

Ford genealogy

To: Gary Ford
Southern Living



337-3268

Dear Mr. FORD,

I will be in Charleston for the Downtown Development "Lovable Communities" Conference next week to hear your presentation on the 10th. I know that your time in Charleston is probably going to be too busy to meet you, but I had intended to write or call you before now about an old cellar hole house site I once found in Fairfield County attributable to a Ford or Hall family of the last century. Our former Museum Director told me you once visited our research library to see records on your ancestors of this area. There is also a small burial plot near this house site with, as I remember, Fords buried there. I used to spend more time exploring in our woods than I do now with 2 daughters and a newly single-mom existence. I have been Director here since last summer and am presently organizing ~~me~~ to begin documenting country graveyards.

PELHAM LYLES SPONG
DIRECTOR

POST OFFICE BOX SIX
231 SOUTH CONGRESS STREET
WINNSBORO, SOUTH CAROLINA
2 9 1 8 0

(803) 635-9811

and ruins.

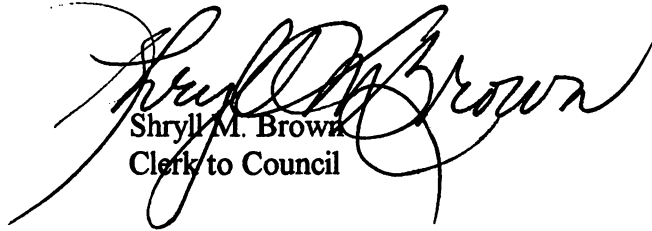


Ms. Pelham Spong
Page Two
April 28, 1999

If any individual is not to be considered for re-appointment, please inform the Board that at least two (2) names should be submitted for each vacancy. These names, along with any that Council may suggest, will be considered by the appropriate committee of Council and then submitted to full Council to fill the vacancies.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Shryll M. Brown
Clerk to Council

/smb

Enclosures

and ruins. If you are interested, we can talk via telephone at any convenient time. In any case, I look forward to greeting you next week.

Sincerely,
Pelham Lyles Spong

PLACES OF PEACE AND POWER

Africa Americas Asia Europe Middle East Atlas
Sacred Sites Newsletter Home



Kissing the Blarney Stone, Cork, Ireland
(Fine Art Print Available)

Five miles north west of the small city of Cork is the village of Blarney - its name being derived from the Irish *An blarna* meaning 'the plain'. Near the village, standing almost 90 feet in height, is the solidly built castle of Blarney. Cormac MacCarthy erected the present castle, the third constructed at the site, in 1446. Built on a rock, above several caves, the tower originally had three storeys. On the top storey, just below the battlements on the parapet, is the world famous Blarney Stone, said to give the gift of eloquence to all who kiss it. Kissing the stone is for some people a difficult physical feat. In past times, to kiss the Stone people were hung by their heels over the edge of the parapet. One day a pilgrim broke from the grasp of his friends and went hurtling downward to certain death. Since that time the stone has been kissed by another method. First, you sit with your back towards the stone and then someone sits upon your legs or firmly holds your feet. Next, leaning far back and downward into the abyss while grasping the iron rails, you lower yourself until your head is even with the stone to be kissed.

Just how long this custom has been practiced or how it originated is not known. One local legend claims that an old women, saved from drowning by a king of Munster, rewarded him with a spell, that if he would kiss a stone on the castle's top, he would gain a speech that would win all to him. It is known, however, when and how the word Blarney entered the English language and the dictionary. During the time of Queen Elizabeth I, Dermot McCarthy, the ruler of the castle, was required to surrender his fortress to the Queen as proof of his loyalty. He said he would be delighted to do so, but something always happened at the last moment to prevent his surrender. His excuses became so frequent and indeed so plausible that the official who had been demanding the castle in the name of the Queen became a joke at the Court. Once, when the eloquent excuses of McCarthy were repeated to the Queen, she said "Odds bodikins, more Blarney talk!" The term Blarney has thus come to mean 'the ability to influence and coax with fair words and soft speech without giving offense'. Echoing the power of the stone, an Irish bard of the early nineteenth century, Francis Sylvester Mahony, wrote:

There	is	a	stone	there,
That		whoever		kisses,
Oh,	he		never	misses
To		grow		eloquent.
'Tis	he		may	clamber
To	a		lady's	chamber,
Or	become		a	member
Of Parliament.				



A SOUTHERNER'S SEARCH

With the words
“Georgia” and “We’re
Irish,” I followed the
dim genealogical
footprints of my
families east—across
the South and the
sea and into the
fog of distant time.

BY GARY D. FORD
PHOTOGRAPHY ART MERIPOL





This is our story.

For my family, it begins long generations ago and far away, although my own memory reaches back only a few decades to a house beside a road in Rusk County in East Texas. We are gathered on the long front porch of my grandparents, Roy and Johnnie Camp, this fair and freckled clan that carries the crisp, common names of the Anglo, Irish, and Highlander Scot: Ford, Thomas, Camp, Leach, Gunn, Russell. It is night, I am a child, and I sit just outside the circle of my large and loving family, listening.

From here, my family traveled some 5,000 miles over 200 years, and finally, one of us came home.

*Kami's Creek Meeting House
Walton, SC c. 1775*



On the night from Virginia to Texas, the talk turns to family. Like all Southerners, we instinctively know we have nothing if we have not family.

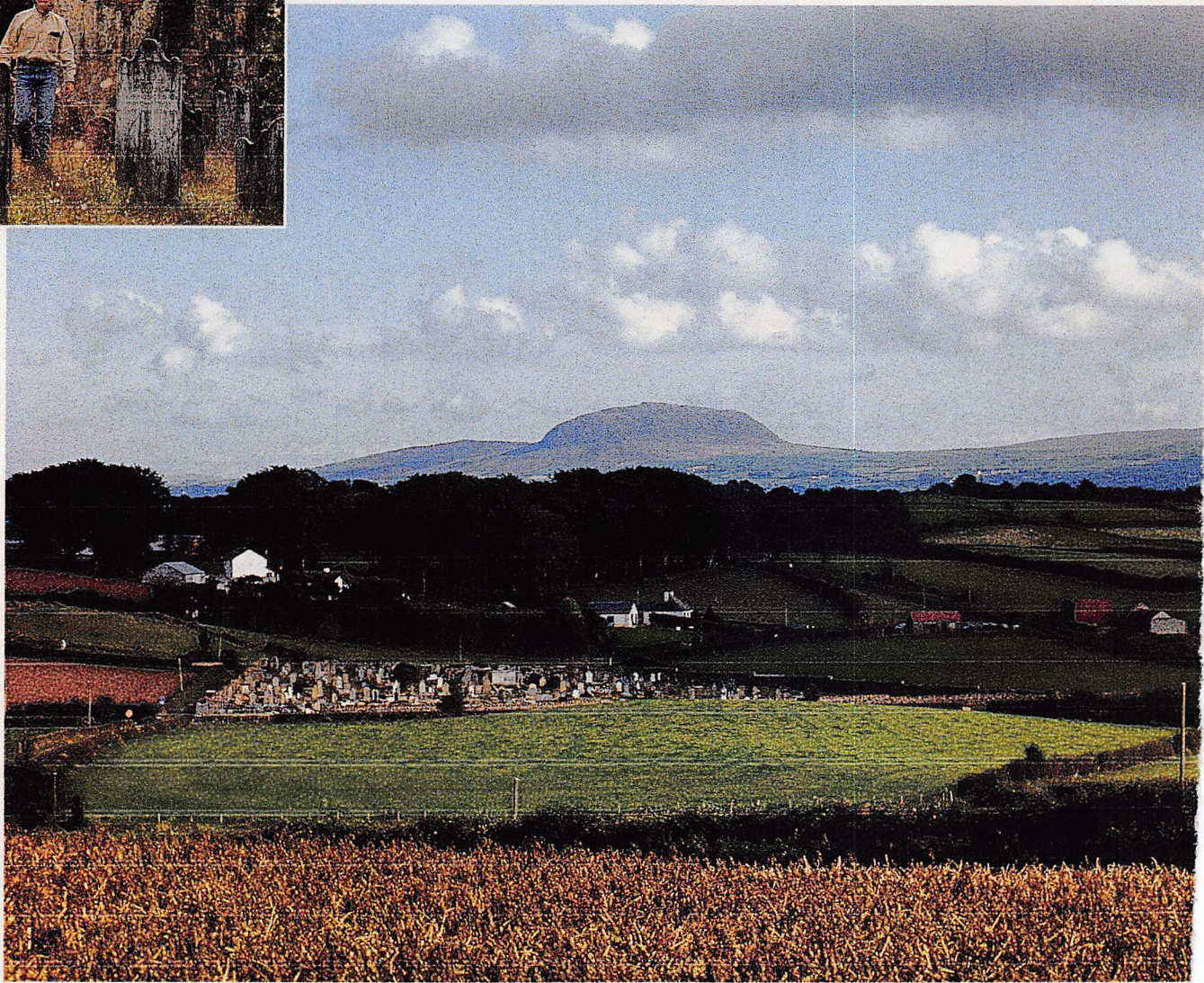
From where did our people come before arriving in East Texas in the 1850s? How did they live? My great-grandmother speaks vaguely of Georgia, and I hear the words, "We're Irish." But my people before me, yeoman cotton farmers who had spent two centuries on their journey across the South to Texas, had walked too far west beyond the memory of all their past geography.

So when my grandfather says, "Oh me, Johnnie, I'm so tired," meaning it's bed-time, our blood's memory has failed us again. None of us know anything about our old, departed places in the east.

I know now.

They talked. I listened. And since 1986, I have mortgaged my present to resurrect my families' past. With the words, "Georgia" and "We're Irish," I followed the dim genealogical footprints of my families east—across the South and the sea and into the fog of distant time. One family, my Russells, I traced to their 18th-century home in the hills of County Antrim in Northern Ireland.

The Russells always went west in the fall, after the work on the land was done for the year. Therefore last fall, I followed them west again, starting my trip where my Russell family began in America—at Meeting and Broad Streets in Charleston.



now the Charleston County Courthouse, to receive a bounty of 300 acres of land. He and some 160 other Ulster-Scot passengers, among them his wife of unknown name, had just arrived after a two-month voyage from Northern Ireland on the *Hopewell*.

In five previous research trips to Belfast, I had discovered in the *Belfast News-Letter* that the *Hopewell* was the only ship from Northern Ireland to reach Charleston in the winter of 1770. In a September 1770 edition, the vessel's agent advertised for passengers from the "Ballymena area," promising to sail for Carolina "on the first fair wind." My Russells, likely from Ballymena, about 25 miles northwest of Belfast, left Ireland forever in late October and reached Charleston in late December.

With the high, sweet peals of the bells of St. Michael's Church sounding from across the street, some clerk writes "James Russell, 300 acres" at the top of a list of other *Hopewell* passengers receiving land—a document preserved in the South Carolina archives.

Those 300 acres stretch along a hushed country lane above Jackson's Creek, the Russells' first home in America, a few miles west of Winnsboro. There I park at the native stone ruins of the old Jackson's Creek Meeting House, where James Russell's 1805 grave rises near the cornerstone. Broom sedge, the color of Irish flax, whispers in the wind.

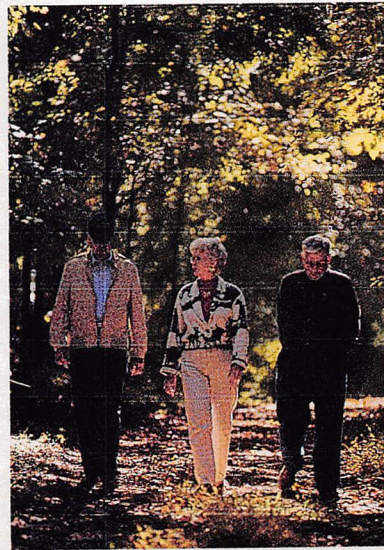
He built this church on a small hill, and in 1791 he deeded the building and land to the congregation with "the natural love and affection he hath and beareth to the Christian religion," an old record says. At the end of the document, James made his mark—two long dashes—and set in motion the fate of our family. For the next two centuries we would make a mark on the land, leave it behind, and walk across the South.

From Jackson's Creek, I drive west into the year 1830, when the Irish immigrant's son, Thomas Russell and his wife, Mary, moved to the hills of Henry County, Georgia (near Atlanta). Thomas, a bricklayer, settled on a rise above Big Cotton Indian Creek and raised Timberridge Presbyterian Church.

Often genealogy leads only to libraries. Other times it introduces you to distant, long-lost family. On a bright Sunday morning I settle into a pew of the present-day Timberridge church, where sunlight streams through stained-glass windows, five of them dedicated to Russells. A distant relative, Lamar Russell, 81, greets me after the service and shows me where our land spreads along State 20.

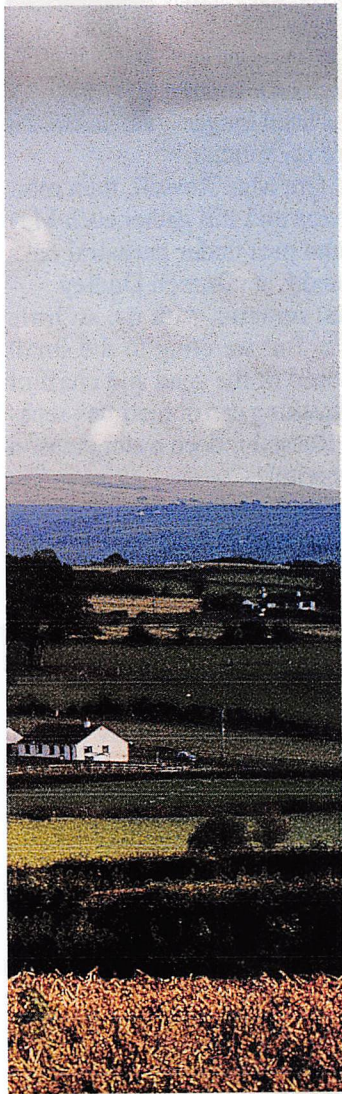
We drive into a pasture to the Russell Cemetery where Thomas is buried. Lamar tells me the old Timberridge church Thomas built, which stood beside the cemetery, was burned by Federal troops in 1864.

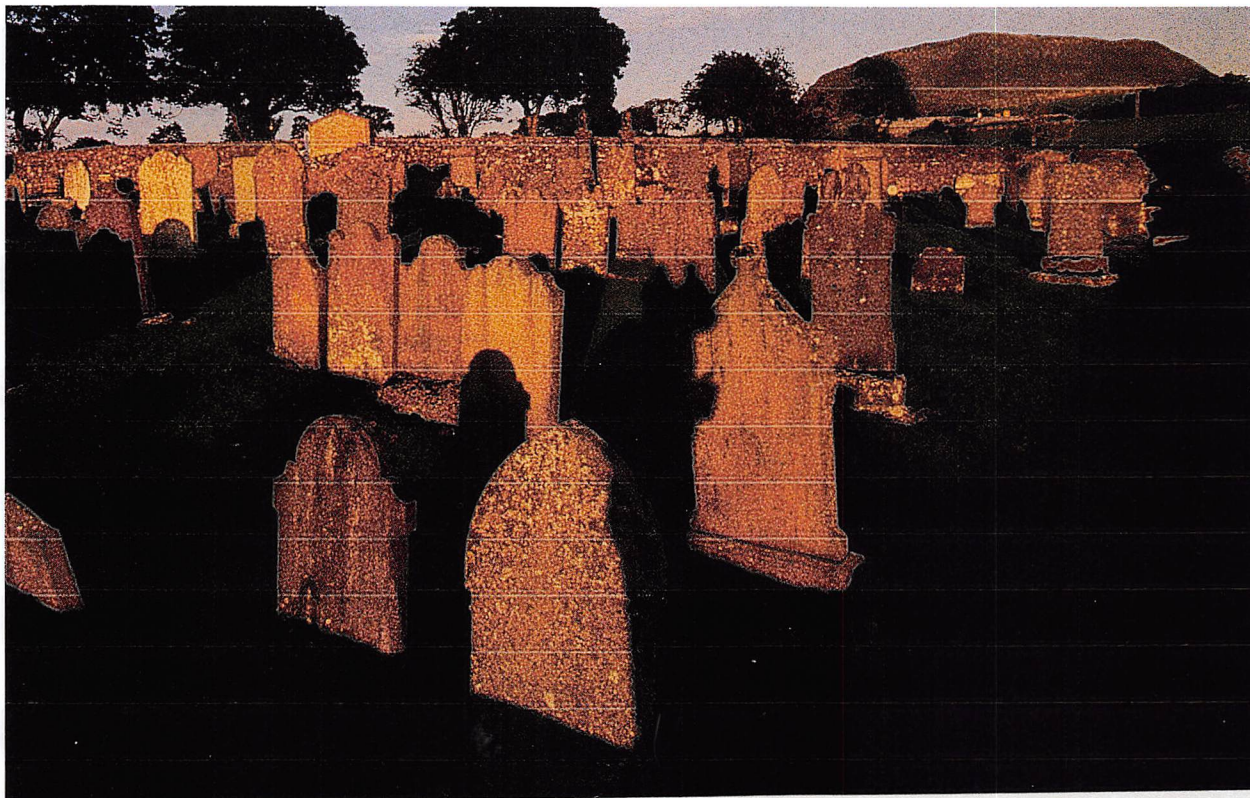
Then he takes me to the house of Bobby and Betty Russell who still live on the old homeplace, shady with huge oaks. They welcome us with sweet iced tea and show me Russell family furniture from the 19th century. Outside we peek into four weathered frame and log buildings, nearly hidden in the trees that grow along an old, sunken roadbed—the McDonough Road of the mid-1800s.



We are still middling folk, made of Ulster stone and Southern red clay, who raise churches and modest homes and lift our eyes to the hope of hills around us.

LEFT: *The parish of Kirkinriola (the Northern Ireland home of my family) spreads before Slemish Mountain.* FAR LEFT: *James Russell is buried at the church he built near Winnsboro, South Carolina.* ABOVE: *My distant kin, (from left) Lamar, Betty, and Bobby Russell walk along McDonough Road.*





recorded on the townland where they lived. On a quarter of the townland of Craigyarren is written the word "Hutchinson."

Hiring a car, I take a trip up to Craigyarren village in the hills of Ulster and the old Presbyterian parish church of Kirkinriola. Less than a mile away, the church's ruins are surrounded by tall, leaning tombstones and high, green grass, whispering gently in the wind. From here, my family traveled some 5,000 miles over 200 years, and finally, one of us came home.

Later, as I always do in Northern Ireland, I visit the Ulster-American Folk Park in County Tyrone. In historic Irish structures and reconstructed American log houses, costumed interpreters show how Ulster immigrants transplanted their culture in America.

In another building the park has reconstructed the top and 'tween decks of a ship like those that sailed to America around 1800. I stoop down into the dim light of the 'tween deck to find mannequins in 18th-century attire and berths of tow and straw. No one is around, so I crawl into one of the berths and lie down in the darkness.

I have done it, and I'm so tired.

I have followed my family across the South, then east to Northern Ireland, and found that we have never really changed. We are still middling folk, made of Ulster stone and Southern red clay, who raise churches and modest homes and lift our eyes to the tops of hills around us.

Years after those long-ago nights on my grandparents' porch, now I know. And I have written it all down, this memory of blood, and it will go someday to that next child who will sit just outside the circle of our family, listening.

In the darkness, I hear the recorded sounds of the slap and slip of water and line, the wheeling sea birds' cries, a murmur of voices, and the whimper of an emigrant child. I close my eyes. The *Hopewell*, its 'tween deck filled with the remembrances of things past, casts off again onto the eternal sea, riding a fair wind to Carolina.

*Late afternoon sun
paints the weathered
stones of Racavan Parish
Cemetery in County
Antrim, Northern Ireland.*

So little of my
family's physical
past remains with
us; so little often
does of restless,
westerling people.

For information on how to get started in genealogy, see page 27. ◇

Like all Southerners,
we instinctively
know we have
nothing if we have
not family.



The lane now disappears into a tunnel of yellowing leaves. Down this road, in the fall of 1850, Thomas' son Forghus (his Celtic name the family's last whisper of Ireland) left with his wife, Mary, and their children for Rusk County, Texas. I walk along it a ways, taking a few steps toward Texas with my great-great-grandparents.

From Georgia along I-20, I follow the white, shivering canvas of their wagons west. This road of my time slices through the fields and forests of their day where Forghus's little caravans traveled, pausing to camp all day on Sunday. This journey took them weeks; I can make it home to Rusk County in a day.

Like his Irish grandfather before him, Forghus, a stonemason, erected Rocky Mount Presbyterian Church on a small hill in Rusk County, where our family has lived longer than in any other place in America. Here my mother, Mary Lois, was born to Roy Camp and Ora Mae Russell, then married my father, Ray. Here my families merge and still gather each May for a reunion, spreading fried chicken and pies under ancestral oaks around the 19th-century home of John and Kate Russell Dudley.

So little of my family's physical past remains with us; so little often does of restless, westering people. But we cling to the small harvest of family stories that are composed of the seed and chaff of fact and folk tale, which genealogical threshing can sometimes separate. Two questions remain: Was James Russell indeed a stonemason from Northern Ireland, and who was his wife?

In yet another attempt to find this answer, I lift into the autumn air, going east again to Ulster (for the sixth time), with hopes of finding James Russell and his wife. As most 18th-century Irish emigrants, he must have had so little that no estate records would exist, I think, trudging into the old Georgian building in Dublin that houses Ireland's Registry of Deeds.

Hour after hour, with diminishing hope, I search 18th-century records the size of card tables, looking among scores of deeds of other James Russells to find just one executed in the fall of 1770 near Ballymena, where my James Russell likely lived. I begin at 9 a.m. At 4 p.m. I find him.

I almost jump back from these words that leap from the yellowed, ancient script dated 26 September 1770: "James Russell" and "stonemason" and "Craigyarren," a townland 4 miles north of Ballymena. His wife gives her consent for the sale of a quarter of a townland. Her name is Mary Hutchinson.

I want to treat the Irish researchers around me to a triumphant rebel yell; instead, my great-grandmother Camp whispers to me, so I just silently repeat what she would have said: "Thank you, Jesus."

My heart singing, I board a train to Belfast, where, at the Northern Ireland Public Record Office, I look among the papers of William Adair, the estate on which James and Mary lived. I stumble across a map dated 1742, with all tenant surnames



Our family tree wraps around several large oaks at the Dudley-Russell reunion in Kilgore, Texas.

*new Jackson's
her was
Hutchinson,
died nursing
ing Revolution
Charleston.
ed in Charleston.*

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SEE PAGE 70

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*Valid through May 30, 2000.

Dear Friend,

I love getting letters from you, especially when you want help. Many of your requests are for a source for an item featured in the magazine. Several years ago we added our "Where To Find It" column that appears on page 249. Beginning with this issue, we offer an additional means of assistance—direct ordering from our Web site at southernliving.com. This will help you obtain selected items featured in this issue as well as locate popular items from past issues. I know this new reader service is one you'll enjoy.

It seems that all Southerners are interested in their heritage. Some of us, like Travel Editor Gary Ford, are genealogy aficionados. With his love of the subject, Gary was the natural choice to lead the charge on this topic for us. Whether you are into genealogy like Gary or just interested in family history, his fine words, along with Art Meripol's telling pictures, give a glimpse of one Southern family's history (see page 102).

It just wouldn't be November without our annual Holiday Dinners special section; the wonderful recipes begin on page 183. Also this month the winners of our Annual Readers' Choice Awards are featured, starting on page 58. This is a list of places I always try to visit; I hope you will too. And be sure to fill out the ballot for the 2000 Readers' Choice Awards on page 62.

In addition to offering enjoyable stories, this November issue also helps you find the perfect tip or recipe that will make this Thanksgiving and the entire holiday season special. Thanks for reading.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John".

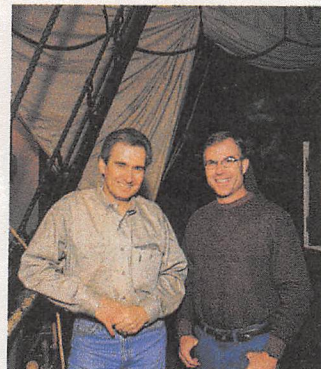
John Alex Floyd, Jr., Editor

P.S. **[SHOP]** is the symbol for items available for purchase on our Web site at southernliving.com. **[INFO]** is the symbol for editorial information.

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Travel Editor Gary Ford's search for his ancestors took him to Northern Ireland, where he and Photographer Art Meripol visited this replica of a 19th-century sailing ship.

ok me years of research to un-
ver the results of my genealog-
uest in "A Southerner's Search"
age 102). If you're new to ge-
gy, you're asking the same
tion I did: "How do I start?"
are some lessons I've learned
ard way that may help you.

BOOKS

bookstore should stock a few
nes that will help get you start-
ne is *The Genealogy Source-*
: (Lowell House, \$26) by
on DeBartolo Carmack. For
r genealogy, try *Genealogy Via*
Internet (Alexander Books,
25) by Ralph Roberts.

GO TO SCHOOL

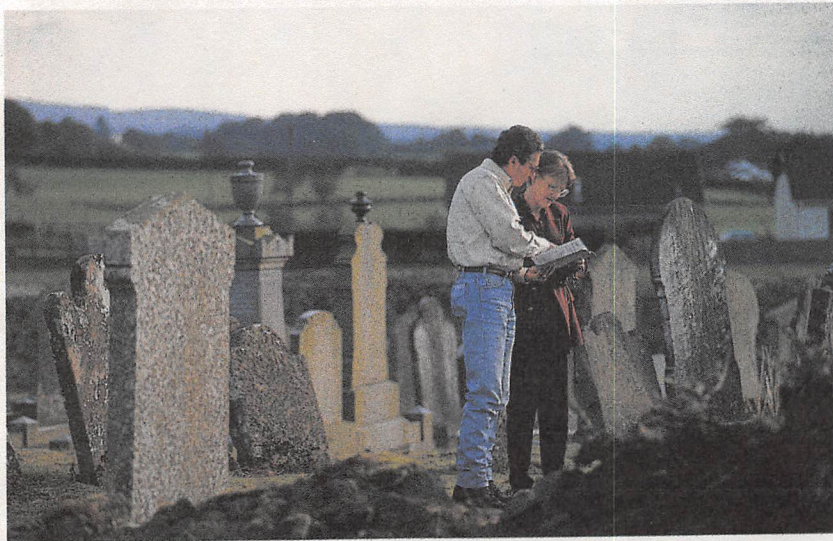
il genealogical societies often
sor seminars for beginners, usu-
with fees for less than \$50. One
e best schools in the country is
nstitute of Genealogy and His-
al Research at Samford Univer-
in Birmingham each June.
klong classes are held for be-
er, intermediate, and advanced
alogy, along with other histori-
opics. Write the institute at
ford University Library, Bir-
gham, AL 35229-7008, call
) 870-2846, or visit their Web
at www.samford.edu/schools/ighr.html.

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

ord all sources including vol-
s and page numbers, even the
you visited an archive or li-
y. Make copies as well as notes.

LISTEN TO GRAY HAIR

you begin your search, ask an
r blood relative about your
ily's past—names, dates, and
es. It can save you weeks of li-
y time. Listen to their stories
While the husk of family folk-
can surround fact, you might
kernels of truth. At least early
our research, to paraphrase



PHOTOGRAPH: ART MERIPOL

Gary D. Ford and his relative in Northern Ireland, May Russell Kirkpatrick, compare notes in Kirkinriola Parish Cemetery near Ballymena.

William Faulkner, one nice, gray-haired old lady can be worth any number of research libraries.

FOLLOW THE BOUNCING COUNTY LINE

In the past, counties gobbled each other like warring fiefdoms. A corner of one county was cut off to form a new one. To find your people, you need to know when and where those lines changed. Long ago, I clutched two books to my breast as if they were Bibles: *The Counties of the United States: Their Derivation and Census Schedules* by E. Kay Kirkham and *County Courthouse Book* by Elizabeth Petty Bentley. You'll find them both on many library reference shelves.

GO BACK AT THE RANCH

Some concern themselves only with leapfrogging from one generation to another, moving on when they find each one. They're missing half the fun. What were your people doing during the hyphen between birth and death? Look into as many church and civil records as you can find. Gather agricultural and mechanical censuses. Locate records for fraternal and patriotic organizations.

STOP AND SMELL

THE WAR OF THE ROSES

Don't research wearing blinders, looking down only one furrow of family and disregarding the world around your ancestors. Read local, national, and international history, and study migration patterns and economic and social changes.

"IT'S ALL ON

THE INTERNET NOW"

No it's not. "Genealogy" might be the third most entered word on the Internet, behind "alien" and "naked," but huge gaps in data remain. While more information is being added, the World-Wide Web most often will tell you where to look, but it won't reveal the documents themselves. Besides, what is posted on the Internet, including Aunt Ethel's research, can be erroneous.

PRESENT AS PAST

The World-Wide Web is a great way to meet what I call cyber kin—cousins who stretch from coast to coast. I count among my genealogical successes not just the dead ancestors I've discovered, but the live cousins I have met. Remember, this is about blood, after all. *Gary D. Ford*