

## Memories of the 1988 Blue Family Reunion

I was going through some things that Ron Blue gave to me, and these articles were about the 1988 reunion. I hope this brings back memories to those that were present at that reunion, and inspire others to attend the reunion coming up in June 2002.

Linda

### A Visit to Blawenburg

1988

Kenneth D. Blue

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My interest in my family roots probably dates back to the mid 1950's when I received a post card from Bob Blue of San Rafael, California. Bob was researching our surname "Blue."

Later Bob wrote that he believed I was descended from the Blue family who had settled here in Hampshire County, Virginia, during Colonial Times.

Bob's conjecture has proven to be both correct and incorrect. Before settling here in Virginia (now West Virginia), our ancestors lived in Somerset County, New Jersey. When migrating, some family members settled here in Romney. My ancestors settled over in Berkley, County, (some of us will travel to Berkley next Monday to investigate our roots).

The recognized family patriarch, up in New Jersey and before the migration, was John Blaw I, Number 1.0 on the N.B.F.A. chart. John had eight children, four sons and four daughters.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, this family lived and worked in the Somerset County area of New Jersey.

Apparently, just prior to the Revolutionary War some of John Blaw's children and grandchildren decided to resettle in Virginia. Moving to new, untilled land was common in early America. It was the answer to an expanding population. It solved the problem of splitting up family farms when inheritance was considered.

But, not all of the family members left New Jersey. Frederick (NBFA 1.5) stayed and farmed a portion of land inherited from John I.

Michael (NBFA 1.3) operated a mill. The popularity of Michael's mill may have led to the adopting of his last name (Blaw) into the Town site of Blawenburg.

When Bill Blue told me that a Colonial Farm House still existed on farm land once owned by my ancestor, Frederick (1.5), and that a tour of the farm house and nearby family cemetery was proposed for the 1988 reunion, I got excited and wanted to make the trip.

Saturday's (1988) reunion here in Romney was enjoyable. I think the highlight was meeting Charlie Lewis (Charlie is also a 1.5 on the NBFA chart). I enjoyed Charlie's presentation on "Flatboating Down The Ohio." Incidentally, the scene he described is depicted in the movie, "Winning of the West."

Sunday, some of us visited Old Bedford Village up in Bedford, Pennsylvania.

Monday was used for traveling from West Virginia to New Jersey.

I truly did not know what to expect in Blawenburg. We rendezvoused at the "Hilltop Restaurant." Blawenburg is a small rural crossroads and the "Hilltop" was easy to find. It's at the only stop sign in town.

We went first to the Blue/Nevius Cemetery. Mr. Walter Baker guided us to the cemetery. The gravesites are in a wooded lot surrounded by farmland. Mr. Baker, who lives in the area, warned us to take care where we talked. The place was a tangle of low branches, thorny vines and worst of all, Poison Ivy.

Bill Blue had with him a page copied from the Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey. It catalogued the gravesites over which we were standing.

The survey had been made during the 1930's and the publication was dated around 1940.

Of special interest was the entry for Frederick Blaw. We were looking for a stone (field stone) into which "FB D/25 May 1793" had been engraved.

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*The Chalice*

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We would be visiting the Frederick Blaw house later that morning. Some of the more agile of our group scurried through the underbrush, hopefully taking care about the Poison Ivy. These more adventurous folks were soon dusting off the field stone markers and singing off the inscriptions.

When they found the one marked "F. B." I joined them. I presumed that, if all the facts were correct, I was standing at my great, great, great, great, great grandfather's grave. I allowed myself a moment of silent reverence and joined the others looking at the other stones.

There are about 50 gravesites representing 20 family surnames in this graveyard. Predominant in the names are Blaw/Blue, and Nevius (Jane Nevius was Frederick Blaw's second wife).

We next went to another burial place on the property of the Beagle Club (A rural hunt club), which is North West of Downtown Blawenburg. Here again, field stone markers had been chiseled and placed over the gravesites. The names on these stones were Blaw.

After visiting both sites, my overall impression was one of wonderment. Our far distant ancestors had created these burying grounds here in the New Jersey countryside. They had marked these graves with hand carved fieldstones and for two hundred years they had remained undisturbed.

What miracle of preservation had kept these places from being plowed under or built upon? Only a few miles away were the major population centers of New Jersey and New York, yet here in the countryside, our ancestors had remained undisturbed and their markers not vandalized.

Conjecture has it that the Blaw/Nevius burial sites (the first place we visited) will be turned into a Golf course, possibly one of those with houses or condos lining the fairways. We can only hope that the new owners, or developers would respect this colonial graveyard and fence it in, endeavoring to keep it undisturbed for another 200 years.

An added note about visiting these gravesites, photographic conditions were poor and with my old camera, I didn't even try. I understand that pictures taken by others in the group turned out poorly and that was disappointing.

Our third stop was what Bill and I have jokingly called Fred's house though we have intended no irreverence. Frederick Blaw had inherited a portion of John Blaw I's land. On this parcel is a nicely preserved and restored Colonial home.

Pierce and Joan Lonergan currently own this house. Mr. and Mrs. Lonergan were gracious enough to open their home to our group of almost 20 people. They seem proud of their house and open it often for organized tours of Colonial Farm Housed in their area. They did have one request. We all signed waivers (in case of injuries, they did not want to be sued) and we entered at our own risk.

Ursula Brecknell, an architectural historian, accompanied us through the house. Ursula dated the home about 1790. As this was near the end of Frederick's life, there is doubt as to whether he built the house or whether his son, Ezekial, actually built and first occupied the house.

The present form of the house does not represent its original floor plan. Ursula showed us what she believed to be the 1790's portion.

The Lonergan's told us that when they acquired the house, it had been divided up into apartments and that they had endeavored to restore it to its original configuration, probably representing the house as it might have been in the mid 1800's.

One compromise was the kitchen in the "T" portion of the house. Walls had been moved to give them the kitchen space they desired.

It was a thrill to walk through what may have been my great, great, great, great, great, grandfather's house. I appreciated the opportunity very much.

Our last stop in Blawenburg was a roadside view of what is believed to be John I's house. Marian Palmer now owns the house. She chose not to open her house to a large group.