

The Name of Ball



The name of Ball is thought to be derived from the Saxon word Bald, meaning “Bold or courageous,” and was probably given to its original bearer because of his bravery in battle. It is found on ancient records in the form of Ball, Bal, Balle, Bael, and Baell. The name is most frequently found on the West side of England in the counties of Lancaster, Stafford, Warwick and Gloucester. It is also found in great numbers in Ireland and in less numbers in Wales and Scotland.

The earliest record of the name is in the “Domesday Book of Devonshire” in which Bal is mentioned as sherriff of that county. The name is found in England on many records as those of Walter Balle in the thirteenth century. John Ball born about 1338 became a priest of St. Mary’s in Yorkshire, engaged in Wat Tyler’s rebellion and was executed in 1381. One John Balle is on record at Bradfield in Herfordshire as the owner of land in 1433. Reginald Balle was constable of Castle Hope in Dengingshire, Wales, at an early date and in 1324, the town records of Nottingham gives Eliaz Balle as baliff. This

office was successively held by John Ball in 1402, Thomas Ball in 1498 and William Ball in 1573.

In Ireland, on the roll of the Norman citizens of Dublin in the latter part of the twelfth century is the Radulphue Balle de Fornace. This would seem to indicate that at least one branch of the family came from Normandy at the time of the Norman Conquest. In 1414 Robert Ball is said to have been the ancestor of the Ballegrave family of Balls, an illustrious and prominent family of which many of the American branches of Balls are believed to have descended. In Great Britain the bearers of the name of Ball were largely of the landed gentry and ministers of yeomanry. The family was represented among early British colonists in the New World. One of the first members to migrate to America was Francis Ball who came from England. The family records of George and Moses Ball, sons of Moses Ball, Sr. of Fairfax Co., Va. show that they with their families settled South West Virginia, Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee.