

Trip brings family history to life for couple

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — The trip introduced a unique opportunity for Nancy and Sam Talbott to see evidence of family ancestors. The couple is researching if Sam Talbott is a descendant of American patriot and colonial Williamsburg resident, John Blair. The Senior Center was organizing a trip that included a tour of Washington, D.C., and colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

“Sam is descended from Blairs,” Nancy Talbott said. “We want to find out if our Blairs are from this John Blair. I called a relative who said to me, ‘hey this guy’s (Blair) in Williamsburg.’” The couple signed up for the trip.

“John Blair signed the Constitution at the Continental Congress,” said Talbott. Blair, a colonial Williamsburg resident, represented the Commonwealth of Virginia and signed the Constitution

in 1787. Sam Talbott found John Blair’s signature on the Constitution when the group visited the National Archives in Washington, D.C., on the trip.

Blair came from a prominent colonial family. Talbott discovered that John’s father, James Blair, was a colonist and the first president of the College of William and Mary founded under a royal charter granted by King William III and Queen Mary II in 1693. The college is the second oldest college in continuous operation in the U.S.

While visiting the historically restored town of Williamsburg, Talbott inquired about the Blair house. It was well known.

“We were able to locate John Blair’s home and his garden,” Talbott said.

Talbott herself is descended from Revolutionary patriot, Nathaniel Loring. As descendants of a Revolutionary supporter, Talbott’s family has been accepted into the Daughters of the American Revolution, a nonprofit organization whose mission includes promoting patriotism and preserving American history. Membership is offered to those who can prove lineage to a Revolutionary patriot. Talbott’s mother sponsored her into the DAR in the early 1960s and Talbott has been a member since. She recently attended a Wyoming State DAR convention in Thermopolis.

The Talbotts felt they scored on several points on their trip including finding the Blair house and John Blair’s signature on the Constitution.

The itinerary included



COURTESY PHOTO

Sheridan resident Sam Talbott strolls before the house of John Blair in historic colonial Williamsburg. Talbott believes that the Revolutionary patriot may be an ancestor and is researching to authenticate his lineage. Talbott and his wife, Nancy, recently visited colonial Williamsburg on a trip in April organized by the Sheridan Senior Center.

some free time in D.C. and Talbott spent half a day at the national DAR headquarters.

“There are thousands and thousands of items in the DAR headquarters,” said Talbott. The headquarters include a library and a DAR librarian helped Talbott search for information on Nathaniel Loring.

“The librarian brought me a Loring-Haskell family Bible donated to the DAR in 1985,” Talbott said. The Bible included pages of marriages, births and deaths that the librarian copied for Talbott.

“I’m not sure if this is my ancestor but I’m still pulling on the thread,” Talbott said. Now home, Talbott will research the information to confirm ties to her family.

Years ago, the Talbotts’ quest to find their connection to patriot John Blair began when the family discovered papers from Sam’s Aunt Ruth referencing John Blair.

“There were scratching on regular paper talking about Richard Blair, Robert Blair and the College of William and Mary,” Talbott said. “It included what looked like a family tree.”

Talbott was intrigued. Her genealogical quest led her to the Senior Center trip that took her to the National Archives, the DAR headquarters, colonial Williamsburg, and the historic Jamestown Settlement Site.

“James Blair is buried at Jamestown,” Talbott said. “We saw his grave.”

Family stories started Talbott’s genealogical journey. Growing up, her father had a four-drawer filing cabinet where he stored his research on the family history. Talbott’s brother, Ted, inherited the files.

“As Ted talked about Dad’s papers and letters in the filing cabinet, it made me more interested in what made me who I am,” said Talbott.

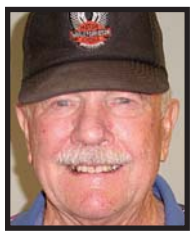
“My ancestry began to mean more to me,” Talbott continued, saying she has been researching her family’s genealogy for about 10 years. “The Blairs are just one itty-bitty part of what I’m doing. I’m such a visual person, going back to Williamsburg and seeing John Blair’s house means so much to me.”

CENTER STAGE

Coal, coal and more coal

Northwest Wyoming has provided coal for personal use and the economy for many decades. When the railroad operated with steam engines, they burned a lot of coal.

The CB&Q Railroad had coal chutes that coal was elevated into from a storage area beneath the rails of the tracks. The rail cars that provided the coal were belly dump rail cars.



BOB HUFF

One enterprising rancher citizen decided that he was going to get a free load of coal from the CB&Q Railroad Supply. He waited until the overseer of the coal chutes went to bed. He then pulled his team and wagon under the coal chute. He was successful in getting the coal to

flow. Unfortunately he was unsuccessful in getting the coal to stop flowing. Needless to say, He had too much coal and his wagon broke down with too much weight. He unhitched his team

and departed the area. The railroad inherited a broken down wagon and had a big job to clean up all of the spilled coal.

Dad had a 1946 Chevrolet truck. It would haul about seven tons with the sideboards up. We went to the Wyodak Coal Mine east of Gillette to get coal for our winter supply. Two loads of the coal would heat our house for the winter season. We burned a lot of wood too. If we had an unusually cold winter we might need more coal and wood.

The local hardware store shipped in box cars. The hardware store tried to sell all of the coal before the deadline to return the car to the railroad. If the hardware store was unsuccessful in this effort, it meant employment for me and my friends. We were paid fifty cents an hour to offload the coal into a storage location. The hardware store would be charged a demurrage fee if the car could not be returned to the railroad on time.

Sheridan Coal was a lot better coal than what we got at the Wyodak Mine near Gillette. It was a lot cleaner and did not have as much dirt and clinkers in the ashes. Of course it was more

expensive. We paid \$2 a ton at the mine for Gillette coal and \$6 a ton for the Sheridan Coal.

There was an underground coal mine out south in the Black Thunder Creek area. The owner of the mine was a German man by the name of Ed Peterson. Since Dad was in the trucking business, he thought he could haul some of Peterson’s coal. He met Peterson at the mine to check out the situation. He told Peterson that the mine was too dangerous and he was not interested. There were rats living in the mine. Peterson said, “David whenever you see them rats, the mine is safe.” Dad did not put much faith in the rats’ judgment. He never entered that mine again.

The recent reduction in force of the coal mines is a bad thing for the people employed by the mines in the Gillette and Sheridan areas. It is a bad thing economically for the cities that were so dependent on the mines full employment and going full blast.

BOB HUFF grew up in Upton. He is a driver for the mini-bus managed by the Senior Center. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.

SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

- Deadline to qualify for discounts on the **three-day trip to the 2016 Medora Musical** is Monday, June 6. The cost is \$620 per person double occupancy and includes a tour of the Teddy Roosevelt National Park, breakfasts, the Pitchfork Fondue Rib Eye Dinner, the Medora Musical show, a \$20 gift card to spend in town, lodging at the elegant Roughrider Hotel, round-trip transportation via coach bus and a sarsaparilla reception. Optional excursions will be available. The price after June 6 is \$50 more per person.
- **Sibley Lake fishing trip** and hot dog roast, Tuesday, June 14. Deadline to sign up is June 6 at the Sheridan Senior Center. Excursion includes

pick up from Heritage Towers, TRVCC and the Senior Center. The cost is a \$20 suggested contribution per person for those 60 and older and registered with the Senior Center. The cost is \$25 for younger participants and those not registered with the Senior Center.

- **Help make Sheridan a Dementia Friendly Community!** Attend “When I’m 64” on June 7 at 5:30 p.m. at the stage of the Senior Center dining room, 211 Smith St. Learn more about this important initiative and become a “Dementia Friend.” You will learn more about dementia and the small ways you can help. From telling friends about Dementia Friends to visiting someone you

know living with dementia, every action counts. No prior experience or dementia expertise is needed. Please join us and help us transform the way we think, act and talk about dementia. Pizza provided by Thrivent Financial.

- **Caring for a loved one in the Tongue River Valley?** Would you like to know resources are available to help you? A Caregiver Support Group meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Tongue River Valley Community Center in Dayton. Please stop by. There is no charge and walk-ins are always welcome. For more information, call or contact Michelle Keller, TRV program director for the Sheridan Senior Center at 655-9419.

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