

# Chapter Two

## John Blair's Impact

### **Facts concerning the relationship of the Patricks to John Blair:**

Sharon Cemetery grave marker says “ Blair, Capt. John  
Born in Tyrone County, Ireland November 12, 1770”

John Blair left Ireland for America in April of 1796

Thomas Patrick Born about 1784. His Grave marker at Sharon Cemetery  
says “Died Aug 8, 1842, In the 58<sup>th</sup> year of his age”

Anthony Patrick was born about 1775.

There was a woman named Isabela Blair that lived at Carrickatain in 1795. In “The Update to The Search for Thomas Patrick’s Ireland Home” on page 5, it is reported: “We did find one piece of exciting evidence. On page 48 of the 1795 Rent Roll book (PRONI ID – D623/C/4/3 Rental for Donelong Manor 1794 – 1809) there is a list of the “Cottiers” of the Patrick Leasehold. Cottiers were families that worked and lived on the Leasehold. On the page with the names of the Cottiers, there appears to be a contract spelling out the details of the agreement with the Cottiers. It is hard to read, but it appears to say that the Cottiers will pay so much per year (looks like 6 lbs and 6.5 ?) toward the land lease. In return, they would get ½ acre of ?? land, a ½ acre of flax land, a ½ acre of potato land, ????, a house and garden and bog ground. There were four cottiers listed. One of the cottiers was named Isabela Blair. This is the first time I had ever seen the name Blair associated with Carrickatain or Donegheady Parish. It is certainly feasible that this could be the connection that allowed for a close relationship to develop between John Blair, Anthony Patrick and Thomas Patrick. John Blair immigrated to America in 1796.

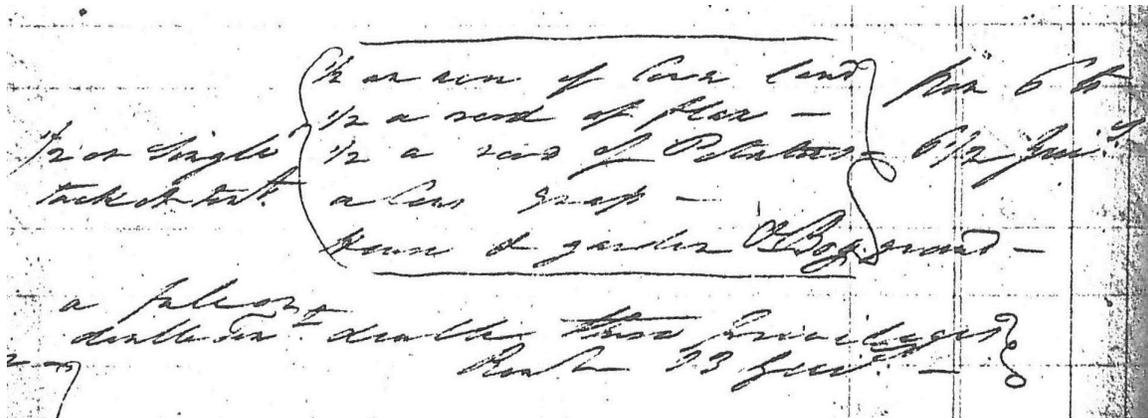
\* NOTE - This is hard to read. I think  
it is the contract with the Colliers)  
JHPJR.

Ch or son of Carl and Mrs 6th  
1/2 a cord of fuel -  
1/2 a cord of Potatoes 1/2 bushel  
a cow grass -  
four of garden vegetables -

a plow  
dull in duller than  
Wm. Eager  
Wm. Lewis  
Isabella Blair - Cottier  
Law Eager

\* ISABELLA BLAIR

a plow  
dull in duller  
Wm. Eager  
Wm. Lewis  
Isabella Blair - Cottier  
Law Eager



In an Obituary of John Blair, which was published in the Belfast Telegraph in 1848, which researcher Marie Wilson found. It said John Blair grew up in the Donegheady area of County Tyrone.

From John Blair's Will, we know he left an inheritance to all of the living children of Thomas Patrick. See Clause #7 and #8. He identifies these children as "my second cousins".

From John Blair's Will – Clause 12<sup>th</sup> – “---To Eliza Patrick, Marion Alabama, five hundred dollars --- the legacy to E. Patrick may be remitted to her brother James Patrick, Marian;” (Note; from Rebecca Drake's – “Patrick Pride”, -- Eliza and James were the children of Anthony's first marriage to Caroline Leighton.)

Again from the Will – Clause 12<sup>th</sup>—“To the late Anthony Patrick's children by his present Widow, one hundred and sixty-six dollars and two thirds;”

### **Speculation by Joseph H Patrick, Jr.**

It will be speculation on my part, but I will propose a relationship between John Blair and the Patricks. There are some facts, but tying the facts into a conclusion will depend heavily on circumstantial evidence. I want it to be clear that this is opinion and not factual.

I believe that John Blair grew up on Carrickatain. I believe his mother was Isabela (Isabella) Patrick Blair. Why do I believe that? Mainly, because I believe John Blair's relationship with the Patricks has been proven by his actions to be a close and caring relationship. It was also widespread,

covering a lot of different people connected to Carrickatain. He did not spread his wealth over all of Donegheady, he spread it over the people on Carrickatain. Such gifting is indicative of close proximity and a family connection.

My guess is that Thomas and Anthony were sons of Robert Patrick. I am also guessing that Robert had a sister named, Isabella. Isabella married a man with the last name of Blair. For some reason he left the relationship, maybe by divorce, but probably by death. Isabella went back to Carrickatain to raise her family. We know that John Blair also had a brother Samuel, who later came to York County.

In his Will, John Blair identifies the children of Thomas as his “second cousins”. I think he made a common mistake and they were really his “first cousins once removed” or - he used an English system of kinship which differs from our American system. The main obstacle with their being his second cousins is the great difference in the age of Thomas’ children and John Blair. I also speculate that John Blair was a first cousin to both Thomas and Anthony, by their Aunt Isabella Patrick Blair.

Our Patrick family lore said that John Blair “advised, persuaded and /or sponsored” Thomas and Mary Patrick to come to South Carolina. John Blair must have maintained close contact with the Patricks at Carrickatain over a number of years. If in fact, his mother was working and living at Carrickatain, it could help explain the long term close relationship. The children of Anthony’s first marriage also passed through York, with the encouragement and help of John Blair, before moving down to Alabama and Mississippi. There were many children and grandchildren in both the Blair family and the Patrick family named in honor of an Isabella.

Houston Blair, 3009 Rochester Court, Monroe, NC 28110 704-289-8546 [hblair001@carolina.rr.com](mailto:hblair001@carolina.rr.com) . Houston is a Blair family researcher. He provided me a copy of an article on John Blair’s Log of his passage to America. You will need a magnifying glass to read. Sorry!

The View From Home

Co Antrim historian DR DAVID HUME looks at the story of a

voyage across the Atlantic in 1796 and asks what else may be

gathering dust in United States archives



Dr. David Hume

# Why John Blair's Journal makes interesting reading ...

**ON a Thursday in the April of 1796 John Blair stepped on board a ship called the Sally of Savannah, then docked at Larne in Co Antrim.**

The Sally was bound for Charleston in South Carolina; John Blair was one of her passengers who was destined for a new life across the Atlantic.

I first became aware of John Blair through one of his descendants, Roy Blair, who lived in the town of Union in South Carolina.

Roy, through correspondence with me several years ago, outlined the story of his Ulster ancestor, and the voyage which he had made.

In fact, Roy went a bit further than that, ensuring that I received a copy of John Blair's log of the ship's voyage, which is located in the University of South Carolina. One wonders how many other documents relating to Ulster people are stored away in such archives and museums.

During a trip to the Carolinas I got to meet Roy, when he travelled the distance from Union to a church meeting at which I was speaking in the city of Greer. His effort in bringing the John Blair log to light again was a matter of great pride, and he and his family were deeply proud of their

Ulster-Scots roots, like so many folks in the up-country (Piedmont) of the Carolinas!

Roy Blair has never got to see Larne harbour or the coastline of Co Antrim, but knowing it well, it made it easier for one to imagine that day in 1796 when his ancestor set sail, little considering that almost two centuries later someone from Larne would meet one of his many descendants, let alone read his account. And it is a fantastic and literate record.

The account starts on April 21, 1796, when John arrived on the boat, just 15 minutes before she was due to set sail, his late arrival due to farewells to the friends who had come to say goodbye. He writes in his log of how he was conscious that he was leaving his native country, perhaps forever.

The start of the voyage saw the ship have "a considerable motion" and the author found himself "somewhat sick" as a consequence.

It would not be the last piece of rough weather and heavy seas which had to be faced, and the next day the Journal tells us that "I was extremely sick this day, as were the rest of the passengers in general."

On Sunday, April 24, 1796, Blair managed to note that: "My sickness continues this day accompanied with violent frequent vomiting and numbers of the passengers in my situation. Express a wish of being at home again..."

Home may have been in Co. Tyrone, according to what Roy Blair understood, but it is not clear why, that having been the case, John would have travelled to Larne to take ship.

Unfortunately, he does not give anything of family history in the 1796 log. He does, however, provide a fascinating and poignant account of the voyage. For one passenger at least, a man named Hugh Milligan, America would never offer itself as a land of opportunity.

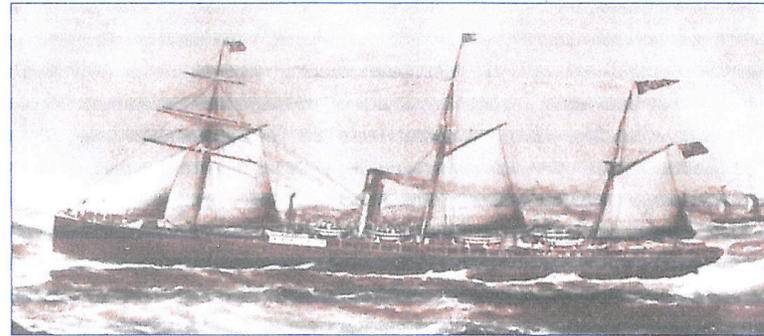
Milligan had apparently suffered an injury in getting on board the ship and he died as the result of a wound. He was buried at sea, his widow being inconsolable at the loss of her husband.

This incident was combined with the ship not making good headway, and an attempt by the ship's steward to cut the rations. A few days later, and things appeared to have improved. Blair could record they had covered 141 miles to add to the 209 already negotiated by the Sally. But it is clear that the length of the voyage resulted in frayed tempers on board the ship. At one point the Ulster author notes "There are but few days passes now without a scuffle of some sort..."

Some of the diversions were innocent enough, as when a Methodist preacher insisted on conducting service despite the reticence of his would-be flock. But there were serious squabbles over places in the food queues, and a code of conduct was devised by Blair and another passenger named Henry McNeill, while a committee of six men was established to investigate grievances.

This "ship's government" ultimately failed, for a row over the food queue led to a battle between the passengers and the ship's captain was forced to restore order.

On May 7, Blair noted a phenomenon which had become the talking point, recording "an uncommon appearance in the western horizon somewhat like a thick vapour arising out of the seas, affecting the cause there has been many conjectures. Some attributed as to the spouting of a whale, but the south-west wind which prevailed, together with the heat of the sun acting upon the water appealed to me to be the most rational cause," his Journal tells us.



The 19th century saw emigrant ships such as this one cross the Atlantic from Ulster to America

A few days later he was relating how the sailors had decided to spend some time diving into the water, something which the passengers were disinclined to do on account of sharks swimming nearby. At one point when some passengers did jump into the sea, they were almost overcome by strong currents and made quickly back to the ship.

The custom of crossing the bar was observed on the ship, with sailors dressed as Neptune and his wife, and passengers who had not been across the Atlantic being ducked into a cask "until half drowned".

In all of this, the situation at home emerged onto the scene. It was 1796, a year after the Battle of the Diamond in Co. Armagh, when the Roman Catholic Defenders had attacked Protestants at Loughgall, leading to the formation of the Orange Order.

John Blair tells us that around 6am on June 19 there was "a general scuffle between the parties we have on board, namely Defenders, or Roman Catholics, and Break of Day Boys, or Protestants. It was occasioned by the former accusing the latter of a murder committed in Ireland; they intend going to law as soon as we arrive in America."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the general climate on board was deteriorating. On June 21, John Blair was describing the passengers as "now beginning to wear a furious countenance," this being increased by contrary winds and calm.

Supplies were running low, as they were further away from Charleston than they had been 12 days before, and some provisions were obtained from a passing ship named the Nancy. For the smokers on board, however, there was little relief; we are informed that lack of tobacco resulted in rope yarn was used instead. Shortly afterwards the fierce majesty of a thunderstorm off the coast was witnessed.

"The horizon seemed all in a blaze with electric fire. About half an hour later it thundered

in a most tremendous manner, accompanied with a very heavy squall which in an instant broke our foreyard, and split our main stay-sail; the sailors with great difficulty got the top sails handed which freed us from danger, at the hazard of their own lives, as some of the fire fell away convenient to the Quarter Deck..."

It was the last drama before land! On July 7, he would write of how the passengers were bringing bundles of their belongings to the deck, as Charleston was only 47 miles away. It was his last entry at sea. John Blair, like his fellow passengers, would step onto American soil and begin a new life.

He would settle in South Carolina, but descendants would spread far west as well, resulting in new generations across the southern states.

Many questions remain from the Journal. Did the Break of Day Boys and the Defenders settle far apart from each other? Who were the other passengers on the ship and where did they end up?

What became of the widow of Hugh Milligan, who was buried at sea? Maybe some of the answers are in other archives in the United States, waiting to be found.



Roy Blair, descendant of John Blair, who wrote the 1796 Journal of his voyage across the Atlantic, meets up with Dr. David Hume in the early 1990s during a visit to Greer Presbyterian Church in South Carolina.



Larne Lough, dominated by an industrial landscape today, was departure point for many emigrant ships in the 18th century, including the Sally of Savannah, which took John Blair to South Carolina in 1796.

## THE FIRST GENERATION OF BLAIR FAMILY

Our story begins in Tyrone County, Ireland in the year 1768 with the birth of Samuel Blair[1], who is our first known Blair progenitor. His immigration to the United States followed that of his brother John Blair[1].

On November 12, 1770 John Blair[1], brother of Samuel Blair[1], was born in Tyrone County, Ireland. John, who later came to be known as "Captain" John Blair (the source of his title has never been determined), immigrated to the United States in 1796. He settled in Yorkville, which was to become York, South Carolina. After the death of his first wife (we do not know her name), John was married to Nancy, who was born in Ireland December 4, 1776. Her maiden name is not known, but may have been Wright, since John's will refers to his brother-in-law William Wright. Captain John came as an "Irish Peddler" and created a small fortune investing in stocks, bonds, real estate, etc. before his death at Yorkville on October 3, 1848. He owned over two thousand acres of land in various areas of South Carolina. His will of 15 pages (see synopsis of will in the "Will" section of this book) indicates he became a benefactor of Clark-Erskine Seminary, Due West, S.C., Columbia Seminary, Columbia, S.C., Blairsville School, and many other organizations. He and his wife Nancy did not have children, but he generously provided for his many relatives. Nancy died at Yorkville on October 28, 1860. They are buried in Sharon A.R.P. Church Cemetery, Sharon, South Carolina. Their monuments and steel fence were vandalized several years ago and were restored in 1986. An unmarked grave at the foot of Captain John and Nancy's graves is believed to be that of his former wife (refer to Captain John's will).

We know little about Samuel Blair[1], except that in 1812 he took the history-making step of immigrating to the United States. He is believed to have entered this country by way of New York, and then come down by way of Pennsylvania. Alternately, he could have come in by way of the port of Charleston, South Carolina, as other Irish immigrants to the area were known to have come. He was married to Mary Mitchell, also thought to be born in Ireland. She was born in the year 1784. The couple settled at what was to become Blairsville, York County, South Carolina, just a few miles from Captain John, who had preceded them. Samuel Blair[1] died at Blairsville on January 12, 1834. His wife Mary died at Blairsville on January 13, 1839. They are buried in Sharon A.R.P. Church Cemetery, Sharon, South Carolina. There were four children:

1. Isabella Blair[2] born in 1812.
2. Nancy Blair[2] born in 1813.
3. Mary Blair[2] born in 1819.
4. Samuel Blair[2] born March 15, 1824.



The ornate wrought iron enclosure surrounds the graves of John Blair and his wife, Nancy. The headstone just beside the enclosure is for Joseph Patrick, son of Thomas and Mary. The next headstone is for Mary Gilfillan Patrick and the next one is for Thomas Patrick. These are located in the Sharon ARP Church Cemetery, next to the church.

Nancy Blair in her Will, again gifted money to the children of Rebecca Patrick Mitchell. Her fifth clause states - "Of the same estate, in like manner, I will and bequeath to Mary Frances, Thomas, Henry and Nancy Irwin - two sons and two daughters of Joseph Mitchell (Note: by his first wife - Rebecca), thirty shares of Bank of Hamburg stock and fifteen hundred dollars in money, and to said Mary Frances and Nancy Irwin, daughters, in addition to the above bequest to them, each five hundred dollars: the said Joseph Mitchell to be the guardian to receive said legacies, therein given, and receipt my Executors for the same."

There will never be a complete understanding of the impact that John and Nancy Blair had on Thomas and Mary Patrick. We do know it was huge. We can however get some idea of the monetary impact the children of Thomas and Mary Patrick experienced. It is abundantly clear that their generosity to them was substantial. This is especially true concerning the children of Rebecca Patrick Mitchell (she had died in 1842). In 1848 John Blair left Rebecca's children thirty shares of bank of Hamburg stock and 200 acres of land -- value for the two about \$3,800. Nancy Blair left them about \$4,500. My financial advisor son, John, says that the sum would equate to about \$1,000,000 in today's dollars.

The children of Thomas and Mary, other than Rebecca, received thirty shares of the Bank of Hamburg (about \$2,000), two slaves ( Maria and her son, value about \$1500) and 198 acres of land (about \$2000) for a present day value of about \$670,000.

It has been said that the Blairs were one of the wealthiest couples in the upper part of South Carolina. He showed his love for his fellow men and women, especially his family and friends from what is now Northern Ireland, with a constant support of gifts and encouragement. The descendants of Thomas and Mary owe the Blairs greatly for all they did to make our family grow and prosper over the years. You can say the Patricks were Blessed by the Blairs!