

First Missions – Iceland & Greenland

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Iceland & Greenland

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Revised October 25, 2013

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GREENLAND: Whenever there have been workers in Iceland and Greenland, they have been listed on the Scandinavian lists, as Greenland, Iceland and Faroe Island are all Danish dependencies. Iceland is now fully independent since WWII and has had its own democratic parliament since the year 930 A.D. The Faroe Islands is still a dependency.

Rasmus Prip was born 1896 in Denmark, professed in 1921 (in Saskatchewan?), went in the work in 1923 in Saskatchewan; and went to California in 1926. He is shown on the Denmark Workers list by 1929, but due to a lack of Workers List, it is not known exactly when during the 1927-29 period that he went to Denmark. Rasmus labored in all the Scandinavian countries except Finland, spending several years in **Iceland**, He was listed during 1964-1967 as laboring in **Greenland** without a companion, and is **the only worker known to ever spend time in Greenland**. It is unknown if there were any converts.

Rasmus was said to have been in Greenland at the time of the German occupation of Denmark during WW2. He was able to get to Faroe Islands, Iceland and back to Greenland, but not back to Denmark during this time, so he spent his time in those (at that time) Danish dependencies for the whole war.

ICELAND: According to Syd Holt's Letter 7, in August 3, 1985, there was just one professing lady in Iceland: "where they [two sister workers: Iris Murray and Kay McKay] will visit the one saint lady...before going on to visit on the Faroe Islands." Kay McKay labored for 10 years in Iceland and Iris Murray for 5 years. They were there when Dave Pfingston (California) was stationed there in the Air Force in the mid 70s. After he was discharged, he went in the work in California and returned to Scandinavia to preach. There were only two professing ladies living in Iceland when he was there, along with the two sister workers. Only one native Iclander has professed in gospel meetings in that country." (Asta of Akranes)

Helen MacLean, a professing woman from England went to Iceland to do academic research on Icelandic MSS on January 17, 1967 and stayed until September 1967. She wrote: *"When I landed at the Reykjavik airport in Iceland in 1967, I was met by two sister workers, Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson. It looked as though I'd landed on the moon as the landscape and the mountains were all white with snow. Later I met Calvin Casselman and his companion. The workers visited me often in my university digs and I'd make simple meals for them. Had regular fellowship with Asta of Akranes who was the only professing native Iclander. I had to jump on a boat and sail 70 miles up the coast from Reykjavik to where I played the organ for the workers at Gospel meetings. Kay McKay was very well loved by Asta, and she was indeed lovely. I cultivated a good relationship with the other friend Jonina, (she was half Faeroese) who was elderly and infirm and confined to a hospital in Reyjavik, so I got on the bus and visited with her regularly on Sundays and sang hymns to her and read the Bible to her in Icelandic.*

"The workers must have had a really hard time of it because they were on the outskirts of what is a very closed society of 320,000 people, whereas I went up on 17th Jan and slid easily into Reykjavik inner circles. By 25th January I had met everyone who was anyone up there, the President of Iceland, the British Ambassador and staff, the British Council people, you name it. The British Council then asked me if I would mind giving English lessons to the Second Secretary at the Russian Embassy, which I did, as I needed the money. The British Embassy were Not Amused by this, especially as my surname was Maclean and this was at the height of the Cold War, and complained I was being seen far too often in the Russian Ambassador's car. I never met the folks at the US base at Keflavik. The Icelanders hated the American soldiers being up there, so that would be a big no-no."

It is Helen MacLean's opinion that *"the reason the Truth did/does not catch on in Iceland is that they have a very strong sense of Family, and they will never accept any other artificial religious 'family' (Two by Twos) which might divide or alienate their own blood relative family. They are basically Lutheran. Once they accept you into their fold though, they are your friends for life."*

Icelanders do not have surnames, but use the patronymic system, being named after their father. **Ásta** (Pronounced Ow-sta) lived in the town of Akranes, about 20 miles north of the capital, Reykjavik. Another woman lived in Reykjavik, called **Rakel**, but she had moved there from the Faroe Islands, where she had professed earlier. Both of these women are long dead, but would be the two mentioned in Syd Holt's letter. They all met in Reykjavik. Ásta would take the ferry to meeting, but on some occasions they all went to Akranes to her place for meeting.

The earliest Workers List located upon which Iceland appears is 1959, when Rasmus Prip and Helmut Leichsenring (Germany) were there. However, several years of the Workers Lists for the 1950s are unavailable so it's not possible to say for certain when workers first went there. When Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson were in the northerly town of Akureyri, in about 1993, they had meetings in an old folks home, and many there remembered Rasmus from the war years, when it seems he had many meetings round the country. Rasmus Prip died January 19, 1988 in Denmark.

In 1960 Calvin Casselman (B.C., Canada) joined them. Calvin's mother was Icelandic, and he once visited where his mother had come from before she emigrated to Canada.

In 1961, Rasmus Prip and Helmut Leichsenring are still there, joined by two sisters, Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson, both from Saskatchewan. Nona had been born in Iceland as Jonina Eriksdottir, but her family changed to using a surname system on their migration to Canada when Nona was quite small (perhaps 5yrs?) Her father Erik Jonson (hence Nona was Eriks daughter, or Eriksdottir), was the son of Jon (hence Jonsson). They took the surname Johnson, and Jonina, anglicized her name to Nona.

During the 1960s, then again in the 1970's, two American families lived in Iceland for the NATO base (run by US Air Force), and were some form of support for the workers. They lived off base, and had the meetings in their homes.

During the years 1991-1993, Geoff Crowley (Originally from New Zealand, but moved to Iceland from Australia, now living in Scotland) and his family lived there. Only one native Icelandic person has ever professed, and there are none professing there now. Iceland was officially 98% Lutheran when the Crowleys lived there. The church is state supported.

In 1962, Calvin Casselman and Helmut Leichsenring and Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson.

In 1963, Kay Mackay from Scotland joins Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson, along with Calvin Casselman & Helmut Leichsenring.

In 1964, there are three pairs of workers: Calvin & Helmut, Mary Nesbitt and Kay Mackay, Nona Johnson and Esther Mortenson (Denmark). During this time an Icelandic hymnbook was produced, in cooperation with local people in order to have the strict Icelandic protocol of how poetry and hymns should be written grammatically correct.

In 1965, Calvin Casselman is replaced with John Holm (England).

In 1966, Calvin Casselman replaces Helmut Leichsenring.

In 1967, only Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson.

In 1968 and 1969, Calvin Casselman and Eldon Knudson are there along with Mary Nesbitt and Nona Johnson.

In 1970 and 1971, just a pair of sisters, Kay Mackay and Iris Murray (from Scotland).

In 1972 and 1973, Mary Nesbitt and Iris Murray.

1974 Kay Mackay and Iris Murray.

1975 Kay Mackay and Mary Nesbitt

1976 Nona Johnson and Kay Mackay.

1977 and 1978 Nona Johnson and Mary Nesbitt.

Then no workers are listed in Iceland until 1991

In 1991-1992, Nona Johnson & Mary Nesbitt return for two years.

Since 1993, there have been no workers listed in Iceland.

When did the workers first arrive? **Probably Rasmus Prip in late 1930's, who labored mostly solo. Rasmus Prip died January 19, 1988 in Denmark**

Who were the first brother workers? **Rasmus Prip**

Who were the first sister workers?

Who was the native first to profess? **Asta of Akranes (first and ONLY native to ever profess)**

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention?

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention currently held? **Not one**

Who have the Overseers been? **Scandinavian Overseers**

Language: **Icelandic**

About Icelandic Family Names: Iceland is the only country which still follows the ancient tradition of patronymic family names as established by the Vikings. In Iceland, one's last name is not handed down from one generation to the next; each generation gets a new one. And it is even possible for a family of four to have four different last names. It sounds rather strange, but actually it is a very logical system. **[Follow link](#)** to read more...

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