

The origin of the Burleson Surname

There has been a lot of speculation and conjecture about the origin of the Burleson name, but all scholars agree that the Burleson name originated in medieval England. There are many theories, and most ideas are based on generally accepted evidence about how surnames were first adopted in medieval England:

- Occupational surnames
- Geographical surnames

Let's take a closer look at how English surnames are adopted, see the theories on how they might apply to our surname.

Incidences of Burleson surnames in Medieval Times

- We found these references to Burlesons in medieval England:
- A reference (undocumented) to a "Hugo Burleson" in the year 1202 AD.
- A reference (undocumented) to a "John Byrleson" in the year 1209 AD.
- A documented reference to a "William de Burleton" at Shropshire England in 1291 AD.
- A documented reference to William de Burleston owning land in 1391 near the ancient hamlet of Burleston in County Dorset, England.
- A documented reference to an Elizabeth Burleston who died in 1418 AD.

There is substantial evidence of several Burleson Family groups living throughout England:

- In 1086 we see a small group of families residing in the hamlet of Burleston, in County Dorset in south central England.
- In 1202 and 1210 we see references for "Burleson" and "Byrleson" in County Durham in Far Northern England near the Scotch border.
- In 1291 we see William de Burleston in Shropshire England, located in west central England near the Welsh border.
- In 1391 and 1419 in County Devon in southwestern England.

From 1600 AD, we see a Burleson Family Group in County Durham in north England near the Scottish border. We also have speculation that some Burlesons migrated from Durham to Holborn England in the late 1500's.

From the mid 1500's through the 1700's, we find numerous church records for the Burlesons in Holborn in County Middlesex, a suburb of London.

While there appears to be no pattern in the locations of people named Burleson, we must remember that England is a very tiny country, roughly the size of Colorado, with any geographical location being less than a three walk in any direction.

There are three main theories on the origin of the Burleson surname:

A bastardization of a Swedish surname.

- The son of the butler.
- The son of a man who picks "burls" from freshly woven cloth.
- The residents of Burleston hamlet, as noted in the Domesday book.

Let's examine these theories more closely, relying whenever possible on empirical evidence.

Occupational surnames

As surnames first emerged, it was not uncommon for someone to have an occupational name. For example, "John the blacksmith" might choose the surname John Smith. Likewise, Some say that the name Burleson is a variant on "son of the butler".

Others say that our surname derived from the Saxon occupation "burle", for a person who dresses and finishes cloth by removing the burrs that are leftover from the weaving process. There is also unsubstantiated speculation that "Burleson" is derived from "son of the Butler".

Geographic surnames

In this tradition, "William of Burleston", (William of Burleston) will become William Burleston. A preponderance of the evidence strongly suggests that this is the true origin of the Burleson surname.

The famous Domesday Book, a comprehensive census of England in 1086 AD order by William the Conqueror, shows us the true origin of the Burleson surname.

The Domesday book describes a parish (a hamlet) named Burleston with nine families, located in County Dorset just six miles from Dorchester England.

There is also uncorroborated statements by professor Elon Byrd of Elon College, North Carolina. He refers to "ancient" documents from far north England that mention a Hugo Burleson" in the year 1202 AD, and another for a "John Byrleson" in the year 1209 AD.

By 1391 AD, there were many Burlestons living near Burleston hamlet, and The Burleston cost of arms was designed by Bishop Burleston in County Durham.

Regardless, the circumstantial evidence suggests that the geographical name theory may be correct. The earliest evidence is from the Domesday book, the great English census from the year 1086 AD.

The great book notes a small parish named Burleston in County Dorset, near present-day Dartington and Puddleton (formerly named Piddleton, after the river Piddle in Piddle valley). A parish does Not have a religious connotation. Rather, a small hamlet was called a parish in medieval times. Burleston parish was indeed a hamlet, and consisted of only nine households, four of which were slaves.

The text of the Domesday book show this data about Burleston:

- Taxable units: Taxable value 3 geld units.
- Value: Value to lord in 1086 £2.
- Households: 5 smallholders, 4 slaves.
- Ploughland: 2 ploughlands (land for).
- Other resources: 2.5 lord's lands. Meadow 16 acres. 1 mill, value 0.16.
- Livestock in 1086: 1 cobs. 3 cattle. 115 sheep.
- Lord in 1066: Milton (St. Peter), abbey of.
- Lord in 1086: Milton (St. Peter), abbey of.
- Tenant-in-chief in 1086: Milton (St. Peter), abbey of.
- Phillimore reference: 12.5

It's interesting that site of Burleston parish hamlet still exist in County Dorset, settled in among the lovely rolling hills of southern England.

There are several important pieces of circumstantial evidence to support the theory that Burleston hamlet lent It's name to our surname:

Document dated 1215 AD - This document refers to a "William de Burleton" at Shrewsbury castle In Shropshire in western England near the Welsh border.

Burleson Coat of Arms - The recognized Burleson heraldry was first published by A man named Bishop Burleston in county Durham, about four centuries after the the residents of Burleston parish adopted their bane from their hamlet name.

Burleston families living near Burleston hamlet - There are land sale documents from 1391 AD suggesting that people with the Burleston surname were living near their ancestral homeland near Puddleton England in Dorset.

William de Burleston, 1391 in Dorset, deed to William Gybbe.

William de Burleston (of the 1391 William Burleston) noting his mother is Elizabeth Burleson, and that she died, in a document dated 1418-1419. This document refers to Dartington England which is less than 90 miles from Burleston hamlet in County Dorset.

1215 Document mentioning William de Burleton

This document from the year 1315 AD shows a William Burleton in Shrewsbury England, living only 137 miles from the Burleston parish in Dorset: In the calendar of Patent Rolls for King Richard II for the year 1315 AD (located in membrane 12d), we see the following reference of a "William of Burleton": "Commission to W. De Stanford, Richard de Harlye and J. de Bromfeld to deliver the gaol of the castle at Shrewsbury of William be Burleton, a prisoner of that gaol for the death of Nicholas de LD Rode."

The 1391 document mentioning William de Burleston

Here we see a William Burleston in a document relating to Fenton in Dartington England. As we may know, Dartington is just 100 miles from the Burleston parish which was noted in the year 1086 AD: "To all faithful in Christ to whom this present writing shall come William Burleston greetings in the Lord everlasting. Know that I have remised and released all together for me and my heirs forever quit claim to William Gybbe of Byneknowl all my right and claim that I have or may have in whatever possible way in one messuage and four firlings of land and Four Shillings worth of rent with its reversions and appertainences in Fenton in the manor of Dertyngton , to have and to hold and to enjoy the aforesaid messuage and four firlings of land and four shillings worth of rent with its reversion and appertainences to the Aforesaid William Gybbe and paying to the Lord of that fee and rent and service accustomed forever.

These witnesses:

- Henry Noreys,
- Robert (hole in page)
- Henry Settecote
- And others.

Dated, Fenton, Tuesday nest before the feast of St Barnabas the Apostle in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Richard II after the conquest. " Note: The town of Fenton is present-day Venton and Dertyngton is present-day Dartington, in County Devon. The 100 mile proximity to the Burleston parish mentioned in the Domesday book is very unlikely to be coincidental. This is convincing circumstantial evidence that the William de Burleston made his surname from the name of his ancestral home at Burleston hamlet.

1419 deed mentioning a William Burleston

Here we see William Burleston doing a contract for an area near Dartington, in County Devon England. (Dartington is less than 100 miles from the parish of Burleston as mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 AD. William BURLESTON has enfeoffed Master Roger BOLTER precentor of the Cathedral church of Exeter, John CHUDDERLEGH, Thomas FERRERS and Peter STURT, clerk, of all his lands in Devon to the intent that Elizabeth his mother should have the same for life without impeachment of waste; after her death his lands in Yongeston are to remain to Thomas FERRERS and his heirs forever for 100 marks to be paid in the four years

next following to buy 3 bells for the use of the rector of the parish church of Blackawpton*; his daughter Joan to have his lands in Wolvelegh, Silverton, and Bisschoplegh in tail, in default of issue, remainder to James son of John BURLESTON in tail, remainder in default of issue to Thomas FERRERS in fee.

Lands in Doune, Etyston and . . . to be granted to James son of John BURLESTON in tail, remainder in default of issue to Thomas FERRERS in fee. Lands in Poddyngysheighys" to be sold and the money received to be disposed of at the discretion of Elizabeth his mother, who is also to have the ruling of all his lands in Heigchyrch (Somerset) and of all other his lands mentioned in the charter of feoffment and not specified here.

Notes:

- (1) The above document refers to the town of "Poddyngysheighys". This could be the village of Piddleleton (later re-named Puddleton by Queen Victoria in the 1800's). Note that Dartington is less than 100 miles from Puddleton in County Dorset, which was the subject of the 1391 deed.
- (2) Roger Bolter was the Dean of Exeter in 1419.
- (3) There is now a parish of Blackawton which lies approximately six miles south by southeast of Dartington.

Summary

Now that we know the possible origins of the Burleson surname, let's move on and look at heraldry and examine the Burleson Coat of Arms.

We then return to our discussions of the Burleson Family in England and attempt to make a tenuous connection between the British Burlesons and Edward Burleson who arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the mid 1600's.