

Welcome to



Blair Tips for Beginners

Advice to New Blair Researchers:

- Collect all you can from the sources you have immediately on hand. Speak to your relatives, but take what they say with a grain of salt. Treat the information you get by word of mouth as clues, not fact! Not everyone's Blair ancestor fought at the Alamo!
- The Blair's were not always too creative when it came to handing out names. Even as far back as the 1700's there were dozens of Blair's named Sam, John, James etc., so don't automatically assume that the Sam you find is the Sam you are looking for.
- Don't believe everything you read in print or find on the internet! A huge amount of early (and new) research has proven to be inaccurate. This same rule applies to information you read in Obituaries and Biographical Sketches in County Histories. These are excellent sources of information and clues, just be aware they are often fraught with errors and typos. Always try to verify the information you find in primary sources...the more sources the better!
- DON'T ASSUME! For instance: You find two Blair families in the same county and you automatically want to assume they are related in some fashion. They may well be, but prove it, don't assume it. This occurs quite frequently because of similar migration patterns.

How to Trace Your BLAIR Family Tree

Preston E. Groome

So your family tales of ancestral glory end with Grandpa, or Great Grandpa buying a Model T. That doesn't mean that your roots are lost. They're merely misplaced, and you'll have to dig to find them.

If, like most families, yours hasn't kept detailed archives, don't be discouraged. You can do your own genealogical research and reclaim the heritage that is rightfully yours.

Whether your people arrived in the 1900s, or the 1600s, you can often follow a paper trail back to that first ancestor to set foot on American soil. While there are many good books on this subject, the purpose of this article is to suggest a few ways to go snooping around and getting started in following this paper trail. I'll cite some of my early experiences as they may be typical of other searchers and place emphasis on the value of some of the classic fundamentals of genealogy such as the necessity of working back from your earliest known ancestor; determining the birth date, birth place, marriage place and date, and spouse of each ancestor; where they lived and searching the available local histories of the community in which they lived, the census of the area, city directories, church records, etc., ancestor by ancestor.

You have already made the first big step in this direction by joining Clan Blair Society. It offers many services to help our members in their research pursuits, many of which will be discussed further in this article. But let's not leave Grandpa setting out in that open Model T 'cause it's cold out there and get on with the story. Both of my grandpas fought in the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy. I had no trouble obtaining the essentials of their Civil War Service. My mother often said "that's all they ever want to talk about". They enlisted in the early days of the struggle, survived through to surrender and their military records were readily available and official records were obtained. My paternal Grandpa was listed in the Petersburg City Directory from the mid 1850s up to his enlistment and showed him to be an engineer working for an engineering firm in the city and showed his place of residence. It was known that he was a Methodist because his second marriage was certified to by a Methodist minister on the Marriage Page in the Bible, which apparently was a wedding gift or was obtained at that time because the

records only began with this marriage. His church records began in the mid 1850s. I searched high and low but I could find no record of his first spouse or marriage nor of his birth or parents. Unfortunately I had not learned of the value of census records at this stage; I now know they would have been helpful had I searched the 1860 census.

My interest in genealogy came well after my Grandpas were long gone. I knew my paternal Grandpa enlisted in the Confederate Army from Petersburg, Virginia. I searched the paper trail throughout Virginia for records of his birth and parents without success. My parents never discussed his parents or family to my recollection, and they, too, had disappeared from the scene. Finally I remembered that he had lost his first wife shortly after the War and remarried, 'cause the Bible records told me so and that I descended from his second wife. But the Bible Records didn't go back. They started with the Second Marriage.

It then occurred to me to write for a copy of his marriage certificate to his second wife. This might appear to some as a useless move because the Bible record clearly identified the details of the second marriage, but this proves the saying of "leave no stone unturned; you never know what's under it 'till you turn it over. When that certificate arrived it showed that he was born in Kent County, Maryland, of which I was completely unaware.

I was working in New York City at the time and the next day's lunch hour found me heading for the Genealogy Department of the New York Public Library. Upon arrival I asked the Librarian how to go about finding records of ancestors born in Kent County Maryland. Without moving from his tracks he said "well, you are in luck; we have a very good source record for Kent County, Maryland". He then immediately reached under the counter and . . . pulled out "*Source Records for Kent County, Maryland*" and turned to an entire page of Source Records, mostly of local area histories, for the GROOME Family. There I found enough paper trails to take me back not only to my immigrant ancestor born ca. 1685 in Suffolk County, England, arrived in America ca 1715 and a copy of his parents 1680 Quaker Marriage Certificate which incidentally had the name "Groome" spelled three different ways in the same document,, but to several generations of his ancestors, the earliest identifiable one of which was born ca. 1590s. They presented another problem, however. My immigrant ancestor's name was SAMUEL GROOME; there were records of Samuel Groome extending from 1649 through to the 1850s. It seemed that every generation had a Samuel and every sibling's family had a Samuel emphasizing the necessity of working

backwards, one generation at a time. It also took me back to a sibling ancestor who arrived in Massachusetts in 1650, left, went back to England, became a London Merchant, a ships owner and captain transporting indentured servants and supplies to Maryland and Virginia and tobacco back to England in the 1650s-1680s, and one of the twelve Proprietors and Receiver General and Surveyor of East Jersey in 1680s. His name, too, was Samuel Groome.

Towards the end of my tracking down the paper trails uncovered by my visit to the New York Public Library and putting the pieces together in generation by generation form, I found that a great uncle had already been there, done basically the same thing and written a book in 1907 that included my family, which proves another classic fundamental of genealogy, i.e. check for previously written family histories. However, I have been able to add considerably to his work, confirm some of his suspicions and take the family proof back several generations beyond the immigrant ancestor.

It became easier, then to follow the paper trail of my maternal ancestral line back to a lady living in a small town in rural North Carolina who put me in touch with one of my distant STALLINGS relatives who had collected a filing cabinet full of Stallings Records, later published, which led me back to Nicholas Stallings born 1617 in Stallingsboro, Lincoln Co. England, and emigrated to James City County, Virginia in 1635.

Well, you might say, as my wife does, "you were lucky". I'll be the first to admit that I was, but the luck only came after I spent several years of digging to find the stone that had the luck under it. You, too, will not know how lucky you are until you find the stone that has the key to your paper trail. My luck was there all along but I did not know about it and did not find it until I turned over lots of stones. You, too, might have to turn over a few or lots of stones until you find your lucky one, but I can assure you that its there waiting for you to come seek.

Clan Blair Society offers many services to help you in your seeking. While this article will mention a few suggestions, the CBS Blair Family Lending Library contains many books; some 66 items are listed in our 1997 DIRECTORY, pages 6-9, pertaining to the BLAIR Family or are of interest to our BLAIR Members. *The Source*, a Reference Book in four parts, is one such book which you might find helpful in getting started. As its cover says "A book that's already done the work for you", is reviewed in the 1996 3rd Quarter *BLAIR BRUIDHINN*. I'm sure you'll find many more of interest to

you in the DIRECTORY listing. While, as is explained in the DIRECTORY, the books are kept at and dispensed from the ODOM Genealogical Library in Moultrie GA, Louise Swackhamer is our Librarian and will be glad to help guide you through its contents and to answer any questions you may have.

The DIRECTORY is a combined effort, primarily of two people. Preston Groome compiles and maintains the Membership Address database from which it is prepared and from which it and the Newsletters are distributed while Cherie Blair puts the package together, dresses it up, publishes and distributes it. I would like to add at this point that any errors in the publication are probably the result of my translation errors in compiling the database and I would like to be informed of them so the database can be corrected. I also urge you to promptly notify me of any address changes so our database can be maintained so as not to have you miss Newsletters or Directories in the future.

While speaking of paper trails, CBS also participates in **BLAIRLIN**, our computerized Blair Ancestral Lineage Matching System. This database was published as *BLAIRLIN III* in mid-1993 when it contained 8453 BLAIR or BLAIR-related lineages, some excerpted from reliably researched publications and of over 800 members of CBS and BSGR (Blair Society for Genealogical Research). Matches had been identified for over half of these members and the matches were compiled into some 80 BLAIR Family Trees. Copies of this publication are available in the Lending Library, however, personal copies are still available at the publication price of \$25.00 with a check made payable to BLAIRLIN FUND and sent to its compiler, Preston Groome, 5 Nichols Rd, Convent Station, NJ 07960.

BLAIRLIN is an on-going project. Members of both Societies are invited to submit their lineage for inclusion in the database and their lineage is entered into it and matched against all present and future entries and they are informed when matches are detected and compiled into a BLAIR TREE. This, too, is a combined effort of two people, Shawn Blair who enters lineages into its database and Preston Groome, the originator of this computerized Blair Ancestral Lineage Matching System and its present co-Compiler stands ready and anxious to help members take advantage of this modern-day method of combining members research efforts to the useful advantage of the entire group. Plans are in the developmental stage for another printing of **BLAIRLIN's** database within the next couple of years. We hope it will contain your ancestral line.

The INTERNET is one of our newest service offerings and is rapidly expanding to where it is becoming one of our major areas of interest and help. Shawn Blair is our WebMaster and he stands ready to help you turn stones over in this new media.

Our Quarterly Newsletter, a prize-winning compilation, contains a QUERY Column in which members can enter Queries for information pertaining to their ancestors which many members find quite helpful. It also contains other articles of interest to our members researching their own line. The Newsletter Editor, Skip Hilty, is always ready to be helpful and encourages participation with anything you wish to contribute of general interest to her readers. Skip is helped in this effort by Cherie Blair, who after Skip puts the material into readable form turns it over to Cherie who massages it into our unique format with all of the interesting graphics to give it maximum eye appeal. Anne Groome, the Query Column Editor, stands ready to help in compiling a Query or to be helpful in other genealogical questions or areas in which a member may be interested.

Clan Blair also participates in many of the Scottish Gatherings and Games, usually with a tent where our members can gather, obtain refreshments and talk with other members and other BLAIRS about their interests and frequently find not previously known cousins. At all such Gatherings and CBS presences you will usually find a CBS Commissioner available to help or to tell you where you can get help.

Once you start turning those stones over you never know where the paper trail to be found under them might lead, but one thing we can assure you is that it is addictive. You will enjoy it and there is nothing to compare with the thrill one experiences when you find that stone, your lucky stone, that uncovers the key to your elusive ancestors. When I found mine on my lunch hour, I never got back to work that day and couldn't wait to get home to tell my wife of my find. Your lucky stone is there, too, but you, like I, will never know that you have one until you go and find it. You have already made an excellent start. CBS and all of its helpers are here to help you find it!