



EDGAR

EVENTS

**Researching and sharing Edgar family
history – No. 22, November 2008**



DNA Update

by James Edgar (Editor) (jamesedgar@sasktel.net)



We have two new testers! Desmond Edgar of South Africa, and **Robert Edgar** of Oregon both have kits going their way. **Desmond** is a cousin of Alida Reilly, who contacted **Richard Edgar** of Tandragee, Northern Ireland. Richard forwarded the email message to me and her story resounded so much through my own Northern Ireland history that I just had to reach out to her. Here's what she wrote [with some minor corrections by Yours Truly, Ed.]:

Hi Richard,

My name is Alida. I live in Port Alfred, South Africa. My father was William Edgar from Kilkeel Co. Down. He came out to S.A. with his family when he was a young man. I was his illegitimate daughter and given up for adoption. (He was a married man.)

I traced my biological mother at the age of 39 and she told me who my dad was. He had already died, so I never met him. However, I did meet numerous family members in Kilkeel when I visited there. They told me many interesting facts about my dad and what a lovely man he was. So sorry that I never got to meet him. I did trace him to the wall of remembrance where his ashes are kept. I stood there and wept and wept, as here I was, so close to him that I can reach out and touch him, but it was too late. If only I could turn back the clock.

They also said the resemblance between me and my eldest son (who was with me in Kilkeel) and my dad was remarkable. I was given photos of my dad, and my son, Wayne, really looks just like him. I was also given my dad's Orangeman's sash, which my cousin, Tommy Hanna had kept lovingly wrapped in tissue paper. Although I do not know much about the Orange men, I do treasure this sash as my dad had worn it and it is the closest I will ever come to him. It is also a very important gesture, proving that the family have accepted me, otherwise they would never have given it to me. Although they never knew of my existence, the minute they saw me, they put their arms around me and said "This is Willie's daughter. She looks just like her daddy."

Since then I have had DNA tests done using a sample of my blood as well as a sample of blood donated by a male first cousin, living in Johannesburg. The tests prove very positively that I am an Edgar. The reason for me doing this was that I wanted to try and get a British passport. Not that I intend to ever leave S.A. I love this country with all my heart, but it would serve as a back door for my two sons, should things ever get worse here (for instance, because of Zimbabwe). They are also African through and through, but I would feel more at ease if I knew I had provided an escape for them, should they need it (God forbid that that should ever be the case).

Mr. Jim Wells, who is Member of Parliament for Co. Down, has tried to get me a passport, but to no avail. Apparently, the law over there states that if my dad had registered me as his child when I was born, they would accept that, but they do not accept DNA proof. How silly! My dad could have lied on the certificate, or he could have thought I was his child and registered me as his unknowingly, and they would accept it, but blood cannot lie!

I wrote and told the British consul so. I mentioned the fact that Britain was overrun by people of a different culture, different religion, different language, and different colour, who do not have half the claim that I have, and yet they let them in! And I, who have a legitimate claim to being half British, they won't give a passport. Anyway, I have gotten a bit discouraged and given up the fight for now. Maybe one day, I will take it up again. What I really wanted to say was, I am so thrilled to be an Edgar!! I find the history of the Edgars and Northern

Ireland so interesting and I cannot read enough about my roots and heritage. It's so great to know where I come from and the history of my forefathers. Up to the age of 39, I did not have any history and roots.

I would love to correspond with any Edgars who would be interested in writing to me. Is there an Edgar web page where you can list this letter?

My dad's father, an Edgar, married a Miss Hanna. His sister, an Edgar, married the brother of his wife, a Hanna. So a brother and sister, married a brother and sister. I can get the names of my grandparents if anyone is interested in knowing exactly how I am related to them. I really look forward to hearing from you and many other unknown cousins.

Best wishes and kind regards,

Alida Rielly

I wrote to Alida, inviting her to join our Ancestry.com group and pointing her to our newsletter collection, to which she answered:

Hi there James!

Thank you so much for responding to my e-mail. I received quite a few e-mails from different members of the Edgar family.

I am going to forward the DNA profile of myself and my male first cousin, Desmond Edgar. I have a feeling that this is not the test you are needing, but it may be of some use.

I need to ask a strange question. I know it sounds silly, but both the toenails of my little (pinky) toes, don't grow out/forward, but they turn up and curl backwards!! Both my sons have the same toenail abnormality and it is not on my mother's side of the family. Are there any Edgars out there with these funny toenails???

I have joined the Edgar site as you suggested. I have had a wonderful time paging through all the photos and the eerie thing is that there are so many of these men who resemble my dad and my son Wayne, so much! I keep wondering if they are family of mine. Both my dad and son are short, with dark hair and dark brown eyes.

Please keep in touch and keep on passing my details on to other Edgars.

I will write more about myself and my family shortly and send it off to all those who contacted me.

Keep well and God bless,

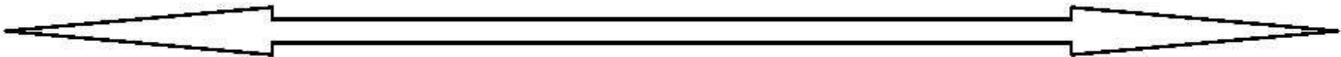
Alida

Then later that same week, I heard from Bob Edgar in Oregon. I'd had his name for some time, given to me by Frankie Sawyer. She and Bob had met a few years ago at a Scottish gathering in the eastern USA. It was nice to get Bob's call, to share some of our stories, trying to see if we could fit our two families together. His great-grandfather came from Dumfriesshire in Scotland in 1845 to Fergus, Ontario. From there, after nearly 20 years, the family moved to Nebraska, and then on to South Dakota, ending up in northern Idaho. Bob was born there. He says that from a high knoll he could see Canada to the north of where he grew up.

Jodie (my wife) and I searched the on-line records and discovered the family in the Scottish 1841 Census, the 1851 Ontario Census, and the 1870 US Census, when they were living in Nebraska. The records are there; now we just have to wait for the results of the DNA analysis to see Robert's Haplogroup. Also, at Robert's suggestion, I contacted his cousin, Diane Craig, in California. She shared her Edgar tree information with me, so we can see if there's a way to connect to someone we might already have in our various trees and databases.

On Friday, October 25, I ordered a DNA test kit for Alida's cousin, Desmond Edgar, in South Africa. His results will show us to which of the three Edgar Haplogroups in Kilkeel he belongs – I, I1a, or R1b. We found his grandfather's birth record in the Ontario Archives, so we have the right connection. This past week I've spoken on the phone to Alida, Desmond, and his two sisters, Colleen and Barbara, plus I spoke to Diane Craig – it's been a busy time!

We anxiously await these two results...



*Steve Edgar of Weston, Crewe (steven-edgar@sky.com) suggests this as a good read — borrowed shamelessly from an article written by **Larry D. Smith, Brockville, U.S.A.** for www.ulsterancestry.com/ulster-scots-4.html*

This is the fourth in a series about how the Edgars and other Protestant families got into Northern Ireland and then populated the New World.

The Ulster-Scots In Pennsylvania

The initial settlements in Pennsylvania were made in the south-eastern counties in the vicinity of the ports of Philadelphia, Chester, and New Castle. As more and more families arrived, they moved further westward. The towns in the eastern region were inhabited by the Quakers, who had founded the colony, and the Germans, who had begun immigrating to the colony in the early-1700s. Many of the Ulster-Scots who were forced to emigrate from Ireland because of the economic conditions in their homeland could make the voyage only by entering into indentured servitude. The services of those individuals and families were most often purchased by the wealthy Quakers, and therefore they settled in that region. As soon as they became freed of their obligations, they generally moved onward. The Ulster-Scots who had been able to finance their journey to America tended to move beyond the already inhabited sections of the province and homesteaded in the frontier regions.



In the period from the year 1717 through the 1750s, the “frontier” was in the present-day counties of Berks, Lebanon, Lancaster, York, and Adams. Through the 1760s and into the 1770s the “frontier” was pushed north and westward with the acquisition of lands from the Indians and the erection of Cumberland and Northampton Counties in 1750 and 1752 respectively. In 1771, Bedford County was formed out of Cumberland. In the following year, Northumberland County was formed out of Northampton. Then in 1773, Westmoreland County was formed out of the western portion of Bedford. The erection of each new county points to the influx of settlers; as the frontier regions were settled and became more and more crowded, the demand for conveniently accessible courts of law arose. When the Pennsylvania Assembly saw that a particular region

had reached a certain level of inhabitants and merited being separated into smaller jurisdictional regions, it granted the requests and erected a new county.

Of course, the Ulster-Scots were not the only ethnic group which pushed into the Pennsylvania frontier. There were quite a number of German families who were also frontier homesteaders. The two groups coexisted somewhat peaceably in the frontier primarily because they were both outsiders in regard to the English. The mountainous region in the centre of Pennsylvania was ideal for the way of life of both groups and sufficiently distanced them from the English in the eastern counties. The Germans sought out good limestone-based farmlands and they found them in the Appalachian Mountains. The Ulster-Scots tended to find the solitary isolation of the Appalachians ideal to their own temperament.

The mountain range known as the Appalachians stretches in a curving arc from the northeast corner of the province of Pennsylvania, through the south-central region of that province and on southward through Maryland, Virginia, and into the Carolinas. At the time of the initial waves of the Ulster-Scot migration, it served as a natural boundary line between the English colonies and the Indian lands. Apart from a few instances in which the white settlers (for the most part Ulster-Scots) violated the Indian treaties and moved into the lands to the west of the boundary, the incoming settlers tended to homestead in the great valley just to the east of the Appalachian range. As the lands in Pennsylvania filled up, the incoming settlers moved southward into Virginia and eventually into the Carolinas. Then, in 1754, a new treaty was signed at Albany, New York, with the Indian sachems by which they granted tracts of land to the Allegheny Mountains (which define the western edge of the Appalachians) to the province of Pennsylvania. With the prospect of new lands to homestead upon, many residents of the established counties along with new immigrants pushed into that region. In the 1768 New Purchase Treaty, the Indians conveyed lands to the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly, which lay to the west of the Allegheny Mountain Range.

Blair County in 1846. The remainder of this article will dwell primarily on the settlement of the Ulster Scots in Blair County.

Blair County was part of the region that was opened up for homesteaders by the Treaty of Albany in 1754. It was



not until about 1768, though, that the first settlers moved into the portion of that region which would be given the name of Blair County in 1846. From 1768 until 1774, there were only a few families that had established their homesteads in this collection of mountains and valleys that lay between the Allegheny and Tussey Mountains. Then, between 1775 and 1779, there was a large influx of settlers. The period from 1778 through 1782 was one in which the relations between the Indians and the Euro-American settlers broke down and Indian incursions into the region were increased. Many, perhaps half, of the original pioneer settlers left Bedford County and few of them returned. After the American Revolutionary War was over, there occurred a massive migration of people all over the eastern seaboard. Once more settlers flooded into this region; included among them were many Ulster-Scots.

The Ulster-Scots and the Germans tended to stick to themselves and settled in different valleys in the part of the region that would be designated as Blair County. The Germans settled principally in the Morrisons Cove and Indian Path valleys, while the Ulster-Scots built their homesteads in the Scotch, Logan, and Sinking Spring valleys. The German settlers tended to obtain their property through legal means of warranting,

surveying, and then patenting the land. The Ulster-Scots, on the other hand were known to obtain their property by simply squatting on a certain tract of land and hoping not to be ousted from it when the government noticed. Quite a number of Ulster-Scot families settled in the Sinking Spring Valley on the tract claimed by the Proprietors. The Penn family had surveyed and set aside many tracts of land throughout the province for their own private future use. Those tracts were often homesteaded upon by the Ulster-Scots. They sincerely (albeit erroneously) believed that since the Proprietary family had invited them to emigrate from their homeland with the prospect of lands to settle upon, then the Proprietary Tracts were the lands they had been invited to. The earliest tax assessment return that is still in existence in the collection of records maintained in the Bedford County Court House which separates the families settled on the Proprietors' Lands is one taken in 1785. That return listed thirty-two families residing on the Proprietors' tract of Sinking Spring Valley. Some individual families were spread out in the other valleys, including the Indian Path Valley, which encompassed much of Old-Greenfield Township.

The period between the year 1778 and 1782 was one of intensified Indian/Euro-American conflict. The only Frankstown Township tax assessment returns from the American Revolutionary War period that are currently in existence in the Bedford County Court House are for the years 1775, 1779, and 1782. It is difficult to know whether any others simply did not survive, whether they were removed by earlier researchers, or whether they simply were not taken. The 1779 Frankstown Township Tax Assessment recorded many of the residents as "absent," meaning that they had left the region. Most of them moved eastward to the relative safety of Cumberland County, and as already mentioned, did not return to Bedford County. As the Indian attacks grew more frequent and intense, the day-to-day government of the county may have been affected; there might not have been much motivation on the part of the tax assessors and collectors to travel about through the region at

their own personal danger.

Many, but not necessarily all, of the families that fled from Bedford County were Ulster-Scot. The Germans tended to cling to their farms more so than the Ulster-Scots; they were more reluctant to give in to the terrors of the Indians. The Ulster-Scots had been harassed for so many centuries that they did not feel the same attachment to the land as what the Germans did. The Ulster-Scots, though ready for a fight at the drop of a hat, tended to move from one location to another without any misgivings.

Prior to the Indian incursions and the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, as noted previously, the Ulster-Scots and the Germans tended to separate themselves from each other somewhat. Following the Revolution, as more families came back to this region, the two ethnic groups began to intermingle more. The war, and the intermingling of men of different ethnic backgrounds in the armed forces, probably helped to bring the people closer together.



This is my brother Steve's idea of a "dream truck!" He took the photo the day after St. Patrick's Day 2006, as we drove north to visit the Giant's Causeway on our final day in Ireland. We arranged for him to toast the strange rocky formation with a wee pint o' Guinness!

