



Past and Present

Newsletter of The Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society
October 2019

www.sgesjax.org

Quote of the month

The Two Basic Rules of Family History Writing:

1/Do not 'wait until I finish my research' to get started. You will never finish your research.
2/Do not try to tell everyone everything. You will become overwhelmed and lose your motivation." –Linda Coffin

Genealogy detectives at the SGES Library

"The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy" by Blaine T. Bettinger SR-53. Sections in this book include Getting Started, Selecting a Test, Analyzing and Applying Test Results.

Announcements

Because of technology issues all emails sent and received from sgesjax@att.net during the month of August have been lost. If you sent a message and have not heard back from us, that is the reason. Please accept our apology and do write again so that we can address your requests.

The SGES Library is staffed by volunteers. It is our intent to be open the specified days and times indicated in this newsletter. Issues do occasional arise, so we ask that you call ahead 904-778-1000 to make sure library will be open the specific day you wish to visit.

Story of the month

Most Difficult Blasdell Brick-Wall By Barry C Sweetman

I first started my genealogy research back in the 90's as a middle-aged man. I had always wanted to research my father's ancestry, but I was afraid that, as I always joked, "I was descended from horse thieves". Phew. I can now thankfully admit that's not what I found. My father was born in England and since my grandfather emigrated to the United States in the early 20th century and became a naturalized citizen shortly thereafter, my father, who was born in Bristol, England to a naturalized American citizen held dual citizenship and as it turned out so do I. But my father isn't the subject of this article, rather it is my mother's ancestry, the Blasdell family from Ontario. My grandfather Blasdell was a Merchant Marine sailing the Great Lakes during the First World War. I didn't get to know him though, as he died many years before I was born. My grandmother Blasdell and I were always close, and I can remember her pulling out a box of pictures many times and telling me who everyone was. I had never met any of those relatives and come to find out they were mostly Canadian. As a seven-year-old child I wasn't necessarily interested in people I'd never met, I'd rather have been out playing. But I dutifully listened to what she was telling me. It's unfortunate that she died before I had a chance to write it all down, but I didn't. And because of that, my family research has been much more difficult. I eventually traced my Blasdell ancestry back to an Isaac Blasdell who migrated to Upper Canada (present day Ontario, Canada) in 1796 because he was dissatisfied with the new post revolution American government, but for 20+ years that's as far as could get. This has been a very difficult brick-wall to break down because he left no record of his life before moving to Canada, and not much afterwards either. In 1796 Isaac petitioned the Governor of Canada for 200 acres of land and in his petition, he stated that he had "lately come into the Province with a wife". Nothing more. I always knew he originated in New Hampshire but couldn't find any reference to his

parents. Could this have been because his family fought for independence during the Revolution, but he didn't like the resulting government. Well anything's possible but I couldn't find any evidence of that. Twenty years of research and I still couldn't manage to destroy that brick-wall. I had six generations of Blasdell ancestry, but I was sure it should be extended to the colonial settlers of New England but just couldn't make the jump. If I could only make the connection of one generation, I would have an unbroken lineage back to 16th century Lancashire, England which is where the Bleasdale family originated. The surname was changed to Blaisdell when they migrated to the colonies and to Blasdell upon emigration to Canada. I and many other researchers believed that Isaac was born about 1775 or 1780 but there was never any proof. No records existed so it was as if he just appeared from nowhere. He had been termed a latter-day Loyalist since he was supposedly born during the Revolutionary war and had Loyalist tendencies and we never had any reason to consider anything different; although there were indications that he could have been married before his current wife Rebecca Misener. Come to find out that this point, and his Loyalist attitude were very important clues. What if he had fought in the Revolution and then determined that he didn't like the new government? If he had another wife before he married Rebecca Misener about 1796, he would have had to have been born prior to 1775. And there I started to realize the most likely truth. Recently, I started digging into another Isaac Blaisdell who I thought at times might be the same person but couldn't reconcile the 15 to 20 years difference in birth dates. This other Isaac Blaisdell was born on June 2, 1760 in Amesbury, Massachusetts, but his father moved his family to New Hampshire in 1762 to practice his trade as a clockmaker. This Isaac had fought in the Revolution beginning with the Battle of Bennington in Bennington, New Hampshire with the New Hampshire Militia and ending up as a corporal in Capt. Daniel Rummel's Co, New Hampshire Militia in 1779. Digging a little further I discovered that his sister married and moved to, of all places, Ontario. Then I found out that his brother also enlisted in the military in 1813, was sent to the Canadian frontier and never returned to New Hampshire.

Although this isn't definitive proof that the two Isaac's are one and the same people, there is enough reason to consider that they probably are. Certainly, genealogy isn't an exact science, but when I presented my argument to the Blaisdell Family National Association which I belong to, just to verify that my theory is plausible, I got an encouraging response. I can find no other feasible possibility, so I believe I have found my link to the New England Blaisdell family and thereby to the earliest North American emigrant Ralf Bleasdale born in Hawkshead, Lancashire, England. In 1635, he sailed to America, aboard the ship Angel Gabriel and ended up shipwrecked in Pemaquid Point, Maine. He survived and made his way to Massachusetts. The family spread to Maine and New Hampshire, and other colonies, but that is a much longer story.

Website

Noted Genealogist researcher/author Thomas MacEntee has made available to the public, free access to his "Genealogy Do-Over" program. This is a project-based initiative to improve genealogy research skills while having fun too. Although started in 2018, it is still applicable in 2019.

Topics: 1) Reviewing DNA Testing Options and 2) Organizing Research Materials – Digital

Which DNA Test is Best? One Way to Start . . .

. . . is to read! That means studying various articles available online and in print. I've learned so much over the past five years from these great blogs that feature DNA and genealogy:

- DNA Bargains – Which Test Should I Use?
<https://dnabargains.com/dna-test-use/>
- DNAeXplained – Genetic Genealogy
<http://dna-explained.com/>

- Kitty Cooper's Blog
<http://blog.kittycooper.com/>
- The Genetic Genealogist
<http://www.thegeneticgenealogist.com/>
- The Legal Genealogists – DNA
<http://www.legalgenealogist.com/blog/category/dna/>
- Your Genetic Genealogist
<http://www.yourgeneticgenealogist.com/>

DNA Genealogy Toolkit

Another great read – and FREE – is the *Jump into Genetic Genealogy: Use Genealogical DNA Testing to Solve Family Mysteries* e-book from Family Tree University. This guide will help you learn the terminology involved with DNA genealogy and you'll be able to differentiate between the various tests.

How about a wiki, like Wikipedia, but for DNA genealogy? That's what you'll find at the ISOGG Wiki(http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Wiki_Welcome_Page) created and maintained by the International Society of Genetic Genealogy. This site makes it easy to search for terminology, DNA test vendors, and more.

Interpreting DNA Testing Results

One tool I need to use more is GedMatch (<https://gedmatch.com/>) which allows you to upload your testing results from various tests and run reports as well as connect with other genealogists using DNA testing.

Organizing Research Materials – Digital

While computers and the Internet have been a boon to genealogy researchers, with more data come more headaches including how to keep it all organized!

Danger Ahead: The Digital Dark Ages

Which of these two items do you think is more in peril of being lost: An original photograph from 1950 OR a digital scan of that same photograph? While the printed version might be lost, or consumed in a fire or damaged in a flood, consider all these calamities that could befall your digital version:

- Hard drive failure
- Accidental deletion of file
- Conversion from high-res TIFF file format to lower-res JPG format
- File corruption
- File format becomes obsolete
- Storage on outdated media such as floppy disks
- Over-correction of color and features using photo editing software

The truth is that there is no guarantee that TIFF or other file formats will even be around in 20 years. I'm sure that even with glasses, my eyes will always be able to see that 1950 photo!

Pick a File Naming Convention and Stick With It!

There are many different ways to name your digital files used in genealogy research. Some prefer a numbering scheme while others begin with the surname. What about married female ancestors? (I ALWAYS use the surname with which they were born.)

My method right now, and one that works for me is as follows: SLATTERY John Vincent b1888 WWI Draft Reg Card tells me, at first glance, that the file is a World War I draft registration card for John Vincent Slattery who was born in 1888. I add the “b _____” segment since I have many ancestors with the same name, such as John Austin.

Metadata Is Your Friend

What is metadata? It is “data about data” but there is an easier way to get genealogists interested. What if I told you that there was a way for you to add information about a digital image to the file – such as the subject, data, location and even a source citation – to the file so that it is always part of the file structure? That is what metadata can do.

Once you’ve mastered the metadata concepts, consider adding important metadata to each of your genealogy research files!

Organize AND Backup Digital Materials

What good is spending hours organizing digital files if you don’t ensure their future accessibility? Every genealogist should have a data backup plan and also perform backups on a regular basis.

Try employing the 3-2-1 Rule:

- 3 copies of each file. This means one primary copy, likely your hard drive, and then two other copies such as in the cloud and on an external hard drive.
- 2 different media formats. Don’t store all copies on different hard drives or in different cloud platforms. Use different media such as hard drive, cloud, USB flash drive etc.
- 1 offsite copy. This means do not copy files to a USB drive that you keep near your computer. Place it in a fire safe. Better yet, make sure one of your file copies is in the cloud which means it is not physically stored near the hard drive version.

Don’t forget that backing up on a regular schedule is important as well. In the genealogy community, the 1st day of each month is promoted as Data Backup Day and is a reminder to all genealogists to future proof their research data!

<https://abundantgenealogy.com/genealogy-do-over-month-10-october-2018/>

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New additions to the SGES Library

GA-520 History of Macon County GA—Louise F Hays
NC-347 North Carolina Marriages and Deaths 1826-1845 Carrie L Broughton
EF-374 Naturalizations in the American Colonies –Gluseppi
AL-322 Marriages and Death Notices from Alabama Newspapers & Family
Records 1819-1890 –Foley
NC-348 North Carolina Bible Records—Wilma C Spence