

# The Belknap -Belnap Family

Sawbridgeworth, England  
to  
Honolulu, Hawaii (1510 - 1966)

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As the gangplank lowered and the last cinch ropes were secured Abraham Belknap and his two brothers looked with wonder upon the new world they were entering. Soon they would settle in Lynn, Massachusetts, with dreams of a prosperous future.

Abraham's son, Joseph Belknap, grew to manhood in America and through his efforts the "Old South Church" was founded in Boston in the year 1658.

Their home lay far to the East over miles of traveled yet uncharted Atlantic Ocean. Correspondence to friends and relatives in distant Sawbridgeworth, England, was intermittent at best. Thoughts of home and surrounding pastoral scenes came and went. There was too much to do in their new environment. (See: Vol 68 & 85 Genealogical Register, New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Boston.)

When Elizabeth and Henry Beltoft were married in a rural and isolated village of England circa 1510, no thoughts of the skyscrapers and bright lights of New York City, the extravagant shows or gaming tables of Las Vegas, Nevada, nor the modern hotels on the romantic beaches of Honolulu, Hawaii, passed thru their minds.

But now, 450 years later, their descendants make their home in these and many other cities of the world. And in the many years that have passed the progeny of this couple have made their mark on the pages of history:

Tears streaming down dirty faces . . . tears from the acrid smoke of gunfire and tears from fear. Ear piercing noise from the din of war. Tense nerves and fear as the Kamikaze keeps coming. Then holocaust as the suicide pilot reaches his target: The "S. S. Belknap" during the Leyte Invasion 1944. (See: U. S. Naval Records, Washington D. C.) 38 men die on the decks of the battle weary subchaser "Belknap."

The warm summer afternoon lays a carpet of laziness over the rolling hills of Montana. Two men, dirty and hard from a lifetime of cattle tending, rest their horses to watch two Indian children race bareback, happy and free toward their home "Fort Belknap." (See: Dept. of Interior, Indian Affairs) Fort Belknap one of the largest Indian reservations in the West.

Sirens scream. Men race down echoing concrete hallways. Commands from the loudspeakers. Prison Riot Two killed. Furniture and fixtures destroyed. Ray Belknap, Honolulu Prison Official fights to bring back order and control.



**Arms:** Az fimbriated argent, three eagles langued gules, displayed in bend cottised arg. **Crest:** A dragon vert statant langued gules, gorged with a ducal coronet and chain or, reflexed over the back.

A clear crisp day. Eyes squinting against the bright sun's reflection on the new fallen snow. Skiers winding their way down nature's masterpieces of forests, mountain slopes, and bright snow. Belknap Recreation Center, New Hampshire. Playground for the young and young-at-heart. Happy hearts and bright cheeked smiles.

Slowly the pale layer of smoke rises toward the beamed lights of the ceiling. The glare of the lights focus on the green felt tables below. Slow milling people sit or stand at the sullen tables. No smiles—no happiness. A weak attempt at joy comes from the end of the room where pasty-faced musicians make loud noises hinting at music to cheer the losers at the gambling tables of a Las Vegas Casino. Charlene Belknap stands by her husband as he surveys the "action" then he departs to "take the count" of the day's winnings."

In the darkened room all eyes are focused toward the illuminated ticker tape . . . the heartbeat of capitalism was represented by the heavy volume on the stock exchange. Young Ronald Belknap Taylor sits near his father, an investment banker, in his Palm Springs, California, office. (See: Page 778 Who's Who In The West 1966.)

Belknaps were hearty and aggressive. One family of Mormon Belknaps pushed a hand cart across the plains in 1846. (See: The journal of Gilbert Belnap by Della Belnap) While further north a distantly related part of the family rode in an ox cart from Iowa in 1847 over the Oregon Trail (See: Franklin Belknap Hall, Willamette University, Salem, Oregon)

*Editor's note:* Dick Taylor sent us a Belknap-Belnap 15 generation chart covering 500 years of genealogy from England to Hawaii. The chart is an amazing 16 feet long. This in itself is a tribute to unselfish labor and devotion to ancestral compilation.

The bell is heard for blocks in all directions. High pitched voices mingle with the admonishments of mothers as sinless children scamper through the gates and up the steps of "Belknap Elementary School" Beaver, Utah.

Headlines screech the pain. A man is to be crucified . . . sacrificed to the hungry populace as impeachment proceedings grind out against the Secretary of War, General Wm. W. Belknap. (See: Encyclopedia of American Biography Vol. II). A man who served his country long and well has fallen from favor.

Hearty applause rises from the grandstand as the last strains of the band's music drifts away into the happy day. The men, all sharp in their freshly pressed uniforms, stand ready to receive their honors. The speaker for the day addresses the crowd and the proud "Belknap Rifles" of Texas. (See: "Belknap Rifles" Alamo Library, San Antonio, Texas)

Rays of sunshine stream down from the windows high in the vaulted royal room. Pomp and discipline rule the discussions below as the quiet and stuffy gentlemen compile the "Landed Gentry" and "Peerage" Records to show that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth of England, is, indeed, 17th in descent from John Belknap. (See: Debrett's Guide to Peerage.)

"People of the Beautiful Hill" this is their name and their heiritage no matter where they may be . . . the safe manufacturer of Los Angeles, the Camera Shop owner of Boulder City, or the famous Barrister of New York City's legal fraternity all share the glamour, the pride, the responsibility.

Originally it was: "Beltoft." Toft meant knap or knoll of the hill. As the English language softened and matured many of the family exchanged knap for toft so we find in 1589 Belknap instead of Beltoft. Bel, of course, came from "Belle" meaning beautiful.

Others found the letter "k" confusing and often we find "Belnap." Although there is the oft repeated story about the son who so greatly hated his father (because his widowed father woo'ed and won his son's fiance) that he changed his name by dropping the "k" so as not to honor his father's heritage.

On file with "International Finders" and the Society of Genealogists, LONDON, is one of the most complex Family Trees ever compiled. It is a fifteen foot long chart showing the family over the last 500 years. It includes 15 generations and the families reach into every corner of the world. The master copy is being constantly improved and added to by the compiler and copies are available to family genealogists or historians so inclined.

Although the days of the crest are gone, the Belnaps can wear a shield of honor in the knowledge that their family history is full of honest and hearty people. "Belknaps, Patriots all" are the words emblazoned on the door of Samuel Belknap's ancestral home in Newburgh, New York. And "patriots" they are, have been, and will be!

*Not distant B/S*