

Origin of the Waller Family

Before 1066

After the time of Charlemagne, who was crowned in 800 A.D., Western Europe was besieged with a second wave of incursions by Vandals and Norsemen and, for nearly 300 years, orderly government practically ceased. It was in the year 911 A.D., when sea rovers from Scandinavia, under Rollo, their leader, sailed their viking ships into the estuary of the River Seine to establish what would become a mighty state, the Duchy of Normandy,

They called themselves "Normans", a softened form of "Norsemen". In their new environment, the Normans rapidly acquired all, and more than all, of the knowledge and refinement of the Latin people they found in the new country. They established domestic order, long unknown in the French Empire. They took up Christianity and thereby tapped the greatest reservoir of learning to be found in the Medieval World, the writings of the Clergy. They abandoned their native speech and adopted the Old French, in which Latin was the dominant element. They quickly raised the new language to a dignity and importance it had never known. They established it in writing, in poetry and in romance. The Normans lived in a state of polite luxury, in contrast to the coarse vulgarity that existed all about them. They displayed their magnificence, not in riotous living, but in large stately edifices, rich armour, gallant horses and a spirit of chivalry which found its highest exaltation in the Norman Knights, distinguished for grace of bearing and military adroitness.

In the Duchy of Normandy, the social system was based on the concept of a warrior aristocracy, animated by ideas of chivalry, knit together in a system of military service, rewarded by titles to land. The association of land with fighting power, the acceptance of Papal authority and the rise of cavalry, composed of steel-clad knights and nobles mounted on well-trained horses, brought Normandy to a dominant position in war, and new forces were created which could not only conquer, but also rule.

Such was the home of the Valer clan and its distinguished son, Alured de Valer, whose black shield bore three gold walnut leaves between two narrow silver stripes, who was destined to join battle under William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, that fateful day in October, 1066.

William took advantage of a quarrel over the throne of Anglo-Saxon England to attack. The ensuing battle of Hastings was so decisive that it is impossible to reckon our history without those fateful four hours. When darkness fell on October 14, 1066, William had earned the lasting title of "Conqueror" and a new flow of concepts began that would influence men's lives for centuries to come.

The Battle of Hastings is well recorded by chroniclers, who were generally Monks, working in both prose and poetry, but not the least of these records is the 231 foot long Bayeux Tapestry, a mammoth piece of embroidery, stitched with colored wool threads on a linen background, said to have been made by William's wife, Matilda, and now displayed in the Cathedral of Bayeux, which was consecrated only 11 years after the battle. Thanks to this tapestry, we may surmise that the Valers of Normandy, in 1066, were tall, powerful men with swarthy complexions and dark hair which was shaved from the back of the head to a line slightly above the tops of the ears. As trusted vassals of the Duke and capable fighters, they held ample landed estates, worked by their own serfs, while they lived in feudal splendor.

The full "BAYEUX TAPESTRY" (app 1077)

After Hastings, the Normans introduced into England their system of land tenure based on military service, and William seems to have been generous with his knights in apportioning the spoils of war. In the years following the Conquest, a few hundred Norman barons took over the lands of more than 4000 Anglo-Saxons. Land was the major form of wealth. Let it never be said that the Conquest was not profitable to the Conquerors!

Norman and Anglo-Saxon customs were combined in such a way to make the best use of each, while avoiding the chief disadvantages. The English counties or "shires" had been established by the Saxons and William the Conqueror recognized these political subdivisions, but established his own control over them by appointment of the sheriffs. As a royal official, the sheriff looked after the King's interests in his county by attending the county courts, collecting taxes for the King. This is of interest because, as we shall see, the office of Sheriff was often held by a member of the Waller Family.

The conquest had a profound and lasting effect on the English language. The Norman nobles were the aristocracy of the land and held all positions of honor and profit. At first, they held a deep contempt for the Saxon population, which was returned with ardor, and clung to the Latin-French of their native Normandy. Latin remained the language of law and business for several generations, but though it was a powerful medium of expression, Normans began to find advantages in the short Saxon words, often developed from physical sounds they represented. Gradually, the two races mingled and inter-married and differences disappeared. The result of the fusion of the two languages has been to make Modern English the richest and most powerful language of all times.

The blending of the languages affected the spelling of the Waller name. To begin with, there was no "W" in either medieval Latin or Old French. To confirm this we find the name of William the Conqueror, when it appears on the Bayeux Tapestry, spelled variously as, "Vvillelm, Vvilgelm", etc. In the Square of Falaise, birthplace of William the Conqueror, in present day France, there stands a bronze statue of him on which his name is spelled "Guillaume Le Conquerant."

Webster's New World Dictionary has this to say about the letter W: "W, the 23rd letter of the English alphabet. Its sound was represented in Angle-Saxon times by 'uu' until about 900 A.D., then by a character borrowed from the runic alphabet of the ancient Scandinavians called the "wen". In the 11th Century, a ligatured VV or W was introduced by Norman scribes to replace the wen. No doubt this change took place in the years following the Conquest, as the fusion of the Latin-French of Normandy with the Saxon-English language was under way. Thus, we find justification for the acceptance of the name "Valers", as it appears on the Roll of Battle Abbey, and "Alured de Valer" as it appears in the Domesday Book. It was not until the time of Thomas Waller, who lived from about 1330 to 1390 and was a four-times-great grandson of the Veteran of Hastings, that the fusion of the languages overtook the family. It was Thomas who purchased the old Saxon Castle of Groombridge in County Kent in the year 1360, settled the family there and modernized the name of de Valer to Waller.

As we all know in Biblical times people only had one name. This custom persisted in Greece and Rome until after the decline of Roman Civilization. With the revival of learning, or about the time of the Crusades, the need arose for family names which would identify individuals with greater certainty than single names. One of the very first types of family names was derived from the land people owned or lived upon, or else, some geographical feature of their home-place. At first, these were not hereditary surnames at all, but rather identification by which one could be recorded and differentiated from his neighbors or other people. Often it was the Clergy who gave people these surnames in a time when few people could read or write. Frequently, the people so named by the Clergy wouldn't know anything about it at the time. We believe this to be the way the name of Waller was developed: In the Latine and Old French, "Val, Valis" denoted a valley or, more particularly, land lying within a broad watershed. The suffix "-er", in Old French, was added to a noun to mean "a person having something to do with." Thus, the name Val-er meant "of, or having something to do with a valley" in which the clan lived in Normandy.

In the years following the Conquest, there were countless controversies among the new masters of England over the titles to their land and how these fitted into the Anglo-Saxon laws and customs. Also, in 1085 William the Conqueror was threatened with another invasion of England by the Danes. He desperately needed taxes and the assurance of the loyalty of his subjects. The tangled claims to land represented a poor tax base. Thus, William instituted a vast sworn inquiry into the whole wealth of his feudal vassals. The inquest and description was carried out with a degree of minuteness unique in that era and unequalled for centuries to come. The results were published by scribes, in the year 1086, twenty years after Hastings, as "The Domesday Book", in the 59th and next to the last year of William's life. This should explain and justify the reference to The Domesday Book made in the opening paragraph of this work.

More about "THE DOMESDAY SURVEY" (1085 - 1086)

In my opinion, John Dickey has done the best job to date of describing the Waller origins. Most of the above is from his book which is highly recommended reading for any Waller researcher. It is out of print but the Mormons have it on microfilm. Go to a Family History Center near you. (ask at any Church of Latter Day Saints) When you get to the FHC tell the nice Mormon lady that you want the following microfilm: number 1321014, item number 8, Title, "Waller, A family History" by John Dickey. She will help you fill out a card, charge you \$3.25 and there will be a 7-10 day wait while it is shipped from Salt Lake City. These ladies are wonderful. They will call you when they receive it and teach you how to use a microfilm reader if you need assistance.

Waller History 1066 to 1500

Generation 1, Alured de Valer, a Norman knight who came over to England with William the Conqueror, fought at the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066, was granted land in England for his military services and whose name is in The Domesday Book.

Generation 2 and 3, Unknown de Valers. Statements have appeared in print that Alured de Valer fought with William the Conqueror in the Battle of Hastings, 14 Oct. 1066; was given land in England for his military service; that his name is recorded in The Domesday Book (published in 1086) and that he died in 1183. Now, since there is a spread of 117 years from the Battle of Hastings to the year 1183, it seems clear that the same person could not have taken part in that battle and lived until 1183. It has been decided, at least to our satisfaction, that two generations of Valers must have existed between the veteran of Hastings and the recorded death of an Alured in 1183.

Generation 4, Alured de Valer, who died in 1183, was a great grandson of The Hero of Hastings. He is mentioned on the mural tablet erected by Sir Jonathan Wathen Waller (b. 1769) at Speldhurst Church, near Tonbridge Wells, in County Kent. He lived at Newark, Nottinghamshire and married Adelina de Hockerton.

Generation 5, John de Valer, born about 1165. We would appreciate any documented information we can get on this individual.

Generation 6, Henry de Valer, born about 1200. We would appreciate any documented information we can get on this individual.

Generation 7, Vilhelm de Valer, (ca. 1230-1278). We would appreciate any documented information we can get on this individual.

Generation 8, Valer de Valer, (ca. 1260-1316). We would appreciate any documented information we can get on this individual.

Generation 9, Henry de Valer (ca. 1295-1371), of Hockerton, who married Alicia de Mortimer. From this union sprang the Wallers of Groombridge Hall.

Generation 10, Thomas Waller (1330-1390), oldest son and heir. He married Christina Chalfunt, daughter of Henry Chalfunt. We do not know when the family left the estate in Nottinghamshire, given them by William the Conqueror, but it was this Thomas Waller, of Lamberthurst, who in 1360 purchased from Lord Clinton the estate known as "Groombridge" (also spelled Gromebridge and Groomsbridge) to begin a 244 year tenure there by the Waller family. Records show License of Land, (Title) at Billington in 1407. Much earlier in Saxony times Groombridge had been a moated castle.

This was the time of the Renaissance (1300-1550), a time of learning. Thomas was a contemporary of the great English writer, Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400). Modern English was beginning to take shape as

Normans began to use more of the Anglo-Saxon language and Saxons took up some of the Latin. Thomas changed the spelling of the family name to "Waller" and dropped the "de".

Generation 11, John Waller (1363-1420), married Margaret Lansdall, daughter of Thomas Lansdall of County Sussex.

Generation 12, Sir Richard Waller (1395-1462), Hero of Agincourt. Knighted in the field by King Henry V for capturing Prince Charles, the Duke of Orleans who was commanding the French forces. Sir Richard married Margaret Gulby and we have records of two sons. (see "A Very Interesting Waller" on the Home Page)

Generation 13e, Sir William Waller, born around 1420, oldest son and heir, who inherited Groombridge Castle and the title of Baronet, to become a part of a line of Baronets which was still going in 1975 in England.

Generation 13a, John Waller (ca.1420-1490), a younger brother of Sir William Waller, from whom sprang the Wallers of Beaconsfield, most, if not all, of the Wallers in Virginia and Tennessee, and Edmund Waller, Poet Laureate of England. John was settled in Leigh, County Kent, when he purchased Beaconsfield Castle in Buckinghamshire, somewhere around 1450, and moved his family there to become the first of the Bucks Wallers and to begin a 200 year tenure for the Waller Family. Beaconsfield is located about 25 miles northeast of London on the main road to Oxford. He married Elizabeth Farinford, daughter of William of Leigh, Kent.

At this point we are departing from the Baronet branch of the family. American Waller researchers can pick up the thread on John in Buckinghamshire County, England.

John Waller (c1420-1490) Buckinghamshire

Link to researchers and historians of Buckinghamshire County.

John Waller (c1420-1490) from whom sprang the Wallers of Beaconsfield including Edmund Waller, Poet Laureate of England. In addition, many of the Wallers from Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee are descendants of John. He was settled in Leigh, County Kent, when he purchased Beaconsfield Castle in Buckinghamshire, somewhere around 1450, and moved his family there to become the first of the Bucks Wallers, and to begin a 200 year tenure for the Waller Family. Beaconsfield is located about 25 miles northeast of London on the main road to Oxford. This link will take you to a listing of the next nine generations. That takes us to the late 1600's, early 1700's when many of the American Waller families were established. It allows American researcher's to look for familiar names. This listing also shows how far we have to go. There are many dates missing and a lot of younger brothers and sisters not accounted for. Please help us fill some of these gaps with documented information.

Nine generations of John Waller's descendants.

Descendants of John Waller

1 John Waller Abt 1420 - Abt 1490
 . +Elizabeth Farinford
 2 Richard Waller
 +Anne Symmons 1524 -
 3 Robert Waller 1482 - 1545
 +Elizabeth Fryer
 4 William Waller 1510 - 1557/58
 +Jane Bowland
 5 Thomas Waller 1546 - 1626
 +Dorothy Gerrard
 6 Edmund Waller 1582 - 1667

..... +Mary Smith
..... 7 Thomas Waller Abt 1610 - Abt 1682
..... +Anne Keats 1615 -
..... 8 William Waller 1630 - 1690
..... +Mary Allen
..... 9 William Waller 1670 - 1703
..... +Elizabeth Allen
..... 8 Edmund Waller
..... +Theophilia - 1708
..... 9 John Waller - 1726
..... +Frances
..... 8 Thomas Waller - 1721
..... +Elizabeth
..... 9 Thomas Waller
..... 9 William Waller
..... 9 John Waller
..... 9 Katherine Waller
..... 9 Sarah Waller
..... 9 Mary Waller
..... 9 Elsie Waller
..... 8 Keats Waller
..... 8 John Dr. Waller Abt 1645 - Abt 1723
..... +Mary Pomfrett 1648 -
..... 9 William LLD Waller 1671 - 1751
..... +Elizabeth Saville
..... 9 John Col Waller 1673 - 1754
..... +Dorothy King Abt 1675 - Abt 1758
..... 9 Mary Waller 1674 - Abt 1720
..... +Edward Herndon Abt 1678 - Abt 1758
..... 9 Thomas Waller 1675 -
..... 9 Stephen Waller 1676 -
..... 9 Benjamin Waller 1677/78 - 1735
..... +Elizabeth
..... 9 Edmund Dr Waller 1679/80 - 1745
..... 9 James Waller 1683 - 1684
..... 9 Jemima Waller 1684 -
..... 8 Anne Waller
..... 8 Dorothy Waller
..... 8 Mary Waller
..... 8 Susan Waller
..... 8 James Waller
..... 8 Alice Waller - 1699
..... *2nd Wife of Edmund Waller:
..... +Lucy Grobham
..... 6 Henry Waller
..... +Jane Aldy-Sorg
..... *2nd Wife of Henry Waller:
..... +Jane Sare
..... 7 Jane Waller
..... 7 Mary Waller
..... 6 Robert Waller
..... 6 John Waller
..... 6 Thomas Waller
..... 5 Alice Waller
..... +unk Platte
..... 4 Anthony Waller - 1558

..... 4 Ralph Waller
..... +Sarah Saunders
..... 4 Thomas Waller
..... +Unknown Hampden
..... 4 Robert Waller Abt 1538 -
..... *2nd Wife of Robert Waller:
..... +Elizabeth Duncomb
..... 4 Edmund Waller Abt 1530 - Abt 1603
..... +Cicely Bell
..... 5 Robert Waller Abt 1560 - 1616
..... +Anne Hampden Abt 1589 - 1653
..... 6 Edmund Waller 1605/06 - 1687
..... +Mary Breaux
..... 7 Benjamin Waller
..... 7 Edmund Waller - 1699
..... 7 William Waller
..... 7 Stephen LLD Waller - 1707
..... 7 Charles Waller
..... 8 Charles Waller
..... +Susannah Forrest
..... 9 Charles Waller
..... +Elizabeth Rowzie
..... 9 Edward Waller
..... +Ann Tandy
..... 7 John Waller - 1615
..... 7 Robert Waller
..... 7 Anna Mary Waller
..... *2nd Wife of Edmund Waller:
..... +Anne Banks
..... 7 Unknown Waller
..... +Unknown Dormer
..... 6 Anne Waller
..... +Unknown Kirle
..... 6 Cicelie Waller
..... +Nathaniel Tomkins
..... 6 Ursala Waller
..... +Unknown Dobbins
..... 6 Thomas Waller
..... 6 Mary Waller
..... 6 Stephen Waller
..... 6 John Waller Abt 1616 -
..... 6 Dorothy Waller
..... 6 Griffith Waller
..... 5 Margaret Waller - 1632
..... 5 Elizabeth Waller
..... +Unknown Fredway
..... 5 Thomasine Waller
..... +Unknown Ballenger
..... 5 Susan Waller
..... +William Widmer