

Jerry McKelvy's
WAY BACK WHEN
January, 2024

THE VOYAGE

Many families try to trace their family history as far back as possible. The further back you go, the harder it gets to find good information. The Internet makes researching much easier, but not everything you find posted on the Internet is correct. Old records are sometimes just not available and some have been lost for one reason or another. This is especially true of the passenger lists of ships bringing immigrants to America. It takes a lot of diligent research to find that information. I am fortunate that family researchers have discovered that my McKelvy ancestors left Belfast, Northern Ireland and arrived in Charleston, South Carolina in 1767. I have been in contact with one of my distant cousins in California who has compiled much information on every branch of the original family that arrived at Charleston in 1767.

Researchers have discovered that my McKelvy ancestors arrived in Charleston, South Carolina on a ship named *Nancy* under the command of a Captain Samuel Hannah. After the ship's arrival at Charleston, a court case was brought against the ship captain because of the poor treatment his passengers received during the voyage. The records from that court case lists the names of the passengers on the ship and that's where my family shows up.

There could be many reasons why those folks would leave their homeland on a dangerous trip across the Atlantic. It could have been to escape religious persecution, greed, adventure, or some other reason. Probably, it was the desire to better provide for one's family by settling some new land, or the fact that so many of their neighbors were going that influenced many to come to America.

A law had been passed in South Carolina in 1761 called the Bounty Act which provided cash money to ship owners for each immigrant they brought to help settle unoccupied land in the colony of South Carolina. Free land was given to heads of families and some children over a certain age. Those receiving the land grants had to agree to clear and cultivate at least three acres per year for each 100 acres allotted.

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Imagine a family making the decision to board a ship in 1767 on a journey of nearly 4,000 miles to a new home. Many probably left some family members behind knowing they would never see them again. From what I have read, a voyage in 1767 across the Atlantic would take from eight to twelve weeks. These ships were at the mercy of the winds and storms encountered along the way. They didn't have any radar, weather reports, or any way to communicate with others.

Early accounts of these voyages reveal deplorable sanitary conditions on many of the ships and it is said that about 15% of the passengers usually died during the trip. Because of so many deaths on these early immigrant ships, they came to be known as "coffin ships".

Conditions on the ship *Nancy* which brought my ancestors to America were very bad. The ship was rated to accommodate 80 adult passengers, but the owners crammed 291 men, women, and children on the ship for the voyage. The ship owners were paid a certain amount for each passenger, so the more they could transport, the more money they received. It must have been a very uncomfortable journey for these immigrants due to the crowded conditions on the ship. Many died on the trip and many were sick and dying when they reached Charleston. They accused the captain of giving them salt water to drink and failing to provide them with enough food during the voyage. I'm sure many of the passengers wondered during the voyage if they had made a bad decision to come to America.

Henry Laurens, a former slave trader, stated that he "never saw an instance of cruelty in ten- or twelve-years' experience equal to the cruelty exercised upon those poor Irish".

Here is a clipping from the South Carolina Gazette dated June 22, 1767: It's a little hard to read because the letter "f" is sometimes used where an "s" should be such as the word "diftrefs" which should be "distress" and "ficknefs" for "sickness". Also, the word "corpse" is spelled "corps". This was the way of writing back in 1767, but I think you can get an idea of what they are saying by reading the article.

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Monday JUNE 22, to

To the HUMANE & CHARITABLE.

Charles Town, June 24th, 1767.

ON an information of the distress of many unhappy people, just landed out of a ship from Ireland, WE this morning made a visit to them at the Old-Barracks, and really found a dismal melancholly scene, such as we think, in justice, the PUBLIC ought to be informed of, as being certain they would be glad to contribute a relief, which we have not in our power to give, from their number, which consists of THREE HUNDRED, almost every one of them confin'd to their beds by a cruel Flux and Fever.—We saw in several rooms two and three corps at a time—many dying—some depriv'd of their senses—young children laying intirely naked, whose parents had expired but a few days ago, and they themselves reduc'd by sickness, to a situation beyond any description.—Any person who would descend to visit these poor people, in this their dreadful affliction, will find them to be such real objects as deserve immediately to have their sorrows sooth'd.—Should any charitable hand be willing to give them aid, and would send their relief to us, the monies or other things would be properly applied, and justice done them.

GEO. SHEED, *C. W. of St. Philip's parish.*
EDWARD LIGHTWOOD, *of St. Michael's.*

In consequence of the above advertisement being put up at the Exchange and other public places, upwards of £. 100 sterling has already been subscribed; but that sum is too inconsiderable to afford these poor people the necessary relief.

Records show that only three passengers on the *Nancy* arrived in good condition and most were forced to join the welfare rolls after landing in Charleston. Records also show funeral charges for coffins for 76 Irish Protestants who had died on the voyage. The condition of the immigrants on the ship *Nancy* was so bad that the citizens of Charleston were asked to contribute to their relief.

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From the records available, researchers have determined that these McKelvys arrived at Charleston on June 5, 1767 on the ship *Nancy*:

James McKelvy—age 42 (the father)—received 350 acres of land

Margaret McKelvy –age 48 (the mother)

James McKelvy -age 16 – received 100 acres of land

Alexander McKelvy – age 15—received 100 acres of land

William McKelvy – age 14

Jane McKelvy – age 8

John McKelvy –age 5

Hugh McKelvy – age 2

Researchers have not found any information on Jane. It's possible that she may have died after reaching Charleston. Not much information has been found about Alexander. We have good information on all the others. My branch of the family descends from John who was only five years old when he arrived. The family settled in what later became Laurens County, South Carolina. When John was grown, he married Mary Stuart and they had 16 children. When those children were grown, some moved on to other states. One went to Tennessee and later some of his descendants went on to Missouri. Another one went to Illinois. My great-great-grandfather named Jabez and his family moved to Coweta County, Georgia for a few years before moving west to Ouachita County, Arkansas. The area where they settled near Bluff City became part of Nevada County in 1871.

I have discovered many distant cousins all over the United States who descend from this early McKelvy family which arrived in Charleston in 1767. When I read the accounts of the harsh treatment the passengers received on the voyage, I count myself fortunate that the little five-year old child named John survived the voyage. Otherwise, I wouldn't even be here.

From what I can find, payment was withheld for the ship's owners because of the cruel treatment of passengers on this voyage in 1767. There is a record of Captain Hannah making another voyage from Ireland to Philadelphia with another load of immigrants in 1770. Hopefully, he learned his lesson and treated those passengers better.

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LOOKING BACK

50 YEARS AGO—1973

Bluff City—Roger Dale Norman is now operating the store connected to George Henry's service station. Eddie Allen is now operating the store formerly run by Ed and Gladys Harvey. A new pulpwood yard has opened (J. M. & T. Pulpwood). Bluff City has a traffic light at the intersection of Hwy. 24 and Hwy. 299 flashing red on Hwy. 299 and yellow on Hwy. 24.

April, 1973—a tornado hit the Terrapin Neck community heavily damaging the church.

There was a gasoline shortage. Some stations completely ran out of gas. I stopped at Willisville to get gas and was only allowed to purchase \$2.00 worth.

Some prices in 1973—ground beef (95 cents per pound), bacon (\$1.39/lb.), gas (46 cents/gallon)

30 YEARS AGO – 1993

Bluff City—Eddie Allen has opened a new store at the corner of Hwy. 24 and Hwy. 299. He has moved his business from the building where the post office is. That former store building opened in July as Harvey's Company Store. A new tower was constructed in the field next to James Tomlin's home.

Sears Roebuck quits their catalog business.

A religious group called the Branch Davidians was in a stand-off with the federal government for several weeks. The stand-off ended in April with the building on fire resulting in the deaths of 76 members of the cult, including 25 children, along with the leader, David Koresh.

Some prices in 1993—average price of new car (\$16,000), bread (75 cents per loaf), 27-inch color TV (\$500-\$700)

25 YEARS AGO – 1998

Bluff City – a severe hail storm with quarter-size hail hit Bluff City in January.

A mass school shooting at a middle school in Jonesboro resulted in 4 students being killed and 15 injured. Two boys (age 11 and 13) were arrested.

Some prices in 1998—postage stamp (32 cents), gasoline (\$1.06/ gallon), dozen eggs (\$1.09)

20 YEARS AGO – 2003

February--The space shuttle Columbia exploded on re-entry with seven crew members being killed.

March—The U. S. began an invasion of Iraq to destroy weapon of mass destruction and remove Saddam Hussein as dictator of that country

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Some prices in 2003—postage stamp (37 cents), gasoline (\$1.83/gallon), new car (\$21,169).
Minimum wage is \$5.15 per hour.

2023 News of the Year – Don Mathis

The past year had 12 months of news.
Here's the top stories you may choose.

Pope Benedict, born with German nationality,
they buried him in Vatican City.

Chinese balloons drift across our sky.
The wreckage debris was sent to the FBI.

A train's hazardous cargo derails in Ohio.
As poison spread, folks were ordered to go.

Banks in California are in misery.
First Republic's failure makes US history.

Tornado strikes Alabama and Mississippi
tearing apart towns like Silver City.

Pentagon documents leak to the internet
about attacks on Ukraine and the Russian threat.

The WHO declares the end of COVID-19.
Charles and Camilla become King and Queen.

Excessive pressure deep in the ocean
causes the submersible Titan implosion.

Summer temperatures were the highest yet.
Planet Earth felt like a briquette.

Trump faces 91 charges in four cases.
Will his trials affect the presidential races?

United Auto Workers won't be ignored;
they strike against Stellantis, GM, and Ford.

At a festival, Hamas killed 300 or more.
The next day, Israel declares war.

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Surgeons at NYU were able to install the first transplant of a human eyeball.

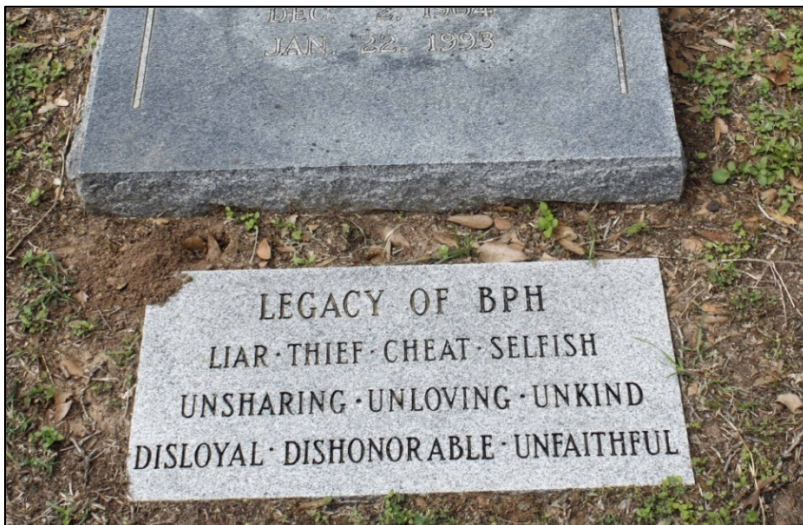
Texas governor signs a mandate criminalizing an illegal entry into the state.

2023 had these headlines and more.
Stay tuned to see what's ahead in 2024.

RAINFALL RECORD

Here is the rainfall record at my house for 2023---January (10.5 inches), February (3.1 inches), March (7.5 inches), April (10.2 inches), May (5.4 inches), June (5.4 inches), July (8.4 inches), August (3.1 inches), September (4.0 inches), October (4-8 inches), November (3.9 inches), December (1.7 inches) making a total of 68.0 inches for the year.

In comparison, four of the last five years have been unusually wet – 2019 (74.3 inches), 2020 (75.6 inches), 2021 (67.5 inches), and 2022 (54.9 inches). Our normal rainfall is about 52 inches per year.



A friend sent me this photo of a grave marker found at a cemetery in Texas.

In Australia, defamation does not apply to deceased persons. Common law states that the dead have no rights and a person's reputation cannot be violated since they are no longer alive.

In Germany, defaming the memory of a deceased person can lead to lawsuits, fines, and up to two years in prison.

Rhode Island has a law making it illegal to defame a person within the first three months after their death. In most states, there is no law against defaming a deceased person.