

Chapter 11 - The Ancient Icelandic Pedigree, Clergy and Government Officials

Introduction: Another institution that had a great influence in the formation of Icelandic society was the church. Bishops and Priests were looked upon as leaders of the community. Christianity was peacefully accepted by a vote of the Althing in 1000. At the beginning, all the population was Roman Catholic and this would continue until 1550. We have many Catholic Bishops and Priests who are our ancestors. It seems that the Roman Catholic practice of priestly celibacy was not commonly followed in Iceland. The Catholic Church would establish churches, monasteries, and convents. It would also start the rudimentary organizational structuring of the geography into parishes.

Norway and Iceland would fall under the rule of Denmark in 1380. This brought about the practice of the King of Denmark appointing a governor or governors to oversee Iceland. We have a few of these governors in our ancestry. Iceland would not regain its independence until 1944.

As a result of the Protestant Reformation, the King of Denmark decided that all of Iceland must conform to the Lutheran faith. One Catholic Bishop (our ancestor) would lead a short rebellion in an effort to at least allow the Catholic faith in Iceland to continue to exist. But the Catholic faith would end with him being beheaded in 1550. From then on we can count our ancestors among many of the Lutheran priests and ministers. They would continue to organize Iceland into parishes.

Eventually, Iceland was divided into governmental entities of counties (sýsla) and districts (hreppur). One of the governmental officials born from this system was the sýslumaður or lawman or sheriff or as I have expressed it “district magistrate.” We have several of these officials in our ancestry.

Below I have identified many of Iceland’s most prominent citizens who are among our ancestors. Each of their individual stories sort of walks us through the detailed history of Iceland and the part each of them played in the events of their time. Like the previous chapter, I have arranged them according to their estimated year of birth.

Catholic Bishop Isleifur Gissurarson (1006 - 1080)(Our 23rd great grandfather)

Isleifur Gissurarson (1006 – 1080) was born about 1006 at Mosfells in Arnessýsla. His parents were Goði Gissur the white Teitsson and Þórdís Þóroddsdóttir. His father was the son of Teitur Kjetilbjörnsson from the family Mosfells, who would later be named Haukdælir.

Isleifur's father sent him to the convent school in Herford (Herfurða) in Westphalia, Germany, which was then led by abbess Godesti. Isleifur thus became the first Icelander to receive a religious education and he was ordained a Priest in Germany. He was the most learned man in the country in his time and the most famous of the first generation of the native priests.

When Ísleifur returned home to Iceland his kinfolk thought it good that he should

Traces Through World History

strengthen his position by taking a wife. It seems that the Church in Iceland ignored papal decrees as to clergy celibacy which would be the case until the year 1550. Ísleifur learned of “the fairest of women” named Dalla Þorvaldsdóttir who lived at Asgeirsa near Vididalstungu in Hunavatnsýsla in the North of Iceland. Being that Skalholt is in the South of Iceland, Ísleifur would have to make a considerable journey to seek her out. So with a friend he rode to Asgeirsa. Upon arrival, he approached and told Þorvald that he wished to marry his daughter Dalla. But Þorvald told him that he would have to agree to dwell farther north than Skalholt before he would agree to the marriage. Ísleifur answered that he could not agree to leave his parish. Ísleifur and his companions then rode off to return to Skalholt. Dalla asked her father who those men were and what was their business. When she heard of Ísleifur’s intent, she said, “I have the ambition to possess the best husband and the most famous son with him that were ever born in Iceland.” She asked her father to send after the men. Ísleifur and Dalla Þorvaldsdóttir were married and they had three sons: Þorvaldur, Teitur and Gissur, the latter would take over as Bishop after his father's death in 1080.

In about 1050 it was the counsel of the people to have a Bishop over them; and Ísleifur, was chosen as Bishop at the Althing “by the whole commonwealth of Iceland.” He was bidden to go abroad for his consecration at the hands of Archbishop Adalbert of Bremen.

On his way, Ísleifur went to see Holy Roman Emperor Henry III and he brought a gift of a polar bear to give to the Emperor. The Emperor gave Ísleifur a pass and he then went to obtain a blessing from Pope Victor II. The Pope appointed Whit-Sunday for the consecration. So on Whit-Sunday in 1056, he was consecrated at the age of fifty to be the first Bishop of Iceland by Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg-Bremen. Although Isleif was also Bishop of Greenland, he may have never set foot there.

Ísleifur continued to live on the family's family farm in Skálholt, as there was no bishop's farm. He also became the goði of the district. Ísleifur built the episcopal see on the family farm Skálholt, where in 1057 he built the cathedral. This would become the mother church of Iceland and the chief center of culture in Iceland until the end of the 18th century.

Ísleifur founded a school for the education of native priests. One of his most important initiatives was to teach the Icelanders how to read and write and establish literacy among them. In his education abroad he had learned the continental script. He taught this to his son Teitur who proved to be an apt pupil. Being able to keep written church records would be important for the priests of Iceland. Chieftains and good men sent their sons there for teaching, and many of them were ordained priests and became good clerks. Among Ísleifur’s students was Jón Ögmundsson who would later become the first Bishop of Hólar.

Ísleifur had little income, though Skalholt was to become the best farm in the country. He succeeded in getting sanction from the Althing to impose a toll or tithe for support of the church.

Ísleifur exercised great influence through the Althing. From the first the bishops were allotted seats in the Assembly. It was at the Althing while Ísleifur was celebrating Mass that he fell ill. He had a room prepared for him at Skalholt from which he gave much final counsel.

Ísleifur served as Bishop for 24 years (from 1056 to 1080), until his death on July 5, 1080. His memorial day is March 3.

Traces Through World History

Catholic Priest Teitur (marglati) Isleifsson (1040 - 1111)(Our 22nd great grandfather)

Teitur Ísleifsson (1046 – 1111) was born about 1040 at Skalholt in Arnessýsla. His parents were Bishop Isleifur Gissurarson and Dalla Þorvaldsdóttir. His father had built the Skalholt Cathedral and established a school there. So Teitur was immersed in education at a young age. Teitur's father had introduced reading and writing of the continental script to Iceland and taught this to Teitur. Teitur was an apt pupil and engaged in helping his father to teach reading and writing to other pupils at the school. Teitur would become one of a first general of Catholic Priests in Iceland to be educated at the school. He was also a leader of the extended family of Haukadalur family clan.

Teitur established himself as the farmer at Haukadalur. Haukadalur was a place of learning for many young people, including two later bishops from Iceland, Þorlákur Þórhallsson and Björn Gilsson.

Teitur married Jóreiður Einarsdóttir and they had two children: Rannveig and Bishop Hallur. We descend from both of these children.

Bishop Gissur Isleifsson (1042 - 1118)(Our 24th great grandfather)

Gissur Ísleifsson (1042–1118) was born about 1042 at Skalholt in Arnessýsla. His parents were Bishop Isleifur Gissurarson and Dalla Þorvaldsdóttir. His father had built the Skalholt Cathedral and established a school there. So Gissur was immersed in education at a young age. He went on to study in Saxony like his father and was ordained a Priest at a young age.

Gissur came home and married Steinunn Þorgrímsdóttir, who had previously been married to Þórir Skegg-Broddason at Hof in Vopnafjörður. They first lived there. Gissur and Steinunn were known to have had at least six children: Bodvar, Asgeir, Teitur, Thordur, Grom and Jon. We descend from Gro.

Gissur was a big man and well-grown, optimistic and somewhat open-eyed; majestic in appearance and most benevolent of men, framed by power and curiosity. He traveled extensively abroad, and the couple traveled south to Rome. He was abroad in 1080, when his father died. From his deathbed, his father had nominated Gissur to the Althing to succeed him as Bishop.

Gissur came home the following summer and he was then elected Bishop. The people received him joyfully, and he had won such great honor and esteem.

Gissur went to Rome to meet Pope Gregory VII, who sent him to Archbishop Hardvig of Magdeburg, where he was ordained in 1082 making him the second Catholic Bishop of Iceland. He was then forty years old.

Gissur settled at Skálholt when he returned home. With his father, he was practically the founder of the diocese at Skálholt and he proved to be a great statesman as well as an ecclesiastic. After the death of his mother Dalla, he gave the land to the bishopric along with various other assets and then said "that there should always be a bishopric there so Christianity can be maintained," as stated in Hungurväka. He rebuilt the cathedral in Skálholt and held a school there as his father had done.

With the view of establishing a permanent system of tithes, Gissur had a census taken of

Traces Through World History

the farmers which determined that Iceland then had a population of about 50,000. With the help of Priest Sæmundur the learned Sigfusson (our 21st great grandfather) and Law Speaker Markus Skeggjasson (our 22nd great grandfather), Gissur established a system of tithes in 1097 to be distributed in four parts: (1) for the bishop, (2) for the church, (3) for the clergy, and (4) for the poor.

In 1105, at the request of the people of the north, Gissur granted them a bishop of their own and established a new diocese at Holar in Skagafjardarsýsla. Bishop Jón Ögmundsson became the first bishop there. So after that, Gissur would be just the Bishop of Skálholt. But Gissur made sure that the Diocese of Holar had a good start as he transferred a quarter of his income toward the endowment of the new see.

When Gissur had been Bishop for thirty-six years, being then seventy-five years of age, he became dangerously ill, and sent to the Althing the name of Thorlak for election of his successor. He died at Skálholt on May 23, 1118. Ari the learned would say of him, "He was more beloved by his fellow-countrymen than any man we know to have lived in this land."

Catholic Priest and Goði Saemundur (the learned) Sigfusson (1056 - 1133)(Our 21th great grandfather)

Sæmundur (the learned) Sigfusson (1056 – 1133) was born at Oddi in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Catholic Priest Sigfus Lodmundarson and Thorey Eyjolfsdóttir.

It is often said that Sæmundur was the first Icelander to study in France, but it should be noted that at that time the area south of Saxony and east of the Rhine was often called Franconia and he may have studied there. However, there was no actual university in Europe at that time, so Sæmundur had probably studied at a monastery school or at a bishop's or academic center. However, it is certain that he went abroad to study at a young age and stayed there for a long time. He probably came home in about 1078.

Sæmundur settled in Oddi after returning home and was ordained a Catholic Priest and had a church built for Saint Nicholas. He founded a school in Oddi and was considered one of the most learned men of his time. He wrote on historical subjects, such as the kings of Norway. His writings are all lost, but they were probably written in Latin. Legends are written about him and he is often quoted in ancient writings, but it is not now known with certainty who authored these writings. Sæmundur may have been the author of the so-called "Older Edda." He was the first Icelandic author and historian whose name we know.

Sæmundur wrote a work in Latin about the history of the Norwegian kings from Harald Fairhair to Magnus the Good. Sæmundur placed special emphasis on the chronology, which made his work an important reference work. It has unfortunately been lost, but was used as a source by other authors such as Snorri Sturlason, who himself grew up and had studied at Oddi as the foster son of Jón Loftsson.

Sæmundur's married Guðrún Kolbeinsdóttir, daughter of Law Speaker Kolbeinn Flosason. Sæmundur's and Guðrún were known to have at least four children: Eyjólfur, Loðmundur, Loftur and Þórey. We descend from Loftur.

Sæmundur contributed to the effort to legalize tithing in Iceland between 1096 and 1097,

Traces Through World History

together with Bishop Gissur Ísleifsson (our 24th great grandfather) and Law Speaker Markús Skeggjason (our 22nd great grandfather).

Due to Sæmundur's learning, use of the written word had come to him early on that he was very knowledgeable and various legends have been created about his magic skills and business with Kōlski. The most famous of these is the story of when Sæmundur came home from Svartaskóli and crossed the sea on the back of Kōlski, who was in the form of a seal.

Sæmundur was involved in the effort to put down all the laws of Iceland in writing in about 1117–8 at the Law Speaker's dictation. Among the laws were the Church Laws. Sæmundur assisted Bishop Thorlak with the transcription and codification of these laws. Sæmundur was also encouraged by Bishop Thorlak in his works on Iceland history.

With the advice of Sæmundur, the Church Laws would be drawn up in a compendium by the Althing in the years 1122-33, and incorporated in the law of the land. The church outlined the following subjects: (1) faith and baptism; (2) burial practices; (3) priest duties and responsibilities; (4) designated holy days; and (5) churches.

It seems as if Sæmundur at the end of his life had good relations with Archbishop Asser in Lund and the Norwegian king Sigurd Jorsalfar. Among his contemporaries, Sæmund was highly praised, but apparently he also had enemies. In Icelandic folklore, Sæmund became almost a legendary figure and gained a reputation, perhaps mostly after his death, for being a magician. This may be because he was able to read and write Latin, a mysterious language for most people.

Sæmundur died on the family farm Oddi on May 22, 1133. He had become rich and respected, his school was the leading one in Iceland, and he had friendly relations with powerful people in the Nordic countries.

Sæmundur's son Loftur went abroad and married Þóra Magnúsdóttir, daughter of King Magnus barefoot Olafsson. Their son was Jon Loftsson who became "the greatest and friendliest chief in Iceland."

A dramatic episode from Loftur's life is told by Snorri Sturlason in *Heimskringla*: when his son Jon had been born in Norway in 1124, he was left to be raised by the priest Andreas Brunsson in Kungahälla in Bohuslän. Loftur himself and Princess Þóra then went to Iceland, but in 1135 Loftur decided to bring home his then 11-year-old son. As soon as Loftur arrived at Kungahälla, however, a frightening sign appeared. There was a great roar in the streets at night; the city dogs went mad with fear and ran out of the houses and "bit everything that came in their way." This warning was repeated almost every night from Easter to Ascension Day. Shortly afterwards, the city was invaded by Wendish pirates who looted and burned and hunted slaves among the townspeople. But by then, Loftur and Jon had already left the city in a convoy consisting of thirteen cargo ships destined for Bergen. However, the voyage became stormy. Eleven ships perished with men and everything and even the twelfth was broken, but the crew was rescued. Loftur and his son seem to have been on board the thirteenth ship - the one that did break - and eventually they also managed to get to Iceland.

Loftur was ordained a Priest and probably taught at the school at Oddi, like his brother Eyjolfur. Upon Eyjolfur's death in 1158, Loftur became the Goði at Oddi, a chieftaincy which at his own death was taken over by his son Jon.

Traces Through World History

Catholic Bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson (1075 - 1145)(Our 23rd great grandfather)

Ketill Þorsteinsson (1075 – 1145) was born about 1075 at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörðursýsla. His father was Þorsteinn Eyjólfsson and his mother is unknown. He probably grew up in Möðruvellir. Later he took over as chieftain there and would have been involved in the council when the episcopate was installed at Hólar in 1106. He entered as a Priest in Hólar around that same time.

Ketill married Gróa Gissurardóttir, daughter of Gissur Ísleifsson, Bishop of Skálholt. They were known to have a son, Runólfur, who we descend from.

Þorgils Saga provides the reason why Ketill would be destined to become bishop. It was due to his successful mediation at the Althing between Hafliði Másson and Þorgils Oddason. With impressive cunning, he managed to reach a settlement between the two seemingly completely irrational parties. Thereby a feud was averted where the opponents had large armed groups of men facing each other. Ketill, however, was reluctant to become a bishop, because he had a repulsive flaw: he was one-eyed like the pagan god Odin. He had lost his eye in a knife fight with a man who slandered his wife Groa. He eventually agreed to become the diocese's bishop after being convinced that this would promote peace and a settlement was reached.

Ketill was elected Bishop by Jón Ögmundsson and was ordained by Archbishop Össur in Lund on February 12, 1122. This made him the second Catholic Bishop of Hólar. The Þingeyrarklaustur monastery was formally founded in 1133, during Ketill's episcopate.

Future Bishop Klæng Þorsteinsson would be among those clerics that would be taught and trained by Ketill at Holar.

Ketill would be the primary driver and perhaps author of a compendium of Church Laws by the Althing in the years 1122-33, and incorporated it into the law of the land. The church provided that “all men shall be Christian in this country and believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” and that every child shall be baptized. On burials, the law required that all graves be the same price. On the priesthood, it was required that each farmer foster and train a boy for the priesthood. The law set down the approved Holy Days. On churches, the law established the principle that the churches would be privately owned. But if a church was burnt or destroyed, the landowner was required to rebuild it. Men were prohibited from bearing weapons in a church.

Ketill was well-liked and respected as a bishop and had a great interest in history. Ari the wiser Þorgilsson says in *Íslendingabók* that his writings are based upon a book first written by Bishop Þorlákur Runólfsson, Bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson and Sæmundur the Priest. Ari then reworked the book according to what they thought would be deleted or expanded "so that it is now better than the previous one."

When Ketill reached seventy years of age he desired to retire from his bishopric, and commended himself to the prayers of the synod of priests at the Althing. Then Bishop Magnus of Skálholt invited him to his dedication festival at Skálholt, in connection with which he gave a banquet serving a goodly supply of mead, the whole “so elaborate that it had scarcely a parallel in Iceland.”

After supper on the Friday following both bishops went to bathe in a nearby hot springs. Ketill died at Laugarás Hot Springs in Biskupstungur on July 7, 1145. Great sorrow fell on the

Traces Through World History

festival company until the close of his funeral, when “the comforting speech of Bishop Magnus, and the excellent drink provided, made men forget their sorrows sooner than they would otherwise have done.”

After her husband Ketill’s death, Groa became a woman semi-recluse. Only six nuns can be identified in Iceland before 1300 and Groa was one of them. She lived for many years as a nun at Skalholt, dying in the days of Bishop Klæng Þorsteinsson.

Ketill’s son Runolfur would follow him into the priesthood and would also be a well known poet.

Bishop Hallur Teitsson (1090 - 1150)(our 21st great grandfather)

Hallur Teitsson (1090 – 1150) was born about 1090 at Haukadalur in Arnessýsla. His parents were Catholic Priest Teitur Isleifsson and Jorunn Einarisdóttir. He was the grandson of Bishop Isleifur Gissurarson and the nephew of Bishop Gissur Isleifsson. He lived at Haukadalur and was considered one of the greatest scholars of his time.

Hallur married Þuríður Þorgeirsdóttir and they had a son Gissur. We descend from Gissur. Gissur would become a Catholic Priest and Law Speaker.

When Magnús Einarsson, Bishop of Skálholt, died in a fire in 1149, Hallur was elected Bishop. He then went south to Rome but died before he could be consecrated in 1150 in Utrecht, Netherlands on the way home.

Bishop Klængur Þorsteinsson (1102 - 1176)(Our 22nd great grandfather)

Klængur Þorsteinsson (1102 – 1176) was born about 1102 somewhere in Iceland. His parents were Thorsteinn Arnorrson and Halldora Eyjolfsdóttir, the daughter of Eyjolfur the gray Gunnarsson of Bardarstrandarsýsla. He came from one of Iceland's most prestigious families, the Reyknesingar family. Klængur’s mother was born on the rich Reykhólar farm on Breiðafjörður.

Klængur was sent to study at a young age at Hólar, and in his forties, and was a cathedral Priest and teacher there.

After the sudden death of Bishop Magnús Einarsson, Hallur Teitsson (our 21st great grandfather) was elected as the next Bishop in this episcopal see. But he died in Holland in 1150. Klængur was then elected.

In 1152, the year of Klængur’s consecration, the English cardinal Nicolas Breakspear, afterwards Pope Adrian IV, visited Norway and established the archdiocese at Nidaros, under which the two sees in Iceland could be more strictly supervised. Klængur became the fifth Bishop of Skalholt from 1152 to 1176. On April 6, 1152 he was consecrated by Áske, the archbishop of Lund in Sweden.

Klængur married Ingvildur Thorgilsdóttir. She was daughter of Þorgils Oddason of Staðarhóll in Saurbær. She had been married against her will but left her husband and had with Klængur a daughter, Jóra, who we descend from. They also had a son named Runólfur.

Klængur was known for his learning and his talent as a poet. Klængur was a Bishop of the old school. He was a northerner trained by Bishop Ketill and was an eloquent preacher and a

Traces Through World History

skillful poet. He was also a great lawyer and chieftain. In every great suit, his advice was sought and Klængur settled many feuds.

He became famous for the huge church that he had built in Skálholt after his consecration. As we know today, it was a Norwegian style stave church. Their wood was imported from Norway on two ships. It was not completed until after the death of Bishop Klængur. The dimensions were: 48.5 m in length, 22 m in width and 13.5 m in height. This church was long considered the most important building in Iceland until 1309 when it burned down as a result of a lightning strike.

Klængur is said to have been a pious person who often walked barefoot in snow and frost. However, he seems to have been a life-lover as well and held large and expensive parties in Skálholt, as he was friendly, and it is said that 840 people were invited to the church dedication which occurred on St. Vitus' Day, June 15. The dedication sermon was preached by Nicolas Bergsson, the abbot at the Thvera Monastery.

Klængur maintained the episcopal school and theological college. He introduced writing instruction in the Saxon script. He took pains to instruct the students in copying the Scriptures and singing the psalms in the approved manner.

Klængur is considered to be the founder of Augustinian monasteries at Hitardal, Þykkvabæjarklaustur and Flatey. Also during his tenure, a Benedictine nunnery was established at Kirkjubær.

By 1174, Klængur was becoming old and sickly. He received permission from Archbishop Eystenn Erlendsson in Norway to arrange a successor. He then notified the Althing his desire to retire, and they would let him choose his successor. But this selection was carried out in a highly political manner. The Althing presented to Klængur the names of three nominees, one each from the three regions that formed the diocese. Klængur then nominated Thorlak Thorhallsson, the saintly abbot of Þykkvabæjarklaustur monastery.

Klængur then took to his bed and died the following winter on February 28, 1176 at Skálholt.

Priest and Law Speaker Gissur Hallsson (1125 - 1206)(Our 20th great grandfather)

Gissur Hallsson (1120 – 1206) was born about 1125 at Haukadalur in Arnessýsla. His parents were Bishop Hallur Teitsson and Þuríður Þorgeirsdóttir. Gissur was from the Haukdælar family. From his birth until about 1133, he lived as the foster-son of Bishop Þorlákur Runólfsson. But Bishop Þorlákur died in 1133, so Gissur had probably returned to his parents by then.

Gissur was a Catholic Priest and a companion of Bishop Klængur Þorsteinsson. Gissur had been a marshal at the court of King of Norway Sigurdur Munnur Haraldsson (our 24th great grandfather). Gissur was with Bishop Klængur and had been to Bari and Rome in Italy, among other places. He and Bishop Klængur returned home to Iceland after Klængur's ordination in the summer of 1152.

When Gissur came home he got married and lived in Haukadalur. Gissur's wife was Álfheiður Þorvaldsdóttir, sister of Guðmundur Dýra Þorvaldsson. Their seven children were: Þuríður, Kolfinna, Abbott and Law Speaker Hallur, Bishop Magnús, Prior Þorvaldur, and Þordis.

Traces Through World History

We descend from Þuríður and Prior Þorvaldur.

Gissur also had several children with his concubines, one of which was Þuríður Arnadóttir. They had a daughter, Halldora, who we descend from.

Gissur was regarded as the most learned man in Iceland in his day. He was elected as Law Speaker of the Althing in 1181 and would hold that office until 1202. He was highly respected and considered a great scholar. He had *Hungurväka* written, which was the story of the first Bishops of Skálholt.

In latter part of his life Gissur spent a great deal of time at Skálholt. When Bishop Thorlak Thorhallsson became ill in his dying days, Gissur attended him as his caregiver. Gissur gave the oration at Bishop Thorlak's funeral.

Gissur died at age 82 on July 27, 1206 at Haukadalur. He had proved to be the friend and counselor of several bishops and was a stabilizing factor in their policies.

Goði and Catholic Bishop Pall Jonsson (1155 - 1211)(Our 20th great grandfather)

Páll Jónsson (1155 – 1211) was born about 1155 at Oddi in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Jon Loftsson and Ragnheidur Thorhallsdóttir. In his youth he had been a retainer to Harald, Earl of Orkney. He studied in England and returned to Iceland where he established a farm at Skarði in Rangarvallasýsla. He was a goði, a magistrate, almost a judge, and acted as a chieftain in his countryside. Pall was also a Catholic Deacon.

Pall married Herdis Ketilsdóttir, daughter of Catholic Priest Ketil Þorsteinsson. They had four children: Loftur, Halla, Þora, and Ketil. We descend from Þora.

On his death bed, Bishop Thorlak Thorhallsson nominated Pall, the illegitimate son of his sister, to be the next Bishop at Skálholt. Pall was then forty years old. But the irregularity of his birth caused some hesitation. The Althing naturally had much debate over the matter and sought the advice of Brand, Bishop of Holar, who had no scruples about asking Pall to depart abroad to be consecrated.

King Sverrir Sigurdsson of Norway (our 23rd great grandfather) received Pall with great honor. Pall was then ordained a Priest by the archbishop of Lund and consecrated Bishop on April 23, 1195.

Upon his return to Iceland, he took up residence at Skálholt. But he seems to have kept his farm at Skarði which was only about 15 miles away across the Þjorsa River. So all his children were most likely born there.

Not long after becoming Bishop, Pall would be called upon for his ability to be a peacemaker. There was a quarrel between Kolbeinn Tumason and one of Thord Sturlalson's thingmen. Both parties arrived at the Althing in 1196 with large forces of armed men. Great commotion arose in which one man lost his life, and bloody conflict was averted only through the efforts of Bishop Pall, who was able to arrange a temporary settlement.

Like most chieftain-bishops, Pall enriched his cathedral. He had brought from Norway two glass windows, which was a first for Iceland. He added a steeple to house the bells that had been presented to his predecessor. In 1198, Pall had a shrine made for Bishop Thorlak Thorhallsson's relicts which stood over the high altar at Skálholt. The Althing canonized Bishop

Traces Through World History

Thorlak in 1199.

Pall's wife Herdis justified her upbringing as a priest daughter, as she proved a skillful manager at the bishopstead, though there were one hundred persons on the estate including seventy or eighty servants. Bishop Pall maintained the reputation of a chieftain. To celebrate his consecration, he gave a feast to his northern colleague Brand and other friends, serving the best wine and ale.

Pall had a reputation and skill in making verse, and interest in general book-lore, and had some musical ability. He also wrote literary works, among which are medieval songs that surpassed many in his time. He was a great patron and sheltered great artists in Skalhólt who brought beautiful works of art and treasures to the episcopal see and even sent one to a foreign prince as well.

In his tenure as Bishop, Pall was responsible for two effective actions. He had a census of his diocese completed which determined that there were now 220 churches served by 290 priests. He also acted to settle a trade dispute over the measurement of homespun cloth. He introduced the use of the English yard so measurements of the cloth could be standardized.

On May 17, 1207, Pall's wife Herdis and her children Ketil and Halla went to the farm at Skardi to get servants and see to affairs. They had to cross the Þjorsa River. Upon their return they found the river to be flooding. The ford was impassable so they obtained a boat that the horses could tow across. But the boat foundered and Herdis and Halla were drowned.

Bishop Pall Jonsson died November 29, 1211 at Skalhólt. One of the things he had built at Skalhólt was a sarcophagus for his remains to be entombed in. For a long time the story of the sarcophagus was considered a legend. But when excavations were carried out in the Skálholt cemetery in August 1954, it was found. When it was opened on August 30, 1954, a skeleton of a man with a crosier was found in it. It was believed to be Bishop Páll's remains, since no one in Iceland had ever heard of anyone else who was buried in a sarcophagus. The sarcophagus can be seen in the crypt of today's Skálholt Cathedral.

Law Speaker, Priest, Prior Styrmir (the wise) Karason (1180 - 1245)(Our 20th great grandfather)

Styrmir the Wise Kárason (1180 – 1245) was born about 1180 at Þingeyrar in Hunavatnssýsla. His father was Kari Runólfsson, who was the abbot at the Þingeyraklaustur Monastery at Þingeyrar. The monastery had been founded by Bishop Jón Ögmundsson in 1106. Styrmir partly grew up in Þingeyraklaustur, received an education there and stayed there until 1220.

It is believed that Styrmir's wife was Jórunn Einarasdóttir. Their son was Valgarður, who we descend from.

Styrmir served as Law Speaker of the Althing from 1210 to 1214 and would serve in that capacity again from 1232 to 1235.

Styrmir was ordained a Priest. Around 1220, Styrmir was the house chaplain and secretary to Snorri Sturlason at Reykhólt.

He became the first Prior at the Viðeyjarklaustur Monastery. Viðeyjarklaustur was a

Traces Through World History

monastery in Viðey in Kollafjörður and was of the Augustinian order. It is believed to have been founded in 1225 or 1226.

In light of the fact that Styrmir was a home priest in Reykholt, it is likely that he was Snorri Sturluson's assistant in writing and bookmaking. It is not known that Styrmir wrote any saga texts himself, but he edited several texts, and added new passages in some of them. Styrmir was a well-known writer in his time. He is linked to the following works: *Styrmisbók Landnáma* which was lost; The life story of King Ólafur the Saint, it too was mostly lost; *Flateyjarbók Sverris*; and *Hólmverji*.

Styrmir died on February 20, 1245 at the Viðeyjarklaustur Monastery.

District Magistrate Asgrimur Þorsteinsson (1225 - 1285)(Our 19th great grandfather)

Asgrimur Þorsteinsson was born about 1225 at Hvammur in Hunavatnssýsla. His parents were Þorsteinn Jonsson and Ingunn Argrimsdóttir. Asgrimur was known to have resided at Baugstadir in Arnessýsla and later at HrafnGil in Eyjafjardarsýsla.

Asgrimur married Guðný Mánadóttir. They were known to have at least three children: Eyjólf, Máni, and Þora. We descend from Þora.

Asgrimur and his brother Eyjólfur had some involvement with the events at the wedding of Hall Gissurson and Ingibjörg Sturladóttir, Sturla Þórðarson's 13 year old daughter. It was held on October 22, 1253 at Flugumýri in Blönduhlíð in Skagafjardarsýsla. Asgrimur revealed to Hrafn Oddsson (our 19th great grandfather) the plot that Eyjólfur Þorsteinsson, Sturla Sighvatsson's son-in-law, was planning to attack Gissur's farm. Eyjólfur Þorsteinsson attacked the farm with a force of men. They burned down the houses and 25 people died in the fire.

Asgrimur got into a conflict with Bishop Árni Þorláksson of Skalholt, but later reconciled with him.

Late in his life, Asgrimur became one of the first ever *Sýslumaður* or district magistrates in about 1283. He was placed in charge of Hunavatnssýsla.

Ásgrimur Þorsteinsson died on May 16, 1285, possibly in Hunavatnssýsla. His son Eyjólfur would take over for him as district magistrate for Hunavatnssýsla.

Goði, District Magistrate, Governor Hrafn Oddsson (1226 - 1289)(Our 19th great grandfather)

Hrafn Oddsson was born about 1226 at Nupar in Isafjardarsýsla. His parents were Oddur Alason and Steinunn Hrafnadóttir. He was a Catholic Priest, king's representative and knight in the Age of Sturlunga. He lived first in Eyri in Arnarfjörður in Isafjardarsýsla. He would establish his farm at Sauðafell in Dalasýsla. He was a chieftain, hirðstjóri (governor) and a Knight.

In 1245, Hrafn married Þuríður Sturludóttir, daughter of Sturla Sighvatsson and Solveig Sæmundardóttir and they settled on the farm at Sauðafell. They were known to have had at least six children: Hallkatla, Sturli, Jon, Thordur, Valgerdur and Thorgerdur. We descend from Hallkatla and Jon.

Shortly after his marriage, a set of significant confrontations would take place. An

Traces Through World History

opposing force to the Sturlung family was soon in the making. Gissur Thorvaldsson and Kolbeinn ungi Arnorson became the leaders of this force. When Kolbeinn ungi had been defeated, Þórður kakali Sighvatsson began gathering some forces and in 1248, Hrafn and Einar Thorvaldsson came from the Vatsfjord district in northern Iceland to pledge him their allegiance. When Þórður went to Norway in 1250, he divided his supporters and appointed Hrafn, Sturla Þórðarson and Þorleifur Þórðarson in Garðar to be in charge of West Iceland. When Þorgils skarði came to Iceland in 1252, there was a conflict over power between him, Hrafn and Sturla.

Hrafn was invited to the wedding of Ingibjörg Sturludóttir and Hallur Gissurarson in Flugumýri in the autumn of 1253, but when he came to Skagafjörður, Asgrimur Þorsteinsson (our 19th great grandfather) told him about the plot that Eyjólfur Þorsteinsson, Sturla Sighvatsson's son-in-law, was planning to attack Gissur's farm during the wedding. The wedding occurred on October 22, 1253 at Flugumýri in Blönduhlíð in Skagafjardarsýsla. Eyjólfur Þorsteinsson attacked the farm with a force of men. They burned down the houses and 25 people died in the fire. Hrafn refused to join in the plot. Hrafn went to Hólar when the fire was set, but met the attackers afterwards and went with them from there to Eyjafjörður.

Around 1260, Hrafn moved to Stafholt in Myrasýsla. Gissur Thorvaldsson had been appointed as the Jarl and the King of Norway's representative in Iceland. Gissur Þorvaldsson and Hrafn finally reconciled at the Alþing in 1262. Hrafn was then appointed as hirðstjóri for the Borgarfjord district. The position of hirðstjóri was to supervise the magistrates, read royal letters in the Alþing where he sat in the forefront, take care of the land defense, supervise the trade, name judgments in major cases, confirm the judgments of the Lögrétta that had legal force, provide for counties, tax collection and manage the kings property.

Sturla Þórðarson (our 19th great grandfather) was not pleased with Hrafn's appointment as hirðstjóri at Borgarfjord. His son Snorri convinced him in joining an attack against Hrafn. This proved a failure and Sturla Þórðarson was forced to leave the country in 1263.

Hrafn became embroiled in a bitter dispute with the ecclesiastical authorities over the issue of transfer of properties with churches on them to the ownership of the church. Many of the chieftains were opposed to this and Bishop Arni Thorlaksson was making threats of excommunication if they didn't surrender the properties. Led by Hrafn, the chieftains appealed this to the King. In 1273, King Magnus summoned a council in Bergen to resolve the issue. Hrafn was part of this council. The council decided to place the churches of Iceland under ecclesiastic control.

In 1277, Hrafn and Thorvard Thorarinsson had sailed to Norway. They were shipwrecked and had to spend the winter in the Faroe Islands, but the following spring they reached their destination. Hrafn and Thorvard Thorarinsson remained in Norway in the years 1278 and 1279. They assisted Lawyer Jon Einarsson in preparing a law code called "Jonsbok." The Jonsbok was to be implemented in Iceland and Hrafn was given the title of *merkismaður* (standard bearer) and was to exercise authority over all of Iceland. The new law code reduced the number of members of the Alþing to eighty-four and established the title of *Sýslumaður*. The *Sýslumaður* or district magistrate was to be a civil officer or lay judge who administers the law, and collects tolls, taxes and fines. They were also to hold courts of justice and name the men who were to sit in juries. Hrafn would be one of the first *Sýslumaður* or district magistrate in Iceland.

Traces Through World History

By 1285-1286, the issue of ownership of churches had still not been resolved and the chieftains became openly hostile towards Bishop Arni. Bishop Arni revived his claim to all the churches and church property. Hrafn and the lawyer Erlend Olafsson (our 18th great grandfather) offered determined resistance. Bishop Arni declared that Hrafn and Erlend were banned by the church, although he stopped short of excommunicating them.

In 1288, two royal commissioners were sent by the king to Iceland in an attempt to resolve the issue. Hrafn and Bishop Arni were summoned to go to Norway in the fall. In the summer of 1289, Bishop Arni and Hrafn had to accompany the king on a military expedition to Denmark. On their return they were summoned to Nidaros for a final hearing of the case. Hrafn was unable to appear as he suffered from a wound he received in the military campaign. Hrafn died at Nidaros on November 22, 1289.

Lawyer Erlendur the Strong Olafsson (1235 - 1312)(Our 18th great grandfather)

Erlendur the strong Ólafsson (1235 – 1312) was born about 1235 at Skeid in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Ólafur Tottur and Valgerður Flosadóttir. He made his home at Ferjubakki in Myrasýsla.

Erlendur's first wife was Jórunn Valgardsdóttir and their sons were Jón a farmer in Ferjubakki and Haukur Erlendsson a lawyer. We descend from both of these children.

Erlendur is first mentioned in a letter to the king along with other rulers in 1375. He spent a lot of time traveling and seems to have been to Norway eight times from 1282 to 1305, but during that time he took a trip abroad at least once a year, and often two or three. He had been appointed as a lawyer in 1287 with jurisdiction in the north and west of the country and took over from Sturla Þórðarson. He was one of Bishop Árni's opponents in local affairs and was a significant political player after Hrafn Oddsson's death but was not as clever as Hrafn so the bishop bested him in the end. He seems to have been zealous and often had quarrels.

Erlendur's son Jon married Margaret Magnúsdóttir and they had three children: Magnus, Flosi, and Vigfus. We descend from Flosi.

Erlendur's son Haukur would be an important person in Iceland. He was born about 1260 at Ferjubakki in Myrasýsla. He would be a lawyer and a knight of Norway. He was also known for having compiled a number of Icelandic sagas and other materials mostly in his own hand, bound in a book called the *Hauksbók*.

Haukur married Steinunn Aladóttir and they had seven children: Svarthofdi, Valgerdur Erlendur, Jorunn, Gudni, Teitur, and Ormur. We descend from Svarthofdi.

Though not in his early years, Haukur was educated abroad in Norway, where "he owes his whole education." Like his father before him, Haukur became a lawyer of Iceland no later than 1294, serving in the post until 1299. Around 1301 he arrived in Norway, and served from 1303 to 1322 as a lawyer in Oslo and on the Gula Thing. Sometime after 1303, he is mentioned as being on the king's council. He was also one of the men who was led to recognize Magnus IV of Sweden as King over Norway. He was knighted, became one of the leading men of the kingdom, and was repeatedly sent to Iceland on important missions.

During this period, lawyers may or may not be conferred the title of "herra", at any rate,

Traces Through World History

Haukur serving in Norway and was addressed as "herra" in a 1309 letter, and in a letter dating from 1311, he is called "the lawyer of the Gula Thing and knight."

Haukur is considered to be the author of *Hauksbók* which is a compilation that includes Icelandic sagas and a redaction of the *Landnámabók*, as well as an arithmetical treatise called the *Algorismus*. Among the sagas included is a version of *Eirík the Red Saga*, which includes the accounts of the exploration and the attempted colonization in the American continent by Thorfinn Karlsefni, whom Haukur counts as one of his ancestors. He also penned "Hauk's Annals," which chronicled the events of his lifetime.

Haukur Erlendsson died on June 3, 1334 at Ferjubakki.

Knight and Governor Ketil Þorláksson (1280 - 1340)(Our 17th great grandfather)

Ketill Þorláksson (1280 – 1342) was born about 1280 At Kolbeinstadar in Hnappadalsýsla. His parents were Lawyer Þorlákur Narfasson and Helga Nikulasdóttir. He lived in Kolbeinsstaðir.

Ketill married Una Guttormsdóttir and they had eight children: Jon, Nikulas, Oddur, Snorri, Vigfus, Oddny, Narfi, and Ormur. We descend from Oddur and Oddny.

Ketill was appointed governor in the Westfjords in 1312. He went to Norway in 1313 and became a retainer to King Hákon V Magnusson. He was knighted and returned home in 1314 with a royal letter which was approved by the Althing the following year. Soon after that he announced the election of Audun Thorbergsson as Bishop of Holar.

In 1320 the Icelandic Bishops and chieftains were summoned to attend a council in Bergen. Among those required to attend were Ketill, lawyer Snorri Narfason and Bishop Arni of Skalholt. The result of the council was that Ketill returned to Iceland with letters under royal seal and that the people of Iceland were then to take an oath of allegiance to King Magnus Eiríksson, who had become king at the age of three.

Ketill was involved in disputes about Möðruvallaklaustur in 1327 or 1328. In 1330 he is mentioned among a group of distinguished guests at a famous wedding in Hagar on Barðaströnd. He sailed in 1332 and returned in 1334, sailed again in 1336 and does not appear to have returned until 1340. It is possible that he was governor until 1341 with Eiríkur Sveinbjarnarson, but of course he had some agents or bailiffs act for him when he was abroad.

Ketill Þorláksson died on October 7, 1342 at Kolbeinstadar.

Catholic Priest Einar Hafliðason (1307 - 1393)(Our 15th great grandfather)

Einar Hafliðason (1307 – 1393) was born on September 15, 1307 at Breiðabólstaður in Hunavatnssýsla. His father was Hafliði Steinsson, who had been a Catholic Priest and ráðsmaður (administrative steward) at Hólar from 1292 to 1308 and finally the Priest at Breiðabólstaður í Vesturhópi until his death in 1319. His mother was Hafliði's concubine Rannveig Gestsdóttir. Einar was sent to study with Bishop Lárentíus Kálfsson at the monastery of Þingeyri at the age of 10, later becoming a follower and secretary for Lárentíus. When Bishop Lárentíus would say the mass he often had Deacon Einar as his server. Too ill at the time to ordain Einar, Lárentíus sent

Traces Through World History

Einar to the southern diocese of Skálholt for consecration there by Bishop Jón Halldórsson in 1332.

Einar had a son named Arni with Þuridur Arnadóttir, who we descend from.

Einar became a Catholic Priest in 1334 at Höskuldsstaðir in Skagaströnd and in 1343 the Archbishop of Nidaros granted him Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhópi, one of the best farms in the region, in what is now Húnavatnssýsla. Einar held this parish until his death. Einar was one of the leading clerics in the diocese of Hólar, taking various official roles. He is best known, however, for his writing: he began the annal *Lögmannsannáll*, a chronicle which Einar continued up to 1361, when it was taken over by someone else. He almost certainly composed *Lárentius Saga*, a biography of Einar's friend and teacher Bishop Lárentíus Kálfsson, sometime after 1346; and wrote or otherwise appeared in a number of official documents. In 1381, he also translated the miracle-story *Atburðr á Finnmörk* from Latin into Icelandic. Einar was thus a prominent member of the North Icelandic Benedictine School, and *Laurentius Saga* is an important witness to the lives of its members.

Einar is also one of the few 14th century Icelanders known to have traveled outside Scandinavia. According to his annals, in 1347 Einar "went ... away from the land [Norway], and traveled to the papal court, and was in Avignon for nine nights, and traveled widely in France, and was in Paris for some time."

Einar Hafliðason died on September 22, 1393 at Hoskuldsstadir in Hunavatnssýsla.

District Magistrate and Governor Arni Þórðarson (1315 - 1361)(our 15th great grandfather)

Árni Þórðarson (1315 – 1361) was born about 1315 at Haukadalur in Arnessýsla. His parents were Þórður Kolbeinsson and Halldora Þórvaldsdóttir.

Arni's wife is unknown, but he had at least three children: Ingileif, Þórður, and Asgeir. We descend from Asgeir.

Arni became District Magistrate for Rangarvallasýsla in 1349.

Árni sailed to Norway in 1356 together with Jón Skráveifa and Þorsteinn Eyjólfsson, and together with Andrés Gíslason, who had sailed the year before, they were given joint governorship over Iceland for three years. They sailed home in the summer of 1357, but the ships they were on sailed to Shetland and had to spend the winter there. They did not return home until the summer of 1358. Upon his return, Arni became District Magistrate and Governor over 1/4 of Iceland.

In 1360 it happened that a man named Markús Barkaður went to a man named Ormur who lived on Kross in Eastern Iceland and caused him great injuries. Markus' wife and two sons were with him. This event is called the First Crusade. They were all sentenced to death and Governor Árni had them beheaded in Lambey the same year. Árni lost his share of governorship in 1360, when Smiður Andrésson took over governorship for all over the country. Árni befriended him, but Jón Skráveifa, a lawyer, filed a complaint against Árni for the execution of Markús and his family. Árni also got into an argument with Jón and their men fought at the Alþing that summer.

Smiður took up Barkaður's case and sentenced Árni to death. Árni sent his case to the

Traces Through World History

king and offered to be under arrest until the royal court was held, but he did not receive an appeal and was arrested in Lambey in 1361. On June 18, 1361, Smiður had Árni executed in Lambeyri in Sudur Mulasýsla for the killing of Markús and his family.

District Magistrate and Governor Björn (the Jerusalem Pilgrim) Einarsson (1350 - 1415)(Our 14th great grandfather)

Björn the Jerusalem Pilgrim Einarsson (1350 – 1415) was born about 1350 at Vatnsfjordur in Nordur-Isafjardarsýsla. His father was Einar Eiríksson, who was the District Magistrate in Vatnsfjordur. His mother was Helga Pétursdóttir. They were thought to not have been married. Björn therefore did not inherit from his father, but he made money early and began to collect land. Björn was one of the most widely traveled Icelanders of his day. He was an chieftain and would be one of the richest men in the country. He lived at Vatnsfjörður.

Björn married Solveig Þorsteinsdóttir and they were known to have two children: Kristin and Thorleifur. We descend from Kristin.

Björn' father Einar Eriksson was a chieftain of the old type, who often went on expeditions to foreign lands. Although Björn may not have inherited any wealth from his father, perhaps he inherited this wanderlust desire. Björn would be known as “Björn Einarson Jorsalafari,” so-called because of his expedition to Jerusalem. Björn would become especially well known because of his expeditions to foreign lands. On his first trip abroad in 1379 he visited Rome in company with Bishop Oddgeir of Skalholt. In 1385 he set sail for Norway with four ships, accompanied by his wife, but they were driven to Greenland, where they spent two years. After returning to Iceland he again went to Rome in 1388, also this time accompanied by his wife. When they reached Norway they were arrested by the authorities for going to Greenland and trading with the people there without license, but upon taking an oath before the court that they had been driven to Greenland by storms they were released, and continued their journey to Rome, returning in 1391.

Like his father before him, upon his return to Iceland in 1391, Björn became the District Magistrate at Vatnsfjörður. Also after his return he made arrangements for his son Thorleifur's wedding. But Thorleifur was shipwrecked on his voyage to Eyjafjord, where the wedding was to be celebrated, and lost his life. Björn's sister was then married to Jon Guttormsson, a brother of the wealthy Loftur Guttormsson (our 14th great grandfather), with lavish display of hospitality and a great number of guests according to ancient custom. Some time afterwards he became involved in a quarrel with Thord Sigmundsson (our 15th great grandfather) who had accompanied him on his pilgrimage to Rome. The two met at Nupar in Dyrafjord accompanied by large armed bands, and a battle took place in which two of Björn's men were killed, and he himself with most of his men was wounded. He was forced to seek refuge in a church, and was not able to leave till the following day. Attempts to negotiate an agreement between the two failed.

In the winter Björn traveled about the country to secure support, an effort in which he was so successful, that in June 1394, he gathered about him the local governor, the lawyer Thorsteinn Eyjolfsson (our 14th great grandfather), many priests and other prominent persons, and about ninety armed men. They went to Thord Sigmundsson's home, and summoned him to appear

Traces Through World History

before the lawman at Mosfell to answer for the death of the two men killed at Nupar. Thord appeared on the appointed day, accompanied by fifty men. He was outlawed together with five others, but it was left to the king to decide whether he should be allowed to remain in the country. The leading men finally succeeded in arranging a settlement of the affair, according to which Thord was to pay Björn fifty-four hundred in goods or in money, and he should arrange a suitable feast for Björn and his wife.

In 1405 Björn undertook a trip to the Holy Land, accompanied by his wife, Bishop Vilchin of Skalholt, the District Magistrate Snorri Sveinsson and the monk Jon Halfredsson. They first sailed to Norway, where Bishop Vilchin died in the early part of the winter. The following spring they continued their journey to Rome, Venice, and Jerusalem. When they reached Venice on their return from the Holy Land, Björn's wife proceeded to Norway, but he went to Spain, where he visited the tome of St. James in Santiago of Compostella. On the way to Norway he also visited the grave of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury, England.

Björn again sailed for Iceland in 1410, spending the winter in the Shetland Islands. He reached home the following summer. His wife had died on the expedition, either in Norway, as some sources have it, or in the Orient, as stated by others. In his life and character Björn Einarson was much like the great chieftains of earlier days. He maintained a hirð (a group of armed companions) according to ancient custom, and kept skalds about him to sing about his exploits. Björn became Governor over all of Iceland in 1413. He was so wealthy that he gave several farms to the St. Olaf church where he wished to be buried. To eighteen churches he gave in all forty-three hundred, and to three others other valuable gifts. To the poor he gave five hundred, to poor relatives fifteen hundred, to various churches for masses to be celebrated for the dead twelve hundred, in all eighty-five hundred, besides other valuable gifts.

Björn the Jerusalem Pilgrim Einarsson died in 1415 at Havalfjordur in Borgarfjardarsýsla. He was buried at Skalholt.

Governor and Knight Sir Loftur (the rich) Guttormsson (1375 - 1432)(Our 14th great grandfather)

Loftur the rich Guttormsson (b1375 – 1432) was born about 1375 at Modruvellir in Eyjafjardarsýsla. His parents were Guttormur Ormsson and Soffia Eiríksdóttir. He was a chieftain, District Magistrate, knight and Governor. It is believed that Loftur was abroad around 1400, when the Black Death swept through Iceland, but in 1406 he had returned to Iceland and was appointed as a District Magistrate at his home at Modruvellir.

Loftur's wife was Ingibjörg Palsdóttir and they were known to have had four children: Þorvarður the rich, Eiríkur polyp nose, Ólöf, and Soffía. We descend from all four of these children.

Loftur's concubine was Kristín Oddsdóttir and they were known to have had four children: Skúli, Ormur, Ólafur, and Sumarlídi. We descend from all four of these children.

In 1414 Loftur appears to have been at the court of King Eric of Pomerania and was said to have been knighted. He had a serpent in his coat of arms. He became Governor for the north and west of Iceland in 1426 and held that position until his death in 1432. Loftur seems to have

Traces Through World History

been popular and peaceful and respected. He was friends with Bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton of Hólar and was steward of Hólar in 1430 and 1431.

Loftur was one of the richest Icelanders of his time, who is believed to have become very rich in the fishing industry and the export of dried fish, but also inherited big money, among other things from his relatives who died in the Black Death. He owned many lands and had as many as eighty farms, but he mostly stayed at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, at least in the latter part of his life. It is said that he kept himself rich and rode with eighteen to twenty men between his large farms. At the time of his death in about 1432 at Möðruvellir, his wealth was so great that his two illegitimate sons each inherited eleven and one-half hundred in real estate in addition to other property.

One of his sons by Kristin Oddsdóttir, Ormur would follow in Loftur's foot steps to become Governor in the north and west of Iceland after Loftur's death in 1432.

One of his sons by Kristin Palsdóttir, Þorvarður the rich would figure in the story of an evil bishop. A man named Jon Gerecksson led such a vicious life in Norway that he was disposed from his position as archbishop by the Pope. But the king of Norway still favored him and the king caused him to be elected as Bishop of Skalholt in 1425. He came to Iceland with a band of rowdies who commenced to commit all sorts of deeds of violence from one district to another. Þorvarður and Teit Gunnlaugsson were seized by these men without cause and imprisoned at Skalholt and subjected to all sorts of indignities. After making their escape they laid a plot to revenge themselves on the evil bishop and his band. The bishop's illegitimate son Magnus, the leader of his unruly band of followers, had been wooing Margaret Vigfusdóttir, one of the most prominent young ladies in all Iceland. She ignored him and in order to revenge her he proceeded to her residence, Kirkjuból, killed her brother and set fire to her house. Margaret saved her life only with great difficulty, and vowed that she would marry no one but the man who possessed sufficient courage to wreak vengeance upon her assailant. Þorvarður appeared as her champion and suitor, and the evil bishop began to realize that serious trouble was brewing. But when Magnus fled from Iceland, he thought the storm might blow over without dangerous consequences. In July Þorvarður and Teit united their forces in the neighborhood of Skalholt. Þorvarður, Teit and their men were able to approach unobserved. But the bishop learned of their presence and fled to the church with his priests and associates. The bishop was attempting to say the mass before the altar, but fifty men stormed the church and dragged him away. They tied him in a sack and drowned him in the Bruara River. His followers were hunted down and slain. Þorvarður later married Margaret Vigfusdóttir.

District Magistrate and Governor Helgi Styrsson (1380 -)(Our 16th great grandfather)

Helgi Styrsson (1380 –) was born about 1380 at Kross in Rangarvallasýsla. His father was Styr Hallvardsson who had come to Iceland from Norway. He had a sister named Gudrun who we also descend from. Helgi resided at Kross in Landeyjar and was known to live there for a long time.

Helgi married Sigríður Þorsteinsdóttir in about 1409 at Viðimýri in Skagafjörður with the consent of her brother Páll. She was the daughter of Þorsteinn Styrkarsson who was a farmer at

Traces Through World History

Viðimýri. Helgi and Sigríður were known to have a son named Teitur, who we descend from.

Helgi became the District Magistrate for the Westman Islands and possibly parts of Rangarvallasýsla and Arnessýsla in about 1405. His farm at Kross was located in the Westman Islands that were just off-shore to the south.

Helgi Styrsson is mentioned in a letter of tribute from the Icelanders to King Eirik at Pomerania at the Alþing dated July 1, 1419. Helgi was one of the signatories of the letter. He is therefore recognized as one of the country's leading rulers.

In a another letter dated April 11, 1420, he is called a District Magistrate for the Westman Islands. In that case there were six English merchants who had ventured there and built houses there without permission. Helgi summoned them to come before the Alþing and obey the laws of the country.

Helgi would be involved in that case along with District Magistrate Hannes Pálsson. In a letter dated July 1, 1420 from King Eirík to the Alþing, Helgi and Þorsteinn Helmingsson (Ólafsson) are referred to as Governors. They together with others sign a letter dated August 15, 1420 to King Eirik stating that Hannes has carried out the errands that the king entrusted to him and that he and District Magistrate Þorleifur Árnason (our 13th great grandfather) will be able to inform the king about the country's needs, necessities and benefits. In that letter, Helgi was referred to as the Governor in the south and east of Iceland.

Catholic Priest Jon Mariuskald Palsson (1390 - 1471)(Our 13th great grandfather)

Jón Mariuskáld Pálsson (1390 – 1471) was born about 1390 at Eida in Sudur-Mulasýsla. His parents were Pall Thovardsson and Sesselja Thorsteinsdóttir.

Jón was a Catholic Priest and served as steward at Hólar until 1429 and provost at Hegranesþing from 1426 to 1429. When Bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton of Hólar came to take over his diocese, Jón left and was a Priest at Grenjaðarstaður in Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla from 1427 to 1430 and then at Breiðabólstaður in Fljótshlíð from 1431 to 1440. Then he went back north to Grenjaðarstaður and was a Priest there until his death. He was a Provost in Þingeyjarþing from 1440 to 1448. He was one of the most powerful and wealthy priests in the country at the time and he quarreled with the rulers, not the least was Bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton and Bishop Marcellus of Skálholt.

Jón's concubine was Þórunn Finnbogadóttir, daughter of Finnbogi the old Jónsson and Margaret Hoskuldsdóttir who lived at Ás in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. They were known to have had five children: Brandur, Arnfinnur, Finnbogi, Gudrun, and Halldora. We descend from Brandur and Finnbogi. Brandur was a lawyer at Hof in Höfðaströnd. Finnbogi was a lawyer for northwestern Iceland at Ás.

The cult of the Blessed Virgin flourished around Jon's time. About half the churches in the country were dedicated to her. Traditional verse-making and folk-songs had lapsed or been driven underground under the dominance of external ecclesiasticism. Poetry took a religious form and began to show a revival towards the end of the century, chiefly under the inspiration of Jon, who became known as Mariuskáld, poet laureate of the Virgin.

Traces Through World History

District Magistrate and Governor Þorleifur Björnsson (1432 -1486)(Our 12th great grandfather)

Þorleifur Björnsson (1432 – 1486) was born about 1432 at Skarð in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Sir Björn the rich Þorleifsson, Governor and District Magistrate at Skarð, and Olof Loftsdóttir. Þorleifur had early county authority in various places and was often with his parents in their travels around the country. He established an estate in Reykhólar in Bardastrandarsýsla.

Þorleifur's wife was Ingveldur Helgadóttir, who was the daughter of Lawyer Helgi Guðnason and Kristín Þorsteinsdóttir. There was some question as to the validity of their marriage as they had a common second great grandfather, Eiríkur auggi Magnússon, making them 3rd cousins. Bishop of Skalholt Sveinn Petrusson declared their marriage invalid in 1471. By then they already had seven children. They then applied for a marriage license to the king, archbishop and Pope on the advice of the succeeding Bishop Magnús Eyjólfsson and received it. As a result, there was a great deal of controversy over their legacy, which lasted for many years. The children of Þorleifur and Ingveldur were: Helga, Jarþrúður, Björn, Guðný, Kristín, Þorsteinn, and Einar. We descend from Helga, Jarþrúður, and Guðný.

In 1467 Þorleifur and his father got into a conflict with the English in Rafi, Norway. His father Björn and seven of their companions were killed. Þorleifur was arrested and detained until his mother paid a high ransom for him. Þorleifur and Ólöf fought hard against the English in the following years.

Þorleifur served with Governor Hinrik Kepken and then became a Governor in Iceland in 1470. Þorleifur, however, continued to be a District Magistrate in several counties. He was the appointed Governor in 1481 for the north and west and probably held that position until his death in 1486.

Þorleifur seems to have been well educated and perhaps a scholar. He owned Flateyjarbók, having inherited it from his grandfather Þorleifur. Þorleifur is named in a medical book that was found in Dublin, Ireland in the early 20th century. This was an Icelandic leather manuscript that was found among Celtic manuscripts in The Royal Irish Academy and is a collection that contains both medical advice of all kinds, pharmacology, magic spells and a cookbook. Before one chapter of the book it says: "Hier has lækna boc þorleifs biorns son." The book is more detailed than any other medieval medical book that has been preserved in the Nordic countries.

District Magistrate Erlendur Erlendsson (1435 - 1495)(Our 13th great grandfather)

Erlendur Erlendsson was born about 1435 at Kolbeinsstadir in Hnappadalsýsla. His parents were Erlendur Narfason and Hallbera Solmundsdóttir. His father had been the District Magistrate in Rangarvallasýsla in about 1440. Erlendur would later be the District Magistrate in Rangarvallasýsla.

When he was a young boy, Erlendur lived at Skalholt in the days of Dutch Bishop Gottsvein (Gozewijn Comhaer, 1437–1447). The Priest Sveinn spaki Petrusson was also there at that time. Then in about 1444, Sveinn was sent to Torfastaðir in Arnesýsla during the winter, and

Traces Through World History

invited Erlendur to travel with him as his servant. But when they came to the hills south of Hrosshagi, the weather got bad and they got lost and then lay down for the night to stay warm. Some thought that they didn't survive. While stranded, Sveinn told Erlendur to behave well as they had been given a second life. Sveinn promised Erlendur that when he becomes the Bishop of Skalholt, he could have, Gudridur Þorvarðsdóttir, the daughter of Þorvarður the rich Loftsson and Margret Vigfusdóttir of Möðruvellir as his wife. Erlendur answered, "It may well be that you will become a Bishop in Skalholt, but never that I will have such a rich and well-born woman, as poor as I am."

Sveinn told him that he should never doubt God's mercy, for it will be as I say. In the morning they were rescued and relieved and went on to Torfastaðir.

Erlendur got on well and became the District Magistrate in Rangarvallasýsla around 1450. He may have taken over the office from Lawyer Helgi Olafsson around 1453 or earlier, as Helgi left office there around 1440. He settled on the farm at Hlidrenda in Rangarvallasýsla.

Priest Sveinn's prediction of Erlendur's marriage came true. In about 1460, Erlendur married Gudridur Þorvarðsdóttir at Möðruvellir. They were known to have had at least six children: Narfi, Vigfus, Þorvarður, Jon, Erlendur, and Holmfríðar. We descend from Vigfus, Þorvarður, Jon, and Holmfríðar. Priest Sveinn Petursson was indeed Bishop of Skalholt from 1466 to 1475.

It has been reported that Erlendur passed judgment in his first case in about 1459. One of his well known cases was initiated on September 9, 1471. It involved a robbery case at Kross near Lambey in Rangarvallasýsla. He made judgement in the case against Eyjolfur Gunnarsson on January 25, 1472 at Hliðarendi. Another case in 1475 involved Þorleifur Björnsson (our 12th great grandfather) of Reykhólar in Bardastrandarsýsla and Helgi Teitsson (our 14th great grandfather). In 1481, Erlendur passed judgement on the case of Eiríkur Jonsson.

In 1483 Erlendur sold a farm called Hrossatungu to Hallur Jonsson. The deed of purchase from Erlendur to Hallur Olafsson was made at Oddi on June 14, 1483. Then Erlendur sold some land at Möðruvellir with the consent of his wife Guðriður on February 7, 1491.

Then in 1492, Erlendur made a judgment in favor of 27 hundred in compensation for Ormur Jonsson after Sigurður Þorsteinsson in Fljótshlið, had been prosecuted. This Ormur Jonsson also had a favorable judgment passed in 1492 in Egilsstaðir for marriage compensation, he was referred to in the judgement as the king's agent in Mulasýsla.

After the monastery at Helgafell divided the land at Hraunholt in Hnappadal, Erlendur sold some land at Kolbeinsstaðir to Arni Einarsson on October 2, 1494. Then on March 2, 1495, Erlendur and Guðriður sold some land at Bakki in Kjalarnes of Gullbringusýsla. It appears that Erlendur was still alive on June 1, 1495, but probably died later that year.

Lawyer Finnbogi Mariúlaus Jónsson (1440 - 1513) (Our 12th great grandfather)

Finnbogi Mariúlaus Jónsson (1440 – 1513) was born about 1440 at Grenjaðarstaður in Sudur-Pingeyjarsýsla. His parents were Jon Mariuskald Pálsson and Þorunn Finnbogadóttir. His father was a Catholic Priest at Grenjaðarstaður. Finnbogi probably got the nickname because he had not been considered as devout and loyal to the Virgin Mary and his father. Finnbogi first

Traces Through World History

lived at Hafrafellstunga in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla and later at Ás in Kelduhverfi district of Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla.

Finnbogi's wife was Málmfríður Torfadóttir, daughter of Governor Torfi Arason and Kristín Þorsteinsdóttir. They married in the autumn of 1467. They were known to have had nine children: Gudridur, Jón, Þorsteinn, Kristin, Torfi, Gudlaug, Hallur, Una, and Sigridur. We descend from Jón, Þorsteinn, Gudlaug, and Sigridur. Jón was a Catholic Priest at Helgastadir in Eyjafjardarsýsla, Laufas in Surdur-Þingeyjarsýsla, and served as the Prior at the Möðruvallaklaustur Monastery from 1524- 1546. Þorsteinn was the District Magistrate for Þingeyjarsýsla and Sigurdur was the District Magistrate in Skagafjardarsýsla.

Finnbogi became the lawyer in the north and west of Iceland after the death of Hrafn Brandsson (our 12th great grandfather). Finnbogi held the position from 1484 to 1508. He is, however, called a lawyer in court from 1481, where Hrafn the lawyer himself was the other party. Finnbogi was considered a scholar and a shrewd man.

Jón Sigmundsson (our 11th great grandfather) went abroad in 1508 and received a royal grant to the legal profession from King Kristján II, and he returned to Iceland in 1509 in time to attend the Althing. Finnbogi had probably already received news that he had lost his office to Jón because he did not go to the Althing that summer. He went the next year, however, and won the case concerning the ownership of Grund in Eyjafjörður and other lands, which he believed he had inherited from his daughter. Finnbogi is mentioned in the Leiðarhólmur Convention of 1513.

Finnbogi Mariúlaus Jónsson died at As in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla in about 1514.

Lawyer and District Magistrate Jón Sigmundsson (1455 - 1520)(Our 11th great grandfather)

Jón Sigmundsson (1455 – 1520) was born about 1455 at Miklabær in Skagafjardarsýsla. He was the illegitimate son of Sigmundur Steinþórsson, a Catholic Priest in Miklabær and later in Breiðabólstaður in Vesturhópur, and Solveig Þorleifsdóttir, the widow of Governor Ormur Loftsson, and the sister of Governor Björn Þorleifsson.

Jón was an Icelandic chief and lawyer from the north and west from 1509 to 1518. He is best known for his quarrels with Gottskálk Nikulásson, Bishop of Hólar (our 12th great grandfather).

Jón's first wife was Guðrún Gunnlaugsdóttir from Marðarnúpur. Their wedding was held in Víðidalstunga in 1483 and during the wedding Ásgrímur, Jón's brother, was killed. That event became one of the triggers for a murder case. They were known to have had two children: Einar and Gudni.

Jón's second wife was Björg Þorvaldsdóttir from Móberg in Langadalur. They were known to have had five children: Einar, Bjorg, Guðrún, Vilborg Söngvaborga, and Helga. We descend from Helga.

Jón was the District Magistrate for the Vaðlaþing assembly in Eyjafjarðarsýsla from 1481 to 1493 in Húnavatnssýsla. He lived the longest in Víðidalstunga and also kept a farm in Urður in Svarfaðardalur. He had a dispute in about 1488 with Magnús Þorkelsson of Grenivík and his wife Kristín Eyjólfsdóttir (our 11th great grandparents). Jón broke up the house at Grenivík and hurt

Traces Through World History

Kristín. He also became involved in the great inheritance dispute that was inherited by Solveig Björnsdóttir (our 12th great grandmother) in Skarð, where he accompanied Björn Guðnason (our 12th great grandfather), the District Magistrate in Ögri, as they were friends and comrades-in-arms.

In 1508, Jón sailed and received a royal grant to the legal profession, but did not return home until 1509. Jón followed Björn Guðnason at Vatnsfjarðarmálar and they campaigned for the Leiðarhólmur Convention, where chieftains undertook not to tolerate the bishops inequality in applying church law. However, Jón could not exercise his legal power in those years due to a church ban. In fact, Vigfús Erlendsson (our 12th great grandfather) was a lawyer all over the country from 1516 to 1518, but did not receive the king's approval for the office from the north and west.

Jón had a great quarrel with Gottskálk Nikulásson, Bishop of Hólar (see the narrative for Gottskálk Nikulásson below). The bishop believed that Jón and his second wife, Björg Þorvaldsdóttir, were too closely related to be married. (They were actually only third cousins) It seems that the Bishop's motivations were to seize some of Jón's estates and collect fine money from him. The Bishop also leveled other insults at Jón. Gottskálk cursed Jón and got Stefán Jónsson, Bishop of Skálholt, to do the same. Gottskálk also had Jón fined heavily and he eventually lost most of his property to the church and Gottskálk personally. Jón spent a lot of time with Björn Guðnason these years. But when Björn Guðnason died in 1518, Jón Sigmundsson stood friendless and alone, deprived of his wife and stripped of his property, He died in poverty in 1520 probably at Víðidalstunga.

District Magistrate Torfi the rich Jonsson (1460 - 1504)(Our 12th great grandfather)

Torfi the rich Jónsson (1460 – 1504) was born about 1460 at Klofa in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents Jón Ólafsson and Ingibjörg Eiríksdóttir. His father was a District Magistrate in Rangarvallasýsla and later in Arnessýsla. Torfi was a chieftain and District Magistrate. Torfi's life is reported in a number of folk tales as well as contemporary records, and fact in his life is sometimes hard to distinguish from legend.

Torfi's wife was Helga Guðnadóttir, daughter of District Magistrate Guðni Jónsson of Kirkjuból and Þóra, the daughter of Björn Þorleifsson Governor of Skarð. Helga and Torfi had eight children: Ingibjörg (the older), Sesselja, Katrin, Bjarni, Eiríkur, Kristin, Ingibjörg (the younger), and Jon. We descend from Sesselja.

Torfi first lived at Hvammur in Dalasýsla. Then he moved to Hjørsey in Mýrarsýsla, and finally moved back to his birthplace at Klofa. By 1480 he was known to be the District Magistrate for Arnessýsla. Then he was the District Magistrate in Dalasýsla in about 1497. He took over the District Magistrate position in Rangarvallasýsla after Erlendur Erlendsson in about 1498.

Torfi often had disputes with Bishop of Skálholt Stefán Jónsson because Torfi protected people from prosecution by the Bishop and also the Bishop did not think he paid all of his tithes and other taxes to the Church. Torfi seems to have been a major troublemaker, who would stop at nothing. It is, however, said that relations between Torfi and the Bishop settled down after Torfi

Traces Through World History

was struck with illness at the Alþingi, giving a great cry and becoming so strong that it took eight men to hold him and tie him up. The Bishop had the priests calm him with readings and singing until Torfi slept and thereafter was less troublesome.

In 1502 Torfi had Lénharður fógeti killed. Little is known about Lénharður, a foreign thief based at Arnarbæli. Torfi pursued him with a posse and had him killed at Hraun í Ölfusi. Torfi confessed this to Bishop Stefán but the Bishop did not impose a major penance, considering the killing a public service.

At the Alþingi in 1504, Torfi was again being aggressive, wanting to drive the District Magistrate Arnór Finnsson from office, influencing such a judgement with a band of armed men. Not long afterwards, Torfi died. There are two accounts of his death: he is generally said to have died from sickness at Skíðbakki in Landeyjar, or from drinking at Fíflholtsþing. After his death, his widow made peace with Bishop Stefán, handing over three farms and a silver cross for Torfi to be buried at Skálholt, as he had wished.

Torfi allegedly gives his name to Torfajökull where, according to legend, he found a hidden valley where he took his people in 1493 to escape the plague.

District Magistrate Björn Guðnason (1465 - 1518)(Our 12th great grandfather)

Björn Guðnason was born about 1465 at Kirkjuból in Strandasýsla. His parents were Guðni Jónsson, a District Magistrate and lawyer at Hvammur in Hvammssveit and Kirkjuból in Langadalur, and Þóra Björnsdóttir.

Björn became a District Magistrate at Ögur in Isafjardarsýsla in 1490. He lived at Ögur and was the most powerful man in the Westfjords in his days.

Björn married Ragnhildur Bjarnadóttir and they were known to have had at least three children: Þora, Gudrun, and Ölof. We descend from all three of these children.

Björn was said to be very provincial in protecting his own and quarreled fiercely over power over church lands with Bishop Stefán Jónsson in Skálholt. In the spring of 1513, Jón Sigmundsson was a lawyer who was in a bitter dispute with Gottskálf Nikulásson, Bishop of Hólar. In seeking resolution of this sort of conflict, Jón Sigmundsson supported the Leiðarhólmur Convention at the Althing, where the chieftains undertook not to tolerate unequal treatment by the bishops in enforcing church law. Björn had written that convention document. Then in the summer of 1517, Skálholt Bishop Stefán Jonsson went to Ögur with a group of 300 men to confront Björn, but Björn had at least as many men with him. So there were no clashes and they reconciled, but both died in the next year (1518).

Doctor, District Magistrate and Governor Vigfus Erlendsson (1466 - 1521)(Our 12th great grandfather)

Vigfús Erlendsson was born about 1466 at Hlidarenda in Rangarvallasýsla. Vigfús was the son of Erlendur Erlendsson, the District Magistrate of Hlíðarendur, and Guðríður Þorvarðsdóttir. Vigfús put together an estate and lived at Hlíðarendur in Fljótshlíð. In addition to Vigfús being an important man at law, he was also a good doctor and healed wounds that were

Traces Through World History

considered fatal. Vigfus had in his younger years been an aggressor, wealthy, a great chieftain and a womanizer. He had a quarrel with his sister Hólmfríður, and their men prepared for it with weapons, and during that time Vigfus imprisoned Hall Grimsson. Although Vigfus was an irritation to some, he was a good man and a good doctor.

Vigfus married Guðrún Palsdóttir, the illegitimate daughter of Pál Jónsson in Skarð. They had at least six children: Gudridur, Anna, Pall, Björn, Birgit, and Jonina. We descend from Gudridur.

Vigfus also had a second “wife” or concubine named Salgerður (or Valgerður) Snjólfsdóttir. They were known to have had five children: Gudrun, Ingveldur, Gissur, Kristin, and Erlendur. Bishop Ögmundur declared this marriage invalid after Vigfús' death.

Vigfus took over as District Magistrate for Rangarvallasýsla from Torfi Jonsson in about 1503. He is first mentioned in that year, when he makes a judgement against Governor Benedikt Hersten. On July 18, 1503, Benedikt gave Vigfús Erlendsson a receipt for the fines he was to pay for a volley of blows he gave in an attack on Þórður Brynjólfsson at the church door of the cemetery at Kross in Landeyjar.

On January 21, 1505, Vigfus received a letter from the king in regards to the arrest of Halli Brandsson. In a letter made at Hliðarendi on Nov. 8, 1505, Vigfus is referred to as a farmer. In 1506, Vigfus held the case in the shoemaking judgment. In 1506, he and his lawyer brother Þorvarður Erlendsson (our 12th great grandfather) presented a case at the Kjalarnes Thing and had a judgment passed in regards to a farm at Kirkjuvogur in Gullbringusýsla.

Later in 1506, Vigfus went abroad in regard to the Möðruvellir inheritance dispute. In his absence, his brother Narfi Erlendsson acted as his agent in judging a case at Fíflholt in Rangarvallasýsla. On May 18, 1507, Vigfus was appointed as the king's agent in Rangarvallasýsla and became a Governor for Iceland for the next 3 years.

In 1509, Vigfus received a letter from the king that was to impose a three-year tax on Iceland. In the following year, Sveinn Þorleifsson Rantzow's replaced Vigfus as Governor to rule all of Iceland.

When Vigfus' brother Þorvardur (our 12th great grandfather) went abroad to Norway in 1511, Vigfus took over his jurisdiction, and by 1513 he was absolutely the lawyer for the south and east of Iceland. Þorvardur died at Möðruvellir that winter. When Jón Sigmundsson, a lawyer from the north and west, was removed, Vigfús was elected in his place and was therefore a lawyer all over the country from 1516 to 1518.

There had been a long standing dispute between Vigfus and Grimur Palsson over some lands at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjardarsýsla. Vigfus had been representing the interests of his sister Holmfrídur Erlendsdóttir. Holmfrídur's first husband was Jon Hallson who was the son of Hallur Grimsson. The king had issued a letter to Vigfus for Hallur Grimsson's arrest in the Möðruvellir inheritance dispute. Grimur Palsson lived at Möðruvellir and like Vigfus, was also a District Magistrate. Because Grimur had presented to the king the first proposed settlement, the king ruled in Grimur's favor in a letter from Copenhagen date April 25, 1513 and Grimur was awarded most of the money. But in 1515 there was still a great deal of land exchange and agreements going on between Grimur Palsson and Vigfus and Holmfrídur in regards to the Möðruvellir case.

Traces Through World History

During the following years, Týli Pétursson was a Governor and was not popular, as he was a great troublemaker and was tumultuous at the Alþingi. Vigfús had great intentions of becoming a Governor again and sought evidence of Týli poor performance as a governor and lawyer, and it was easy to find. Among other things, Vigfus enjoyed the support of Bishop Ögmundur Pálsson. Supposedly a letter dated July 14, 1520 was made at Breiðabólstaður from 13 priests and their leader Bishop Ögmundur Pálsson that recommended to Christian II, King of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden that Vigfus be nominated as Governor of Iceland once again.

In the summer of 1520, Vigfús, Týli and Ögmundur, all sailed on the same ship for the event of Ögmundur's ordination as Bishop of Skalholt. In mid-August, they were in Harvík, England, where Bishop Ögmundur lent Vigfús money according to letters that still exist. Then they went to Norway, where Vigfús died, but Týli did not keep the governorship and was killed in Iceland a few years later.

In 1523, Bishop Ögmundur determined that Vigfus had entered into a marriage with his second "wife" Salgerður Snjolfsdóttir while still married to his first wife and invalidated this marriage. He had 90 marks of Vigfus' money set aside for payment to the church at Skalholt and an additional 60 marks payable for church attendance and the rest of all his money was confiscated. This judgment was made by six priests at Skalholt on November 9, 1523. Vigfus' sister Holmfrídur had power of attorney and acted on behalf of Vigfus' children. On the day after, she gave Bishop Ögmundur the land Sandgerði in Suðurnes for Eyvindarmula in Fljótshlíð. Bishop Ögmundur had probably taken over most of Vigfus' other lands, which have not gone for other debts on July 5 and 21, 1523.

Lawyer and District Magistrate Þorvarður Erlendsson (1466 - 1513) (Our 12th great grandfather)

Þorvarður Erlendsson (1466 – 1513) was born about 1466 at Hlidarenda in Rangarvallasýsla. He was the son of Erlendur Erlendsson, the District Magistrate of Hlíðarendur, and Guðríður Þorvarðsdóttir. He was the brother of Vigfús Erlendsson described above. In 1486, when Þorvarður was about twenty, his grandmother Margrét gave him several lands, including Engey and Laugarnes. Þorvarður lived at Strönd in Selvogur and Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður. He would become a lawyer and District Magistrate..

Þorvarður's first wife was Margrét Jónsdóttir. They were known to have at least three children: Erlendur, Ragnheiður, and Jon. We descend from Erlendur and Ragnheiður.

Þorvarður's second marriage was to Kristín Gottskálksdóttir, daughter of Bishop Gottskálf Nikulásson. They were known to have six children: Kristin, Gudrun, Margret, Egill, Olafur, and Gottskalk.

Þorvarður became a District Magistrate in Eyjafjarðarsýsla around 1490. In 1499 he became a lawyer in the south and east and held that position until his death. For almost twenty years, Þorvarður shared with Grímur Pálsson (our 12th great grandfather), the District Magistrate office at the Möðruvellir estate. They had taken over this office from Pál Brandsson (Grímur's father).

Lawyer Finnbogi Jónsson (our 12th great grandfather) had ruled in 1495 that Icelandic law

Traces Through World History

rather than the laws of Norway should be followed. This judgment was upheld by Alþingi and again by Finnbogi in 1499. But then Þorvarður himself became a lawyer and affirmed this judgment in his district. Judgments and summonses alternated for several years, but on November 24, 1507, the king confirmed that all of Norway King Hákon háleggur's legal remedies would apply in Iceland. That confirmation was called Möðruvallaréttarbót. Grímur was therefore forced to resign the District Magistrate office at Möðruvellir in about 1510. Þorvarður then took complete charge at Möðruvellir.

Various cases were still unresolved and Þorvarður and Benedikt, Grímur's son, went to Norway in the autumn of 1512 to have them settled. But Þorvarður died there during the winter. Grímur Pálsson then resumed the District Magistrate office at Möðruvellir. At the Althing in 1515, Grímur reconciled with Vigfús and Hólmsfríður, Þorvarður's siblings, and got Möðruvellir and many other assets.

Þorvarður's son Erlendur Þorvarðarson was born about 1494 at Möðruvellir. His mother Margrét Jónsdóttir was the sister of Bishop Stefán. He was in the service of his uncle Stefán when he was younger and in 1518 he killed his brother-in-law, Orm Einarsson (husband of his sister Ragnheidur), a farmer in Saurbær in Kjalarnes, in Viðey. This did not prevent him from being elected a lawyer for the south and east of Iceland in 1520. He does not appear to have been confirmed by the king until 1538. Erlendur lived at Kolbeinsstaðir and later at Strönd in Selvogur.

Erlendur had three wives and also had illegitimate children. His first wife was Þórunn Sturludóttir from Staðarfell. She died while they lived in Kolbeinsstaðir. Erlendur and Þórunn had two children: Jon and Gudbjorg. We descend from Gudbjorg.

Þorvarður served at a time when there was great support for the Protestant Reformation as it was unfolding in diocese of Skálholt. Bishop Gissur Einarson was a proponent of the Reformation in Iceland and did not trust Þorvarður.

In 1553 Þorvarður lost his lawyer position because of various crimes and some serious ones, including manslaughter. He then went to Copenhagen and in 1558 managed to get a royal letter issued in which he was forgiven of the charges and he got part of his property back. He lived a long time after this but with little respect. Þorvarður died in about 1576 at Kolbeinsstaðir.

Catholic Bishop Gottskalk the cruel Nikulasson (1469 - 1520)(Our 12th great grandfather)

Gottskalk the cruel Nikulasson (1469 – 1520) was born about 1469 in Tornes in Hordaland, Norway. His parents were Nikulas Rognvaldsson and Herborg Bardardóttir. He was the Bishop of Hólar from the year 1496 to 1520. He was the nephew of Ólafur Rögnvaldsson who preceded him as Bishop. As he was not born of an Icelandic family, he was therefore considered to be one of the “foreign” bishops. Gottskalk Nikulasson has received harsh judgment in Icelandic history resulting in his nickname “grimmi” meaning cruel.

He lived in concubinage, taking for his “wife” Valgerdur Jonsdóttir. They had a daughter, Kristin, who we descend from. His second concubine was Gudrun Eiriksdóttir and with her he had two children: Oddur and Gudrun.

Gottskalk was harsh and greedy. It seems to have been his chief care to acquire property

Traces Through World History

for himself and his children. In his relations with the people of his diocese he showed an arrogance and despotic temper which brought him into serious conflicts with the leading men. Clashes often occurred between the chieftains and the churchmen who sought to establish the supremacy of the Roman hierarchy, but the bishops had usually been moved by a desire to promote the interests of the church by enforcing the principles of ecclesiastical ascendancy. But that redeeming feature was not to be found in Gottskalk. Entrenched in the power of his high ecclesiastical office he used it ruthlessly only to gain his own mercenary and selfish ends. The noted controversy between Bishop Gottskalk and the lawyer Jón Sigmundsson (our 11th great grandfather) shows how completely he rejected all spirit of fairness and reconciliation in attempting to enforce his own arbitrary dictates.

Gottskalk believed that he had found that an impermissible degree of blood relationship existed between Jón Sigmundsson and his second wife Björg Þorvaldsdóttir who had married in about 1493. They were actually just third cousins, but this was a violation of the ecclesiastical code of prohibited degrees. Gottskalk summoned Jón to appear before him at Holar. When Jón disregarded the summons, he caused heavy fines to be imposed on him. Jón was able to clear himself of most of the charges brought against him by the Bishop, but this only increased the relentlessness of the angry prelate. He laid Jón in ban, and summoned his wife to appear at Holar. She was forced to confess to the Bishop, to part from her husband, and to pay a fine of 300 “hundreds”, as she did not have the courage to resist. But even this did not satisfy Bishop Gottskalk. He again cited Jón to appear before him, laid him in the highest ban of the church, and imposed new fines upon him. Jón now went abroad to plead his case to the king and the archbishop. As he was able to show that Bishop Gottskalk had extorted much property from him, had seized many of his estates, and had laid him in ban wrongfully, the archbishop decided that the Skalholt Bishop, Stephen Jonsson, should examine his case. The crown prince, who was acting as regent, had appointed Jón as lawyer in the northern and western districts of Iceland, and ordered that Björn Gudnason (our 12th great grandfather), lawyer in western Iceland, should decide the case concerning the estates which the Bishop had seized. On Jón’s return to Iceland, Bishop Stephen Jonsson confirmed the decree of Bishop Gottskalk against him. Björn Gudnason decided that Jón’s estates should be returned to him, but this decision was annulled by Bishop Gottskalk. In order to settle the controversy Jón finally agreed to pay the bishop 200 “hundreds” and to swear him an oath that he would obey all rules which he might establish. He was now freed from the ban, but the agreement didn’t last long. On a visit to Holar, Jón was attacked and wounded with a knife, but the Bishop paid no attention to the outrage committed. Instead he summoned Jón to appear before him to receive absolution for his sins. When Jón refused, he was laid in ban by both bishops. Jón then went to western Iceland to his friend Björn Gudnason, and the two sought to aid one another in the struggle with Bishop Gottskalk. Jón’s son Einar was also accused by the Bishop of having aided his father. He was laid in ban and his estates were seized. Jón again went abroad to lay his case before the king. He received a royal letter of protection and the king also issued instructions to the Governor of Iceland that Jón’s estates should be returned to him. But when the Governor arrived in Iceland it is said that the Bishop turned the governor against Jón through the use of bribes. At the Althing it was decided that Jón should not be heard, as it would only tend to disturb the peace. Bishop Gottskalk also tried to kill

Traces Through World History

him by having him shoved from a narrow bridge into the river. Jón fell in, but was rescued. The chieftains had tried to form a confederation to protect themselves against the aggression of the bishops, but this too proved futile, as the church exercised so complete control over the minds and conscience of the people that they did not dare to resist the bishops for fear of a ban and excommunication.

Bishop Gottskalk Nikoasson died at Holar on December 8, 1520. He would be succeeded by Jon Arason, the last Catholic Bishop of Holar.

Bishop Jon Arason (1484 - 1550)(our 12th great grandfather)

Jón Arason (1484 – 1550) was born about 1484 in Grýta and later lived at Laugalandssel, Möðruvallaklaustur, in Eyjafjarðar. His parents were Ari Sigurdsson of Möðruvalla and Elin Magnúsdóttir of Gryta. He was educated at Munkaþverá, the Benedictine abbey of Iceland, and was provided instruction from the learned Einar Benediktsson (our 13th great grandfather), abbot of the monastery. Having attracted the notice of Gottskálk Nikulásson (our 12th great grandfather), bishop of Hólar, he was sent by that prelate on two missions to Norway. In about 1508 Jón became a Catholic Priest at Helgastadir, and two years later (1510) at Hrafnagil. Upon the death of Bishop Gottskalk Nikulasson he became provost and acting bishop in the Holar diocese (1520).

In about 1500, Jon took as his “wife” or as some would say “concubine,” Helga Sigurdardóttir. They were known to have had at least six children: Magnus, Björn, Ari, Helga, Thorunn, and Sigurdur. We descend from Björn, Helga, and Sigurdur.

In 1522 Jón succeeded Bishop Gottskálk in the episcopal see of Hólar. But Bishop Ogmundur Palsson of Skalholt sought to hinder Jon’s election, and a hostile feeling existed between the two prelates. Ogmundur attempted to rule all of Iceland in a proud and ambition way rather than focusing his bishop duties only on the diocese of Skalholt. On the other hand, Jon Arason was a chieftain to still a higher degree. More gifted than his rival, dignified in appearance, charming in manners, cheerful and spirited in conversation and highly admired by his adherents. He was a typical Icelander and a man of extraordinary talents, though poorly versed in Latin, and openly neglectful of the law of celibacy. But the law of celibacy was not well regarded as Iceland was distant enough from Rome and clerical discipline in that age was very lax.

Jón Arason was consecrated Bishop of Holar by his archbishop in the Metropolitan See of Nidaros (Trondhjem), Norway in 1524. In 1526, Bishop Ogmundur went to meet with Jón at the Althing and Ogmundur brought a force of 1,300 men. Jon’s forces numbered 900. Armed conflict between the two hostile groups was averted only through the efforts of the parish priests who proposed that two champions appointed by the bishops would fight a duel. The duel was fought on an island in the Oxara River. Ogmundur’s champion won the duel, but Jón’s men were not well satisfied. The following day, the church at Skalholt was destroyed by fire.

The movement of the Protestant Reformation would begin with the Einarsson brothers. Jon Einarson (our 12th great grandfather) was a Priest at Skalholt. He had read some of Martin Luther’s writings and had been so impressed by them that in a sermon at Candlemas he inveighed

Traces Through World History

against the veneration of saints, which he called idolatry. His brother, Priest Gissur Einarson, was a special friend of Bishop Ogmundur. Bishop Ogmundur sent him to school in Hamburg. After hearing Luther preach in Wittenberg he had accepted the Lutheran faith. But when he returned to Iceland he played as if he was still a Catholic Priest to remain in favor with Bishop Ogmundur. Ögmundur chose him as his successor in 1539.

King Christian III was elevated to the throne of Denmark in 1534. He favored Lutheranism for his kingdom. Perhaps seeing this eventuality, the Althing passed a decree on January 30, 1533 signed by Bishop Ogmundur and Bishop Jón that pledged their allegiance to the king of Norway and the Catholic church. In 1537 King Christian III had given his sanction to a new code of church laws embracing the Lutheran Reformation. In 1538, the king encountered opposition from Bishop Ogmundur who was old and blind by that time and his opposition proved effectively meaningless. Bishop Ogmundur was taken prisoner by Kristoffer Huitfeldt, a royal leader, and taken to Denmark, where he died in 1542. Gissur Einarsson's was then selected as Bishop of Skalholt which was sanctioned by the king on March 15, 1540, and he was formally made bishop in Copenhagen in 1542. This essentially made Gissur the first Lutheran Bishop in Iceland.

Bishop Jón Arason was still thoroughly devoted to the cause of the Catholic church, but would become more like a war-chief than a Bishop. He became involved in the dispute with his sovereign, King Christian III, who wished to adopt Lutheranism in Iceland. But Bishop Jón refused to promote Lutheranism on the island and in his heart he was bitterly opposed to the Reformation. Jón's first conflict with Bishop Gissur was over a piece of land at Bjarnanes. The case was submitted for arbitration by a court of six judges. However, without awaiting the decision, Bishop Jón seized Bjarnanes and refused to surrender it.

Although initially he took a defensive rather than an offensive position on the matter, this changed radically in 1548. The Lutheran minister at Skalholt, Gissur Einarsson, had died. Bishop Jón then assumed the offensive and went to Skalholt in an attempt to establish the Diocese of Skalholt in the Catholic spirit and then have a Catholic Bishop appointed there. But Marteinn Einarsson (our 11th great grandfather) had returned from Denmark, confirmed as Bishop by the king, to oppose Bishop Jón. Jón soon realized that he could not take Skalholt by force and he returned to Holar to make more careful preparations.

In the summer of 1548, Bishop Jón was summoned to Denmark by the king in an attempt to seek Jón's cooperation. Another royal letter had been sent to the clergy and leading men of Iceland in which they were warned not to aid the Bishop if he failed to obey the king's summons. These letters were read aloud at the Althing in Jón's presence.

Bishop Jón Arason's continued resistance is thought to have come from a kind of primitive nationalism and simple ambition as much as religion. He resented the Danes changing the religious landscape of Iceland and felt their culture would be less disrupted by staying Catholic. Bishop Jón then led a force of 100 men in an effort to seize Skalholt by force. However redoubts had been constructed around the church, guns were mounted, and the works were guarded by many hundred armed men. His demands that they surrender were met by jeers and challenges. Jon once again returned to Holar.

At Holar, Bishop Jón built up his own fortifications having erected a castle around the

Traces Through World History

church and his residence. On August 27, 1548, he wrote a letter to the Pope pledging anew his allegiance to the Church of Rome. Although suspended and declared an outlaw by the king, Bishop Jón felt himself encouraged by a letter from Pope Paul III to continue his opposition efforts. For the Pope, this seems to have been a generalized opposition to the spread of Protestantism, not necessarily support for the peculiarities of Jón's life or Icelandic culture. Still, the encouragement helped strengthen the opposition against the Lutherans into a kind of civil war.

Bishop Jón knew no bounds in his zeal toward that cause, as he fought for what he deemed to be a Catholic Iceland, in a personal struggle against the Danes. In this struggle he had the help of his illegitimate children, who fought along with him in various battles. Chieftain Daði Gudmundsson (our 12th great grandfather) had been instructed by the king to arrest Bishop Jón and his sons so that a new military expedition to Iceland could be avoided. Bishop Jón was now pursuing a course which could only be regarded as open rebellion against the royal government. The uprising was now not only religious, but also a national struggle waged in defense of what still remained of Icelandic national liberty.

In 1549, on learning that Bishop Marteinn was traveling in the western districts. Bishop Jón sent his sons Ari and Björn with over 100 armed men to seize him. Bishop Marteinn was captured and brought to Holar. He was held in confinement at the monastery of Modruvellir.

In a letter June 27, 1550, Daði Gudmundsson was instructed to once again aid in the capture and arrest of Bishop Jón. When Jón learned of the order for his arrest, he decided to face his opponents boldly.

In the summer of 1550, Jón rode to the Althing with a guard of 200 men, accompanied by his sons Ari and Björn, each with a force of 100 men. From the Althing this small army marched to Skalholt where they took the church and the bishop's residence. The force also seized and restored the monastery at Videy. Before returning to Holar, they also rode to Helgafell and restored the monastery there.

Bishop Jón now focused his attention towards his greatest adversary, Daði Gudmundsson. In the fall of 1550, Jón left Holar with ninety armed men, accompanied by his sons Ari and Björn. An additional 30 to 40 men from the Borgarfjord district joined them. But at the Battle of Sauðafell he was suddenly attacked by Daði Gudmundsson. This led to Jón and his sons being taken prisoner and handed over to the king's bailiff, Christian Skriver. The Lutheran Bishop, Marteinn Einarsson, was at once set free. Without awaiting any formal judgement, the king ordered the decapitation of Bishop Jón and two of his sons, Ari and Björn, who had been staunch allies of their father. The decapitations occurred on November 7, 1550.

Some fishermen avenged the death of their bishop by killing Christian Skriver and his adherents in the following year. On March 30, 1551, the priest Sigurdur Jonsson, a son of Bishop Jón, who had taken no part in the uprising, sent 30 men under the leadership of three priests to bring the bodies of his father and two brothers to Holar. They demanded that Bishop Marteinn give them permission to exhume the bodies and the permission was granted. The bodies were placed in coffins and they began their return to Holar. On approaching Holar, the procession was met by the priests and a large gathering of people. The cathedral bells rang out in greeting and the bodies were interred in the churchyard with honor and pious veneration. On April 27, the

Traces Through World History

priests elected Sigurdur as his father Jón's successor. But the election lacked confirmation. Lutheranism, now that Catholicism had no leader, met with no opposition. The people, however, continued to cherish the faith of their fathers for a long time and looked upon Jón Arason as a national hero and a martyr. Five Lutheran Bishops of Skalholt, and three of Holar, are descendants of his, and in later times, among the converts at a Catholic mission given in Iceland was a woman descended from the hero bishop.

This made Jón Arason the last Catholic Bishop of Iceland before the introduction of Protestantism to Iceland.

The current church in Munkaþverá was built in 1844. In front of the church, there is a memorial statue dedicated to Jón Arason.

District Magistrate Dadi Gudmundsson (1485 - 1563)(Our 12th great grandfather)

Daði Guðmundsson (1485 – 1563) was born about 1485 at Snóksdalur in Dalasýsla. His parents were Gudmundur Finnsson and Þórunn Daðadóttir. As he lived at the farm Snóksdalur in Dalasýsla, he became known as Daði of Snóksdal. He was a prosperous landholder with successful fishing operations based on the Hvammsfjörður.

In 1525, Daði married Guðrún Einaradóttir, daughter of Catholic Priest and poet Einar Snorrason and Ingridur Jonsdóttir. Guðrún's brothers were Marteinn Einarsson, the second Lutheran Bishop of Iceland, and the District Magistrates Pétur and Brandur Einarsson. In one source, Daði and Guðrún reportedly had three children: Þórunn, Arni, and Einar. In another source they only had a daughter, Þórunn, who we descend from.

Daði's second wife was Ingveldur Árnadóttir. They supposedly had several children and the Arni and Einar listed above may have been her children.

An 18th century District Magistrate named Magnus Ketilsson drafted a historical register of District Magistrates in Iceland. Daði was listed in it as a District Magistrate who was possibly in charge of Snæfellsnessýsla. But there is doubt as to the accuracy of this. However, in 1530 Daði may have been involved in doing some work for aged District Magistrate Björn Þorleifsson. Or he may have served as a District Magistrate in 1536, after Björn Þorleifsson died and Bishop Ogmundur Pálsson had taken over the authority of Governor and may have used Daði as an agent for a short time.

Daði was a rich and influential man of shady morals. He would become the main opponent of Catholic Bishop Jón Arason (our 12th great grandfather) who strenuously opposed efforts to promote Lutheranism in Iceland. Daði was staying at Skalholt at the time they were expecting an attack by Bishop Jón. Daði helped to construct the fortifications around Skalholt that discouraged Bishop Jón's plans. Three of Daði's estates were sacked by Bishop Jón in 1548. In January 1549, Jón excommunicated Daði and then went with a contingent of soldiers to capture him. Daði, who had 50 to 80 men under arms with him at Snóksdal in the spring of 1549, resisted the attempt and remained free.

At the Althing in 1549, Bishop Marteinn Einarson (our 11th great grandfather) read letters from the king proclaiming Bishop Jón an outlaw and instructing Daði to arrest Jón and his sons. Meanwhile, Bishop Jón had succeeded in capturing Bishop Marteinn. Daði was also in such

Traces Through World History

imminent danger of being captured that he saved himself only by mounting a swift horse.

In a letter from the king dated June 27, 1550, Daði and Peter Einarsson were instructed to aid the royal commandant Lauritz Mule in arresting Bishop Jón. When Jon heard of this in the autumn of 1550, he and his sons, Ari and Björn took an army of 400 men and captured Daði's estate at Sauðafell. Daði raised a large body of men and at the Battle of Sauðafell surprised Jón and his men, capturing them. Daði reported this to the royal clerk Christian Skriver and was instructed to keep them in custody. The decision was made that the prisoners should be put to death.

Daði continued his life as a wealthy man, holding numerous properties and a large number of cattle, as well as six ships. He also served as steward of the land of the Helgafellsklaustur monastery. He reaped little satisfaction from his famous victory over Bishop Jon. Ten years after Jon's death he became afflicted with cancer of the face, an ailment from which he died after much suffering in 1563.

Daði and Guðrún's supposed only child, Þórunn, drowned with her husband Björn Hannesson in 1554, leaving three young children to inherit Daði's assets when he died in 1563. Even though Daði also had several children by Ingveldur Árnadóttir, it was Guðrún and Þórunn who inherited most of his wealth.

District Magistrate and Governor Hannes Eggertsson (1490 - 1530)(Our 11th great grandfather)

Hannes Eggertsson was born about 1490 in Vikinni, Sogni, Norway. His parents were Eggert Eggertsson and Johanna Matthiasdóttir. He was of Norwegian descent and it seems he came to Iceland when he was about 20 years old. It is believed that he received an appointment as a lawyer and Governor in Iceland in about 1513. As this was at a significant young age, he may have been sent to Iceland by Norwegian authorities specifically for this purpose. He established himself at Núpur in Dýrafjörður of Isafjardarsýsla and became a leading man in the Westfjords.

Hannes married an Icelander woman named Gudrun Björnsdóttir, daughter of Björn Guðnason, the District Magistrate in Ögur. Hannes and Gudrun were known to have had at least six children: Eggert, Björn, Hannes, Gudrun, Katrin, and Margret. We descend from Eggert and Björn.

Hannes' son Eggert would be an influential person in Iceland. He was born about 1513 at Núpur in Dýrafjörður of Isafjardarsýsla. In his youth, Eggert served Ögmundur Pálsson, Bishop of Skálholt, and went with him to Germany and Norway on his missions in the years 1538–39. Later, he was in the service of Gissur Einarsson and went with him when he went abroad for consecration in Copenhagen in 1542. He lived at Saurbær, otherwise known as Bær á Rauðasandi, a major farm in Barðastrandarsýsla.

Eggert's first wife was Sesselja Jónsdóttir. They had at least four children: Ragnheidur, Björn, Þorleifur, and Jon. We descend from Ragnheidur. Eggert later married Steinunn Jónsdóttir, but their children are unknown.

Eggert became the District Magistrate for the Westfjords in 1544 and lived at first at Núpur. He was Governor from 1551 to 1553 and Lawspeaker for the south and east until 1556,

Traces Through World History

and for the north and west from 1556 to 1568, after which he was a District Magistrate and steward of the land of Helgafellsklaustur.

Eggert was the richest man in Iceland in his time, and indeed the most powerful. Among his manuscripts was the celebrated *Eggertsbók*, which contains the earliest surviving text of *Gísla Saga*. On one occasion while Eggert lived at Saurbær, he was seized by English pirates and held for a whole month on board their ship until a high ransom was paid. In 1580 Eggert moved to Hamburg, where he died in 1583.

Second Lutheran Bishop Marteinn Einarsson (1502 - 1576)(Our 11th great grandfather)

Marteinn Einarsson (1502 – 1576) was born about 1502 at Stadastadur in Snæfellsnes. His parents were Einar Snorrason, the Catholic Priest at Stadastadur, and Ingridur Jonsdóttir. Ingridur was the sister of Bishop Stefán Jonsson of Skálholt.

Marteinn had worked for nine years with English traders, sailing with them to England. He also studied in England as one of his sisters married an Englishman and lived there. He learned to be a painter. Then he returned to Iceland after graduation, spent two years as a merchant in Grindavík until he was twenty years old, when he was brought to the notice of Bishop Ogmundur Palsson. He became a Catholic Priest in 1533 and took over the church at Stadastadur and made his home there. However, like most of Ogmund's proteges, he came to favor the new teaching (Lutheranism).

Marteinn was married to a woman named Ingibjörg, whose father's name is unknown. They were known to have had seven children are: Einar, Þorunn, Jón, Halldór, Guðrún, Ingiríður and Þórður. We descend from Jón.

Marteinn was the Catholic Priest at Skálholt church in 1538. He was an early supporter of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant leaning Gissur Einarsson became Bishop of Skálholt two years later, but he died in 1548. Gissur became known as the first Lutheran Bishop of Iceland. Shortly after Gissur's death, the leading priests and laymen met to elect a bishop. The Catholic party, led by Bishop Jón Arason (our 12th great grandfather) nominated Sigvarð Halldórsson, the Abbot of Thykkvabaer. The Lutheran party nominated Marteinn. The Catholics were outvoted and Marteinn was elected.

Marteinn then went to Denmark to be consecrated. However, he had some lack of theological knowledge and it was remedied by having him attend some schooling for six months. He spent a winter in Copenhagen studying evangelical theology under John MacAlpine, the Prior of Blackfriars in Perth, Scotland. After that, Marteinn was consecrated on April 7, 1549 and then returned to Iceland in the summer.

After his return to Iceland, Marteinn was at Skálholt when it was fortified to resist the efforts of Bishop Jon Arason. Daði Guðmundsson (our 12th great grandfather), who was also there, was Bishop Marteinn's father-in-law. At the Althing in 1549, Bishop Marteinn read letters from the king proclaiming Bishop Jón an outlaw and instructing Daði to arrest Jón and his sons.

While Marteinn was traveling to some of his churches in the west, Bishop Jón's sons, Ari and Björn, captured him and detained him at Ari's farm at Möðrufell. Marteinn remained detained until after the Battle of Sauðafell in 1550, where Daði Guðmundsson defeated Jón

Traces Through World History

Arason, ending organized Catholic resistance to the Reformation, at which time he formally took control of the bishopric of Skálholt.

Marteinn was Bishop of Skálholt from 1548 to 1556. He was the second Lutheran Bishop. He published the first Icelandic Lutheran hymn-book, which appeared in Copenhagen in 1555. He resigned as Bishop on 1557 in protest of the king's decision to appropriate church tithes. He was very aggrieved by the rapacity of the royal officials and the humiliation of his country. He returned to Staðarstaður where he served as a Lutheran Priest until his retirement in 1569. Marteinn lived out his retirement in Álftanes á Mýrasýsla where he published a collection of psalms and was considered a good painter, although none of his paintings are known to survive. He died on October 7, 1576.

Marteinn's son Jón Marteinnsson was born about 1533 at Stadastadur. He may have started as a District Magistrate for Vaðlaping in Eyjafjardarsýsla in about 1560. He later lived at Strönd in Selvogur of Arnessýsla where he was District Magistrate for Arnessýsla, Rangarvallasýsla and the Westmann Islands. He reportedly passed a judgement in Rangarvallasýsla in 1572.

Jón Marteinnsson married Gudbjorg Erlendsdóttir, daughter of lawyer Erlendur Þorvardsson. Their only known child was Solveig who we descend from.

Lutheran Bishop Gisli Jonsson 1515 - 1587)(Our 11th great grandfather)

Bishop Gisli Jonsson (1515 – 1587) was born about 1515 at Gaulverjabæhar in Arnessýsla. His parents were Jon Gislason, Catholic Priest Gaulverjabæhar, and Vilborg Þorðardóttir. Gisli became a Catholic Priest in about 1535 probably at Skálholt. As a young Priest Gisli was caught studying Luther's translation of the St. Luke's gospel. So he was already leaning towards Lutheranism.

While Gisli was a Priest at Skálholt Cathedral, he was acquainted with the chief steward of the place named Oddur Eyjólfsson. It seems that Oddur's sister Kristín Eyjólfsdóttir had an incestuous relationship with their brother Gísli Eyjólfsson. Gisli Eyjólfsson also had an incestuous relationship with their sister Þórdís Eyjólfsdóttir (our 10th great grandmother). When the three were found out, they fled to the sanctuary of the Skálholt Cathedral, as the punishment for incest at the time was execution. As he thought highly of his siblings, Oddur brought their situation to Gisli Jonsson's attention. Gisli Jonsson arranged absolution for Kristín with the King, and Kristín would later marry the Bishop and had a number of children by him. The sister Þórdís must have also been granted absolution as she later married Halldor Ormsson.

Gisli Jonsson and Kristín Eyjólfsdóttir were known to have at least five children: Gudrun, Stefan, Helga, Arni, and Vilborg. We descend from Arni.

In dealing with the rebel Bishop Jon Arason, the king sent a letter to Holar declaring Bishop Jon as an outlaw and announcing the selection of Gisli Jonsson as the new Bishop there. However, Gisli would not be able to claim the office, as Bishop Jon then excommunicated him and seized his benefice and property.

Gisli Jonsson was elected to replace Marteinn Einarsson (our 11th great grandfather) as Bishop of Skálholt after Marteinn's resignation in 1557. He became the third Lutheran Bishop of Skálholt. Gisli proved an able and vigorous administrator during an episcopate of nearly thirty

Traces Through World History

years (1558 - 87). In his constructive evangelical work he was ably backed by two conscientious governors, Paul Stigsson and John Buckholt; but their ecclesiastical zeal was considerably discounted, since the Crown was further robbing the Church in 1556, by extorting a quarter of the tithe. This was the very thing that had offended Bishop Marteinn and influenced his early retirement.

Bishop Gisli, of practical rather than intellectual ability, took pains to direct his clergy to visit their people to see that they knew the catechism. With the help of Paul Stigsson, he tried to deal with the widespread sexual irregularities, the difficulty here being that the reformed religion held as a crime what under the old regime was hardly regarded as a misdeed, even if committed by a priest; though it is only fair to add that Lutheran clergy were not blameless in this respect. This was also a time when the Lutheran faith was now allowing priests to be married, yet the keeping of concubines and mistresses was a practice which continued.

Bishop Gisli finished publishing the hymn-book in 1558 that had been translated by Bishop Marteinn. But Gisli's lack of poetic talent resulted in Bishop Gudbrandur Thorlakksson preparing a new hymn-book later.

Bishop Gisli led no mere institutional life. Shortly before his death he recited the catechism and eight psalms, with an invocation to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Cross. Then he went into his historical cathedral and read the Song of Solomon and one of Havermann's Books of Prayers.

Bishop Gisli was involved in translating some of the bible into Icelandic. He assisted in preparing a vernacular bible from Latin into Icelandic. On Sept. 23, 1574, he began translating the Book of Prophets and Maccabees 1 and 2. He finished this work on March 10, 1575.

Bishop Gisli Jonsson died on September 3, 1587 at Skalholt.

Lutheran Minister Sigurður Jónsson (1520 - 1595) (Our 11th great grandfather)

Sigurður Jónsson (1520 – 1595) was born about 1530 at Holar in Skagafjardarsýsla. He was the youngest son of Jón Arason, Bishop of Hólar, and his wife, Helga Sigurðardóttir. He became a Catholic Priest in Grenjaðarstaður in Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla after his brother Magnús, who had been a Priest there, died young.

Sigurður's concubine and later wife was Sesselja Pétursdóttir. They had two children: Halldora and Petur.

Sigurður's had an illegitimate daughter with Guðrún Markúsdóttir named Þuríður who we descend from.

Sigurður was considered the most intelligent of his brothers but more peaceful than his brothers, Björn and Ari, and was largely not involved in the later conflict over the Reformation even though he supported his father.

Sigurður was his father, Bishop Jón's representative in many matters related to the operation of Hólar and ran his mission abroad. In 1542, Bishop Jón sent Sigurður and fellow Catholic Priest Ólaf Hjaltason to Laufás for a royal meeting and they stayed at the court of the Danish king for the winter.

But during the Reformation conflict, his father Bishop Jón and his brothers Ari and Björn

Traces Through World History

had little respect for Sigurður and considered him cowardly. Ari reportedly said that he had a calf heart and Jón called him his daughter and said that his daughter Þórunn was the son.

After Bishop Jón, Björn and Ari were arrested and then executed, Sigurður went to Hólar and took care of the operation of the diocese. Among other things, he made a detailed record of the Bishop's property, which has been preserved. In the spring of 1551, two Danish warships arrived and Sigurður was summoned along with other major rulers of the North and they were made to swear the Danish king homage. Sigurður was twice elected Bishop of Hólar, but both times the king refused to accept his election. However, he remained the main and richest Priest in the north of the country, kept himself generous and always had armed escorts.

Sigurður was said to be a great scholar and after the monastery at Munkaþverá was closed down during the Reformation, he established a school at Grenjaðarstaður and taught young men. He died in about 1595 at Grenjaðarstaður.

District Magistrate Arni Gislason (1520 - 1587) (our 10th great grandfather)

Arni Gislason was born about 1520 at Hafgrímsstaðir in Skagafjardarsýsla. Árni was the son of Gísli Hákonarson, a lawyer at Hafgrímsstaðir in Tungusveit in Skagafjörður, and his wife Ingibjörg Grímsdóttir. He was said to be a great financier, greedy, hard-hearted and reluctant. He would become a District Magistrate and one of the country's most powerful and wealthy in his time. He first lived near the Þingeyraklaustur monastery in Hunavatnssýsla and later lived for a long time at Hlíðarendur in Fljótshlíð in Rangarvallasýsla.

Arni Gislason first married Helga Tomasdóttir, daughter of Catholic Priest Tomas Eiríksson, abbot at the Munkaþverá monastery in Eyjafjardarsýsla, and Þora Olagsdóttir. Arni and Helga had a daughter, Guðrún who we descend from.

Arni's second marriage was to Guðrún Sæmundsdóttir, daughter of Sæmundur ríki Eiríksson and Gudridur Vigfusdóttir. Arni and Guðrún were known to have at least 11 children: Halldora, Solveig, Gudrun, Hakon, Ingibjörg, Holmfrídur, Anna, Sigrídur, Sæmundur, Pall, and Gísli. We descend from Solveig and Holmfrídur.

Arni became the monastery keeper of Þingeyraklaustur in about 1559. Then he was the District Magistrate in Ísafjarðarsýsla when he got into a bitter dispute with Governor Eggert Hannesson (our 10th great grandfather) over Vatnsfjarðarmála. Árni supported Björn Þorleifsson's inheritance rights, but Eggert claimed that the property of Governor Þorleifur Björnsson (Our 12th great grandfather) and his wife should have fallen to Björn Guðnason (our 12th great grandfather) in Ögri, as Eggert was his grandson. A settlement was reached in the Althing in 1560 after several years of controversy.

Magnús Jónsson moved from Þingeyjarsýsla to Ögur in 1564 and became Eggert's son-in-law. It was not long before these two domineering chiefs, Magnús and Árni, met. In 1567, Magnús says that Árni "rode with rage during the night" where he was sleeping in a tent in Skutulsfjarðareyri and two years later they and their men landed together again in the town of Skutulsfjarðareyri and they were then drunk and knives were out. Magnús sued Árni before the Alþing in 1570 with a detailed case in thirteen sections where Árni's various insults are listed, varying in severity. It is not clear, however, that their disputes had been decided in Althing and it

Traces Through World History

is likely that they may have reached a settlement before that happened.

Árni became the District Magistrate in Rangarvallasýsla and moved to Hlíðarenda in Fljótshlíð after the death of lawyer Páll Vigfússon in 1569. At Kirkjulækur in Fljótshlíð in 1570, Árni was identified as the king's representative at the Rangarvalla Althing. He would pass judgement on a case at Holt under Eyjafjöllum on May 28, 1582. He handed down a verdict at the Rangarvalla Althing on January 9, 1585. Árni died in about 1587 at Hlíðarenda. His District Magistrate office then fell to his son-in-law Eyjolfur Halldorsson (our 9th great grandfather), husband of his daughter Solveig.

Lutheran Minister Eiríkur Magnússon (1528 - 1614)(Our 11th great grandfather)

Eiríkur Magnússon (1528 – 1614) was born about 1528 at Dunhaga near Modruvallaklaustur in Eyjafjardarsýsla. When he first became a Catholic Priest in about 1535 he was assistant priest to Björn Jonsson (our 11th great grandfather), the son of Bishop Jón Arason, at Melstadar in Hunavatnssýsla. After the Protestant Reformation, he was known to be the Lutheran Minister at Audkula in Hunavatnssýsla.

Eiríkur was married to Gudrun Thorkelsdóttir and they were known to have had eight children: Magnus, Ingunn, Ragnhildur, Helga, Thuridur, Margret, Gudrun (elder), and Gudrun (younger). We descend from Magnus. Eiríkur died in about 1614 at Audkula.

Eiríkur's son Magnus followed his father into the ministry and took over the office at Audkula. He was married to Steinvor Petursdóttir and they were known to have seven children: Gunnar, Helga, Katrin, Hallgrimur, Bjarni, Jon, and Sigurdur. We descend from Bjarni. Three of their sons would follow their father into ministry: Bjarni, Jon, and Sigurdur.

Lutheran Minister Illugi Guðmundsson (1530 - 1609)(Our 11th great grandfather)

Illugi Guðmundsson (1530 – 1609) was born in about 1530 quite possibly in the vicinity of Eyjafjörðursýsla. The names of his parents are unknown but he was believed to be related to Lutheran Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson (our 10th great grandfather). Illugi is first found in documents as living in Eyjafjörður in 1542 and had then become a Lutheran Minister. This was at a time just prior to the Protestant Reformation in Iceland, so his first ordination may have been as a Catholic Priest. He was assigned to the parish of Múla in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla at a general priesthood meeting on April 30, 1551, which was after the Reformation and he would therefore be a Lutheran Minister from that point on.

Illugi married Malmfriður Jónsdóttir. She was the daughter of Catholic Priest Jón Finnbogason and Þorunn Petursdóttir. Illugi and Malmfriður had nine children: Jón, Guðmundur, Helga, Þorsteinn, Gúðrun (elder), Ingjaldur, Gúðrun (younger), Ingibjörg, and Hildur. We descend from Þorsteinn and Ingibjörg.

Illugi is still found in the records in 1579 and 1581. He seems to have also been a steward at Hólar for a time around 1555, but was assigned to Múla for a long time. Illugi died at Múla in about 1609.

Illugi's son Þorsteinn was born about 1555 at Múla. Þorsteinn followed his father into the

Traces Through World History

ministry. Þorsteinn became a Lutheran Minister in about 1580 and served with his father at Múla. After his father's death, Þorsteinn became the primary minister at Múla. Þorsteinn married Sigríður Jónsdóttir and they were known to have two children: Jón and Guðriður. We descend from Guðriður. Þorsteinn died at Múla in about 1632.

Lutheran Minister Olafur Guðmundsson (1537-1609)(Our 10th great grandfather)

Olafur Guðmundsson was born about 1537 at Saudanes in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. His father was Gudmundur Einarsson. He would come to the Lutheran Ministry after the Protestant Reformation conflict. In about 1561 he was the Lutheran Minister at Rauðaskriða in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla. He was also known to be the Minister at Skeggjastada in Nordur-Mula and Svalbard in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. He was known to be the Minister at Saudanes sometime before 1567. His assignments there would be largely responsible for locating a major branch of our family tree into Northeastern Iceland. He was a minister, poet, and significant man in the region.

Olafur first married Olof Magnusdóttir. They were known to have had at least ten children: Magnus, Sigurd, Gudmundur, Hallgrimur, Ketill, Gudlaug, Ragnhildur, Ingibjorg, Jargerður, and Sigurður. We descend from Gudlaug and Sigurður.

Olafur also seemed to have had a mistress named Ingibjorg Jonsdóttir and they had two children: Jon and Asmundur.

Olafur was a famed scholar, poet, writer, and translator of literature. He was a poet that Lutheran Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson (our 10th great grandfather) entrusted with many of the translations of religious literature into Icelandic. Olafur translated about 15 religious poems in 1575. Much of his work went into the Icelandic Hymnal that would be published in 1589. Olafur was also a prolific writer on his own account. He authored at least 16 poems between 1575 and 1600. He further translated about 8 poems authored by other European poets.

It has been said that he continued his translations and writings right up to his death in about 1609 at Hof í Vopnafjörður in Nordur-Mulasýsla.

District Magistrate Eyjólfur Halldórsson (1540 - 1595)(Our 9th great grandfather)

Eyjólfur Halldórsson was born about 1540 at Saurbær in Kjosarsýsla. His parents were Halldor Ormsson and Þordis Eyjólfsson. He became the District Magistrate for Rangarvallasýsla in about 1587. He lived at Reyðarvatn in Rangarvallasýsla.

Eyjólfur married Solveig Arnadóttir, daughter of Arni Gislason, a colleague District Magistrate in Rangarvallasýsla with Eyjólfur. Eyjólfur and Solveig were known to have at least six children: Arni, Þordis, Isleifur, Þordur, Gudridur, and Sturla. We descend from Þordis and Isleifur.

Before Eyjólfur was District Magistrate, he acted as an agent of his father-in-law Arni Gislason as in 1585 he passed a judgment at the Rangar Althing. Then upon Arni's death in 1587, Eyjólfur received a District Magistrate appointment for half of Rangarvallasýsla. On June 23, 1592, in a case involving six men at Fíflholt, Eyjólfur was identified as the king's agent. In

Traces Through World History

1591 at Reyðarvatn he passed a judgment in regards to some pauper debts. Then in the same year he and Oddur Einarsson, Bishop of Skalholt, had a half-judgment passed in the case of Sir Ormur Ofeigsson and Erlendur Magnússon (our 8th great grandfather) in Stóruvellir.

Eyjólfur Halldórsson died at Reyðarvatn in about 1595. On June 16, 1603 an exchange took place after his death involving his wife Solveig, who died around 1602.

Lutheran Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson (1541 - 1627)(Our 10th great grandfather)

Guðbrandur Þorláksson (1541 – 1627) was born about 1541 at Melstaður near Miðfjörður in Hunavatnssýsla. He was the son of Þorlákur Hallgrímssonar, the Lutheran Minister at Melstaður Miðfjörður, and Helga Jónsdóttir. He studied at Hólar College from 1553 to 1559 and then went to University of Copenhagen where studied theology and logic. Guðbrandur was one of the first Icelanders to study in Denmark instead of in Germany. After returning to Iceland in 1564, he served as rector of the Skálholt School for three years before becoming the Lutheran Minister at historic Breiðabólstaður near Vesturhóp in Hunavatnssýsla.

Guðbrandur first married Gudrun Giladóttir and they had only one daughter, Steinunn, who we descend from.

Guðbrandur's second marriage occurred on September 8, 1555 to Halldora Arnadóttir who was born at the Þingeyraklaustur Monastery while it was still a Catholic institution. Guðbrandur and Halldora were known to have had at least six children: Pall, Kristin, Halldora, Skuli, Bjorg, and Sigurdur.

In 1571, the Danish King Frederick II named Guðbrandur Lutheran Bishop of Hólar on the recommendation of Paul Madsen, bishop of Zealand, who had been his teacher in Copenhagen. He officially took office on April 8, 1571. He would serve as Bishop of Hólar for 56 years; no Icelander has held the position longer.

As Bishop, Guðbrandur focused on cementing the Reformation in Iceland in part by working to publish holy works in Icelandic. There had been a printing press located at Holar at the time of Bishop Jon Arason. After the Reformation, the printing press had been moved to Breiðabólstaður in Hunavatnssýsla where it was kept in the possession of the Catholic party. Guðbrandur brought the printing press back to Holar and by this accomplishment, the art of printing in Iceland was glorified. With the help of the son of Jon Matthiasson, the original printer, he made Holar into a real power-house of evangelism.

Printing of the Guðbrandsbiblía, or "Guðbrandur's Bible," was completed in 1584. Portions included previous translations such as the vernacular New Testament of Odd Gottskalksson, and used after consideration of Bishop Gisli Jonsson's (our 11th great grandfather) translation of Prophets and 1 and 2 Maccabees, written at Skalholt. The new translations by Guðbrandur were based on Latin, German, and Danish translations. Although he worked with trained printers, Guðbrandur engraved some of the book's adornments himself. He not only welded the whole version into a literary masterpiece, but he also assisted with the type setting, and procured twenty-nine woodcuts, carrying the work through in a space of ten years.

To finance publishing his Bible, a royal grant established a tax of about 4 shillings on each church, so Guðbrandur issued 1,000 copies of his bible, and then set himself to the task of

Traces Through World History

distributing them in the parishes at a nominal charge. Five hundred copies were printed, which were sold for the price of two or three cows. In 1609 he published a revised edition of the New Testament for poor people. The Guðbrandsbiblía was the basis for most Icelandic biblical translations until 1826.

In addition, during the space of over fifty years, Guðbrandur would publish Catechisms long and short, books of Prayers, Psalms, Meditations, Sermons, and an Icelandic revised calendar. Other works published by Guðbrandur include a translation of Niels Hemmingsen's Liffsens Vey ("Way of Life") in 1575, the first Icelandic hymnal in 1589, an Icelandic Gradual in 1594, and the Vísnaþók, a collection of spiritual songs, in 1612. He also published several writings by Arngrímur Jónsson. He printed nearly 100 books during his time as Bishop. He wrote and translated many works himself, including hymns and The Bible. Thanks to his printing work, as well as his focus on ensuring accuracy in translation, owing to the definitive work of Oddur Gottskalksson and Guðbrandur, the noble ancient language of Scandinavia that had been immortalized in the sagas was now preserved as the language of Iceland.

Guðbrandur was a well-rounded scholar with an interest in natural history, astronomy, and surveying, among other fields. This led to his drafting of a new map of Iceland, which was published in Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* in 1590, as well as fixing the location of the island in the North Atlantic with greater accuracy than previous maps. He also worked to ensure descriptions of Iceland were presented accurately to the world.

Bishop Guðbrandur labored with greater earnestness than anyone else in this period to make evangelical Christianity a living force in the hearts of his people. He was interested in providing proper reading for his people by translating and printing the Bible, and by collections of hymns and other Christian literature. He sought to provide religious instruction, especially for children and young people. He asked the ministers to require of the children that they learn the catechism, together with such prayers and songs as could be said and sung at the table. He proffered that no one who did not know the catechism should be allowed to receive the Lord's Supper, except in cases of serious illness.

During his tenure, Bishop Guðbrandur had to subscribe to a new church code in 1607 draw up for King Christian IV in which Icelandic ecclesiastical order and administration were subject to the dictate of the Danish clergy which further subordinated Iceland to the royal supremacy which paved the way for the proclamation of absolutism in 1661-2.

Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson died on July 20, 1627 at Holar. His tomb is under the Holar church.

Lutheran Minister and Poet Jón Bjarnason (1563 - 1634)(Our 10th great grandfather)

Jón Bjarnason was born about 1563 at Hólar in Eyjafjörðursysla. His father was Bjarni Hróbjartsson. He became a Lutheran Minister in 1580. He was also a poet.

In one of his poems, which is now partly lost, he says he was married at the age of 17, which was also about 1580. He was married to Ingibjörg Illugadóttir, the daughter of Lutheran Minister Illugi Guðmundsson and Malmfriður Jónsdóttir. Jón and Ingibjörg had nine children: Jón, Sigurður, Illugi, Magnus, Vigfus, Björn, Sæmundur, Sesslja, and Sigriður. We descend from

Traces Through World History

Sigurður.

Jón Bjarnason started as an assistant minister at the parish of Helgastaðir in Sudur-Píngeyjarsýsla, and later was assigned to the parish of Presthólar in Nordur-Þíngeyjarsýsla. He may have resigned from the ministry in 1625, but is believed to have lived at least until 1634.

He has several poems attributed to him. He wrote the following titles: "Thinking", "God's Conversation with Eve." A little after 1620, he is attributed with various biblical rhymes published in Bishop Gudbrand's *Vísnaþók*. He also spent time doing translations of scripture.

Jón's son Sigurður was born about 1590 at Helgastaðir. Sigurður's first wife was Steinvor Jónsdóttir. They had two daughters: Málmfriður and Ingibjörg. We descend from Ingibjörg. Sigurður's second wife was Þorunn Jónsdóttir and they had two children: Jón and Malfriður. Sigurður's third wife was Gúðrun Petursdóttir and they did not have children.

Sigurður was first an assistant minister with his father at Presthólar and after his father's resignation in 1625 he became the primary minister there. He served at Presthólar for the rest of his life.

Sigurður accomplished many things. He was the author of: "The Fifty Sacred Meditations" of Gerhard's inspirations, which was published 20 times from 1652 to 1843. He wrote 46 hymns for the daily teaching of godliness that were published three times starting in 1743. He wrote various hymns in the older hymnals; as well as poems in manuscripts abroad and at home. Sigurður died at Presthólar in about 1661.

Lutheran Minister Magnus Eiriksson (1568-1652)(Our 10th great grandfather)

Magnus Eiriksson (1568 – 1652) was born about 1568 at Auðkula in Hunavatnssýsla. His parent were Eirikur Magnússon, Lutheran Minister at Auðkula, and Gudrun Þorkelsdóttir. Magnus become his father's assistant minister no later than 1593.

Magnus's first marriage was to Steinvör Petursdóttir, daughter of Petur Flippusson and Katrin Arnadóttir of Svinavatn in Hunavatnssýsla. Magnus and Steinvör were known to have had at least seven children: Gunnar, Helga, Katrin, Hallgrímur, Bjarni, Jon, and Sigurdur. We descend from Bjarni.

Magnus's second marriage was the a Gurdrun Jonsdóttir. They had a daughter named Gudrun.

Magnus would take over as the primary Lutheran Minister at Auðkula after his father's death in 1614. Magnus's sons Bjarni, Jon, and Sigurdur would follow their father into ministry. Magnus was still identified as living at Auðkula on June 12, 1652 and therefore died sometime after that.

Lutheran Minister Jon martyr Þorsteinsson (1570 - 1627)(Our 10th great grandfather)

Jón Þorsteinsson (1570 – 1627) was born about 1570 at Höfn in Borgarfjardarsýsla. His parents were Þorsteinn Sighvatsson and Astrídur Eiríksdóttir.

Jón married Margret Jonsdóttir on October 10, 1596, probably in Arnesýsla as her parents, Jón Petursson and Margret Jonsdottir lived at the farm called Hæli in that district. Jón

Traces Through World History

and Margret had at least three children: Jón (elder), Þorsteinn, and Jón (younger). We descend from Þorsteinn.

Jón became the Lutheran Minister at Husafell in Borgarfjardarsýsla in 1598. Then he was at Torfastaðir in Arnesýsla by 1601. Then he was assigned to Kirkjubær in Vestmannaeyjar (Westman Islands) around 1607 and would be there the rest of his life.

Jón was a genius and a poet. He translated many of the Psalms into the Icelandic language and this work would be published as the Genesis Psalmar in 1652. He did the same with the Psalms of David and it would be published as Psalter of the Royal Prophet David in 1662.

One of the saddest events in the history of Vestmannaeyjar was the so-called ‘Turkish raid’ in 1627. The culprits were not Turkish, however, but rather pirates from Morocco, although some sources say they were from Algeria. Turkish was a term commonly used in those days to mean Muslims from the Ottoman Empire.

On June 12, 1627, the pirates arrived at Grindavik in Gullbringusýsla and took a Danish merchant ship with its cargo and took several sailors and other people on-board. They captured another ship and then sent one ship with their seized booty back to the Barbary States (countries on the north coast of Africa). They attempted to attack Bessastadir (near present day Reykjavik) but were repelled by the fortification made by Governor Holger Rosenkrans. They then went to the Eastfjords where they seized many cattle and captured 110 persons and killed many others.

Their greatest atrocities were committed on the Westman Islands on July 18, 1672. They arrived there with three ships and 300 men who overran the whole Island with loud yells, massacring the terror-stricken and helpless inhabitants. After driving the people together in a large storehouse belonging to Danish merchants they selected the youngest and strongest and drove them onboard their ships. They then set fire to the building and burned it with those who remained. Jón Þorsteinsson was struck dead while kneeling in prayer. Hence he would be forever referred to as “martyr.” The pirates killed 36 of the inhabitants and kidnaped 242 men, women and children. Jón Þorsteinsson’s wife Margret and their three sons were driven onboard the ships as captives. The parish church was burned and those who tried to escape were mercilessly hunted down and slain. The few dozen inhabitants who remained behind had escaped by fleeing into the caves and other hiding places in the cliffs.

After destroying what couldn’t be carried away, the robbers sailed back to the Barbary States where they sold their captives as slaves. Those who survived wrote such touching letters to their home-folks that money was finally collected for their ransom both in Denmark and Iceland. In 1632 King Christian IV sent a large sum to the Barbary States to secure their liberation. Thirty-seven persons were thus rescued. Of those people carried away by the pirates only thirteen ever returned to their native land. Jón Þorsteinsson’s sons Jón (elder) and Þorsteinn were among these thirteen as they are found in Iceland later on. Jón’s wife Margret had been rescued by a French merchant and had children with him and she did not return to Iceland.

Lutheran Minister Tomas Olafsson (1570-1664)(Our 9th great grandfather)

Tomas Olafsson (1570 – 1664) was born about 1570 at Miklagerdur in Eyjafjardarsýsla. His parents were Olafur Tomasson, Lutheran Minister at Miklagerdur, and an unknown mother.

Traces Through World History

Tomas was first married to Sigríður Jónsdóttir and they had two daughters: Groa and Broteva.

Tomas then married Ragnheidur Arnadóttir in about 1601. Tomas and Ragnheidur had five children: Sigfus, Gudrun, Thorvaldur, Gudmudur, and Jon. We descend from Sigfus.

Tomas started as an assistant minister to his father at Miklagerdur. He became the primary Lutheran Minister at Hals in Sudur-Þíngeyjarsýsla in 1628. He resigned from the ministry in 1652 and lived after that at Kambsstaðir in Sudur-Þíngeyjarsýsla. He died there in about 1664.

Tomas' son Sigfus was born about 1601 at Hals in Sudur-Þíngeyjarsýsla. He married Kristin Eiríksdóttir in about 1600. They had sixteen children: Olafur, Ogmundur, Helga, Guttormur, Ingibjörg, Jon, Snjófríður, Arndis, Katrin, Bretteva, Sveinn, Groa, Sighrúður, Thorunn, Thrúður, and Hróðny. We descend from Ogmundur, Helga, Jon, and Bretteva.

Sigfus studied at Skálholt and was then in the service of Lutheran Bishop Oddur Einarsson. He became a Lutheran Minister before 1630 and was assigned to Desjarmýri in Nordur-Mulasýsla in 1631. Then on May 20, 1632, He traded places with Lutheran Minister Havarð Sigurðsson to be the minister at Hofteigs in Nordur-Mulasýsla and he stayed there for the rest of his life where he died in about 1685.

Lutheran Minister Jón Þorvaldsson (1580 - 1662)(Our 10th great grandfather)

Jón Þorvaldsson (1580 – 1662) was born about 1580 at Skinnastaðir in Nordur-Þíngeyjarsýsla. His father was Þorvaldur Jónsson who was a farmer at Skinnastaðir. His father was very influential in the area and had at one time a power of attorney for several lands in the Hólastól area in the northern part of Nordur-Þíngeyjarsýsla. Jón Þorvaldsson became a Lutheran Minister in the autumn of 1607 and took over the Parish of Skinnastaðir in early 1608.

Jón first married Guðný Þorvaldsdóttir, daughter of Lutheran Minister Þorvaldur Olafsson from Háls in Sudur-Þíngeyjarsýsla. They had two children: Guðrún and Þorbjörg. We descend from Guðrún. Guðný died on April 29, 1617.

Jón's second wife was Kristin Grímsdóttir. They had four children: Solveig, Jón, Guðný, and Gunnlaugur.

Jón was a troublemaker because around 1627 he received a high fine, 9 ½ rd., for being in a fight. He had been very wealthy, but he lost three hundred in money in the Jökulsá River in 1655. Jón resigned from the ministry in 1660. He died in about 1662 at Skinnastaðir.

Lutheran Minister Jón Sigurðsson (1588 - 1640)(Our 9th great grandfather)

Jón Sigurðsson (1588 – 1640) was born about 1588 at Breiðabólstaður in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Sigurður Einarsson, the Lutheran Minister at Breiðabólstaður, and Ingunn Jónsdóttir. He studied at Skálholt. He went abroad in 1605 and was enrolled at the University of Copenhagen on December 23, 1605. He was back in Iceland in the summer of 1606, and then went abroad again in 1608. He received a letter from his father on June 2, 1609 inviting him to become the school headmaster in Skálholt. He took over as headmaster at

Traces Through World History

Skalholt in 1610 with the permission of lawyer Gísli Þórðarson. However, Gísli's son Steindór, who was studying in Copenhagen, had received a royal letter for the position of headmaster but did not come to Iceland until 1613 and never did become headmaster. Jón Sigurðsson was assigned to Flögujarðir from 1613 to 1615. Then in 1616, he became an assistant minister to his father at Breiðabólstaður. He then became the primary minister there when his father resigned on July 28, 1626.

Jón's first marriage was to Gudrun Gísladóttir. They had two children: Elin and Magnus. Jón remained the Minister at Breiðabólstaður for the rest of his life.

His second wife was Kristín Teitsdóttir, the daughter of Reverend Teits Halldórsson and Þora Torfadóttir. Jón and Kristín had a daughter, Gudrun, who we descend from.

Jón was married a third time to Gudrun Snorradóttir, but their children are unknown.

Jón Sigurðsson lived for the remainder of his life at Breiðabólstaður where he died in about 1640.

Lutheran Minister Gunnlaugur Solvasson (1600-1647)(Our 8th great grandfather)

Gunnlaugur Solvasson (1600 – 1647) was born about 1600 at Möðrudalur in Nordur-Mulasýsla. His parents were Solvi Gottskalksson, Lutheran Minister at Möðrudalur, and Snjáfriður Þorláksdóttir. He officially became a Lutheran Minister at Möðrudalur in 1629, but may have previously been his father's assistant minister there. He would be the primary minister at that church after his father's death in 1632.

Gunnlaugur married Olof Jonsdóttir and they had seven children: Jon (elder), Snjafridur, Solvi, Steinvor, Sesselja, Ingibjorg, and Jon (younger). We descend from Solvi.

Gunnlaugur lived his entire life at Möðrudalur, dying there in about 1647.

Gunnlaugur's son Solvi was born about 1639. He married Helga Sigfusdóttir in 1654 at Bruar in Nordur-Mulasýsla. They had six children: Ingibjorg, Gunnlaugur, Eiríkur, Gudny, Guttormur, and Ragnhildur. We descend from Guttormur.

District Magistrate and Representative Magnus Þorsteinsson (1609 - 1662)(Our 8th great grandfather)

Magnus Þorsteinsson (1609 – 1662) was born about 1609 at Þykkvabæjarklaustur in Vestur-Skaptafellssýsla. His parents were Þorsteinn Magnusson, District Magistrate for Rangarvallasýsla, and Guðriður (younger) Arnadóttir. Magnus lived at Arbær in Rangarvallasýsla.

Magnus first married Gudrun Teitsdóttir and they had a daughter Þuriður.

Magnus' second marriage was to Gudrun Jonsdóttir and they had seven children: Kristín (elder), Katrín, Einar, Guðriður, Gudrun, Kristín (younger), and Jón. We descend from Guðriður.

Magnus also had an illegitimate son Vigfus.

Magnus was the District Magistrate for the western part of Skaptafellssýsla from 1650 to 1655. He became an Althing representative in 1653. He then took over from his father the District Magistrate office at Þykkvabæjarklaustur in that same year. He then was District

Traces Through World History

Magistrate for all of Rangarvallasýsla from 1657 to 1659. Magnus passed a judgement in regards to Eysteinn Jonsson at the Rangar Althing in 1657.

Magnus Þorsteinsson died on May 7, 1662 at Þykkvabæjarklaustur.

Lutheran Minister Þorleifur Olafsson (1620-1688)(Our 7th great grandfather)

Þorleifur Olafsson (1620 – 1688) was born about 1620 at Finnstungu in Hunavatnssýsla. His parents were Olafur Guðmundsson and Steinunn Þorleifsdóttir. He was a farmer at Finnstugu. He became a Lutheran Deacon at Þingeyrar in Hunavatnssýsla in 1646.

Þorleifur married Þorunn Kortsdóttir. She was the daughter of Kort Þormóðsson and Þorunn Hakonardóttir. Her father was the abbot or steward at the convent at Skógar in Rangarvallasýsla. Kort's father Þormóður Kortsson was the abbot before him. Kort's grandfather Kort Lyðsson had come to Iceland from Hamburg, Germany. Þorleifur and Þorunn had ten children: Jon, Hermann, Björn, Tumi, Guðmundur, Sigurdur, Þorunn, Gudrun, Sigridur. And Þorkell. We descend from Björn.

Þorleifur became a Lutheran Minister in 1655 and served as assistant to Sumarlið Einarsson at Blöndudalshólar in Hunavatnssýsla. Þorleifur became the primary minister there after Sumarlið's death in 1658 and served there until May 26, 1668. After that he went to Finnstungu where he died a few months later in about October 1688.

Þorleifur's son Björn was born about 1656 at Blöndudalshólar. Björn became a lawyer at Guðlaugsstaðir in Hunavatnssýsla.

Lutheran Minister Oddur Bjarnason (1636-1702)(Our 7th great grandfather)

Oddur Bjarnason was born about 1636 at Lundar in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla. His parents were Bjarni Jonsson, a silversmith at Lundar, and Guðlaug Sigurðardóttir.

Oddur first married Gudrun Hallsdóttir at Veigstaðir in about 1656. They had two children: Hallur and Gisli.

Oddur second marriage was at Arnarnes in Eyjafjardarsýsla in about 1673 to Arnbjörg Sigurðardóttir. They had four children: Gudrun (elder), Olafur, Gudrun (younger), and Guðlaug. We descend from Guðlaug.

Oddur was consecrated as a Lutheran Minister at Miklagarður in Eyjafjardarsýsla in 1653. He was assigned to Skinnasatdir in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla in 1665. Then he was assigned to Möðruvallaklaustur in Eyjafjardarsýsla in 1678 where he stayed for the rest of his life. He lived at Arnarnes. He died at Arnarnes on December 10, 1702.

Lutheran Minister Oddur Eyjólfsson (1651-1702)(Our 8th great grandfather)

Oddur Eyjólfsson (1651 – 1702) was born about 1651 at Þorláksstaðir in Kjósasýsla. His parents were Eyjólfur Narfason and Regnhildur Oddsdóttir. His parents were not wealthy and had many children, but some of their sons were educated.

The Lutheran Bishop of Skalholt Brynjólfur Sveinsson took Oddur in, gave him a name,

Traces Through World History

and placed him in the Skálholt school. Oddur was then in service to Bishop Brynjólfur. While he was a student, Oddur received a very praiseworthy letter of recommendation from the Bishop dated July 20, 1657, that nominated him to register at the University of Copenhagen. Bishop Brynjólfur gave him money for school and paid him to study at the University of Copenhagen for two winters. Oddur took the entry exam on July 16, 1659. He then went abroad to the university.

Oddur would show great diligence and progress at the university. When the Swedes invaded Copenhagen in 1659, Oddur went into military service and made a good reputation. He then received a royal letter stating that he should either get a good ministry when it was vacated or the schoolmaster's office in Skálholt.

In 1661, the position of headmaster in Skálholt was vacated after Gísli Einarsson had become a priest at Helgafell. Three men wanted the office, Oddur, Einar Torfason, and Ólafur Jónsson. Oddur was a little younger than the other two but no less educated and he applied for the position. Bishop Brynjólfur decided that the other two should compete, but Bishop Brynjólfur really preferred Oddur for the job. Oddur became the schoolmaster at Skálholt and held that position until 1667.

Oddur married Hildur Þorsteinsdóttir at Holt under Eyjafjöll in Rangarvallasýsla on January 20, 1667. Hildur was the daughter of Lutheran Minister Þorsteinn Jónsson in Holt, son of Jón martyr Þorsteinsson who was killed in the “Turkish” invasion in 1627 in the Westman Islands. Oddur and Hildur had five children: Þorsteinn, Þorkell, Þórður, Jakob, and Rannveig. We descend from Þorsteinn.

Oddur's second marriage was to Margrét Halldórsdóttir who was the widow of Grimur Einarsson. Grimur and Margret just happens to be our 8th great grandparents through their daughter Kristin Grimsdóttir. Oddur and Margret did not have children.

Oddur got his start in ministry in 1668 when he replaced his father-in-law Þorsteinn Jónsson as the primary Lutheran Minister at Holt under Eyjafjöll in Rangarvallasýsla. He would hold this position for the rest of his life. He was also appointed as the rector to the Rangarvallasýsla Althing.

Oddur was a highly regarded minister, a well-known scholar and well versed in astronomy and music, a very brave man, a great philanthropist. He died in about 1702 at Holt.

Oddur's son Þorsteinn Oddsson was born about 1668 at Holt in Rangarvallasýsla. He was a student at Holar in 1686. He was ordained on April 7, 1688. He was first his father's assistant minister at Holt. He then became the assistant minister at Midskali in Rangarvallasýsla.

Þorsteinn married Kristin Grimsdóttir in 1692 at Midskali. They had five children: Jón Hildur, Guðny, Margret, and Rannveig. We descend from Hildur.

By 1703, Þorsteinn took over after his father as the primary Lutheran Minister at Holt. He left the ministry in 1742 and moved to Eyvindarmula in Rangarvallasýsla where he died in about 1752.

Lutheran Minister Eggert Jónsson (1664 - 1739)(Our 7th great grandfather)

Eggert Jónsson (1662 - 1739) was born about 1664 at Snartastaðir in Nupasveit of

Traces Through World History

Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. His father Jón Eggertsson was the farmer at Snartastaðir. Eggert grew up with the Reverend Skula Þorláksson in Grenjaðarstaðir in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla. Eggert was a student at Skalholt around 1685. He became a Lutheran Minister in about 1690 and was assigned to be the primary Minister at Svalbarð in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla.

Eggert first married Þorunn Þorvaldsdóttir, daughter of Þorvaldur Jónsson, the Minister at Prestholar in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. They had five children: Einar, Sæmundur, Björg, Þorvaldur, and Guðný. We descend from Sæmundur.

Eggert's married his second wife Kristin Einarisdóttir on June 24, 1719. They had two children: Einar and Jochum.

In about 1702, there was a great deal of degradation in Svalbarð, The Bishop did not accept responsibility for it, but also did not want to condemn Eggert for it or remove him from the vocation. Eggert resigned from the ministry in 1734, but had kept an assistant minister since 1728, Reverend Johann Kristjánsson, who then took over at Svalbarð. Eggert then moved to Heiði in Langanes, but died on December 23, 1739 at Sauðanes in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. Eggert Jónsson is our most recent ancestor who was a Lutheran Minister in Iceland.

District Magistrate Jens Wium (1680 - 1740)(Our 6th great grandfather)

Jens Wium was born about 1680 probably in Denmark. The Icelandic Roots Database and the LDS family tree database has him born in Hofteigs of Nordur-Mulasýsla, Iceland. However, because neither he nor his parents appear in the 1703 Iceland census, it seems more likely that he arrived in Iceland after 1703. However, it is possible that he was in Iceland in 1703 as some parts of the census in Mulasýsla are missing. His parents were Peder Henriksen Wium and Bóletta Juliane Mariu. Peder and Bóletta were both born in Copenhagen. It is possible that Peder's father Henrik may have originally come from Germany and took the name Wium from a parish by that name in Denmark. Peder was a military Commander-in-Chief apparently engaged in the registration of military troops in Copenhagen. Because he held such a prestigious position in the Denmark military it is very doubtful that he would have migrated to Iceland.

Jens Wium likely came to the Reyðarfjörður area in Nordur-Mulasýsla of Iceland perhaps shortly after the 1703 census was taken. Jens married Ingibjörg Jónsdóttir in about 1709, as their first child was born about 1710. Her parents were Jon Sigfusson and Sesselja Johannsdóttir from Egilsstaðir in Nordur-Mulasýsla. However, in the 1703 census, Ingibjörg is found as "her daughter" age 13 in the household of her mother in a place called "Stekkur við kaupstaðinn" in the Reyðarfjörðarhreppur district. "Stekkur við kaupstaðinn" means "jumps to the market place." This seems to imply that it was close to the port and market place of Reyðarfjörður. At that time, Reyðarfjörður was the leading port town on the east coast of Iceland and probably often received ships coming from Denmark. Jens is later found in this location working as a merchant's assistant, it might be said that he came here from Denmark employed in the shipping and merchant business. As Ingibjörg Jónsdóttir lived nearby, they were married and were known to have eight children: Elisabet, Niels, Jens, Hans, Gisli, Gudmundur, Bóel, and Gudny. Elisabet, Hans, Bóel, and Gudny are found in the Icelandic Roots Database as being born in

Traces Through World History

Valþjófsstaður of Nordur-Mulasýsla. However, the LDS Family Tree has them born in Hofteigs of Nordur-Mulasýsla. These are the only children mentioned in the *Icelandic biographies from the Settlement Period to the End of the Year 1940*. The other children, Niels, Jens, Gisli, Gudmundur ate listed as their children in *Sýslumannaæfir* (1913) by Boga Benediktsson. We descend from Bóel.

A man named Bessi Gudmundsson would play a part in Jens life. Bessi had become a District Magistrate for Mulasýsla in about 1683. Bessi lived at Skriðuklaustur near Fljótisdalur in Nordur-Mulasýsla. In 1708, Bessi became responsible for four Althing districts due to District Magistrate's Jon Jonsson death in 1707. Bessi would eventually be responsible for 11 Althing districts during his lifetime. Bessi took in Lawyer Þorsteinn Sigurdsson into his office in 1713. Bessi assigned him to half of Skriðuklaustur and the home garden there, and he reserved half the profits from the income of the county and the monastery.

Also working with Bessi was District Magistrate Jón Þorlaksson who had taken office at Skriðuklaustur in 1671. Jens began his interest in the law with Jón Þorlaksson. Jens was then very youthful, but he stayed there for awhile. Jón Þorlaksson and Jens worked on a case together at Berunes in Sudur-Mulasýsla in about 1704 (this is the earliest date that places Jens in Iceland) in regards to the plight of some poor people. Jens worked on getting close to District Magistrate Bessi Gudmundsson and became accustomed to the county business.

In 1715, Jens was also working as a merchant's assistant in Reyðarfjörður.

On the same terms that he took in Þorsteinn Sigurdsson, Bessi took in Jens in 1716. Bessi then wrote a letter in hope of gaining Jens a position and office around Skriðuklaustur, but didn't get a definitive answer. Jens finally received an appointment letter to be District Magistrate on April 3, 1718. In 1719, he wrote a document to District Magistrate Þorsteinn Sigurdsson concerning a Skyldu Þorsteinsson obeying a judgement against him about excessive rents being charged for monastery burials. Þorsteinn did not object to this. In 1721, at the time of the final Þorsteinn judgement, Jens was in charge of the northern part of Mulasýsla. Jens took over as a full time District Magistrate in 1723. By 1736, he was put in charge of half of the Skriðuklaustur office until 1738. He was responsible for three Althing districts and 14 judicial districts. He was living at Skriðuklaustur at the time.

In 1740, Jens was working with the lawyers Commissioner Jón Þorleifsson from Reyholti, handing a case in regards to a crowded ship when five people died. The captain and the sailors were intoxicated and caused the men to fall overboard. He made this judgement under consultation with Jón Þorleifsson.

Jens Wium drowned on the way from Seyðisfjörður to Loðmundarfjörður sometime after 1740. Jens Wium is our most recent ancestor who was a District Magistrate in Iceland.

Jakob Petursson (1680 -)(Our 5th great grandfather)

Jakob Petursson was born about 1680 at Helgastaðir in Sudur Þingeyjarsýsla. His parents were Petur Helgasson and Ragnhildur Jonsdóttir. Some sources indicate that his father may have been a captain of a ship that shipwrecked in the East Fjords. By 1703, Jakob had established a farm at Hanefsstadir in Nordur Mulasýsla. At that time he was with his first wife Ingibjorg

Traces Through World History

Saemundsdottir and her two daughters. Jakob's mother Ragnihildur Jonsdottir was also living with him.

By 1720, Jakob was married to his second wife Gudny Beinisdottir. They were known to have had two children: Helga and Petur. We descend from Petur.

Petur Jakobsson was born about 1740 at Einarstada in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla. Petur married Kristlaug Grimsdóttir on October 31, 1787 at Einarstada. They had four children: Ingibjorg, Þorunn, Jakob, and Asa. We descend from Þorunn.

Petur Jakobsson is identified as a poet in the *Icelandic Biographies from the Settlement Period to the End of the Year 1940* volumes. His poems are published in a Icelandic manuscript known as Lbs. His name is listed on-line on the website Handrit.is. Petur died on May 15, 1797 at Einarstada.

After Petur's death, Kristlaug Grimsdottir married Jon Einarsson and they had two children: Olof and Einar.

Ásmundur the Wealthy Einarsson (1719 - 1798)(Our 4th great grandfather)

Ásmundur the Wealthy Einarsson was born about 1716 at Hóll in Nordur Múlasýsla. He was the illegitimate son of Einar Þorleifsson. He had a unknown sibling, but their mother is not known.

Einar Þorleifsson was born about 1662 at Stadurreykjanesi in Barðastrandarsýsla. His parents were Þorleifur Einarsson and Sigríður Erlendsdóttir. Einar's brother was the Lutheran Minister Isleifur Þorleifsson. When he became of age he apparently had some interest at a farm called Tindar in Garpsdals Parish near Króksfjörður in Barðastrandarsýsla. He sold his part of this land to his mother in a document dated July 29, 1680.

Einar came from the west of the country and went to the East Fjords. There have been stories that this Einar was somewhat ill-advised, but in many ways he was considered peculiar, as well as intelligent. Einar is found in the 1703 Census at Kirkjubæjar in Nordur Múlasýsla where he was a farm laborer. He was at Hóll in 1723, then at Hrollaugstaðir by 1730, but later lived at Bóndastaðir. All of these farms are located in the Hjaltastaðar Parish of Nordur Múlasýsla. His pattern of movement would imply he was an itinerant farm laborer.

Once upon a time, Einar went to Reyðarfjörður with his men. He agreed with them to go to the parish church at Hólma and listen to the sermon of Rector Jón Þorláksson, Lutheran Minister at Hólma at the time. Einar sat on a crooked bench and stood by the church door, when the rector went out. He thanked him for the Mass. The Rector said, "I think you have little to be thankful for because you could not keep watch during the talk." Einar replied: "I heard so much, that you testified wrongly in the New Testament." The Rector asked, where it had been, and Einar said that it would be best to have the Rector take a look in the New Testament. They then went in, and it turned out to be true, what Einar had said. Then the Rector said: "What is your name, man, where do you live, whose son are you and where are you from? " Then the Rector says: "How many magicians are there under the Glacier?" Einar answered: "Ask the devil in hell if he knows how many of them there are. But how many were the seals that you killed on Midsummer Night? "The rector then stopped talking to him.

Traces Through World History

It is not known which woman gave birth to Einar Þorleifsson's two illegitimate children, it is only known that one of these children was Ásmundur Einarsson. Ásmundur was apparently born when his father was living at Hóll. Ásmundur didn't have much of a start in life as an illegitimate child of an itinerant farm laborer. Perhaps marrying well would be his chance.

Ásmundur's first wife was Kristín Kolgrímsdóttir. She was from the Hjaltastaðar Parish and they married in about 1745. It is said that Ásmundur soon became wealthy as a result of this marriage. As she was the mistress of the house at Hóll, it implies that Ásmundur was the primary farmer and had some ownership in the place. It has been said that Ásmundur lived the longest at Hóll. Ásmundur and Kristín Kolgrímsdóttir had two children: Margret and Isleifur.

Ásmundur's future second wife was Kristín Sveinsdóttir. She was the daughter of Sveinn Jónsson and Sólrún Guttromsdóttir. She was born about 1743 at Torfastaðir in Nordur-Múlasýsla. Kristín's first marriage in about 1763 was to Runólfur Þorsteinsson. He was known to be a farmer at Ekkjufell. Runólfur and Kristín were known to have had two children: Solrun and Sveinn. Runólfur died in 1775. A land transaction involving Kristín dated November 3, 1775 yielded her 88 rd.

As Ásmundur was then a widower, he married Kristín Sveinsdóttir in about 1778. They had two children together: Runolfur and Kristín. We descend from Kristín.

Ásmundur is said to have purchased the farm at Hóll and another at Hreimsstaðir in 1785 for 120 rd. He then made his primary residence at Hreimsstaðir and lived there ever since. Ásmundur died in about 1798 at Hreimsstaðir. At that time his estate was valued at 451 rd. (rigsdaler), 5 sk.(skilling). And the farm Hreimsstaðir was worth 12 rd. Hundred. These archaic Danish currencies are the equivalent of 926 modern Danish Krona, or about 18,800 modern Icelandic Krona. Hence his nickname "the Wealthy."

Sigurður Eyjólfsson (1720 - 1750)(Our 5th great grandfather)

Sigurður Eyjólfsson was born about 1720 at Eyvindamúli in Rangárvallasýsla. His parents were Eyjólfur Spaka Guðmundsson and Hildur Þorsteinsdóttir. In about 1740, Sigurður went east to be engaged as the representative of the church at the Þykkvabæjarklaustur Monastery in Skaftafellssýsla.

Sigurður went further east and married Bóel Jensdóttir in 1743. Bóel was the daughter of Jens Wium, District Magistrate at Skriðuklaustur in Nordur-Múlasýsla, and Ingibjorg Jónsdóttir. Jens had died just three years before.

Sigurður had established his farm at Surtsstaðir in Nordur-Múlasýsla, He and Bóel had seven children: Ingibjorg, Jens, Vigdis, Lisebet, Bergljot, Þorsteinn, and Kristin. We descend from Þorsteinn.

Sigurður Eyjólfsson died in about 1755 by drowning in the Largarfljot River. Bóel married a second husband named Sigurður Oddsson, son of Oddur Eiriksson (our 6th great grandfather). Sigurður Oddsson was a silversmith. He and Bóel had at least one child who died young. Sigurður Oddsson died in about 1780. Bóel lived on at Surtsstaðir. She was the housekeeper there for Halli Jónsson until 1791. In 1793, she was living there with Sigurður Jónsson. Bóel died at Surtsstaðir on February 26, 1797.

Traces Through World History

Sigurður Eyjólfsson and Bóel Jensdóttir's son Þorsteinn Sigurðsson was born about 1750 at Surtsstaðir. Þorsteinn married Sesselja Bessadóttir in about 1774. They had six children: Guðrun, Eyjólfur, Sæbjörn, Sigþruður, Guðridur, and Sigurður. We descend from Sæbjörn.

By 1785, Þorsteinn is found as a farmer at Heykollsstaðir. Then in 1788 he resided by a stream in Selsstaðir near Seyðisfjörður. By 1790, he was established at Austdalur. Not long after, he found his way west to the land of his father's relatives in Rangarvallasýsla. Þorsteinn died on July 13, 1794 at Rettarhusami in Gullbringusýsla.

Samson Björnsson (1815-1893)(Our 2nd great grandfather)

Samson Björnsson was born on October 17, 1815 at the farm Orrastaðir and was baptized at Þingeyrar in Hunavatnssýsla. He was the illegitimate son of Margret Þorsteinsdóttir with Björn Björnsson. His father Björn was married to another at the time. His mother Margret was unmarried. Iceland genealogist, Halfdan Helgason shared that, "Margret, Samson's mother, was a working hand at Björn Björnsson's farm (Orrastaðir). Margret's father, Þorsteinn Steindórsson, tried to make her leave but she was reluctant and Björn was not willing to let her go either."

One year old Samson was shown as living on the same farm as his mother Margret Þorsteinsdóttir in the 1816 Iceland census. His mother was shown as "vinnukona" or maid servant on the farm Hjaltabakki in Hunavatnssýsla. Her parents, Þorsteinn Steindórsson and Margret Jónsdóttir, were living on a nearby farm called Holt. Samson's father Björn was the farmer at Orrastaðir and living with his legitimate wife and children. Samson was also shown in the 1816 Iceland census as living in his father's household as well. So it implies that there was some sort of "shared custody" situation.

Samson most likely grew up in the area surrounding the farms where his father and mother lived. His father died in 1827, but because of Samson's illegitimate status, there was most likely no inheritance and his status may have resulted in some prejudice against him. His mother Margret had married in 1816 and she was living with him on the farm Holt in the 1845 census. She died in 1846.

Meanwhile, Samson had left the farms in Hunavatnssýsla to migrate 200 miles to the area around Þistlifjörður. He was found as a "vinnumaður" or farm servant on the farm Flaga in the parish of Svalbarð in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla.

Samson married Kristlaug Þorsteinsdóttir in 1845 at Saudanes in Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla. They had ten children: Jon, Þorsteinn, Fridbjörn, Jonas, Gudrun, Sigurveig, Margret, Eufemia, Joahannes, and Tryggvi. We descend from Jonas, our great grandfather.

Samson Björnsson is identified as a poet in the *Icelandic Biographies from the Settlement Period to the End of the Year 1940* volumes. He is the last of our ancestors to be specifically mentioned in that publication. His poems are published in a Icelandic manuscript known as Lbs. His name is listed on-line on the website Handrit.is

Intersection of the Ancient Icelandic Pedigree with Civil and Ecclesiastical Records

1703 Census: The first extant substantial census of Iceland occurred in 1703. Icelanders have

Traces Through World History

long known the uniqueness of the 1703 Census and consider it to be a milestone in the history of population studies. During the summer of 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved the Archives' application for the inclusion of the 1703 Census in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. This register lists documentary heritage that has world significance and outstanding universal value. Overall, the 1703 Census can be considered as an accurate and a reliable record of Icelandic society in that year.

The 1703 Census serves to prove the existence and locations of our Icelandic ancestors. In this census our ancestors can be found in a total of 41 places. These places were still spread out across the entire island, however, 24 of these places (about 60%) are in Northeast part of the Island. These places are as follows:

Norður-Múlasýsla (14 places): Ásgrímsstaðir, Brekka, Brimnes, Hánefsstaðir, Hjarðarhagi, Hofteigur, Hrafnsgærði, Hjaltastaður, Kirkjubærjar, Merki, Rauðholt, Sleðbrjótssel, Surtsstaðir, and Torfastaðir.

Suður-Múlasýsla (5 places): Finnsstaðir, Sigmundarhús, Stekkur við Kaupstaðinn, Fjörður and Þingmúli.

Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla (3 places): Skútustaða, Guðmundarlón and Litluvellir.

Nordur-Þingeyjarsýsla (2 places): Presthólar and Svalbarð.

Eyjafjarðarsýsla (1 place): Arnarnes.

Skagafjarðarsýsla (6 places): Axlarhagi, Bjarnastaðahlíð, Flatartunga, Hvammur, Silfrastaðir, and Skarðsá.

Húnavatnsýsla (6 places): Guðlaugsstaðir, Stóraborg, Helgavatn, Kot, Ós, and Torfulækur,

Snæfellsnessýsla (1 place): Ytri-Garðar.

Mýrarsýsla (1 place): Hlöðutún.

Rangárvallasýsla (2 places): Eyvindarmúli, and Miðskáli.

1816 Census: The 16th Century in Iceland also marked the emergence of Ecclesiastical or Church records that further corroborate the existence of our ancestors. Most of the ecclesiastical parishes of Iceland have extant registers of baptisms, marriages, and burial that started by the middle of the century. These church records would also function as civil records started with a letter dated December 11, 1812 from the Chancellery in Copenhagen containing regulations pertaining to entries in church registers, and their format. It also prescribed how copies were to be made and

Traces Through World History

archived for future reference. A census of parishioners was also to be made by the clergy on the first Sunday in Advent, 1816 and was to be entered at the front of the church register book. The census was to include information about name, position in society, age and birthplace of each person in the parish.

So after the passing of about 113 years, the 1816 Census is an illustration of the narrowing of our Icelandic family tree and its movement more towards the northeastern part of the island. In this census our ancestors are found in only eight places in five counties, four of which are in northeastern Iceland. There is one place in Norður-Múlasýsla, which is Jórvíkurhjáleiga. There are two places in Suður-Múlasýsla, Fossgærði and Snjóholt. There is one place in Norður-Þingeyjarsýsla, Ytribrekkur. There is one place in Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla, Núpar. There are three places in Húnavatnsýsla, Orrastaðir, Holt, and Hjaltabakki.

1880 Census: The last census that our ancestors appear in before their migration to North America is the 1880 Census. Once again the parish clergy were entrusted to administer this census with an effective date of October 1, 1880.

Sixty-four years had passed since the 1816 Census and now only six of our ancestors would be found in this census. Our great grandparents Jonas Samsonarson and Katrín Ásmundsdóttir (who had only been married for about one year) were living at Þórarinsstaðir in Norður-Múlasýsla along with their one year old son Ásmundur (later called John Samson). Jonas' sister Sigurveig was living with them. In the same place was Katrin's parents, Ásmundur Sæbjörnsson and Guðrún Björnsdóttir along with Katrin's siblings Sveinn and Kristen. Jonas' parents Samson Björnsson and Kristlaug Þorsteinsdóttir were living at Lýtingsstaðir in Norður-Múlasýsla. Living at the same place was Jonas' brother Friðbjörn and his young family.

Departure for North America. Life in Iceland was harsh in the mid-to-late 1800s. At the time, Iceland was part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and Denmark had largely neglected Iceland's economy. Winters were challenging, and in January 1875, Mount Askja, a volcano in northeastern Iceland, began erupting, spewing millions of tons of debris into the air. Over the next few weeks, dozens of eruptions occurred, filling the sky with lethal smoke and ash that rained down upon settlements across Iceland. Iceland's agriculture could no longer support its approximately 76,000 inhabitants, and an estimated 25% of the population emigrated.

Jonas Samson and Katrin Ásmundsdóttir would live in Iceland for nine more years and have five more children there. On October 20, 1889, Jonas and his young family boarded the ship *Siberian* at Seyðisfjörður bound for Glasgow, Scotland and then on to Canada. They arrived in Quebec City on November 8, 1889 and listed their final destination as Winnipeg, Manitoba. However, by February 24, 1890 they finished their journey at the Icelandic community of Akra in Pembina County, North Dakota.

DNA Matches and the Icelandic Roots Database: I have confirmed over 80 "cousins" that are autosomal DNA matches for myself that also positively confirm the paper trail I have followed to our Icelandic ancestors.

There is also an amazing resource available called the Icelandic Roots Database. For the

Traces Through World History

most part, the Ancient Icelandic Pedigree is all in this database. The core aims of Icelandic Roots are to educate, promote and preserve an interest and knowledge in the history of Iceland and its people; to strengthen the links between Icelanders and those of Icelandic descent in North America; to broaden access to historical documents and records for Icelandic genealogy and history; and to inspire pride in Icelandic heritage, traditions, language, literature, and culture. We have about 90 cousins listed in the database as of January 2020.

Sources:

- *History of Iceland*, Knut Gjerset, The MacMillan Company, New York, NY, 1924.
- *Icelandic Church Saga*, John C. F. Hood, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1946.
- Various Wikipedia articles. A few of the narratives are extractions from Wikipedia articles which I have abridged and edited.
- *Icelandic Biographies from the Settlement Period to the End of 1940*, available on-line at www.Bækur.is.
- *Sýslumannaæfir*, Boga Bendiktsson, Prentsmidjan Gutenberg, Reykjavik, 1913.
- *Ættir Austfirðinga - Relatives of the East Fjords*, Einar Jónsson, Prófastur, available on-line at <https://www.aettiraustfirðinga.is/>
- A Word Document labeled SamsonGenealogy(Icelandic).docx that I have in my possession. It was sent to me by a amateur genealogist named Magnus Haraldsson in Iceland. It is what I refer to as the “Ancient Icelandic Pedigree.” I have had to make some corrections in my own personal database for information found in the file that seemed erroneous. I did this by using what I believed was more reliable information found in Wikipedia or geni.com.
- Information on the above named persons can also be found in The Public Members Trees on Ancestry.com; the Geni.com database; and Wikitree.com database.
- Icelandic Roots Database at www.icelandicroots.com

Traces Through World History