

My Irwin Story Kyle David Erwin

I was born and raised in Peoria, Illinois. Growing up I never heard “stories” about the Erwin family. Sure, there were a few snippets of information, such as we were from the villages of Sebree and Beach Grove, Kentucky. Or that my grandfather, Stambaugh Erwin, was named after the local preacher. Then there was the legend that our original last name was spelled “Ierwin” (more on that later, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves...)

I suppose the reason for the lack of Erwin lore was that my grandfather was the youngest of his siblings, with the oldest almost twenty years his senior. As a result, the only time we had “family reunions” were what others call funerals. My grandfather passed away when I was in high school, and my father was an only child. The rest of the family did not live near us, so I never really interacted with the other family members.

Fast forward to 2009 when I met and married Paula. Her mother is very interested in genealogy. In Kentucky the state sport (after UK and Louisville basketball) is figuring out how we are related to everyone else. She offered to start a family tree in Ancestry and Family Tree. This piqued my interest in things Erwin, and I began to do some internet research into our family history. Then one day Paula had to spend the day in Evansville, Indiana for business. I knew that Sebree and Beach Grove were across the river from Evansville, so I dropped Paula off for work and headed into Kentucky. My main objective was to find my great grandfather’s grave. What I found were multiple graveyards (in various states of repair or disrepair). One graveyard had multiple tombstones with the name “Eirwin”. So, the old story was correct, just transposed letters. That’s one family mystery solved (later research revealed that Erwin and Eirwin were used somewhat interchangeably in the records of the family). I did find my great grandfather Charles Lyman Erwin’s grave. What I also found was an older site with my third great-grandfather Robert Hutchinson Erwin’s grave. That name will be important later.

In my internet searches I stumbled across the Clan Irwin Association website, and I joined the CIA. That year (2018 I believe) Paula and I attended the now defunct Glasgow Highland Games in Glasgow, Kentucky. It was there that I met Barbara Edelman who with the adroitness of a Barbary pirate within a few minutes shanghaied me into becoming the Kentucky Commissioner!

Being active on the Clan’s Facebook page, one day I saw a post of a memory on one of the Clan members, Steve Erwin, that consisted of a few photographs of his family members visiting Erwin graves in southeastern Missouri. I knew from my research that some Erwins did move to that area in the mid-late 1800’s. Steve and I started to compare notes and lo and behold we are both descendants of Robert Hutchinson Erwin (see-I told you it would be important!). I later took the BigY genetic test, and Steve is my closest genetic relative confirming our genealogical research.

Back to my visit in Beach Grove. There is a nice, albeit small, genealogy center in Beach Grove. (Interestingly it is located at an intersection that contains the only stoplight in the county-they were quite proud off it). While there I located a handwritten tree of another descendant of Robert H. Erwin. Unbeknownst to me then, I later learned that the tree was a line that belongs to Leslie Smeathers, our current Association Corresponding Secretary.

The high point so far in my Erwin journey was the Clan trip to Scotland. Not only did we enjoy the beauty of Scotland, but to be able to actually touch and experience our history was beyond compare.

Of course, the story (or should I say journey) is to be continued...

Let Irwin Flourish!