to understand English as well. They were Catholic in tradition and practice. Their social customs



were related to their lives as tenant farmers practicing a subsistence lifestyle surrounded by related families. Although family lore originally indicated they came to North America because of the potato famine (1840s), they and their related families were in Quebec decades before this event. Out of the four branches, the McLane ancestors were the earliest to arrive in North America when Miles Murphy brought his family to Quebec around 1810. They brought their religion and their social customs with them. In both Quebec and Wisconsin they lived in communities of related Irish families always with a Catholic Parish church nearby. They passed on to their many descendants given names of Irish origins.

The McLeans came from Scotland. They lived in Argyllshire which is the ancestral home land of the Clan McLean. They, like the Irish McLanes, were people of Celtic origins. Their social practices revolved around the highlander traditions of the clan system. They also were Gaelic speakers, but may also have been accustomed to English. They were found in many records to be Presbyterian (Church of Scotland). However, later some may have been members of the "free church" and in Canada some were Baptist. The potato famine had a much greater influence on this family than the Irish McLanes. The effects related to the famine resulted somewhat in the "clearances" of the Scottish Highlands. They lived a subsistence lifestyle as crofters and tenants that paid rents to a landlord. The failure of the potato crop led to an inability to pay rents and evictions resulted. They were the second of the four branches to arrive in North America when John McLean came to Ontario around 1850. They established communities in Canada with settlers who, for the most part, came from the same regions of Scotland as they.

The Jensens came from Denmark. Denmark is a Scandinavian country with a distinct Danish language. This language even includes some unique alphabetical characters. Their

ethnic origins arise from the Norse people commonly referred to as the "Vikings." They lived in small farming villages. The Jensens were Lutheran (the State Church of Denmark). They would be the third of the four branches to arrive in North America with the arrival of Christoffer Jensen to Minnesota in 1866. It appears his motivation may have been economic opportunities not available to him in Denmark.

The Samsons came from Iceland which was originally settled by Vikings from Norway (although there was a small population of Irish monks present when the Vikings arrived). Also, Vikings in Scotland and Ireland had inter-married, so our Icelandic ancestors also arose from Celtic stock. Iceland has a very distinct Scandinavian language that has several more unique alphabetical characters than does Danish. It is believed to be the language that is closest to the ancient "old Scandinavian." However, for several centuries Iceland was a possession of Denmark. Iceland's geographical separation from the rest of Europe has created a very distinct and historically rich culture. The Samsons were Lutheran (the State Church of Iceland). They lived on farmsteads made up of one or two families living a communal lifestyle. Iceland did not have the European concept of villages or towns. They were very dependent on the food they raised on their own farmstead. This was disrupted by several volcanic eruptions in the 1800s resulting in massive emigration. The entire Samson family emigrated to North Dakota in 1889.

The major chapters of this book are the genealogy and stories of these four family branches: McLanes, McLeans, Jensens, and Samsons. Their chapters are followed by the stories of the Miles McLane and Hattie Jensen family, the Harvey McLean and Elizabeth Samson family, and Harvey's second family with Dora Magnusson. The book concludes with the story of the James McLane and Enid McLane family.