



## American Cousins

A little over ten years ago, just after I experienced the delight of having a home computer, I decided to dabble in genealogy. At first, I only really wanted to know a bit about my grandparents and possibly, my great-grandparents. As an only child born to older parents, I never knew any of the previous generations in my direct line, as they had all died many years before my birth, and my parents did not speak of them.

### MICHIGAN

Within ten days after entering some details on a Rootsweb site, I had an email from a cousin in Iowa, and a few weeks after that, I heard from another cousin in Texas. Because of these leads, I soon found many more overseas relatives, and in 2001, I found myself accepting invitations to visit some of these people. Since my husband was not keen on long haul flights, I did it alone! I flew from Glasgow to Toronto, and on to Chicago. From there I flew across Lake Michigan to Muskegon and a wonderful, warm welcome from my cousin Kathy and her husband. They showed me all around the eastern side of the lake in that beautiful state, and introduced me to two of their five daughters. I was also given a bit more information on that part of my family tree, which was on my mother's side.

### IOWA

After a few lovely days, I reluctantly left them, and flew back to Chicago, and then on to Des Moines in Iowa, where I was met by my cousin Catherine and her daughter Joan, from my paternal side of the family. They drove me to their home in Ames where I stayed for a week, and again was taken all around and met up with Catherine and Tom's three daughters and their son. Tom had been a lecturer at the University of Iowa, and I was taken round it, which proved very interesting. During the week, we drove over to Kirksville in Missouri to meet Catherine's sister Jeanette and her family and we stayed there overnight.

### KANSAS CITY

When I left Iowa, I flew to Kansas City to meet yet more cousins – Sue and Charlotte. My stay in Kansas will always be special to me because it was there that I visited the graves of my great grandfather, Peter Begbie and his family. It had only been very recently before my visit, that I had found my Begbie links. Peter had come from a

long line of blacksmiths in East Lothian. Not long after he married in 1882, his parents-in-law emigrated to the USA. In 1890, Peter and his family followed them, only arriving in July to find that his mother-in-law had died two weeks Reading where their fifth child was born in 1891, and for a while Peter continued his trade as a blacksmith before becoming a farmer with considerable land. At the local museum, I was able to find newspaper articles and obituaries of the family.

### TEXAS

After my week in Topeka, I was taken by car through several states including Oklahoma, where I was introduced to a Red Indian (who looked just like the rest of us!), to the border of Texas, where we stayed overnight at Wichita before travelling on next day to Sue's home in Ballinger in the heart of Texas. My journey home started at San Angelo where I flew to Dallas and then on to Toronto for my flight back to Glasgow.

It was a good experience meeting up with relatives that I had not known about before undertaking genealogy. It was also wonderful to find that all three families were committed Christians with whom I had so much in common. Since my return, we have entertained many American relatives - some of whom are returning this year for the homecoming.

### ADDICTIVE HOBBY

It has also been enriching to make many on-line friends through this hobby of genealogy, and again, we have welcomed a number of them to our home in the last few years when they have visited Scotland. It is certainly a great hobby - that first idea of only looking for two generations was forgotten very quickly, and one branch is now back to 1550. I am still searching for more twigs, and as well as searching on line, I spend a day a month in New Register House in Edinburgh, where all the Scottish records are kept. I can certainly recommend genealogy as a hobby – but be warned – it is very addictive!

Doreen Baxter

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