

The Blevins Men **of** **New York and New England**

The First Blevins Settlers in the New World

Robert P. Blevins

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The information contained herein represents both original research and my compilations and interpretations of the work of others. Please address any comments, suggestions, criticisms, or corrections to me:

Robert P. Blevins
173 Amanda Lane
Acme, PA 15610
yairi@lhtot.com

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Acknowledgment

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the work and contributions of my 4th cousin, once removed, Alton Blevins. Alton has done an enormous amount of original research and the *majority* of the New York and Rhode Island references used within this paper were his original discoveries. Alton prefers to not publish his work beyond his own immediate family sphere but has graciously encouraged me to use his findings herein.

I also wish to acknowledge the critical reviews of this document provided by both Alton and noted researcher, B. B. Blevins. B. B. began his Blevins research in the early 1970s and was the publisher of an early newsletter called *The Blevins Heritage Magazine*. Over the years he has graciously shared with me many data files and copies of his early, unpublished work products.

Note: This August 22, 2020 version corrects a typographic error relative to the death date for Mary Dyer. On page 5, I had originally stated (in my June 1, 2020 version) that she was hanged in 1760. She was actually hanged in 1660.

"If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of Giants."

- Sir Isaac Newton, 1675

Preface

In 2002, my wife and I took a vacation to Arizona. Part of our travels included a night spent in the small town of Holbrook. Upon checkout, the motel desk clerk asked my wife: "How does it feel to have such a famous name?"

It was then we discovered that Holbrook, Arizona had been the epicenter of the *Pleasant Valley War*, a bloody feud that raged from 1882 to 1892 between local cattle and sheep ranching concerns. We also learned that the leader and many members of the cattle-interest gun fighters were named Blevins. I immediately resolved to discover if and how I might be related to this infamous gang. After nearly 20 years I can say that yes, I am almost certainly related to these people but I still don't know exactly how.

Genealogical research can be an addictive, and often frustrating, endeavor. In fewer than two years, I had *proven* my Blevins line back to my 4th great-grandfather, David Blevins (about 1775 - 1830). It took me *14 more years* to *prove* back one more generation to my 5th great-grandfather, James Blevins (about 1744 - about 1804). Breaking down that brick wall quickly took me back an additional three generations to my almost-certain 8th great-grandfather, James Bliven the "Sayler" (before 1659 - about 1716), who is one of the main subjects of this paper.

I use the terms "proven" and "almost certain" throughout most of my publications. "Proven" means a relationship has been proven according all acceptable genealogical standards. "Almost certain" means a relationship has been proven to my own satisfaction with the realization that some might take issue with that conclusion.

With almost 20 years of experience, I still consider myself a rookie, particularly when compared to some of my friends, peers, and mentors like Ronald L. Blevins, B.B. Blevins, and Alton Blevins, who together possess nearly 150 years of Blevins-research experience.

Prior Research. Good genealogical research is difficult and, prior to the advent of the Internet, it was even more so. Early researchers had to rely on personal family documents, on writing letters, on obtaining family data sheets compiled by others, on reviews of published literature, and on the occasion trip to some distant archive. In spite of the difficulties, much of the early Blevins research is surprisingly good. Unfortunately, much is also very bad.

In 1890, the founding of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) prompted thousands of women (including many Blevins descendants) to start researching to prove their descent from a Revolutionary War soldier. In spite of the low standards of proof initially required by the DAR, many early admissions were based on good, solid genealogies. Many others, unfortunately, were based on spotty and incorrect findings.

The Mormon Church (LDS) is another bastion of early genealogical research. This is due to the Church tenant of finding ancestors who died without learning about the restored Mormon Gospel. Members are expected to identify these relatives from past generations so they can be baptized by proxy. Today, the LDS archives contain one of the world's largest collections of genealogical research. Some of it is excellent; some, not so much.

The Internet greatly facilitates research and offers access to documents, records, and other information that would otherwise be unavailable to most without great cost and effort. The Internet represents a double-edged sword to researchers, however, because it is also filled with virally spread horrible information, unsubstantiated myths, poorly constructed family trees, fabrications, and pure nonsense.

The number one rule for Internet-based research is to use viral findings as leads, but always get as close as you possibly can to the original documentation before you formulate a final opinion.

Be skeptical and apply critical thinking to everything and anything written by another person and yes, that advice applies to everything I have written as well. I generally cite the original sources used so that you can verify or investigate further if you wish.

I can envision, 50 years hence, some researcher pointing at my work and thinking: "What an idiot, I can't believe he got this date and relationship wrong." Mistakes have been, are being, and will continue to be made by researchers and writers. I try very hard to, at least, minimize potential errors and I always eschew obvious works of fiction and myth.

Blevins Origins. I am firmly convinced that this *New York and New England* paper represents and documents the American origins of my own Blevins line. I am also convinced that it represents the American origins for the vast majority (perhaps 80 to 85%) of all current Blevins lines in the United States.

I have no doubt that later Blevins immigrants came to these shores and were the founders of additional lines, particularly during the 19th century. The 1850 and 1860 US Census posed a question on the birthplaces of respondents. The 1870 US Census expanded to include a question on the birthplaces of the respondent's parents. A surprising number of Blevins respondents in those years indicated Ireland as their place of origin.

Although we can legitimately claim Wales as our ancestral homeland, it should be noted that an apparent Irish origin does not necessarily negate an earlier Welsh origin. Ireland almost certainly represented a "temporary" 100- to 200-year stopover for some early Welsh Blevins people.

In the very early 1600s, King James of Great Britain faced a problem. He was plagued by troublesome populations who adhered to newer, more "radical" forms of Protestantism *and* by the inhabitants of Ireland, who largely maintained their Roman Catholic faith.

The King killed two birds with one stone when he created the Ulster Plantation in northern Ireland. King James "relocated" large populations of troublesome lowland Scots, Welshmen, and other problematic folks to the Ulster Plantation. This action was the genesis of today's separation of Protestant Northern and Catholic Southern Ireland and the creation of what we now call the "Orange" and "Green" Irish people. Doubtless, descendants of previously transplanted Blevins people joined the Irish exodus to America during the great potato famine of 1845-1849.

Over the past 200 years or so, other Blevins immigrants undoubtedly came to this country from other corners of the old British world like Canada, Australia, England, or Wales. Many of these later immigrants were probably the founders of new American Blevins lines.

A larger question to ponder - and one perhaps more relegated to ancient historians and anthropologists - is the pre-Welsh origins our Blevins people. The Y-chromosome of Blevins men (inherited strictly along the direct paternal line) falls into a haplogroup that is uncommon among Celtic and most other northern European people. We can certainly trace this chromosome to Wales in the early 1600s, but our ancient male progenitor appears to have had his roots among earlier Mediterranean people. I often joke that some ancestral Welsh grandmother was seduced, a thousand years ago, by a travelling Moroccan rug salesman. The most rational theory I have heard is that our original male progenitor was among the conscripted Balkan Roman soldiers who stayed in Britannia following Rome's withdrawal in 410 AD. I suspect we will never know for sure.

Publication Series. This paper, *The Blevins Men of New York and New England*, is my latest (but earliest chronologically themed) publication in a series that tracks my own Blevins line back through time. As mentioned above, I believe this paper also captures the American starting point for 80-85% of all current Blevins lines in America. The next paper (chronologically themed) is titled *The Blevins Men of Monocacy and Goochland* and captures not only my line but perhaps 80-85% of the current Blevins people who fall into the *Southern Branch* of the family.

My next publication (chronologically themed) is titled *The Blevins Men of the Holston - Expanded and Revised Edition* and concerns only those Blevins people who left what is now Henry County, Virginia to settle in what is now, Sullivan County, Tennessee between 1770 and 1783. Although this publication covers my own Blevins line, it only captures a small minority (perhaps 15% or fewer) of the current American Blevins lines. This publication also includes detailed discussions relative to Y-DNA findings and on the Blevins Longhunters of the 1760s.

My final publication (chronologically themed) is titled *The Blevins Men of the Hiwassee* and covers only those Blevins people who left the Holston area for what is now the Meigs County area of Tennessee. Although this publication, again, covers my own Blevins line, it captures an even smaller minority (perhaps fewer than 2%) of the current American Blevins lines.

An obvious void in my publication series involves the 40 or so years the vast majority of our Blevins ancestors spent, starting around 1745, in what was old Brunswick County, Virginia (later evolving into Lunenburg, Halifax, Pittsylvania, and Henry Counties, Virginia). I am, admittedly, a selfish researcher and my own line's presence in that part of Virginia is adequately covered in the *Monocacy* and *Holston* publications. I do hope to eventually produce a comprehensive paper on that area and time frame with the tentative title *The Blevins Men of the Smith River*.

Following are brief discussions of some of the protocols and techniques I apply in this and in subsequent publications.

Identifiers and Suffixes. To the fullest extent possible, I avoid using the traditional suffixes of Senior (Sr.) and Junior (Jr.) for two men of the same name. Those identifiers are often transitory over time (a Junior later becomes a Senior), are inconsistently applied in the historical records, and often don't even refer to a father and son (they can be applied to an uncle and nephew or to the older and younger of two cousins in the same general location). It is, of course, impossible to *totally* ignore these suffixes, particularly when discussing original documents.

I also avoid using the numbering system (William #1, William #2, etc.) used by many genealogists because those numbers are really only valid for that particular genealogist's family tree structure. If that structure turns out to be incorrect, the numbering system loses even more validity.

The Blevins families were blessed over time with an abundance of men named John, James, Daniel, and William and it is sometimes maddening to keep them separated. For most of the main characters found in this and subsequent publications, I apply special suffixes, sobriquets, or nicknames that apply to one person and to that one person only. Most of the time, there is a documentary basis for the suffix/nickname used but, in some cases, I admittedly created the identifier out of pure fancy.

This *New York and New England* paper introduces John Blethen the Quaker, James Bliven the "Sayler", and Edward Bliven of Westerly. The *Monocacy and Goochland* paper introduces James Bliven the Patriarch and each of his children are given the suffix "the Elder". In the *Holston* publication, I use the names Colonel William Blevins, William Blevins the Elder, John Blevins the Elder, Devil Will Blevins, and Jack Blevins. Each refers to a totally different person named John or William.

Surname Spelling. As most researchers know, the Blevins surname has been subjected to a vast array of different spellings. Today, the overwhelming majority of

Blevins people in the United States use the spelling *Blevins*. We generally refer to this spelling as the principle variation of the Southern Branch of the family. The predominant spelling used today by the much smaller Northern Branch of the family is *Bliven*.

Y-DNA studies have proven that both the Northern and Southern Branches belong to the exact same line of male progenitors. Y-DNA studies have also proven that an even smaller group, those who today use the spelling *Blythin* or *Blethen*, are *also* members of the same overall Blevins family.

Early on in our Southern Branch history, a terminal "s" was added to the earlier *Bliven* form, likely due to the old English tradition of ending patronymic surnames with an "s". (It should be noted that a few early northern records also show a terminal "s".) Also, early in our Southern Branch history, the "i" and "e" vowels somehow switched places. (Again, a few early northern records show the "e" before the "i".)

As a general rule, I use the spelling *Bliven* for members of the Northern Branch of the family and *Blevins* for members of the Southern Branch. This particular document also uses the spelling *Blethen* for one early Blevins man. In all of my documents, however, I discuss and present the variety of spellings encountered in the records.

As mentioned, old documents and their transcriptions contain a dizzying array of spelling variations for the family name and largely involve the substitution of vowels within the name. Some of these variations (*Blevens*, *Blevans*, *Blivin*, etc.) have carried through to modern times. These variations can almost always be attributed to one or both of two factors: *Transcribing* and *Transcription*.

Transcribing errors occurred because most of our early ancestors were illiterate. The majority of early documents were actually written by clergymen, lawyers, or government officials. The person who originally wrote down the name had to use his best guess at the phonetic spelling of the surname given.

Transcription errors are produced by the person who read and transcribed the original document, which was almost always written in cursive hand. This person had to make his best guess at how the name was actually spelled on the document. Cursive handwriting styles and techniques range from elegant and clear to sloppy and barely readable. Handwritten, lower-case vowels "e", "i", "a", and "o" can often look the same.

One of the most egregious examples of transcription error has produced a number of examples of the name "*Bleving*". A particular cursive writing style employed a downward flourish on the letter "s" and a transcriber, unfamiliar with the surname, could easily mistake the terminal "s" for a "g".

Original Documentation. It is always best to get as close to the original documents and records as possible. In many cases, original documents are unavailable to mere mortals. In such cases, it is necessary to rely on published full transcriptions or

abstracts of the originals. It is also *preferable* to use *reliable* transcriptions and abstracts and thereby avoid the need to personally read and transcribe hundreds of pages of hand-written documents. The key word is *reliable*. In cases where the published abstract or transcription raises questions, go to the original if at all possible. Always be wary of other people's *interpretations* of documents, transcriptions, and abstracts.

Take the time to study the history of the places and times of your ancestors. This knowledge will allow you to better understand the context of the ancestor information you find. You may also discover that your ancestors had connections to famous and infamous people. Our Blevins ancestors, for example, rubbed shoulders with people like Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, President Andrew Jackson, President Andrew Johnson, and the first woman to be executed in the Salem Witch Trials.

Estimating Birth and Death Years. Absent definitive records, estimating the birth year for an ancestor is difficult. Knowing the date of marriage, or the birth year of an eldest child can be very helpful. As a *general rule*, men did not marry until about the age of 21 or later; women, on the other hand, sometimes married as young as 14. One of the more valuable information points is the year an ancestor first acquired land as they could generally not buy or sell property in their own name until the age of 21.

Another possible data point is the date they *stopped* appearing on tax or militia lists. To be useful, however, a knowledge of the age limits found in local laws at the time is required.

These data points enable an estimation of birth, such as "in or before 1750" It is important to keep in mind, however, that this estimation can be off by many years. For the sake of brevity, it is sometimes appropriate to add a year to the above and simply state "before 1751". Both techniques are accurate but neither is very precise.

It's always good to have a second, lower-bound data point such as the *first year* an ancestor appeared on a tax or militia list. Using both upper and lower bounds, it is possible to reasonably estimate birth between a range of years such as "between 1740 and 1750". Once a range of years is established, the midpoint of that range (about 1745) is sometimes picked as the estimated year of birth. Again, it is important to keep in mind that this *estimation* can be off by many years. Census records beginning in 1850 provide "definitive" birth years but always keep in mind that our ancestors sometimes lied.

Estimating a year of death is equally difficult absent a definitive record. Sometimes we are limited to estimating year of death as occurring sometime *after* an ancestor's last appearance in the historical records. Another useful clue is the date a son of the same given name stopped being referred to as "Junior" in the records. Headstones and dead certificates are wonderful to have but sometimes even *they* are incorrect.

In my papers, estimated dates are almost always preceded by the term, "about", "before", "after", or by the symbol for approximation, "~". In cases where I present full theoretical family tables, however, I generally exclude these qualifiers for any listed grandchildren simply to avoid clutter.

Signature Marks. A rarely used, but very powerful technique for the researcher is to examine the signature marks made by people within original documents or recordings of original documents. Again, most of our early ancestors were illiterate and couldn't sign deeds, indentures, legal documents, etc. with their own name. Instead, they applied their "mark". Although most marks were a simple "X", many people used unique marks that can be used to identify the same person over time and over multiple documents.

Although most available documents are hand-written recordings (copies) of the original, the clerk, lawyer, or other official who made the recording generally took pains to duplicate the marks made on the original.

We are fortunate in the fact that several early Blevins men used unique signature marks repeatedly over time. This analysis technique, introduced to me by researcher Alton Blevins, and relevant findings are discussed in this paper and in both my *Monocacy* and *Holston* publications.

The following box graphic shows my reproductions of the unique signature marks made by several Blevins ancestors. It should be noted that each of these marks was found in no fewer than three separate documents.

IB	James Bliven the "Sayler"
9	James Bliven the Patriarch
W	William Blevins the Elder
HH	John Blevins the Elder
HB	Henry Blevins (RW Veteran)

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The Blevins Men of New York and New England

Introduction

Tradition holds that the Blevins family has its historical roots in Wales and that tradition is almost certainly true for most of the lines in America. It is the natural inclination of genealogists to seek and indentify their earliest ancestors and, understandably, Blevins researchers look to Wales for that ancestor.

Unfortunately, many Blevins researchers make their leap to Wales prematurely.

One contemporary "researcher", for example, *claims* to be a descendant of Merfyn Frych ap Gwriad of Wales (~780~844) who was the father of Rhordi Mawr (~804~878), the Great King of Wales. Such a deep ancestry claim is impressive, particularly as this same "researcher" can only *prove* his own Blevins line back to a Kentucky ancestor born about 1786.

Some researchers *claim* to be descendants of a 16th century Welshman known as William Blethyn, the Bishop of Llandaff. This William Blethyn (~1525-1590) is a real historical figure who is reasonably well documented. He left a will and a record of his own pedigree. Within his pedigree, he claimed Rhordi Mawr (the Great King of Wales), Brutus of Troy, and the goddess Aphrodite as ancestors. Apparently, exaggerated and myth-filled genealogies are nothing new.

William Blethyn, the Bishop of Llandaff may have been a collateral Blevins ancestor, but he was almost certainly not a direct one. According to the historical records of Dinham Manor (the home of William Blethyn's family for nearly a century), his male line went extinct in 1737.

To my knowledge, there is only one member of the overall Blevins family in America who can genealogically *prove* an ancestral connection to Wales. This single exception is a man who came to the United States *from* Wales in the 1970s. He does not use the surname spelling *Blevins*; he, instead, uses one of the older forms. His grandfather (born 1896) and earlier ancestors used the even older spellings *Blyddyn* or *Bleddyn*. His oldest *proven* ancestor was a man named William Bleddyn (1637-1687) who lived in the village of Llanasa in Flintshire, Wales.

Recently, this gentleman joined the Blevins Project at Family Tree DNA. His Y-DNA results were found to be perfectly consistent with the *Blevins Modal Haplotype*, exhibiting a genetic distance of only "3" over 67 markers when compared to the *Modal*. Many of the American-born Blevins Project participants (including yours truly) exhibit the same (or greater) genetic distance. (For a detailed discussion of Blevins Y-DNA results, see *The Blevins Men of the Holston - Expanded and Revised Edition*.)

This man's reported ancestry is exciting because the 1637 birth of his ancestor, William Bleddyn, corresponds nicely (as will be discussed later) with the estimated birth year of the first known Blevins settler of the New World. His Y-DNA results are exciting because they provide genetic (but unfortunately, not genealogical) proof of an American Blevins connection both to Wales and to the older forms of the surname.

Prior to chasing ancient Celtic ancestors, it is advisable to first establish one's own American lineage. The almost-certain beginning point for *most* American Blevins lines involves the early *Blevins Men of New York and New England*. Unfortunately, most of the earliest published (or Internet-posted) genealogies for these families appear to be as muddled and myth filled as those found for the southern groups of Blevins families.

For many years, Blevins researchers have cited, and relied upon, a single publication for much of their earliest information: the multi-volume, *Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island*, published in 1908 by E. H. Beers & Company. On page 1094, Volume II of this publication, a multi-page profile of the Bliven family (the common spelling in Rhode Island) begins as follows:

The Bliven family is an ancient and an honored one in New England. It is descended from the brothers, Joshua, James and Edward, who came from England to Salem, Mass., some time prior to 1650.

By some members of the family it is claimed that it is descended from Welsh nobility, but there is more probability that the family comes from the German name of Bliven, several of whom were men of fame - one a musician of great note, and another an explorer of Iceland, reaching a point then farthest north. To each was granted the prefix "Von."

The earliest record of the family in America is the conveyance of property by James Bliven to his wife Bridget Oliver, at Salem, where the original parchment is displayed upon the wall at Essex Institute.

Joshua Bliven was of Newport in 1669 as master of the ship "Polly." He had sons, Edward and James. James Bliven, son of Joshua, married Margery Cord. This James located at Westerly, Rhode Island, where his son James lived, and among the latter's children was Perry.

The profile continues on for two more pages (and presents information on later generations) but all of the operative, relevant, and frequently cited language is presented above.

Almost every "fact" presented above is *provably false* and has been misleading Blevins researchers for more than a century. What follows is a paragraph-by-paragraph rebuttal of the "facts" presented above.

Paragraph 1: The Bliven family in New England may, in fact, have been founded by brothers "who came from England to Salem, Mass., some time prior to 1650" but no supportive documentation is known to exist. The index to the 1827 book *Annals Of Salem From Its First Settlement* by Joseph Barlow Felt, for example, lists only *one* early Bliven man in Salem; John "Blevin" (Blethen) and his first record is from 1659. James

and Edward were very common given names in the Bliven families of early New England, but the earliest extant record of either name doesn't appear until the late 1670s.

Paragraph 2: The earliest Blevins ancestors may not have been of "Welsh nobility", but they certainly were Welsh. This is proven, if not by long tradition and historical records from Wales, then by recent Y-DNA test findings. I can't find a single historical reference to a German surname "Bliven" or "Von Bliven" but "Bluven" is a modern, albeit infrequently encountered, German surname.

Paragraph 3: The earliest record of the family in America was *not* "the conveyance of property by James Bliven to his wife Bridget Oliver, at Salem...". The first known record is dated 1659 for a man named *John Blethen*; this record will be discussed later. This John Blethen *did* have a connection with, but was not married to "Bridget Oliver". This connection and the probable reason that a document relative to Bridget Oliver allegedly is (or was) "displayed upon the wall at Essex Institute" will be discussed later.

Paragraph 4: A man named Joshua Bliven really was the master of a ship out of Newport named *Polly*. Historical shipping records prove, however, that the "1669" date cited was off by a *full century*. According to the 1853 Edward Peterson book, *History of Rhode Island*:

"Amount of Molasses imported into Newport, for the Quarter ending the 10th of October, 1769,- 3,000 hogsheads. The Names of the Vessels which brought the same, with the Masters and Owners...Polly, Joshua Bliven, Jamica, E. & F. Malborn..."

This Joshua Blevins *may* have had sons named Edward and James and a daughter-in-law named Margery Cord, but they were certainly not among the earliest settlers. A man named James Bliven and his son James *did* settle in Westerly as early as 1689, but this James, Jr. had no known son named "Perry". The Perry Bliven mentioned above wasn't born until the late 1700s and was married in 1800.

The critical point is that the so-called *Representative Men* spoken of in the 1908 publication were, in reality, the grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or even later descendants of the first *Blevins Men of New York and New England*.

This document will focus on the first three early Blevins men *actually found* in the historical records: John Blethen, James Bliven, and Edward Bliven. I use the spelling *Bliven* herein for two of these men and the spelling *Blethen* for one but, as is normal, a variety of spellings are found in the original and transcribed historical records and in the early literature.

John Blethen the Quaker

A man named John Blethen was the first Blevins man documented in New England. In addition to the standard document sources, there are several excellent early literature sources available relative to this man.

One of the most extensive is the book *Genealogy of the Blethen Family*, published in 1911 by Col. Alden Joseph Blethen. This document appears to have been very well researched and claims to have used early Society of Friends (Quaker) records for many of its early sources. As these records are not readily available to the general public, it is very difficult to verify these claims.

A second source is the 1928, multi-volume *A History of Salem, Massachusetts* by Sidney Perley. A third source is the October 1902 issue of the *Essex Antiquarian*, a quarterly Essex County history and genealogy magazine edited by the same Sidney Perley. A fourth source is the previously mentioned 1827 book *Annals Of Salem From Its First Settlement* by Joseph Barlow Felt.

John Blethen was a member of the Society of Friends; a Quaker. As will be discussed later, his being a "Friend" would cause him frequent problems in a social system dominated by the Puritans. As mentioned above, his being a "Friend" also provided a small treasure of information that would have otherwise gone unrecorded.

According to the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book, the first "Friends" to come to America arrived in Boston in 1656. To prevent the spread of their "heretical doctrines", they were ordered to leave the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Again, according to the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book, many of these first "Friends" stayed but many left Massachusetts and went to Oyster Bay, Long Island.

The Blethen *Genealogy* book actually understates and misrepresents the situation faced by the early Quakers in Massachusetts. The Society of Friends was founded in England by George Fox, sometime after 1642. The term "Quaker" was first coined, as a slur, in 1650.

The first Boston arrival of Quakers was aboard the ship the *Speedwell*, which landed at Boston on July 27, 1656 with only eight Quakers on board. All eight were immediately imprisoned. Shortly thereafter, two women Quakers from Rhode Island arrived and they were also imprisoned. Eleven weeks later, all eight of the Quakers from the *Speedwell* were deported to England and the Rhode Island women were banished back to their home colony. (One of these women, Mary Dyer, was hanged in Boston in 1660 because she returned to Massachusetts after her 1656 banishment.)

In July of 1657, a second party of Quakers set out from England on the ship the *Woodhouse*, which first landed on Long Island before making its way to New Amsterdam (New York City). It isn't clear *where* on Long Island the *Woodhouse* landed, but Oyster Bay may have been a landing spot. An alternate or additional landing spot

may have been Shelter Island on the eastern end of Long Island. In 1651, Shelter Island was sold to a group of English sugar merchants from Barbados, one of whom, Nathaniel Sylvester, was the island's first white settler. The Sylvester family gave shelter to many persecuted Quakers including, sometime prior to 1659, Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick (see below).

At that time, all of Long Island had been claimed by the Dutch West India Company as part of their New Netherland Colony. In practice, however, the Dutch only controlled the western parts of Long Island and English settlers primarily controlled the eastern part. Oyster Bay basically represented the demarcation zone between the two competing interests. The town of Oyster Bay was also an area with significant, early Quaker activity and the Society of Friends erected a meeting house there very early on.

In 1658, the Massachusetts legislature completely banned the entry of Quakers and a ship's master could be fined £100 for violating that law.

It isn't known exactly when John Blethen the Quaker first came to Massachusetts. He wasn't on the passenger manifest of either the *Speedwell* or the *Woodhouse*, but he certainly arrived in, or before 1659. Given the difficulties associated with entering the colony as a Quaker, it is possible that John was *converted* to Quakerism *after* his arrival to the colony. He could have also arrived as a crypto-Quaker and initially kept his religious beliefs and membership in the "Friends" a secret.

The 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book provides multiple mentions and references to John Blethen and includes the statement: "The earliest record found of his name is in Salem - a deed from Daniel Southwick of Salem to John Blethen of Lynn, Sept. 28, 1659."

Note: Daniel Southwick was a Quaker of some note and the son of Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick. The family's persecution was the subject of John Greenleaf Whittier's poem *The Ballad of Cassandra Southwick*. Lawrence and Cassandra died on Shelter Island, Long Island in 1660 while under banishment from Massachusetts.

This September 1659 record is confirmed by official records (*Essex Registry of Deeds, Book 1, leaf 74*) and literature sources. For example, on page 14, Volume III of the 1928 *History of Salem*, Perley wrote ".. and John Blethen, who came from Lynn to Salem in 1659 being a husbandman." In the footnote to this brief mention, Perley provided the following additional information:

John Blethen (Blevin) married Jane Le Marcom (Markes), "a Jersey maid", May 10, 1674; died in the winter of 1704-5; she survived him; children: 1. John, born Mar 14, 1676-7; married Mary, widow of Samuel Robinson July 29, 1701; husbandman; lived in Swansea; 2. Jane, born Feb 20, 1678; living in 1705; 3. Elizabeth, born Aug 29, 1680; living in 1705; 4. Sarah, born Oct 31, 1684, living in 1705; 5. Abigail, born May 2, 1686, living in 1705; 6. Hannah; living in 1705.

A "husbandman" was a free tenant farmer or small landowner whose social status was just below that of a yeoman. "Jersey Maid" was a colloquial term referring to an indentured female household servant. It almost certainly originated among immigrants from the Jersey (Channel) Islands of Great Britain.

On page 153 of the previously mentioned *Essex Antiquarian*, Perley provided some detailed background on John's 1659 purchase under the subheading: *John Blethin House*. Daniel Southwick's parents, (Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick), had recently been banished from the colony. Perley believed that Daniel sold off his father's estate in fear the colony would confiscate same to satisfy unpaid fines. Perley opined that after the storm of persecution was largely over, the estate was re-conveyed to Daniel Southwick by an undated deed (*Essex Registry of Deeds, Book 11, leaf 158*). Three acres were then again conveyed to John Blethen, but that deed has not been found.

On June 16, 1664, John Blethen purchased an acre or so of land adjoining his property from John Burnell for £5 "where of forty shillings is to be paid in mony by ye sixteenth day of August next ensueing after the date hereof & the other three pounds to be pd in marchantable wheat & porke at price currant by the 25th day of Dec next." (*Essex Registry of Deeds, Book 2, leaf 88.*) John Burnell was apparently the father of Cassandra Southwick and the grandfather of Daniel.

As a member of the Society of Friends, John Blethen was considered by the ruling Puritans of Massachusetts to be a heretic. Such "heretics" were treated with disdain, and often with cruelty. The previously mentioned 1827 *Annals of Salem* provided three examples of same:

"1666 June 26th. Some of the Friends were fined £10. Josiah and Daniel Southwick and John Blevin, refusing to pay a fine of £1 apiece, were ordered to be whipped."

"1668 Nov. 24th. Some of the Friends were fined £8 10. Samuel Shattuck, John Blevin, Josiah Southwick and Joshua Buffum were committed to prison one month for not paying their fines."

"1669 June 29th. Some of the Friends were fined £9 10. John Blevin and Robert Gray of them were imprisoned for not giving security."

The June 26, 1666 date of his first "punishment" is the earliest known record of John's membership in the Society of Friends although his 1659 land deals with Daniel Southwick are suggestive of earlier membership. The punishments meted out to "Friends" were typically for infractions such as "absence from public ordinances on Lord's day" or for "profaning the Sabbath by working upon the land". John's punishments listed above, however, were for refusing to assist in the construction of a road and bridge, a fort, and a prison.

Note: Joshua Buffum and Robert Gray were mariners. John Burnell and John Shattuck, a son of Samuel Shattuck, were master mariners. The professions of many of his associates suggest that John "Blevin" may have also been a sailor before he settled down to become a farmer.

On May 10 1674, John married a woman named Jane in Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts. Her surname was given as "Marks" in the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book, as "Le Marcom (Markes)" in the 1928 *History of Salem* book and as "Le Marcom"

in the 1939 *Annual Bulletin of La Société Jersiaise*. Her surname was given as "Markes" in her marriage record and as "Lemarcom" in the birth records of four of her children.

On November 26, 1679, John Blethen purchased "ten or eleven acres" from a woman named Bridget Oliver (*Essex Registry of Deeds, Book 5, leaf 59*). It is almost certain that this deed was the "parchment" that the 1908 *Representative Men* book claimed was "displayed upon the wall at Essex Institute". Its significance to the Essex Institute, however, had nothing to do with John Blethen.

Bridget Oliver was the widow of Thomas Oliver, who had died in 1679. Bridget had been accused of bewitching Thomas to death but was acquitted for lack of evidence. Around 1687, Bridget Oliver married a man named Edward Bishop. On April 19, 1692 Bridget Bishop (nee Oliver) was accused of bewitching five young women. She was convicted and became the first person to be executed in Salem for witchcraft.

On May 28, 1689, John Blethen, along with Robert Stone, Sam Robinson, John Thomas Graves, William Williams, Thomas Maul, James Goodridge, and Josiah Southwick signed a letter addressed "To our Friends and Brethren in Rhode Island or elsewhere".

On November 8, 1704, John Blethen the Quaker prepared a will in which he named his wife, Jane, his son, John, and five unmarried daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Sarah, Abigail, and Hannah. A full transcription of his will is provided in the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book. John died a few months later and his will was probated in 1705 in Salem, Essex, Massachusetts. On February 17, 1705, a full inventory of his estate was made and a transcription of this inventory is also provided in the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book.

On March 9, 1704/05, John's widow, Jane, and his son, John, sold "eleven or twelve acres" of land to Samuel Welt for £45. (*Essex Registry of Deeds Book 16, leaf 200*). Jane's name was listed as "Jane Blevin alias Jane Blethin" and her son's name was listed as "John Blevin" on this indenture. They conveyed their house and lot to Daniel Southwick, Jr. on March 24, 1704/05 (*Essex Registry of Deeds Book 17, leaf 53*).

John Blethen the Quaker's date of birth can only be estimated based on a few clues. His 1659 Salem land purchase would suggest he was born in, or before, 1638. If he was born in 1638, he did not marry until he was in his mid-30s and he died at around the age of 66 or 67. Both of these life milestones are reasonably supportive of a 1638 birth but he could easily have been born a few years, or perhaps even a decade, earlier. A safer estimate is to simply say he was born *before* 1639.

We don't know John's place of birth but it was *probably* in England or Wales. We also don't know the name of his father. John *possibly* arrived in Massachusetts as part of a ship's crew in, or before, 1659.

The following table summarizes the theoretical family of John Blethen the Quaker. I use the term "theoretical" because his birth year is only estimated and I have no information relative to the birth and death years of his wife, Jane, or of the birth date of his daughter, Hannah. The data on John and Jane's children were extracted from the 1928 *History of Salem* book.

**Theoretical Family of
John Blethen the Quaker (before 1639 - 1705)
and his wife Jane Le Marcom**

Children	Birth
John Blethen	March 14, 1677
Jane Blethen	February 20, 1678
Elizabeth Blethen	August 29, 1680
Sarah Blethen	October 31, 1684
Abigail Blethen	May 2, 1686
Hannah Blethen	Unknown

As noted, John Blethen the Quaker had five daughters but only one son, also named John. This John Blethen, Jr. apparently married a woman named Mary, the widow of Samuel Robinson, who already had a child named William Robinson. According to the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book, all of their names appeared in a May 1716 deed in Swansea, Bristol County, Massachusetts.

According to the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book, John Blethen, Jr. also had three natural sons named Nathaniel, Samuel, and John. Although it is not the objective of this paper to trace the descendants of John Blethen the Quaker, it is interesting to note that in the early 19th century, two men from the state of Maine - Ichabod Blethen and Increase Blethen - filed affidavits seeking pensions for their service during the Revolutionary War.

Ichabod's application (*R.940*) was rejected but Isabella Blethen eventually received a widow's pension (*W.23621*) for the service of her late husband, Increase Blethen. According to the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book, both Ichabod and Increase were great-grandsons of John Blethen the Quaker.

A final note of humor comes from the writer of the 1911 Blethen *Genealogy* book where he wrote, in reference to the various spellings of John's surname: "They did not seem to be very particular about their spelling."

James Bliven the "Sayler"

As was discussed in the previous section on John Bliven the Quaker, the Society of Friends were active in the small town of Oyster Bay, Long Island as early as 1657.

It may be purely coincidental, but the second early Blevins man - James Bliven - first appeared about 22 years later in the town records of Oyster Bay, Long Island. As previously discussed, John Blethen the Quaker *may* have originally been a seafaring man. As will be discussed below, this James Bliven was certainly a mariner.

As Oyster Bay was a center of "Friends" activity at the time and it is known that John Blethen was a Quaker, it would be easy to speculate that he and this James Bliven were closely connected; by blood, by Faith, by occupation, or by all.

At this point, it is unknown how closely James Bliven the "Sayler" was related to John Blethen the Quaker. All indications suggest that the two men were about one generation apart. We have a record of John's children so James Bliven the "Sayler" clearly wasn't his son. He may have been a nephew, or their nearest common ancestor may have lived several generations prior.

An online Bliven genealogy states that this James Bliven first purchased Oyster Bay land "from the Indians" in 1672. There are no known records to support this claim. This same online genealogy suggests that this James was the brother of "Henry Blethen (Blevin) of Lynn, Mass., (first recorded 1659)". As there was no known man named Henry Blethen in 1659 Lynn, (it was John Blethen) this genealogy probably contains more than *one* incorrect element.

Note: The author cites as his source for the above as page 7 of *The Bliven Genealogy, 1643-1991*, by Lee A. Bliven, 1991, found in the Westerly, Rhode Island Library. I have not been able to review this publication, which was almost certainly a locally produced and distributed paper.

To his credit, the author of this online genealogy, in an apparent reference to the 1908 *Representative Men* book, also stated: "This 'history' of the Bliven family is, unfortunately, not documented, yet has been copied by many genealogists since 1908 and perpetrated as truth."

It is not known when James Bliven first arrived at Oyster Bay, but the first known record involves his February 10, 1678/79 purchase of a 4-acre plot of land from a man named John Rogers. A transcription of this deed conveyance, extracted from *Oyster Bay Town Records, Volume 1-- 1653-1690*, published in 1916, is shown below.

"Oysterbay this tenth day of february 1678/9...I John Rogers, Now An Inhabitant in Oysterbay within ye North Riding of Yorksheere In Long Iseland doe upon good Considerations Moveing me hereunto, Bargain Sell allienate & Make over A Certaine Track or percell of up Land contayning in quantity foure Acers more or less which I bought of John Townsend of Oysterbay itt liing and being neare or Joyning to ye west End of ye aforesaid John Townsends ffeild by ye three Runns so Called, and halfe a privildg or Right of Comons within ye towne bounds of Oysterbay, I have sould unto James Bleving now residing in Oysterbay the Above Menconed track of upland As I

bought itt of John Townsend with ye half right of Comons ffrom me my heires Executors Administrators or Assignes for ever, to ye Above menconed James Bleving, to him his heires Executors Administrs or Assignes for ever, To have and to hould as theire own proper right tytle & Interest & from Any from by or under me for Ever, Ingaging to give ye Sd James Bleving possession of ye Above said premises Accordin to Law haveing Received in hand full satisfaction for ye same, As witnes my hand & seale in Oysterbay, this 10 day of ffebruary 1678/9 and in ye one & thirtyeth yeare of ye Reigne of Charles ye Second, King of great brittan ffrance and Ireland &c:"

Note that the land transferred by John Rodgers to James "Bleving" had been previously purchased by Rogers from a man named John Townsend.

Two days later the town:

"Then Laid out to John Rogers & James Bleving two Acres of Swamp betwene ye two hills, beyond ye Clifft so called bein 13 rod wide by ye Beach, as staked out, & thirty rod in Lengt up ye Swamp marked with A small white Aacke on ye East sid & A small Ash on ye west side."

According to the *Oyster Bay Town Records*, James' estate was estimated to be worth £20 for taxation purposes in 1683.

On January 7, 1686/87, John Rogers and James "Blevin", both of "Oysterbay in Queens County on long-island in the Province of New Yorke" bound themselves to arbitration to settle some unknown dispute. The arbitrator found for Rogers, and James had to pay him 32 shillings and 3 pence. Henry Townsend, Jr. was one of the witnesses. (*The Dongan Papers: Files of the Provincial Secretary of New York during the administration of Governor Thomas Dongan.*)

What's interesting about the arbitration is James' signature mark. It consisted of a vertical line crossed by three short horizontal lines followed by what must have been a "B", but looks like an "A" or an "R" because it's partially obscured by sealing wax.

James disposed of the bulk of his land in Oyster Bay on the same day, January 7, 1686/87. Following is a transcription of this deed:

"To all Christian people unto whome these may come or any wayes concerne That know yee yt I James Blevin of Oysterbay Saylor in Queens county on Long Island In ye Collony of New Yorke for & in Considration of ffourteen pounds valuable to Currant money of this Collony to me in handpaid by John Townsend of ye Town & Collony aforesd before ye Sealing and dillevery of these presents the receite whereof I ye Sd James Blevins do hereby acknowledge and thereof & every ___ thereof do hereby acquitt release and forever discharge ye Sd John Townsend his Heires Executr & Administratr hath Sold, granted released & Confirmed and by these presents doth Sell grant Release & confirme unto John Townsend aforesd his Heires Executr Administratr & Assigns forever all my whole right title & Interest wtsoever in ye Town or Township of Oysterbay aforesd onely reserving the field & Land that I bought of John Applegate that to be excepted wch is as followeth (to wit) my house & home Lott wch Lott I bought of John Rogers of Oysterbay wch Lott was formerly in ye possession of ye Sd John Townsend wth Six Acres of Land adjoining to ye Sd Lott on ye Hill Side wth ye High way yt was given me by ye Town wth my right of Swamp adjoining to John Rogers and my halfe right of Comons devided & undevided do by these presents Dillr into ye Actuall possession of ye Sd John Townsend

the house & Lands as above mentioned wth all ye priviledges & comoditys & fencing & all other Conveniencys belonging to ye Sd house & Land aforesd To have & To hold to ye only ___ use & behoofe of him ye Sd John Townsend his Heires & Asings forever And yt ye Sd James Blevi[n] for him Self his Heires Executrs Administratrs doth Covenant Grant and & agree to & wth ye Sd John Townsend his Heires & Asings by these presents that he nor they Shall not Interupt molest or disturbe the Sd John Townsend his Heirs or Asings in ye peaceable & quiet possession of ye above mentioned prmises but Shall to ye uttermost of their power & knowledge Shall protect the Sd John his Heires & Asings in ye possession of ye Same To wch I have Sett my hand & Seale the ffourteenth day of January in ye yeare of our Lord 1686/7."

The above conveyance was signed by both James and his wife, Ann, and was witnessed by George Codner and John Dewberry. James applied his signature mark to this deed; the same vertical line with the three short cross lines followed by a block letter "B" that he had applied to his arbitration agreement.

In the above conveyance to John Townsend, James "Blevin" sold the four acres he had purchased from John Rogers on February 10, 1678/79 plus the swamp land he had been given by the Town on February 14, 1678/79. The four acres he had bought from John Rogers, which had previously belonged to John Townsend, had now gone back to Townsend's hands.

The above conveyance reveals several interesting elements. First, James was called "Sayler" (Sailor), a designation that proves his profession in Oyster Bay was that of a mariner. Second, the name of his wife, Ann, was first recorded. Third, James exempted from this sale "the field & Land that I bought of John Applegate". There are no known Oyster Bay records that mention this land acquisition and there are no later records of the disposal of this land.

Sometime between 1687 and 1694, James Bliven the "Sayler" and his family removed from Oyster Bay and settled in the town of Westerly in the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Note: Westerly is a town on the southwestern tip of Rhode Island. Today it's part of Washington County. The county was formed from Providence Plantations in 1729 and was originally named Kings County. In 1781 it was renamed Washington County. The sources for all Westerly land records referenced herein were: *Westerly Land Evidence Vol. 1-3 1661-1728* and *Westerly Land Evidence Vol. 4-6 1725-1745*.

James was admitted as a freeman (a voter) of the town of Westerly on August 29, 1694. One of the requirements to be a freeman was ownership of property generally valued at £40 or an annual income of 40 shillings.

On August 22, 1698, James was granted a license to "retail strong drink." Apparently, James Bliven the "Sayler" had transitioned to the new occupation of tavern keeper. He renewed the license on August 22, 1700, February 17, 1700/01, July 6, 1702, and August 2, 1703.

On January 22, 1702/03, James was granted 100 acres by the town of Westerly because he had lived there for a "considerable time." He recorded his earmark seven days later. (An earmark is a way of marking livestock to show ownership.)

On July 14, 1704, James Bliven witnessed a deed for Austin Odle. The interesting thing about the deed is the way James made his mark. Instead of his usual vertical line crossed with three short horizontal lines followed by a capital "B", he signed with just a horizontal line crossed with three short vertical lines. As will be shown in *The Blevins Men of Monocacy and Goochland*, this version of his mark is identical to the mark repeatedly made by his grandson, John Blevins the Elder, in Virginia.

James appeared in court as a witness several times in 1704 and 1705.

On April 13, 1708, James bought 50 acres of land from Ninigret, Chief Sachem of the Narragansett Tribe, for £5. The following day he transferred title to this land to his son, James, to be conveyed after the death of both himself and his wife. This is the first mention of a James Bliven, Jr. in the extant Westerly records and it is reasonable to assume from this record that James, Jr. was born sometime before 1688. James the "Sayler" returned to, and applied his original signature mark in this conveyance.

Note: Ninigret served as the Chief Sachem of the Narragansett Indian Tribe from 1676 to about 1682. Over the next 50 years or so, the role of Chief Sachem was assumed by several of his children. One son also simply went by the name Ninigret (or Ninigret II) but one son went by the name Charles Ninigret and another son later went by the name Thomas Ninigret.

On August 12, 1714, James Bliven, Sr. and James Bliven, Jr. "both of the town of Westerly" sold this 50 acres to "Daniel MacKoone of Kingstowne" for "fifty six pounds current money of newengland." James Sr.'s wife, Ann, and James Jr.'s wife, Margery, both relinquished their dower rights. Again, James, Sr. applied his familiar signature mark. James, Jr. signed this conveyance with his own unique mark; a cursive, capital letter "J".

Later records will show that Margery, the wife of James, Jr., was of the Tosh family. As will be discussed later, the Daniel "Mackoone" to whom the land was sold was almost certainly related by marriage to the Bliven people of Westerly.

On January 1, 1714/15, James Junior and Margery appeared in court to swear to their signatures on the August 1714 deed. On January 25, 1714/15, James Bliven Senior "of Kingstowne" appeared in court to swear to his signature on the August 1714 deed. Ann did not, suggesting she may have died in the interim. Her death may have been the impetus for James Senior's move to Kingstown. James Bliven the "Sayler" died in 1716.

Note: Kingstown was founded in 1674 and included the present-day towns of North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Exeter, and Narragansett. In 1722, Kingstown was split into North Kingstown and South Kingstown.

Margery Bliven, the wife of James Bliven, Jr., was born Margery Tosh on April 26, 1689 in New Shoreham, Rhode Island. There is no extant record specific to her marriage to James Bliven, Jr., but the 1714 land conveyance and court appearance discussed above and a 1718 record, discussed below, proves that marriage.

Margery was a daughter of Daniel Tosh (1663~1709) and Margery Ackers (1665-1718). Margery's father, Daniel Tosh, died sometime between 1706 and 1709 and her mother, Margery Ackers Tosh, married a man named Job Card in 1716. (Job Card was named in Daniel Tosh's will as his brother-in-law.) Margery Ackers Card (nee Tosh) died in 1718.

On June 18, 1718, Job Card of Westerly quit his claim to "Indians River fork" in favor of the daughters of his wife, Margery Card. The beneficiaries named were James Bliven and his wife Margery, John Ross and his wife Sarah, Joseph Rogers and his wife Jane, Elizabeth Tosh, and Zachariah Allen in behalf of Martha Tosh and Mercy Tosh.

This June 18, 1718 record is the last known record directly involving James and Margery Tosh Bliven in Rhode Island.

Note: In his unpublished, 1930 genealogy of the Bliven family, a man named William W. Bliven (a descendant of Edward Bliven of Westerly) noticed this disappearance from the records and opined that James and Margery had "returned" to England. He hadn't thought to look for them elsewhere in America.

Sometime between 1718 and 1732, James and Margery removed their family from Rhode Island and migrated south. My paper, *The Blevins Men of Monocacy and Goochland*, documents this migration. James Bliven, Jr. of Westerly and proven son of James Bliven the "Sayler" would go on to become the primary *Patriarch of the Southern Branch of the Blevins family*.

Two more Westerly records would later play a role in proving the connection between the Bliven families of Westerly and the Blevins families of old Pittsylvania (nee Brunswick, Lunenburg, and Halifax and later Henry) County, Virginia:

- On September 21, 1731, Charles Ninigret, Chief Sachem of the Narragansett, sold Captain Christopher Champlin, Jr. a tract of land that was bounded by land of Colonel Joseph Stanton that was said to have *formerly belonged unto James Bleavin Sr.*
- On March 6, 1732, Charles Ninigret, Chief Sachem of the Narragansett sold Stanton York a 66 acre tract bounded by James Bleavin, *heirs of James Bleavin deceased*, Thomas Brand, and John Enos.

These deeds will also be discussed in my paper, *The Blevins Men of Monocacy and Goochland*.

We don't know where James Bliven the "Sayler" was born. Given his early occupation as a mariner, he could have easily been born in England or Wales and first arrived on these shores as part of a ship's crew.

We don't know his father's name but he would have likely been born sometime in the 1620s or 1630s and almost certainly in England or Wales. He could have been named James or Edward, given the family's penchant for those names, but that is pure speculation on my part.

Estimating a birth year for James Bliven the "Sayler" is difficult. His proven land purchase in 1679 suggests he was born prior to 1659. His alleged, but unsubstantiated, land purchase "from the Indians in 1672" would suggest he was born prior to 1653. (It is questionable, however, if "the Indians" would care about a man's birth year when selling a piece of land outside of the system of title recording.) I will use "before 1659" as an estimate but recognize he could have been born many years earlier.

At this point, it is customary in my papers to present a summary table of the theoretical family of the primary individual being discussed. Such is difficult here because the only known child of James Bliven the "Sayler" (before 1659 - 1716) and his wife Ann (? - about 1715) was James Bliven, Jr. (before 1688 - about 1745) who married Margery Tosh (1688 - about 1743).

It is very possible that James the "Sayler" and his wife Ann had additional children but, if so, their names have apparently been lost to history. Researcher Alton Blevins has offered the theory that James the "Sayler" *may* have also had a son named Thomas. The evidence of this possible son named Thomas comes, not from Rhode Island records, but from Virginia in 1734. This man is discussed in the final section of my paper, *The Blevins Men of Monocacy and Goochland*.

A few researchers believe that a Westerly man named Edward Bliven was the oldest son of James Bliven the "Sayler". I believe, however, that he was James' younger brother. In any case, his details are discussed in the following section.

Edward Bliven of Westerly

As with most of the early Blevins men, several myths and misconceptions have been written about a man named Edward Bliven. According to a January 28, 2002 Internet post by a man named David Coon:

"John McCoun and Edmund Bliven, brother of James, witnessed an assignment from James to Robert Townsend in Oyster Bay in 1687. Moreover, a John McCoun might have been in Oyster Bay in 1687 to witness an assignment from James Bliven to Robert Townsend (OTBR 3:18). Four years later Isabel McCoun was married in Rhode Island to Edmund Bliven, brother of James and also witness to the 1687 assignment ('Long Island Genealogies' from the 'Traveler' p. 173)."

The only verifiable truth in the above statement is "Four years later Isabel 'McCoun' was married in Rhode Island to 'Edmund' (Edward) Bliven....".

The actual witnesses to the 1686/87 Oyster Bay sale to Robert Townsend were George Codner and John Dewberry and neither John McCoun (by any spelling) nor Edmund Bliven (by any spelling) are mentioned at any time in the *Oyster Bay Town Records*. It is, of course, *possible* that Edward was in Oyster Bay with James the "Saylor" but he left no known records there. (John MacCoon's sons, Samuel and William, eventually did relocate to Oyster Bay and one of them later married a Townsend.)

In 1904, William Armstrong Crozier edited and published the book, *Crozier's General Armory: A Registry of American Families Entitled to Coat Armor*. In the book's introduction, Crozier wrote: "...the Registry now offers descriptions of nearly two thousand coats of arms, with the name of the first of the family in America, the date of his arrival and place of settlement, and, in the majority of instances, the town or country whence he came." Most of his inclusions were very brief entries, including, on page 24:

BLIVEN. Rhode Island.
Edward Bliven, Newport, 1685.
Gules, a lion rampant surmounted by a bendlet argent.

Perhaps there *was* a man named Edward Bliven who first came to America in 1685 and first settled in Newport, Rhode Island. If so, records of his arrival have been lost to history. And perhaps there really *were*, in 1904, nearly two thousand family names in America entitled to wear "Coat Armor". Or perhaps William Armstrong Crozier knew that a wide net catches many fish (book sales). It is very likely that this book entry is the source of the belief that our Blevins ancestors were Welsh Noblemen.

Other tall tales of a man named Edward Bliven include a story of him as a sea captain, sailing from Wales to Long Island in 1684 in his ship, the *Arabella*. This story has absolutely no known documentary basis and is, in fact, contradicted by historical records of known ships named *Arabella*.

Some of these stories could, of course, refer to an earlier man named Edward Bliven but again, no records of an earlier man so named are known to exist.

Most Bliven genealogy sources cite either a 1668 or a 1674 birth year for Edward Bliven of Westerly, the subject of this section. I believe that 1668 is the more reasonable date, given his proven marriage in 1691 (see below). This Edward Bliven is also the first of his name to be *documented* on this continent.

The first extant record of Edward Bliven of Westerly is his marriage on October 2, 1691: "Edward Bleavin and Isabel Maccoon both of Westerly was joined together in marriage by and before me - Tobias Saunders conservator of the peace." (This marriage wasn't officially entered into the Westerly town records until June 20, 1742, about the time Isabel MacCoon Bliven was preparing her will.)

Isabel MacCoon was born about 1675 and was a daughter of John and Mary MacCoon. The "Daniel MacKoone" who bought 50 acres from James Bliven, Sr. and Jr. on August 12, 1714 was almost certainly Isabel's brother and Edward Bliven's brother-in-law.

Edward Bliven's ear mark was recorded on February 4, 1697/98 and he was admitted as a freeman in Westerly on June 13, 1698. In July 1704, he received 100 acres of land from the town of Westerly. (James Bliven the "Sayler" had received a similar, 100-acre town grant in January of the prior year.) In 1705, Edward Bliven was Town Sergeant.

Edward was impressed for Queen Anne's War, but it isn't known precisely when or where he served. The war lasted from 1702 to 1710 on the New England front, so he most likely served sometime during that timeframe.

On February 9, 1707/08, Edward Bliven bought 100 acres from Job Babcock and on November 8, 1715, he bought 4-1/2 acres of swamp land from Edward Larkin. His farm was mortgaged on October 10, 1715.

Edward made his will on August 22, 1716 and it was probated on April 30, 1718. He left his land to his sons: Edward, James, and John. He also directed his son, John, to pay his daughters, Jane and Rachel, £10 each when he came of age.

The mortgage on his farm was discharged by his widow on May 12, 1721.

Isabel MacCoon Bliven made her will on October 14, 1742 and died in early 1743. Her will was probated on May 28, 1743. In it, she named daughters Jane Clark and Rachel Sanders, daughter-in-law Mercy Bliven, granddaughter Mercy Bliven, and sons Edward and James Bliven. (Her son John, who was mentioned in Edward's will, had died in 1728.)

Edward Bliven of Westerly is generally viewed as being the primary *Patriarch of the Northern Branch of the Blevins family*. Although I have not done any significant research on his descendants, all of his sons and grandsons are believed to have remained in Rhode Island or elsewhere in the northeast.

In the early 1800s, four Rhode Island Bliven men - Arnold (*W.15753*), George (*W.21682*), Nathan (*S.21073*), and William (*S.21648*) Bliven - received pensions for their Revolutionary War service. Two other Rhode Island men named James Bliven and Samuel Bliven applied for, but were denied pensions. All of these men were almost certainly descendants of Edward Bliven of Westerly.

In 2006, a proven descendant of Edward Bliven of Westerly joined the Blevins DNA Project. His Y-DNA results are perfectly consistent with the *Blevins Modal Haplotype* and exhibited a genetic distance of only "1" over 67 markers when compared to the *Modal*. His test results provided our first genetic proof that the Northern and Southern Branches were both part of the same overall family group.

There are several data points available for estimating Edward's year of birth. His 1704 acquisition of Westerly land suggests he was born before 1684. His 1691 marriage suggests he was born prior to 1671. Several of his direct descendants claim he was born in 1668 and that date appears reasonable. All of his descendants who offer information on Edward's relationships believe he was a brother of the man we know as James Bliven the "Saylor". I believe this relationship claim is also a reasonable. We don't know where Edward Bliven of Westerly was born; he could have been born here or he could have been born in England or Wales.

The following table summarizes the theoretical family of Edward Bliven of Westerly.

**Theoretical Family
of
Edward Bliven of Westerly (about 1668 - 1717)
and his wife Isabel MacCoon (about 1675 - 1743)**

Children	Born	Child's Spouse
Jane Bliven	1692	William Clarke
Edward Bliven	1694	Freelove Barker
Rachel Bliven	1697	Stephen Saunders
James Bliven	1702	Anna Rhodes
John Bliven	1707	Mercy Rathbone

Summary and Conclusions

John Blethen the Quaker, James Bliven the "Sayler", and Edward Bliven of Westerly were the first members of the overall Blevins family to be documented as settling in America and they were certainly the first Blevins men known to even temporarily set foot in the northeast. There certainly could have been other, earlier Blevins men in this region, but they left no known footprints.

The birth-year estimate for John Blethen the Quaker (before 1639) is based on when he first acquired land in Massachusetts. The birth-year estimate for James Bliven the "Sayler" (before 1659) is based on when he first acquired land in New York. John and James could each have been born several years, or even a decade or more earlier than these estimated dates.

The birth-year estimate for James' son, James, Jr. (before 1688) is based on when he first acquired land in Rhode Island. He could have been born several years prior to 1688 but it is likely that 1687 is fairly close to his actual birth year.

Edward's birth-year estimate (about 1668) comes from several of his Rhode Island descendants and I believe it to be fairly accurate. It also conforms nicely to his marriage in 1691.

John the Quaker, James the "Sayler", and Edward of Westerly were almost certainly related to one another but exactly how is unproven. It is *possible* all three were brothers but I think that is unlikely considering a minimum birth-year spread of about 30 years. I believe it is more likely that John and James were one generation apart. Because we know that James was not John's son, one likely relationship between the two men was that of uncle and nephew. They could, however, have easily been cousins.

I believe that James and Edward were *close* to being about one generation apart but only if James' actual year of birth were 10 or more years earlier than presently estimated. I do not believe they were father and son. I believe it is more likely that Edward was James' younger brother. On the other hand, Edward could have been James' nephew or a close cousin.

What is almost certain is that Edward Bliven of Westerly became the primary Patriarch of the *Northern Branch* of the overall Blevins family in America.

It is also almost certain that James Bliven, Jr., the only proven son of James Bliven the "Sayler", became the primary Patriarch of the *Southern Branch* of the overall Blevins family in America.

The southern migration of James Bliven, Jr. and his subsequent evolution into the Southern Branch Blevins Patriarch is documented and discussed in my paper *The Blevins Men of Monocacy and Goochland*.

