

ORIGIN OF THE LOFTIS LINEAGE

By Jimmie R. Loftis

The earliest records indicating the origin of the Loftis name is this reference to the Lofoten of the Norwegian islands:

"...the Vikings used to take their ships to the Northern Islands to scrape the barnacles off their bottoms on the beaches of those islands; hence the name, Lofoten, which translated into English, means "careen" or to drydock by hauling a ship upon the beach at high tide and let her turn over on one side and then the other side on the next tide. The Chief of the Island Tribe was known as "The Lofoten", or as we would say, "The Dry-Docker of Ships".

The Lofoten islands are situated off the northern coast of Norway. Another landmark that exists in southern Norway is the town of Lofthus near the Hardanger Fjord which is one of the country's most scenic sites.

The first authentic record show the family living in Normandy and Flanders, France, probably having come to France during the Viking invasion of the 9th century. The family emigrated from France possibly before the Viking invasion of the 9th century. The family emigrated from France possibly before the Norman Conquest in 1066 A.D. The name Loftingh in France was Anglicized as Loftin and Loftus, but due to the freedom used in spelling, was variously spelled Loftaine, Loffting, Lofting, Lofton, Loften, Lofan, Loflin, Loftes, Loftice, Lofeshouse, Lofthouse, Lofthus, and Loftis. The name Loftis or Loftus may also be derived from Lofthouse which refers to a house with an attic or a loft above the house. It probably came from the Old Norse words **loft** (elevation, loft) and **tun** (an enclosure). In Old English, **tun** came to mean "a farmstead, an estate or village" and was often modified to **ton** as a suffix on many place names. Thus, the meaning would be that of "a farm on an elevation."

The family name Loftus and Loftis later emerged as a notable English family name in the county of Yorkshire where they were recorded as a family of great antiquity seated with manor and estates in that shire. One of the oldest Yorkshire families, this family is said to have been seated in the village of Lofthouse. Robert Lofthus was Lord of the manor and lands in 1273, and the senior branch established themselves at Swineshead in Yorkshire in the same year. Christopher Lofthouse was prior of Helagh in the same county anno 1460. The family also branched into Kent, Hampshire and Dorset.

During the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, England was ravaged by religious conflict. many families were freely "encouraged" to migrate to Ireland or to the "colonies." Some were rewarded with grants of lands while others were banished. In Ireland they settled in Dublin, County of Connacht, where Adam Loftus, D.D. of Trinity College, Cambridge, was consecrated in 1561, Archbishop of Armagh, and translated in six years afterwards to the see of Dublin. This eminent prelate was twice Keeper of the great Seal of Ireland, and died in the high office of Lord Chancellor of that Kingdom. He was four times

(1582,1585,1597 and 1599) one of the Lords Justices, and was Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, which University he had a principal part in founding, and in which his descendants enjoyed certain privileges during the period they were students. His grace built the Castle at Rathfarnham, and died 5 April 1605 at the age of 72. He and his wife, Jane, daughter of Adam Purdon, esq. Of Lurgan Race, in the County of Louth, had five sons and seven daughters. In 1620 his sons were elevated to peerage as the Earls of Ely. Most of the American Family of Loftis are descended from this Archbishop Loftus of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Belfast, Ireland according to some data in the New England Historical Magazine.

Records indicate the Loftis name may have been anglicized from the Irish names of MacLoughlin or O'Loughlin, MacLoclamn (MacLochlin, MacLoghlin, Mac Loughlin) is the name of the senior branch of the northern Ui Neill. Before the 13th century, they were the most powerful family in Ulster. They were seated in Inishowen where the name is still common. O'Loclamn (O'Loughlane, O'Loughlan, O'Loughlin, Loughlan, Loughlin) is the name (1) of a leading family of Cinel, Eoghain, more commonly called MacLoclamn and (2) of an ancient and distinguished family in Co. Clare, who took their name from Loclamn, Lord of Corcomroe, in the 10th century. The O'Loughlins were the most powerful family in the northwestern part of the county on the shores of the Atlantic and Galway Bay. The name O'Loughlin has been anglicized Loftus in Connacht and Lawton in Co. Cork. The sept of O'Loughlin is entirely distinct from those of MacLoughlin though some confusion arises due to the dropping of the prefixes "Mac" and "O" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Irish and English Coats of Arms of these families are shown below:

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