

Preface

This book is dedicated to the many new McLanes that are becoming part of this wonderful family. Even since I started this research and writing project several new family members have been added, including my own grandson. It had often occurred to me how little I knew about my own family history and how little I could pass on to them because I just didn't know. Someday they will be ready to ask the question "who am I and from what origins did I come?" Hopefully this book will answer many of those questions.

The McLane family has always been rich in oral tradition and family lore. Every McLane that knew Grandpa Miles McLane can remember the gift he had for spinning a story. But much of what Miles told his children and grandchildren were little bits of our family history. Unfortunately nobody bothered to write these things down. He and Grandma Hattie were our only contact with our roots. Growing up in Southern California surrounded by people that all came from somewhere else, you get a sense that there is little to know about the history of your family. We perhaps didn't see the importance of it and falsely thought that our older family members would live forever and always be around to refresh our memories. The same is true of the other branches of the McLane family. This book attempts to put on paper everything that is known or has been told about the ancestors and families related to the McLanes.

I was originally inspired to begin this project in 1996. My wife Jeanne had received a very nice family history book about her family, the Henkels. It was published by her Great Aunt Grace Henkel. After reading and enjoying the story and learning so much about my wife's family I showed it to my mother Enid. She took it home and read some of it and told me how nice it would be if our family had

such a nice book. She said that she and my father had often talked about trying to write their own stories of their lives. As we had recently purchased a computer, I told my mother that I could type their stories in a small book to share with my brothers and sister and their families.

About a week later, my mother gave to me a valise that was full of various papers. She said maybe if you read some of these you can find things to put in the family book. After I finished examining the materials, I was truly amazed. My mother had been collecting family history information for quite some time and I didn't have a clue that she knew so much about her family. In the 1970s she had even written to several distant relatives seeking information and stories about her family. Two very distinct documents in the valise became my first experience with pedigree sheets, or ancestral trees. The one on her McLean family was very easy to understand and had the names of far away places in Canada and Scotland. The other was a paper prepared by an Icelandic researcher who had sent it to my mother's cousin, Wanda Hall. I later figured out that it was a pedigree of my Icelandic ancestors naming some of their places of origin. I was simply amazed and had no idea that she had these things.

I soon bought a genealogical software program for my computer and I busied myself analyzing and entering all the information that I could get from my mother's materials. I began to wonder about holes in the story. For example there was very little information about my father's family. I thought that I would at least have to gather more information about his family and fill in some gaps to present a balanced story.

I had often heard that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) had a lot of

information about family history. I mentioned my interest to an LDS friend where I work and he invited me to go to a Family History Center in an LDS Church in my neighborhood. Being a cradle Catholic, practicing the faith of my Irish ancestors, I was a bit apprehensive. However, the staff was very friendly, gave me a tour, explained what they had available, gave some brochures, and advised me to spend some time getting absolutely all the information I could from living family members and relatives first, before starting any research at the center. This started me on a multi-year journey that caused me to become acquainted with many relatives I never knew before.

After a few months of letter writing and getting answers, I was hooked! I just couldn't get enough and thoroughly enjoyed every new discovery. Because of this experience, genealogy is now my passion and a major pursuit in my life.

I want to take the opportunity here to identify and acknowledge the many relatives that I have found along the way that have revealed so much to me.

I owe many thanks to the efforts of a deceased member of the family. This person was my father's Uncle James Jensen. After writing to several Jensen family members, I was sent an old photocopy that had been recopied many times of a story that James had written in the 1950s about his parents, Christoffer and Kirsten Jensen. James had mentioned in the story how some might not find value in what he wrote, but for me it was a tremendous gift. It started with the birth of his father in Denmark and told the story of how he was a pioneer in Minnesota and the many places in the United States where the family had lived. Thank you James Jensen for thinking about the future a descendant like me who was just a child when you wrote the story. After further research and verification, that story proved to be 100% accurate.

My mother's cousin Wanda Hall is deserving of a great deal of mention. She gave to me my initial exposure to my Icelandic roots, which turned out to be most fascinating. As she is my mother's "double cousin" she is also a descendant of the Scottish McLean's. She had a great deal of information on the McLeans as she still lived in the region of North Dakota where they settled. She had even written a story about my Great Grandfather Charles McLean in a county history book. She told me that I should write to another of my mother's cousins, Don Hensel.

I made contact with Don who was the one that originally wrote information on the McLean pedigree chart that my mother had saved. He has been a great friend. He has openly shared everything he had found out about our McLean ancestors with me. He has given me copies of letters, old photographs, and a great variety of material.

I also must acknowledge my dad's cousin, Raymond Jensen, who loaned me his only copies of photos of my great grandparents so I could have copies made of them.

After all that initial contact with distant family members, I was still at a loss! I had always considered myself as Irish. This was instilled in me by my Grandfather Miles McLane. But after all that letter writing, I still knew very little about the McLanes and whether or not they really came from Ireland. I had come to learn how the name McLane is a derivative spelling of the name McLean and that all McLeans have their origin in Scotland. So did the McLanes come from Ireland or Scotland? Were my parents' families somehow related? I was full of questions.

A few years earlier, my parents had joined with some other McLanes in Alberta, Canada for a family reunion. My dad told me that these were his cousins who were the children of Grandpa Miles' brother Moses. Three of these cousins came to visit my parents home. They

were Bud McLane and his wife Grace, Betty McLane Dwyer, and Pat McLane (the same name my dad goes by!). Pat showed me his photo album with a photo of the graves of John McLane and Elizabeth Murphy in Marshfield, Wisconsin. He said they were his grandparents and my great grandparents. He had visited there and found it based on some things his father told him and on estate papers of an uncle named Jack McLane. In fact, these estate papers with the names and addresses of heirs was mainly responsible for bringing our two families back together. Grace said she still had a copy of the estate papers and would gladly send it to me. Many thanks to them and their trip to the U.S. as those pictures and papers opened the door toward discovering a tremendous Irish heritage.

It was now time for actual research! I went back to my local Family History Center armed with all of this new material. I was most anxious to learn about the McLanes. On my first visit I began searching for some of the names of my known ancestors. I was confronted with the new knowledge of how many persons of the same name were in the Ancestral File database. All of a sudden I found an Elizabeth Murphy. There were, of course, several. But this one lived around the same time as mine, there was reference to a Neillsville, Wisconsin, and her father's name was Miles Murphy. My Grandfather Miles McLane was one of the few people I've met in my whole life named Miles. I knew this had to be a match. I wrote to the person, Foster Murphy, who had submitted this family file. Foster sent a whole package of material to me and I had found my Irish relatives. (You can't get anymore Irish than Murphy!) A huge thank you to Foster for posting that information where I could find it.

Foster's information lead me to my grandfather's birth place in Frampton, Quebec, Canada. I was surfing the internet, when I

came across a long listing of "Irish Canadians." Much to my surprise, my Murphys were listed there. This led me to Karen Beatty, another distant "cousin" who gave me a wealth of information about the Murphys and Frampton. Karen lead me to another Murphy descendant, Diane Steltenpohl and a McLane descendant, Jeff Golden. All these persons deserve thanks for sharing with me the information they had on our common families.

A special note of thanks goes to Betty MacKinnon, a genealogist who lives in Bruce County, Ontario, Canada. She has collected information about Bruce County families for years and freely shared much information with me. She identified an adopted child in my great great grandparents family and provided information about a living descendant of that child. She had information about a McLean sister who married and stayed in Ontario after the rest of the family moved to North Dakota. She did all of this even when there was no reason to believe we were related in any way. However, a few years later she wrote with questions about my Bruce County McDonald heritage and from that we discovered a family connection after all.

This journey of family contact has led me already to three family reunions and several heritage trips to North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Saskatchewan. There is just so much more to learn and so many other places to see and visit. But now it is time to wrap up all I have learned into this book. I will not be guilty of failing to pass on this heritage to my descendants or other descendants who may find it as fascinating as the Jensen story I received in the mail written by Uncle James Jensen. He wrote it down and so have I!

Dennis McLane,

Boise, ID
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