

INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY RESEARCH BY BELINDA JO ADAMS. (2018)

This book¹ is in honor of our ancestors whose genes we carry in our DNA makeup. It is also dedicated to our grandchildren and the generations to come.

For many years I wanted to know my ancestry and now I know a lot more than I ever thought was possible. I hope this answers some of your questions as you read it during your time of curiosity.

Many times, during the five years we lived in NC, I noticed men who looked like my Gill uncles and would tell Steve so. Little did I know that my family moved from that same area in NC to GA, so they were probably distant cousins!

As I started working on our family tree, I found that we do not have a family tree, but a family forest with all the trees together. Later, I decided it was a family jungle with all the different families from each family group marrying one another making it all tangled! Many branches reach out and overlap others, connecting our families time and again.

If you think about life in the 1700-1800s, when our ancestors came to Georgia, there were not many people here. Travel was not convenient like it is now. A five mile distance meant another town or church because it was too far to walk. Once, I walked in a walk-a-thon with my sister when her church was celebrating a hundred years. They walked from their church to the one that started it, six miles away. That is when I realized the distance factor.

Families close by were where suitors looked for future spouses, because it was convenient to court ones closer to home. Thus, sometimes siblings of one family married siblings of another family. Sometimes, first cousins married maybe because they did not know they were not supposed to ... or not. The families were so combined, that by the time my younger uncles (and later, their children) came along, it was hard for them to find a spouse who was not a cousin for them to consider.

As I work on this, I see a newspaper announcement about a Crosby and a Gill setting a wedding date and I thought, "Here we go again! I wonder if they are distant cousins."

Keep in mind, back when our country started, the traveling preacher may not have come around for a long time and if a couple wanted to get

¹ Actually, it is not a book yet. ☺ Maybe one day.

married the custom was, sometimes, to go ahead and 'marry' and when the preacher came around, make it legal. That is maybe the case when some of the children's birthdates are before marriage dates ... sometimes.

I have enjoyed searching into the past and seeing what our ancestors may have been like and to make connections today with cousins before it's too late. I've enjoyed getting to know my family better. I am able to see photos of my ancestors, having some of them spark memories that had all but gone. I've learned some memories are better off letting them remain in the past. Hopefully, we have learned from those decisions and can move on to help future generations have a brighter life. However, some things just need to be told.

Make sure you read the footnotes on each page, for they contain more information and tidbits.

One question people keep asking me is: Where did our ancestors come from? As far as I can see most have come from England. However, when they are listed as coming to United States from England, many times, that is where they boarded the ship. They came to England from other countries, also, because of persecution for religion or other reasons. Place of birth is listed sometimes as Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France or other places.

Another question is: Is there any Indian or Black in our ancestry? My answer to that is, I do not know, from my study of history. We do live in what used to be Indian land and in the Deep South where slavery was a way of life for some people. Some of our ancestors owned slaves and some slave owners took advantage of their female slaves ... not saying ours did. We don't know.

Sometimes, slave owners named their slaves with their last name. After they received freedom, the ex-slaves needed a surname and chose various ones, one choice being their owner's last name. Sometimes, people married people of other races. It was not that big of an issue back then when the country was settled. We don't have photos of them, so who knows?

I have learned that at the beginning of the time when people started coming to this continent, in the 1600's, there were about forty years where Indian, White, and Black people intermarried, held public office and in general lived in freedom without thought of the 'race factor'. I don't know just what caused it to stop, but there came a time that it was 'incorrect'. Some Black people lost their freedoms and some Indians were pushed out of their homes. The descendants of those people were divided by color of

skin and started marrying among themselves so the ‘colors’ were once more divided. Maybe that is not the best way to say it, but ...

Even with that ‘division’ there was a group of people in the mountain areas of the Southeast who were called Melungeon. Some explain they were descended from Portuguese explorers, or perhaps from Turkish slaves or Gypsies. Now a new DNA study in the Journal of Genetic Genealogy shows that the families historically called Melungeons are the offspring of sub-Saharan African men and white women of northern or central European origin.² You can do a search on that word and verify this information.

With the case of the Indians, many of them took on ‘Christian’ names, so we also don’t know there. Unless, someone from our generation knows from our family history and can share that source of information with us before it’s too late. So, I don’t know for sure about any of the Indian links. Note: I have learned from my research that you cannot go on the comments that an ancestor that had straight, black hair or high cheek bones was Indian. And there can’t be the amount of Indian Princesses for everyone to claim they have one in their line.

I did a lot of the research online, verifying it along the way with local history books and interviews with people. You have to be careful with online research, especially the posted family trees. Someone may see a bit of information they think is with their family, but is not. Instead of making sure, they attach it to the tree, then others merge their tree with theirs and you get a whole listing of trees with the same mistake.

For an example of how things can get MIXED-UP while searching for family history, I was looking for D.R. Gill’s 1920 U.S. Census. I had all his information typed in and came up with this information. BUT, this is **not** our D.R. Gill.

Robert Gill wife: Ethel ---Smelser, Grant, Wisconsin---Born abt 1899

3 out of 4 points of the information were almost the same, but ours did not live in Wisconsin. I know that is obvious, but I saw similar mistakes posted with family trees. Be careful! Names and even places are similar. Sometimes, a name may be very close and the family may seem close to the one I am researching, but is the wrong one. Don’t believe it just because it is online and others post the information to their tree.

Make sure you read the footnotes on each page of this book, for they contain more information and tidbits.

² Melungeon DNA Study Reveals Ancestry, Upsets 'A Whole Lot Of People' By TRAVIS LOLLER 5/24/12

Another aspect of research is figuring which generation the person is with. Is he John Sr. or John Jr. or John III. Sometimes, John Jr. would be called John Sr. and that would make John III, John Jr. Of course, dates helped with that ... sometimes. I chose to number them all if they are in our line.

Namesakes. Such a neat idea to name children after people! In earlier days, this was done not only to honor people but as a sort of way of making sure of the inheritance, being the names would be the same as the parents, etc. However, by parents naming their children after their parents, themselves, and their siblings, names are used over and over and over and get confusing during research.

Surnames: That is your last name. In our family forest we have many surnames from Adams to Zeh (a second cousin twice removed) and maybe Zorn. That would be A-Z except for Q & X (unless we can count O'Quin)! But, that is in the whole family forest. Topographical surnames were among the earliest created, giving people easily names to be recognized by in the small villages of the Middle Ages. Locational surnames were originally given as a means of identification to those who left their birthplace to settle elsewhere.³

Surnames became necessary when governments introduced personal taxation. In England this was known as Poll Tax.⁴ Throughout the centuries, surnames in every country have continued to change spellings, for various reasons. Maybe a person did not know how it was spelled and relied on others to write it for them, or a census worker guessed at the spelling.

Sometimes, for some reason or the other, people changed their last names and started a new life. That can cause a family tree to stop dead still. For example, one of my 4th great-granddads was named Francis Harrison. After research trying to find out where he came from, I read that he chose to call himself by his mother's maiden name when he arrived in America, leaving his dad's name of Coxler, behind.

As I research, when a family tree gets confusing as in various parents for a person or some other confusion, that is where I stop, or if there's no documentation. Even if the tree is way back in time, if the facts are confusing, I don't want to include it just on speculation. I use that rule as my guideline. Saying that, sometimes all we have is a story passed down through the generations. If that story and sources seem ok, then I will

³ © Copyright: Name Origin Research www.surnamedb.com 1980 - 2014

⁴ Copyright: Name Origin Research www.surnamedb.com 1980 - 2014

include it as a side note, because if it is true, I sure don't want to leave it out!

I read a quote while researching, "Genealogy without documentation is mythology." The Bible verse: "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying" 1 Timothy 1:4 has also kept me 'in line'.

I will also, along the way, put in notes I came across I thought was interesting or adds to the story of the family line, as in the note a couple paragraphs above.

I also want to thank The Broomes, and Mr. Huxford, The Huxford Genealogical Society Inc. and all the Wiregrass and County researchers for the work they did before I started this project. Their work gave me a good foundation to see how much more I could find.

Note for understanding some of the places our ancestors lived: When Georgia was a colony of England, it was laid off into parishes: Christ Church, St. Matthews, St. George, St. Philip, St. John, St. Andrew, and St. Paul parishes were created by an act of March 15, 1758. St. David, St. Patrick, St. Thomas, and St. Mary Parishes were created in 1765. Later, they became the counties we have today. After counties were established, new ones were made from others, changing borders often. Sometimes, a family might be in different counties at various times, and never having left their property.

Unless noted, all locations are in the United States.

Some of our lineage goes way back in time and some only a few generations. For this volume, I am going to try to use the 1850 U.S. Census as a stopping point. That census was the first that listed names of all family members. Before that time, speculation is used a lot in any listing a person puts into print. I will, however give a summary at the end of each family, if I have documentation which shows the family goes further back in time. Time and size of book prevent me from including everyone. Sometimes, there is proof for further back and I will include it when that happens.

Before 1752, the year began on March 25th. January 1st through March 24th were at the end of the year. Old Style (O.S.) and New Style (N.S.) are used to indicate whether the year has been adjusted. When that happens and I notice, I will use both years.

Deacons played a respected and important role in early New England churches. They sat in a raised pew near the pulpit and had special duties during communion. Some ancestors have that as part of their name, a title, such as sir. A goodwife was a woman who took good care of her home. It was a special title.

A Puritan was a member of the religious group in the 16th and 17th centuries that advocated “purity” of worship and doctrine who believed in personal and group piety. Puritans were persecuted in England and came to America so they would be free to practice their religion. When a man came to the colony or became a member of the church, he was not *free*. He was not forced to work, but his movements were carefully watched to see if he followed their ways. After this probationary period, he became a “**freeman**.” Men then took the *Oath of a Freeman* when they promised to protect the Commonwealth and not to overthrow the government.⁵

When the colonists arrived in America they continued to use British money, such as the pound, shilling and pence. The dollar did not come into being until 1792.

Please make sure of the GPS inserts. I got some of them from various places online, so all may not be correct. As we can, we will check with our own machine.

Did I say, make sure you read the footnotes on each page, for they contain more than sources; sometimes interesting tidbits?

Guidelines to understanding my organization.

Abbreviations used: b.- born; d.- died; married - m. ; dau – daughter; s/o - son of; d/o - daughter of; abt - about; EOL – end of line (of course, this is not the end of the line, but the known and proved part of it); UNKOWN – unknown at this time - Sometimes first names or last names were left out of many writings. RS - Revolutionary Soldier. SAR - Sons of the American Revolution and DAR - Daughters of the American Revolution.

sic - means it was transcribed by author just as originally written, and not translated.

GED file - a family tree saved in a format that will import into other family tree programs besides the one that created it.

Just so you know, Most of the 1890 U.S. Census records were destroyed in a 1921 fire, so that is why it is missing throughout the book.⁶

At the beginning, I am going to include my Harris side. [I purposely did not include personal information for the 1st generation due to descendants still being alive, but have them on file, except for the ones who

⁵ <http://www.americanfamilyhistory.com/Shepard%20Family/ShepardRalph1603.html>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1890_United_States_Census

have not given me the information.] After that, I am going to list the families while joining surnames as close together as possible as they connect to the family.

When I list a couple's children, I list the mother's name first and only her maiden name. It DOES NOT mean they were not married. Most family stories go from way back to the present. I have chosen to start at the closest link to us and go back in time.

If the town or city includes the county, I list them with commas: Blackshear, Pierce, GA. If the county is without a town listed, I add the word county: Pierce County, GA.

I chose to list dates in this manner: 9 Nov 1951 ... instead of November 9, 1951.

I want to thank everyone I interviewed for contributing to the making of this book and for their patience at my many questions, sometimes repeated to make sure I heard it right and remembered it correctly. Thanks to all for helping me get the items together I needed as well as reading, editing and encouraging me to keep going with the project. I think I wore everyone out with my questions, but I wanted to make sure all was correct.

DISCLAIMER: I know there will be wrong information in this book because I have seen mistakes in other books from people with a lot more education and much more knowledge of family trees than I have. It is hard to make sure all dates and names are correct, but I am doing the best I can to make sure of correctness. If you see something that is wrong, **PLEASE** let me know. I can update information in a future revision. I want to make this a correct history of our family. I know the genealogy is not complete, but I have tried to do the best I could with the research I have found. Saying that, the information is accurate as to my knowledge, but not guaranteed. If you are planning to add it to your family file, please verify and check behind me to make sure I did not input something wrong. That is one reason I included sources.