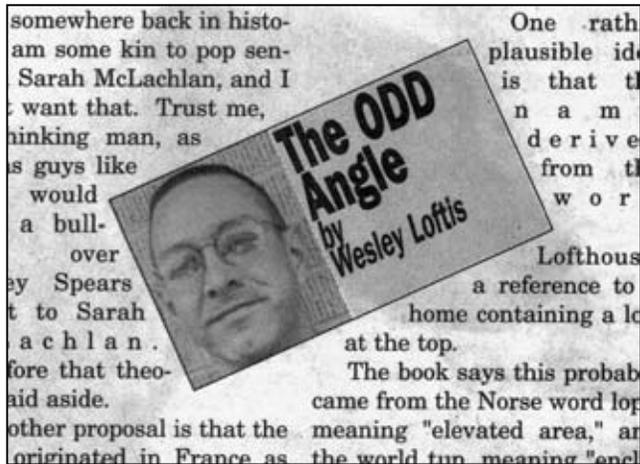


Long lost relatives found through real genealogy, not hoaxes
The Odd Angle by Wesley Loftis – pg. 2A
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Several years ago I discovered that there were people with my last name all over the Dublin area of Ireland.

This information came from one of the teachers at Steekee Elementary School who had grown up in the area, so I considered the source reliable. This laid to rest the long mystery of my family origin - that is, until the plot got twisted into a Gordian knot the size of northern Europe.

Genealogy was all the rage a decade ago. Everybody was trying to hunt down their ancestry, and gold diggers and con men were after all of them. You couldn't log on to the internet without getting e-mail from someone

selling a book on your personal family name. Luckily, I bypassed all of these scams - not so much because I am that bright - but because I am that cheap. The big clue that the whole thing was a set-up was the exorbitant price of the tome itself. If memory serves, they were \$50 - \$75 each, depending on what week you got the e-mail.

But, as it turns out, there is an actual legitimate book out there, co-written by a Jackson County, Tennessee Loftis. I discovered this on the website of a Michigan native - Audrey June Lambert - whose mother bore the Loftis label as a child. The book - Loftis and the Descendants of Laban Loftis: by Jimmie R. Loftis & Bobbie H. Bryant, 1993, published by Cousins by the Dozens - lists all kinds of my kinfolk who lived in the Jackson County area. It also gives several theories as to where the name originated.

One of the theories is that the name was anglicized from the Scot-Irish names of MacLoughlin, O'Loughlin, or one of several other similar titles. I reject this theory immediately for the simple and logical reason that I do not want it to be accurate. If this were true, that would mean that - somewhere back in history - I am some kin to pop sensation Sarah McLachlan, and I do not want that. Trust me, the thinking man, as well as guys like me, would drive a bulldozer over Britney Spears to get to Sarah McLachlan. Therefore that theory is laid aside.

Another proposal is that the name originated in France as Loftingh and was later anglicized as Loftus and/or Loftis. While there is proof that the name Loftingh was fairly common in the Normandy and Flanders areas, I reject this also. With all the controversy between the US and France these days, I have no desire to be of French lineage. Now, had the French government not rolled over for Germany in World War II, and had they not gone socialist and started treating all the citizens as if they were children who needed to be cared for, I might reconsider. Do you remember your world history? The French used to be valiant warriors and independent thinkers. I read Alexandre Dumas. They were rough and tumble gentlemen at one time.

Anyway, another false alarm laid to rest.

One rather plausible idea is that the name derived from the word Lofthouse, a reference to a home containing a loft at the top. The book says this probably came from the Norse word lopt, meaning

"elevated area," and the world tun, meaning "enclosure." I believe this theory has merit, not because of the idea that we were landed people with large homes, but because the loft is probably where my cousins who had stolen a goat or a chicken were found hiding. As Vikings, we were basically part of a gang mentality anyway.

But the most believable of all the possibilities is the one that makes reference to the Lofoten Islands of Norway. According to the Loftis book, "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 dry-dock 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'."

Now everyone who tracks down their ancestors wants them to have been leaders and wise elders. But if all of our ancestors were that, who did the work? Certainly no one in my family. But there is a certain logic that can be used to fill in the blank spaces between the lines.

It seems the beaches of the Lofoten Islands are ideal for the aforementioned barnacle maintenance procedure. I figure this discovery was made entirely by accident by one of my ancestors. Probably a deck swabber, placed at the wheel just to make sure they didn't turn left at Albuquerque, he was likely swilling vodka and studying the fascinating world of toenail fungus when he ran aground.

When the boat's captain began beating him with a cannon ball, he jumped overboard and discovered the clean underbelly of the craft. Therefore he went with the tried and true "I meant to do that" tactic, and was elected mayor of the island. We weren't smart, but at least we had sense enough to associate ourselves with other people who were moving in mental slow motion.

So this is the idea I'll cling to. That puts my ancestry in the middle of the Viking era, and - like any good parrothead - a past full of oceanic adventure. But thank goodness we were run out of Norway, France, England, and Ireland to land here in the USA; land of the free and home of the good lawyer who can get you off the hook.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go to the attic to check on my livestock.

WRL

Loftis and the Descendants of Laban Loftis

By

Jimmie R. Loftis

And

Bobbie H. Bryant, 1993

Published by

Cousins By The Dozens

After more than a quarter century by various members of the Loftis family at collecting, organizing, drafting, writing, computerizing, editing, printing and publishing; this hardbound edition of our family history is the result.

FOREWORD: "Although the past is unchangeable, every man deserves to know something of his origins, for his ancestry, whether virtuous or dissolute, may well prove to be a decisive factor in his future. The past may indeed be prologue. Only through the study of our ancestors can we fully appreciate our destiny. It is, therefore, more than idle curiosity or false pride in our ancestry that prompts us to explore our family history and determine the sources of our heritage. In so doing we should indulge in neither undue pride nor abject apology for what we fine, but rather we should remember that our forbears were people who breathed air, ate food, faced problems and experienced triumphs and failures just as we do...We do feel that our forefathers contributed substantially to the founding and development of America. But we hasten to add that we do not claim that they were aristocrats even though they frequently "walked with kings." Most of them hardly won wide public acclaim; there were few heroes and heroines in the usual sense. Rather, we present to the reader of this book a people who were simple, humble, and proud, and who represented the backbone of America from its founding. They possessed the basic virtues of honesty and hard work, and hence, became the real heroes and royalty of the land." Alvis Milton Holladay

