

# Old Broad Bay Family History Association Newsletter

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The Old Broad Bay Family History Association,  
On the web at: [www.rootsweb.com/~meobbfha/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~meobbfha/) – Editorial comments & queries to [obbeditor@earthlink.net](mailto:obbeditor@earthlink.net)

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## Dues are due for 2011-2012

Dues are due! The last page of the newsletter has the renewal form. Please cut it out, print it out, or make a copy and send it with your check to treasurer Deirdre Putnam before July 1<sup>st</sup>. The membership year is July 1 to June 30. Thank you for your prompt attention to this.

## OBBFHA post office box closed

Due to the rising cost and the difficulty of picking up mail on a regular basis, the board of directors of the OBBFHA decided to close the Association's post office box in Waldoboro.

Membership renewals and other inquiries about membership should be sent to Deirdre Putnam at 17 Bush Hill Rd, Ipswich, MA 01938 ([dhurleyputnam@yahoo.com](mailto:dhurleyputnam@yahoo.com)).

Editorial comments & queries should be sent to Helen Shaw at 77 Pascal Ave, Rockport, ME 04856 ([obbeditor@earthlink.net](mailto:obbeditor@earthlink.net)).

General association mail should be sent to David Putnam at 17 Bush Hill Rd, Ipswich, MA 01938 ([DPutnam925@msn.com](mailto:DPutnam925@msn.com)).

## LD 258 (vital records access) update

LD 258 is the bill to amend Public Law 601 which last year closed Maine's vital records for 100 years. It was sponsored by Representative Deborah Sanderson (R, Chelsea). A public hearing on the bill was held on Wednesday, March 2, with the committee work session being held the next day, Thursday, March 3.

Testifying at the public hearing in favor of the bill were Helen Shaw, CG, Pam Eagleson, CG, Melinde Sanborn, CG, Anne Thomas (Honorary State Regent, DAR), Peggy O’Kane (reference librarian for the Maine State Library), and several others. Testifying against the bill were Elana Jellison (rule making coordinator for the Maine DHHS, and Dr. Stephen Sears (Acting Director, Maine CDC, DHHS). Testifying neither for or against was Kathy Montejo, town clerk for Lewiston and board member of the Maine Genealogical Society.

It was clear at the public hearing that genealogists and DHHS staff were far apart. HHS Committee chair, Senator McCormick, asked those testifying to meet and see if they could come up with a compromise everyone could agree on and bring that to the work session on Thursday. After almost four hours of discussion, we had an agreement.

Present at the HHS Committee work session on Thursday, March 3, were Helen Shaw, Kathy Montejo, Peggy O’Kane, and Elana Jellison. All were allowed to respond to questions and to clarify the reasons for the proposed closure time frames. [Note: Members of the audience are not allowed to speak in work sessions unless invited by members of the committee.] After a lively discussion, the compromise bill was altered by the HHS Committee. The final text of the bill is posted on the legislative website <<http://www.maine.gov/legis/>>. Type 258 in the box in the upper right corner and click on “text” when you get to the bill’s web page.

LD 258 was voted unanimously “ought to pass as amended” at the end of the work session. It was reported out of committee on Tuesday, April 5 and placed on the consent roll for the House on Wednesday, April 6. It was voted on, engrossed, and sent to the Senate for their vote on Tuesday, April 12. It was voted on and engrossed by the Senate on Thursday, April 14. The House and Senate are expected to give their final approval to the bill the week of April 18 and send it to Governor LePage for his signature. The bill will become law 90 days after the legislature adjourns in mid-June.

The Centers for Disease Control, Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics (CDC/ODRVS) will write the rules by which LD 258 will be implemented. These rules will specify what information and documentation must be provided to prove the relationships listed in Paragraph 5 of the law. These rules will specify what information and documentation must be provided to obtain a CDC/ODRVS researcher card. The cost of the researcher card also will be set in the rules. The Governor has placed a moratorium on rule making until June, 2011. Since LD 258 is in essence an amendment of the old LD 1781 (PL 601) the rule making committee will start with the rules discussed the summer and fall of 2010 for LD 1781.

At this time, it is suggested that you not purchase a CDC/ODRVS researcher card as the cost will be lowered significantly once the rules are created and approved – a process which will take at least until September and very likely much longer. If you are not a family member looking up your own family records you will need the researcher card to do research at the Vital Records Unit facility in Augusta because they have always required it there, but you should not need it at municipal offices for accessing open records. That said, it may be best to wait until the rule making process is completed to make sure the town clerks are on the same page as the state.

Jack Battick and Helen Shaw (president and vice president respectively) of the Maine Genealogical Society will be working with representatives of the town clerks association to create an informational paper to help town clerks understand the position of genealogists and to help genealogists understand the position of town clerks regarding access to vital records. This will be

shared with the Vital Records Unit of the CDC/ODRVS.

So, what does LD 258 do to vital records access?

## **OPEN RECORDS**

1. It is now in statute that all vital records before 1892 are open to anyone without restriction. Anyone can buy an informational copy or an official copy on town letterhead.

NOTE: Towns may impose their own rules covering access to vital records to include specific days or hours of availability, forms that must be filled out, and personal identification to be provided. However, having state statute saying these early vital records are public records should help immensely.

Note that the exact wording of the law for the following records states that they are open after XX years from the date of the event. The years listed below are a simplification. These records may be accessed at the Vital Records Unit in Augusta or at the applicable municipal office. See the text of the law on-line for the list of people in Paragraph 5 allowed to buy certified copies of vital records.

2. All birth certificates between 1892 and 1936 are open to anyone without restriction.

That upper year will shift as time goes on; the closure period is 75 years.

Anyone can buy a non-certified copy. Only people listed in Paragraph 5 can buy a certified copy.

3. All marriage certificates, registrations of domestic partnerships, and certificates for fetal deaths between 1892 and 1961 are open to anyone without restriction.

That upper year will shift as time goes on; the closure period is 50 years.

Anyone can buy a non-certified copy. Only people listed in Paragraph 5 can buy a certified copy.

4. All deaths certificates between 1892 and 1986 are open to anyone without restriction.

That upper year will shift as time goes on; the closure period is 25 years.

Anyone can buy a non-certified copy. Only people listed in Paragraph 5 can buy a certified copy.

## **CLOSED RECORDS**

5. Access to birth certificates less than 75 years old

You need to be a family member listed in Paragraph 5 or have a CDC/ODRVS researcher card to look at these records.

Only people listed in Paragraph 5 can buy a certified (or non-certified) copy.

People with a CDC/ODRVS researcher card can buy a non-certified copy.

6. Access to marriage certificates, registrations of domestic partnerships, or fetal death certificates less than 50 years old

You need to be a family member listed in Paragraph 5 or have a CDC/ODRVS researcher card to look at these records.

Only those listed in Paragraph 5 can buy a certified (or non-certified) copy.

People with a CDC/ODRVS researcher card can only buy a non-certified copy.

7. Access to death certificates less than 25 years old

You need to be in a family member listed in Paragraph 5 or have a CDC/ODRVS researcher card to look at these records.

Only those listed in Paragraph 5 can buy a certified (or non-certified) copy  
People with a CDC/ODVRS researcher card can only buy a non-certified copy.

All family members (as listed in Paragraph 5 of the law) must provide documentation of their identity and their relationship to the persons whose vital records are being accessed.

Rules for genealogists (paid or not) who are acting as an agent for a family member listed in Paragraph 5 are still being written and may change. We know so far these genealogists must have a CDC/ODRVS researcher card and that they may buy certified copies of vital records for the client. Also, the client must provide a notarized letter of authorization for the genealogist and documentation of their identity and relationship to the persons whose vital records are being accessed.

## **The Origins of the Welt Family of Waldoboro: A Re-Examination**

*by David Putnam*

The origins of the Welt Family of Waldoboro have been a mystery for many years. When I began my research into the family history in 1993 I found a lack of definitive sources regarding the origins of the family in Maine. The first record of a Welt in Broad Bay (later Waldoboro) appears in Samuel Miller's book, *The History of Waldoboro*. The name John Welt appears on a list of settlers residing in Broad Bay in the year 1760.<sup>1</sup> John Welt's name is not listed on any of the passenger manifests for the ships that brought German immigrants to Broad Bay during the 1740s and 1750s. John Welt does not appear in any other record until he is listed on the muster role for Captain Ulmer's militia company serving during the American Revolution. Welt participated in the attack upon Fort George at Castine. Welt, accompanied by George Hoch, later deserted his company in 1779 and went over to the British side. According to Miller, Hoch and Welt "were induced by promises of bounties of land and money to join the English at Castine. Soon seeing their error, they deserted, were captured, tried by court martial and sentenced to receive each a thousand stripes save one. Welt died under the lash."<sup>2</sup> An ignominious beginning for the Welt family in Maine.

### **JAEGER BLASIVS WELT**

I have not been able to find any record of John Welt marrying or acquiring land. How did the family grow to become one of Waldoboro's largest families in the 19th century? The answer lies with another Welt named Blasius (aka Pleosus) Welt. I believe Blasius, together with his wife Sedona Benner, was the source of the Welt Family in Waldoboro. Was he related to aforementioned John Welt? There has been speculation that they may have been brothers.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this is so, but there is no definitive proof and no other known connection between them other than a common last name. It would be tempting to jump to that conclusion. However, my research has revealed that Blasius Welt's arrival in Waldoboro came several years after John's death and, for the time, under somewhat scandalous circumstances.

The only immigration record that I have been able to uncover for a Blasius or Pleosus Welt is a list of German soldiers from the Ansbach-Bayreuth Regiment of Bavaria that stayed in America after the American Revolution. A Blasius Welt is listed as a Jaeger (Scout) who arrived at Fort George in Castine as a replacement in November of 1782.<sup>4</sup> Ms. Annete Ruppel-Rodrigues, a historian and a Professor of German at the University of Maine, prepared an essay entitled, "When the Hessians Came to Maine During the American Revolution." This essay was published in three parts in the

summer, fall and winter newsletter of the Old Broad Bay Family History Association.<sup>5</sup> In her essay Ms. Ruppel Rodrigues describes the harsh living conditions at the fort. On May 1, 1783 Jaeger Blasius Welt was one of 14 soldiers listed as missing from the regiment.<sup>6</sup> Regimental Captain Cleve noted that some of the men had been lawfully discharged from the regiment.<sup>7</sup> No such notation was made for Blasius Welt. As we know from Jasper Stahl, there was a lively clandestine trade between some of the German settlers in Waldoboro and soldiers stationed at the fort.<sup>8</sup> If Welt did not wish to return to Germany, he would have undoubtedly known about the Germans in nearby Waldoboro and sought refuge among them. The fact that there were deserters hiding in Waldoboro is revealed in a letter from Waldoboro resident Heinrich Suthoff to Captain Cleve of the Ansbach Bayreuth Regiment. In the letter, Suthoff characterized the deserters hiding in Waldoboro as “scoundrels, who would return to Fort George in order to entice many others to desert with them.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, there were paroled German soldiers who had been captured at The Battles of Bennington and Saratoga living with families in the Waldoboro area.<sup>10</sup>

### BLASIUS or PLEOSUS - THE SAME MAN?

The discrepancy between the names Blasius and Pleosus is puzzling. Are they two different men, or the same man? A 1783 plot plan on file at the Lincoln County Registry of Deeds describes a 36 acre plot of land on the eastern side of the Medomak River, adjacent to “The falls.”<sup>11</sup> This plot plan was prepared by John Martin Jr. “a sworn Surveyor of land.” He describes the lot as belonging to “Mr. Blasius Welts.” Beneath the description of the property is a notation signed with the name “Pleosus Welt” describing the sale of the lot to Jacob Bornheimer for five pounds and eight shillings. The date of this transaction is listed as October 19th 1791. Obviously, what is remarkable about this document is that Welt’s name appears with two different, albeit similar, first names. Another land transaction on file at the Lincoln County Registry of Deeds lists “Passa Welt of Waldoborough aforesaid yeoman” purchasing from John Martin a 150 acre tract of land on the east side of the Medomak River in Waldoboro. The transaction is dated June 21, 1786.<sup>12</sup> A Pleosus Welt is listed in the 1790 Federal Census as living in Waldoboro with his wife and four children.

I inquired of Ms. Anette Ruppel Rodrigues, a native of Germany, as well as a historian and professor of the German language, about possible explanations for this discrepancy and she stated that she believes that Blasius and Pleosus were the same person. She stated that in the southern German dialect the letter “B” is pronounced very hard, which makes it sound more like a “P.” Additionally, the “a” sounds more like an “o” in the southern dialect. It is easy to imagine that a German pronunciation of the name Blasius might sound like Pleosus to an American ear. She also stated that Blasius is a common name in Bavaria, home of the Ansbach-Bayreuth Regiment. She had never heard of the named Pleosus.

Several sources list the approximate date of Blasius Welt’s marriage to Sedona Benner as “abt. 1779.”<sup>13</sup> This date is almost three years before Blasius Welt’s arrival at Castine. I have been unable to locate a primary source that definitively establishes the date of their marriage. Additionally, the approximate date of birth given for their first child, Susanna Catherine (Newbert) is listed as, “abt. 1780.” Once again, I have been unable to locate a primary source for her date of birth. Where did these approximate dates come from? Were they provided years after the events and their accuracy subject to the vagaries of memory? Perhaps the fact that Blasius was a former German mercenary in service to the hated British, caused family members to alter the dates in an attempt to cover up an embarrassing family secret. Ms. Ruppel Rodrigues cites a quote from *The Schoppe Family Genealogy* that summarizes the attitude of many Americans towards German mercenaries: “Hessians were German soldiers hired of petty German princes by Great Britain...to come to

America and butcher her children.”<sup>14</sup> If this was the prevailing attitude towards Hessians, it is easy to see why family members might have been eager to obscure the circumstances of Blasius Welt’s arrival in Waldoboro.

The fate of Blasius Welt is equally mysterious. No record exists of his death and I have not been able to locate his grave. His wife Sedona is buried in the Welt Family plot in the Rural Cemetery in Waldoboro. As I mentioned earlier, the Federal Census of 1790 lists Pleosus living in Waldoboro with two males under 16 years of age and three females. The United States Direct Tax Records of 1798 do not list a Pleosus or Blasius Welt. However, they do list a Zedona Welth residing in Waldoboro. She is listed as owning 200 acres of land valued at \$650 dollars and one dwelling house valued at \$130 dollars.<sup>15</sup> Despite the misspelling, I believe this is Blasius’ wife Sedona. The Federal Census of 1800 does not list a Pleosus or Blasius Welt. However, it does list Sitoney Welt residing in Waldoboro with a male under ten years of age, and one male and one female between the ages of 10-15. Once again, either the census taker was not careful in his spelling, or he was confused by an accent. In *Broad Bay Pioneers*, Whitaker and Horlacher list Pleosus’ date of death as “before 1805.”<sup>16</sup> The fact that Pleosus does not appear in the 1798 tax record or the 1800 census suggests that he either died or deserted his family sometime after the birth of his last child Mathias in 1793, and prior to 1798. Without more information we cannot know for certain. However, like the approximate dates provided for his marriage and birth of his first child, we see again that the approximate date provided for Blasius’ death is not verified by any source and seems to contradict known facts.

## SUMMARY

When researching the early Welt Family, definitive information is hard to attain. However, I think, that taken as a whole, the information at hand allows us to make certain assumptions that stand beyond a reasonable doubt. The regimental records of the Ansbach-Bayreuth Regiment list Jaeger Blasius Welt arriving at Fort George in Castine in November of 1782. The list of soldiers from the Ansbach-Bayreuth Regiment who were discharged or deserted in America lists the name of Jaeger Blasius Welt as missing from his regiment on May 1st, 1783. I think these regimental records can be viewed as a reliable primary source, particularly when one takes into account the Teutonic passion for record keeping. The fact that no other record of immigration for Blasius or Pleosus Welt exists indirectly lends additional credence to the regimental records. Additionally, a 1786 land transaction in Waldoboro lists the buyer as Passa Welt. The 1790 Federal Census lists a Pleosus Welt living in Waldoboro. A plot plan dated 1783 for another parcel of land lists the landowner’s name as Blasius Welt. The same document also refers to him as Pleosus Welt. I can find no evidence of a credible scenario that would suggest these were two separate people. The fact that the dates of his marriage (abt.1779) and the birth of his daughter (abt.1780) are listed as approximate dates indicates a lack of a primary source. These dates were obviously taken from memory and their accuracy cannot be proven. They could result from legitimate mistakes of memory, or an effort to cover up Blasius’ “Hessian past.”

In closing, I think the problems I faced in tracing the early origins of the Welt Family are examples of what other genealogist face when researching early American families. Inaccurate record keeping resulting from human error, foreign accents, lack of literacy, as well as personal agendas, can lead a researcher down many frustrating blind alleys. I journeyed down several before I was fortunate enough to stumble upon the regimental records of my “Hessian” ancestor. Regardless of the circumstances of his arrival, Blasius, together with his wife Sedona, accomplished quite a lot. The fact that he came here as a soldier, probably with little or no personal wealth, and choose to risk his

life by staying is a testament to his courage and determination. In their brief time together, Blasius and Sedona were able to acquire a large farm, have five children and establish the Welt Family in Maine. Their oldest son John would become a religious leader in the community and carry the respected title “Deacon John” to his grave. Their grandson, Augustus Welt, would become a prosperous merchant and shipbuilder, as well as a respected statewide civic and business leader. Blasius may have come to America as part of a mercenary army trying to suppress American independence, but he remained in American and, together with his wife, left a considerable legacy of achievement only possible for them in the new United States of America.

#### Endnotes:

1. Miller, Samuel, *The History of Waldoboro*, Emerson Printing, Wiscasset, Maine, 1910, p. 52.
2. Ibid, p. 88.
3. Whitaker and Horlacher, *Broad Bay Pioneers*, Picton Press, Rockport, Maine, 1998, p. 607.
4. Staediler, Erhard, *The Troops of the Ansbach-Bayreuth Regiment in the American War for Independence*, appendix pp. 151-172.
5. Ruppel Rodrigues, Anette, *When The Hessians Came to Maine During the American Revolution*, *Old Broad Bay Family History Association Newsletter*, Volume 8, no. 1, Winter, 2011.
6. Ibid, vol. 7, no. 3, Summer 2010, p. 4.
7. Ibid, vol.8, no.1, Winter, 2011, p. 2.
8. Stahl, Jasper, *History of Old Broad Bay and Waldoboro*, vol. 1, p. 474.
9. Ruppel Rodrigues, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 2011, p. 2.
10. Miller, Samuel, p. 86.
11. Lincoln County Registry of Deeds, Book 26, page 208 at the courthouse in Wiscasset.
12. Lincoln County Registry of Deeds, Book 25, page 16 at the courthouse in Wiscasset.
13. Whitaker and Horlacher, p. 607.
14. Schoppe, Mary Coffin, *The Schoppe Family Genealogy 1782-1932*, Feb. 22, 1932.
15. United States Direct Tax, 1798. *The Genealogical Advertiser: A Quarterly Family History*, Vol. IV, p. 147 [*The Genealogical Advertiser* was a newsletter that was published from 1898-1901. Copies the entire publication run are in one binder available at the Phillips Library, Salem, MA.]
16. Whitaker and Horlacher, p. 607.

## Trip to Germany?

Ms. Anette Ruppel Rodrigues has informed OBB President David Putnam that it is not possible to offer a special trip to Germany for OBBFHA members this year (2011), but that members might be interested in joining with another group, the Pastorius House Association, to travel in 2012. This organization is interested in the historic connections between Germany and the United States. If you are interested in such a trip, please contact Ms. Ruppel Rodrigues directly at 324 Essex St, Bangor, ME 04401-4051 (unserM@aol.com).

## Membership

The Old Broad Bay Family History Association is a group of people interested in studying and maintaining the history of the founding families, and in particular the founding German families, of what is now Waldoboro, Lincoln County, Maine.

There are three types of membership: individual, family, and library. An individual membership confers the right to one vote. A family membership confers the right to two votes. A library membership is solely for the purpose of allowing distribution of the newsletter to libraries and historical societies and confers no right to vote.

The membership year is July 1 to June 30. The newsletter is issued quarterly in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Fall).

Membership checks should be made out to OBBFHA and mailed, along with this form, to: Deirdre Putnam, OBB Treasurer, 17 Bush Hill Rd, Ipswich, MA 01938.

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### Old Broad Bay Family History Association Application for Membership

New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Second member in the household: \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach a list of your Broad Bay Ancestors or write a list on the back of this form.

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

#### How do you want to receive the newsletter?

Individual membership: e-mail (pdf format) \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ US mail \$15 \_\_\_\_\_  
Family membership: e-mail (pdf format) \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ US mail \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

**Research facilities (libraries, archives, historical societies, etc.):** We welcome the placement of this newsletter in your collection. Please fill out this portion of the membership form. Once you are on our subscription list you will receive a renewal invoice by mail each year. **Subscription: \$15 per year.**

Name of research facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_