

A Brief History of The The Rathbun Association's

The association began with Frank H. Rathbun of Fairfax, VA. Frank had a degree in journalism and an interest in family history which was sparked by early experiences in his childhood. In 1979 he began to act on a suggestion made to him that a Rathbun family association be formed and a newsletter be published. With the help of his son and wife, Hazel, the plans began to materialize. They collected funds from nearly 150 Rathbun cousins with whom they had corresponded, and the Rathbun Family Association was formed as an unincorporated organization with a board of directors and Frank as President, and Robert "Rob" Rathbun as Research Director.

In January of 1981 volume one, number one of the Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn Family Historian was published by Frank. It was followed by 16 years of publications, a total of 68 issues. (To view all of the issues go to www.michaelrathbun.org This however was not the first Rathbun Historian published. Frank P. Rathbone published the Rathbone Historian between the years of 1892 and 1894. In 1996 the last issue of the Historian was published. To see Frank's last letter written for the publication go to the Historian volume 16, number 2.

Between 1981 and 1996, in addition to editing and publishing the Historian Frank spent a great amount of time in research and genealogy study of the family. Six National Rathbun Family Reunions were planned by Frank and Hazel and hosted by the association. The first was held on Block Island, Rhode Island in 1983 for the dedication of the John and Margaret monument in the Block Island cemetery. Nearly 200 people were at the dedication. To read Frank's article on the reunion and the dedication go to the Historian volume 3, number 4. In May of 1987 they hosted a trip to England, English Roots, where one of the highlights was a visit to old Prescott Church and Farnsworth Chapel where Margaret and John were baptized.

In addition to Franks work in the study of the Rathbun family history in America other members of the family contributed greatly to our knowledge, Robert (Rob) Rathbun of Kentucky, Frank E. Rathbun of Rhode Island, and John Bowen of Maryland, to name a few. The family suffered a great loss when Frank passed away in 2010, he will be missed. He continued his work and research into the family history almost up until the end.

In 1989 Helen Rathbun of Rhode Island founded the unincorporated Rathbone, Rathbun, Rathburn, Association of Rhode Island and Vicinity. She was elected President and David Rathbun, now of Maryland, was elected Secretary. They sponsor two events per year, a summer picnic and a Christmas party. Tami Hamlin now shares the leadership with Helen.

Between 1999 and 2009 four more Rathbun family reunions were held. In 1999 Mystic, Connecticut, was the site and in 2007 the family met in Coventry, Rhode Island, both

reunions organized and planned by Helen Rathbun and the Rhode Island Rathbun Family Association. In 2001 the family gathered in Utica, New York, organized and planned by Beverly Gillett and John Bowen. A second trip to England was planned and organized by David and Carol Rathbun of Maryland in 2004.

It was at the reunion in 2007 that I became involved with the association by volunteering to plan the National Family Reunion of 2009. The first step in the process of planning this event was to form a planning committee of local Rathbuns. We soon discovered through our correspondent with other members of the family who had been involved in planning previous reunions after Frank no longer was directly involved, that most of the information and experience in the planning of family reunions was spread among several individuals and that there were even several different lists of Rathbun family members stored in several places in different parts of the country. It was evident that some type of formal organization would benefit those planning future reunions and be very useful to those Rathbun family members associated with the association.

Over the next few months an organizational committee was formed to study the desire of the family members to form a National Association. Gail A. Rathbun of Indiana chaired that committee and was joined by six other family members. At the 2009 National Family Reunion held in Fort Wayne, Indiana the committee report was positive toward that goal. The following actions took place at the business meeting held on July 22, 2009 by members at that reunion.

1. Authority to incorporate as a family association voted on and approved.
2. Initial Bylaws accepted.
3. Officers of association elected.

(Those officers were)

Jerry Rathbun President/Treasurer

Gail Rathbun Vice-President

Maureen Lewness Secretary

Robert "Rob" Rathbun Family Genealogist

John Bowen Reunion Planner.

Over the next few months and into 2010 the officers and a few other family members worked on the documentation required to fulfill the task of incorporating the association as a not for profit organization. Peter Rathbun, an attorney and a member of the organizational committee, volunteered his professional services in the preparation of all of the legal documents required.

On March 6, 2010 the association became The Rathbun, Rathbone, Rathburn, International Family Association Inc. (RRRIFA) as "Articles of Incorporation" were filed

and approved by the state of Indiana, Secretary of State.

On March 10, 2010 we were issued our "Employer Identification Number" by the U.S. Treasury (IRS), and on December 03, 2010 we received our letter exempting the association from Federal income tax under section 501 C (7) of the revenue code following the submission of IRS form 1024, and a copy of our revised Charter and Bylaws approved by the officers on September 20, 2010.

Members of the RRRIFA have accomplished several important tasks since that time. Maureen Lewness of California, our first Secretary, published the associations first newsletter "The Register" in March of 2010. Tami Hamlin assumed the responsibilities of Secretary soon after and has continued to publish the "Register". Jesse Rathbun of Kentucky created the association's website where the organization's documents and the Register can be viewed. Michael D. Rathbun of Washington not only created the www.michaelrathbun.org website where the Rathbun Family Historian can be view but placed that publication on a disk. Gail A. Rathbun, working with the board of directors, developed the awards program and formalized Amendment #1 to the Bylaws.

In July 2011 John and Mary Ann Bowen hosted the Rathbun Family Reunion In Washington, DC., the first sponsored by the RRRIFA. Three of the most outstanding events were, the visit to the National Archives, the visit to Fords Theater, and a Rathbun wreath laying at the Tombs of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery. At the business meeting five board members were elected. They were John D. Bowen of Maryland, Glennice Musselwhite of Kansas, Jesse L. Rathbun of Kentucky, Michael D. Rathbun of Washington, and Peter Rathbun of New Jersey. At the board of director's meeting the officers were chosen. Jerry L. Rathbun of Indiana President / Treasurer, Gail A. Rathbun of Indiana Vice-President, Tami Hamlin of Rhode Island Secretary, and Robert "Rob" Rathbun of Kentucky Family Genealogist. Tami Hamlin volunteered to plan and host the next reunion in 2013 to be held in Newport, Rhode Island.

On July 15, 2013, in Newport, Rhode Island, the second Rathbun family reunion sponsored by the RRRIFA was convened. Tami Hamlin was the hostes for this event. The highlights of this four day afare was a trip to Block Island by 50 members of the family and the dedication of a momuement to Capt John Peck Rathbun in the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemeatary.

This was the first RRRIFA reunion in which the Awards Program was in affect to honor those members who have contributed their time and skills to the betterment of the Rathbun family and the Association. The winners were, The Frank H. Rathbun Family History Award went to John D. Bowen and Robert "Rob" Rathbun, The RRRIFA Special Service Award went to Gail A. Rathbun, Jesse E. Rathbun and Peter Rathbun, and the President's Award went to Tami Hamlin. Helen Rathbun, Age 99, was honored with a

Rathbun Family Lifetime Appreciation Award for her many years of service.

Four of the present board members were reelected to the board at the business meeting held on July 15, 2013 with the exception of Dr Edward Kipp of Canada who replaced Glennice Musselwhite who had previously made the decision not to be a candidate. The board meeting was held on July 16, 2013 and all of the association officer's were reelected to their previous positions.

Jesse and Marilyn Rathbun volunteered to plan and host the next reunion in 2015 to be held in Lexington, Kentucky.

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By Jerry Rathbun

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