

## **2010 Gathering Tidbits**

**William E. Riddle** (*Riddle at WmERiddle dot com*)

In mid-August 2010, facing general surgery at my local trauma center to attend to a life-threatening medical problem, I had to relinquish leadership of the 2010 Gathering in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. David Neal Ewing was able to get the commitments needed to 'pull off' the gathering. Barb McGuinness and the organizing committee – J. David Ewing, Virginia Okie and Eric Ewing – stepped up to the challenge, with J. David taking the lead.

By all accounts – several reported in the immediately previous issue of this *Journal* – the gathering was a spectacular success which allowed many people to make new connections, enjoy relaxing times with friends and cousins, and explore the southwestern Pennsylvania area important to their heritage.

This article provides some detailed information about the gathering.

## **A Trip to America**

**Thor Ewing** (*Thor at HistoricalArts dot co dot uk*)

Three hundred years ago, having left Scotland only a generation before, the first Ewing emigrants were leaving Ireland for America. Perhaps they were looking for religious freedom, or were disillusioned with the king for who they had once fought. Perhaps some of them were just looking for new opportunities in a New World.

Thanks to the marvels of modern genetic science, I now know that some of these emigrants – most of them indeed – were my relations. Were there tearful scenes I wonder, as my ancestors said farewell to loved ones they would never see again? What were the choices, what were the motives that led some to leave and some to stay behind?

The journey alone would have lasted more than two months. By cart or coach to the docks, and then aboard the ship that would be their home for the length of the voyage. More than their home: Its thin wooden walls were all that stood between them and a watery grave; as it moved in the water it would have seemed almost to be alive. Small wonder that the name of one of those ships, The Eagle Wing, should enter Ewing mythology as the origin of the Ewing name itself (how many of us have been addressed as Mr. or Mrs. E. Wing, I wonder?).

Once in the new land, opportunities did open. Children grew up knowing Scotland and Ireland only through the stories of old men. Generations passed, wars divided our countries. And so for three hundred years we have grown apart. In that time not one of my forebears crossed the Atlantic. And until last year neither had I.

So when the opportunity came to meet up with the descendants of those early American Ewings, I jumped at it. After all, how often do you get the chance to catch up with someone you haven't seen for three centuries?

My own journey begins by car and train to the airport; I have an early flight so I take the night train and sleep (or rather doze) at the airport until checking in for my first flight. By the time I reach my destination I'll have gone through the ritual removal of coats, belts, phones, money, shoes etc. more times than I can comprehend. My journey is to be undertaken in three hops. First stop Dublin (with a quick step outside so I know I've stood on Irish soil again), then to New York and on to Pittsburgh.

The flight across the Atlantic is long and tedious, but touching down in New York is a revelation. I'm delighted with the way of doing things here – such a general air of friendliness that when someone wishes you a nice day, it really seems to mean something. Nonetheless I wasn't intending to stay quite as long as I do, especially not sitting in a plane waiting on the runway hour after weary hour waiting for a storm to pass. When we do take off it's already night time, but flying alongside the thunderstorm is amazing and beautiful. The sky is suddenly illuminated to reveal the clouds stretching like mountain ranges around and beneath us, each flash showing this cloudscape in a completely new perspective.

I'm met in Pittsburgh by Beth Toscos and Jane Weippert, the first of my long-lost American cousins, who ferry me in style to our hotel on the outskirts of Uniontown. In all my journey has lasted 32½ hours, and it's 47½ hours since I last saw a bed! But then that's nothing compared to the eight weeks at sea endured by 18<sup>th</sup> century travelers.

I'd come to Uniontown as a Ewing to talk about Ewings at a gathering of fellow Ewings. I'd been to a few conferences and thought I knew pretty much what to expect. But what I found in Uniontown was unlike any conference I've been to before. Here was a crowd who were united not only by a common interest in all things Ewing, but who shared a family bond. O.K., so some of us might not be proven blood relatives in fact – though it's truly remarkable how many of us are – but it certainly did seem to me that there's a common stream that unites us in our diversity. The upshot was that this gathering felt at least as much like a family reunion as it did like a discussion group.

Indeed there were several people there who I would have been willing to believe were related to me as recently as a couple of generations ago. But, counting in human lifespans, even the three hundred years that divides us is not such a long time. The oldest Ewings gathered in Uniontown last September could have known grandparents or great-grandparents who could themselves have known elderly relatives who were the sons and daughters of those first Ewing settlers in the early eighteenth century.

There's a different perspective on history in America. Our hotel which is as old as 1903, describes itself as 'historic' and presents itself to match the description;. In Britain it would just be old and probably a bit shabby. On my first morning at breakfast I stumble into David and Frankie Ewing, who along with Wally and Jane Ewing take me under their collective wing for the rest of my stay.

Slowly I realise why this remote spot in Pennsylvania has been chosen for the gathering. Down the road is an old inn which was built by one of our family on land bought from George Washington. But that's not all. The road itself was partly built by Ewings, and it's the first American national road (though I'm still not altogether sure what that means).

On Friday we all went to Uniontown to contemplate its Ewing history and rejoice! And here's where that different perspective on history kicks in. We're all gazing at what looks like an unremarkable 18<sup>th</sup> century townhouse built by Nathaniel Ewing, when it suddenly hits me: Out here any 18<sup>th</sup> century house is remarkable in itself. This must have been among the first decent houses in Uniontown. And our boy Nathaniel must have been quite someone to have built it.

Alas, not all the Ewing history of Uniontown has been preserved, and we sometimes found ourselves trying to imagine an old Ewing residence where there was now only a parking lot, but our host J. David Ewing remembered them all from his childhood and was able to help us conjure a vision of what had once been there.

The Courthouse was undeniably impressive. Several Ewings had served as judges here, and their portraits hung on the walls of the old (or should I say 'historic'?) courtroom. But the most impressive artwork here was a huge folk-art carving of the Marquis de Lafayette which used to sit on top of an earlier building. (This is Fayette County, and the Marquis fought here in the Revolutionary War and returned to visit in 1825.)

Next day in the cemetery, J. David introduced us to his relatives from Uniontown of old. In fact, J. David had discovered new relatives among the graves just earlier in the year. There must have been money in Uniontown once, because there were lots of huge urns and obelisks, some of them bearing the Ewing name. I'd never been to an American graveyard before, and was surprised to see it covered with flags, marking every soldier's grave.

As well as our day trips, there were several enjoyable presentations. David Neal Ewing updated us on the Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project, how it has revealed unsuspected family connections going back hundreds of years, and how this research differs from other areas of DNA work by revealing only paternal ancestry and no more. Wally Ewing told us about the life of his relative, Indian John Ewing, who was captured by Indians with his sister Anne in 1795 and lived with them for fifteen years. I was especially pleased because it's very nearly the story of the children's book *Sword of the Wilderness*<sup>1</sup> – my favourite novel when I was ten years old!

For my own talk, I threw away the notes I had prepared on whether the Ewings count as an independent clan and talked instead about what I have discovered about the history of the Ewing family before they left Scotland. It would seem that the Ewing family which now predominates in America once held the chiefship of their clan in Scotland. They were staunch Covenanters, fighting to defend the old Scottish Presbyterian religious settlement against Episcopalianism. Finally in 1685, they joined one rebellion too many and were forced to flee to Ireland. With this sort of background, it's really no surprise to discover that when they arrived in America, they stepped readily into leading positions, just as they had in Uniontown.

On our last day, we went to Washington Rocks where the young George Washington once led an attack on a company of French, which sparked off the French and Indian War. Most people in Britain have never heard of the French and Indian War,<sup>2</sup> but it happens that I had wanted to visit this secluded glen ever since I was thirteen. How strange that my first visit to America should bring me by chance within a couple of miles of the site. While we were in the woods, I idly picked up an acorn and popped it in my pocket. It's in a pot on my windowsill right now. I do hope it will grow.

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<sup>1</sup> Coatsworth, Elizabeth. *Sword of the Wilderness*. Atheneum, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> From Wikipedia: The French and Indian War is the common U.S. name for the war between Great Britain and France in North America from 1754 to 1763. In 1756 the war erupted into the world-wide conflict known as the Seven Years' War and thus came to be regarded as the North American theater of that war.

**Virginia Okie's *Pointerhope******Herald-Standard*, Uniontown, Pennsylvania, 26 September 2010****Library Gift****Book looks back at Uniontown family's 1924-to-1939 home**

Frances Borsodi Zajac

*Herald-Standard*

A Florida woman recently presented the Uniontown Public Library with a gift of local history.

Virginia Ewing Husted Okie of Lake Wales, Fla., on Wednesday gave the library a copy of "Pointerhope," a book she has written about the Uniontown home of her grandparents James Edgar Husted and Helen Henderson Husted.

The family lived from 1924 to 1939 in an elegant, three-story home that had been located on Route 40 across the highway from the estate of coal baron J. V. Thompson, which is now the home of the Sisters of St. Basil the Great and known as Mount St. Macrina. Husted was also in the coal and coke business. Restaurants are now located where the house used to stand.

"The book is more about a way of life in Uniontown. My dad had pictures of the house. He loved the house. His father lost it during the Depression," explained Okie.

Okie's father, James Miller Husted, grew up in Pointerhope. He married Margaret Loudon Rowe, also from Uniontown, during World War II. Okie's father remained in the military and she spent most of her youth in Oklahoma. She is now retired from working at a power company and her husband, Edward, is a retired newspaper reporter and photographer.

Okie based her book "Pointerhope" on a thesis she wrote as a college student studying interior design at Oklahoma State University. She reprinted the book in 2009 and brought one of the copies to the library where she presented it to Vickie Leonelli, curator of the local history room called the Pennsylvania Room.

Okie decided to make the donation after reading that the Pennsylvania Room was interested in things related to Uniontown on the library's web site. Leonelli gladly accepted the gift, noting it will be available to the public in the Pennsylvania Room.

"It's wonderful when families can return some of Fayette County's rich history to the area and make it come alive again," Leonelli said.

Okie, who has not visited Uniontown in 40 years, came to the library with a cousin from her mother's side of the family, Ellen Kennedy LaBarbera of Mountclair [sic], N.J. Okie and LaBarbera are third cousins through the Ewing family, whose members have been prominent in Fayette County history.

Ed Cope / *Herald-Standard*

**Looking at the book "Pointerhope" are (from left) Virginia Ewing Husted Okie, author of the book; Vickie Leonelli, curator of the Pennsylvania Room at Uniontown Public Library; and Ellen Kennedy LaBarbera of Mountclair [sic], N.J.**

LaBarbera, who works as an interior decorator, grew up in New Jersey and California and was last in Uniontown in 1960 when her family took a cross-country trip and stopped here to visit Oak Grove Cemetery, where many Ewing ancestors are buried. Her husband, Michael, is a banker.

The two women met while researching family history on ancestry.com and are attending The Gathering of the *Ewing Family Association*, which has been taking place Sept. 23-26 at the Historic Summit Inn, located on Route 40 in Farmington. Okie's brother Charles Edgar Hustead and his son Connor Joseph Hustead are also attending.

According to a history of the association, the Rev. Ellsworth Samuel Ewing and others organized *Clan Ewing in America* in the early 1990s, originally to focus on 33 Ewing individuals who immigrated to America before 1776, mostly from Ireland and Scotland, and settled in the Middle Atlantic states.

The organization changed its name in 2008 to include many other Ewing family groups and encourage participation from Ewing families worldwide. The history explained the Uniontown/Pittsburgh area was a target for migration from the upper Chesapeake Bay area in the 1762-1776 period, not only for the Ewings who settled the area but who used their cousins as bridges to settle further west.

These local Ewings include ancestors of Okie and LaBarbera. Several were judges, including William Porter Ewing, Nathaniel Ewing Sr., John Kennedy Ewing and Samuel Evans Ewing. Their ancestor Nathaniel Ewing, 1794-1874, built Mount Washington Tavern c. 1826, now a part of Fort Necessity National Battlefield in Farmington.

Some of the activities planned for the Ewing reunion included a tour of Uniontown and the Fayette County Courthouse, presentations of local Ewing history that included the building of the Historic National Road and settling of southwestern Pennsylvania, a visit to Fort Necessity National Battlefield as well as [the] Pennsylvania Room in the Uniontown Public Library; and a lecture by storyteller Thor Ewing, who came from [England].

"I'm very excited," said Okie of the gathering. "I've been waiting two years for this."

## **Thor Ewing's Presentation**

**David Neal Ewing (+1 505.764.8704, *DavidEwing93 at gmail dot com*)**

I made a video recording of Thor Ewing's excellent talk – *Early Scots Ewing History* – at the 2010 Gathering in Uniontown. YouTube will only allow video clips as long as fifteen minutes and the whole talk was nearly an hour, so I have broken it into four segments. Here are the links:

Segment 1: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YxCjzrZSE8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YxCjzrZSE8)

Segment 2: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=15ktmsetVIA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15ktmsetVIA)

Segment 3: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZkNsyPgcns](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZkNsyPgcns)

Segment 4: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cogUflv4QRw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cogUflv4QRw)

## **Ewing Judges**

**Virginia Okie (*VOkie at digital dot net*)**

Four oil paintings hang in the Court Room at the Fayette County Courthouse in Uniontown, Pennsylvania:



Judge John Kennedy (1774-1846): grandfather of John Kennedy Ewing; father of Jane Creigh Kennedy who is the wife of Nathaniel Ewing Sr.



Judge John Kennedy Ewing (1823-1905)



Judge Nathaniel Ewing Jr. (1848-1914): son of Judge John Kennedy Ewing and grandson of Judge Nathaniel Ewing



Judge Stephen Leslie Mestrezat (1848-1918): husband of Eliza Willson Ewing, a daughter of John Kennedy Ewing

Judge John Kennedy Ewing is the great-great-grandfather of several *Ewing Family Association* members; Ellen LaBarbera, Joseph Neff Ewing Jr., Anne Ewing Zettek, and me (Virginia Ewing Okie). The gathering brought us together in Uniontown. There may have been more Ewings at the gathering who are also related to these judges; we were so busy that I did not get around to meet everyone.

Other Judges who are related to the Ewing family members include:

Judge Nathaniel Ewing Sr. (1794-1874): father of John Kennedy Ewing

Judge Samuel Evans Ewing (1852-1939): son of John Kennedy Ewing; grandfather of Joseph Neff Ewing Jr.

Judge Alpheus Evans Wilson (1828-1884): brother of Ellen Louisa Willson, the wife of John Kennedy Ewing.

Judge Remembrance Hughes Lindsey (1845-1914): husband to Eliza Evans Willson, a daughter of Alpheus Evans Willson who was a brother of Ellen Louisa Willson.

Their sketches are also hanging in the hallway and/or chamber rooms in the Courthouse.

## **Gathering Scrapbook**

Many people have provided pictures taken during the gathering:

From David Neal Ewing:

[www.dropbox.com/gallery/431003/1/2010%20Gathering?h=f82abf](http://www.dropbox.com/gallery/431003/1/2010%20Gathering?h=f82abf)

From Martin Ewing:

[www.flickr.com/photos/martin\\_ewing/sets/72157625068340509](http://www.flickr.com/photos/martin_ewing/sets/72157625068340509)

From Virginia Okie:

[picasaweb.google.com/vminiokie/EwingGatheringPhotosToShare?locked=true#](http://picasaweb.google.com/vminiokie/EwingGatheringPhotosToShare?locked=true#)

A selection follows:



**Historic Summit Inn**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing



**Oak Grove Cemetery**  
Courtesy: Virginia Okie



**Fayette County Courthouse**  
Courtesy: Virginia Okie



**Fayette County Courthouse**  
Courtesy: Martin Ewing



**Chancellor David Neal Ewing**  
Courtesy: Martin Ewing



**'Clan J. David Ewing'<sup>3</sup>**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing



**Thor Ewing**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing



**'Ewingling' Lager**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing



**Mount Washington Tavern**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing



**Braddock's Trail**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing



**Nemacolin Inn – Banquet Site**  
Courtesy: Virginia Okie



**Summit Inn Sunset**  
Courtesy: David Neal Ewing

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<sup>3</sup> Left-to-Right: Robb Jubin (son-in-law) and daughter Jennifer Ewing Jubin, Frank R. Ewing (son) and wife Shannon, Melanie Ewing (wife) and J. D. Ewing, Jr. (oldest son), Jennifer Ewing (my wife) and J. David Ewing.

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