

# My Journey into the Past

By William Caynor

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Most recently I had the great fortune of publishing my second book and expanding on what began as an inquisitive hobby many years ago. I have always had an interest in history and more so in the nature of my family's antiquity. Where were they in the founding of our country, what sector did they side with during the civil war, north or south?

This fascination induced me to frequently search the genealogy section at the local libraries in hopes of finding a Caynor listed. One day while searching at the Virginia Beach library, I located a John Caynor in the 1820 Culpeper County, Virginia census reports.

This discovery started me on a path of adventure of deciphering the records and linking the fragments that bind the Caynor puzzle together. After this find, I continued to scan the census reports for additional Cynors.

The first census of American citizens was taken just three years after the ratification of our great nation's constitution in 1787. The census was to be taken every ten years. These census reports, which extend to the year 1930, tell many things about your family that include the names of; husbands, wives, sons and daughters as well as their occupation, education, age, wealth and where they lived.

I extracted this information and lineage and then traveled to the national archives, state archives and the courthouses and libraries in the regions that my family came from. There I searched wills, marriage licenses, death and birth records, property tax records, service records,



land deeds, slave schedules and court records to obtain additional information.

This information led me to smaller towns, church records and cemetery plots. I began in southeastern Virginia and traveled to my family's origination point in Northern Virginia and across the country to Missouri where a branch of my ancestry migrated during the Gold Rush of 1849.

My journey bonded me with my fifth great-grandfather Mathew Caynor, who served as a private in the Continental Army under General George Washington during the harsh winter at Valley Forge in 1777-78.

This expedition also had me reading in anticipation as Mathew's grandson, a confederate, was captured by General George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of Waynesboro on March 2, 1865. In addition, I know now that the John Caynor in the 1820 census is my

fourth great-grandfather.

After all these years of research, I still required closure for the hundreds of documents and records that I had accumulated over this period and thus decided that the only way to achieve this end was to assimilate all of the information into a story.

This story was not just for my use, but for all the Caynor members so that they can regain their lost heritage. It was also created for researchers of the many other families that are intertwined into the Caynor ancestry.

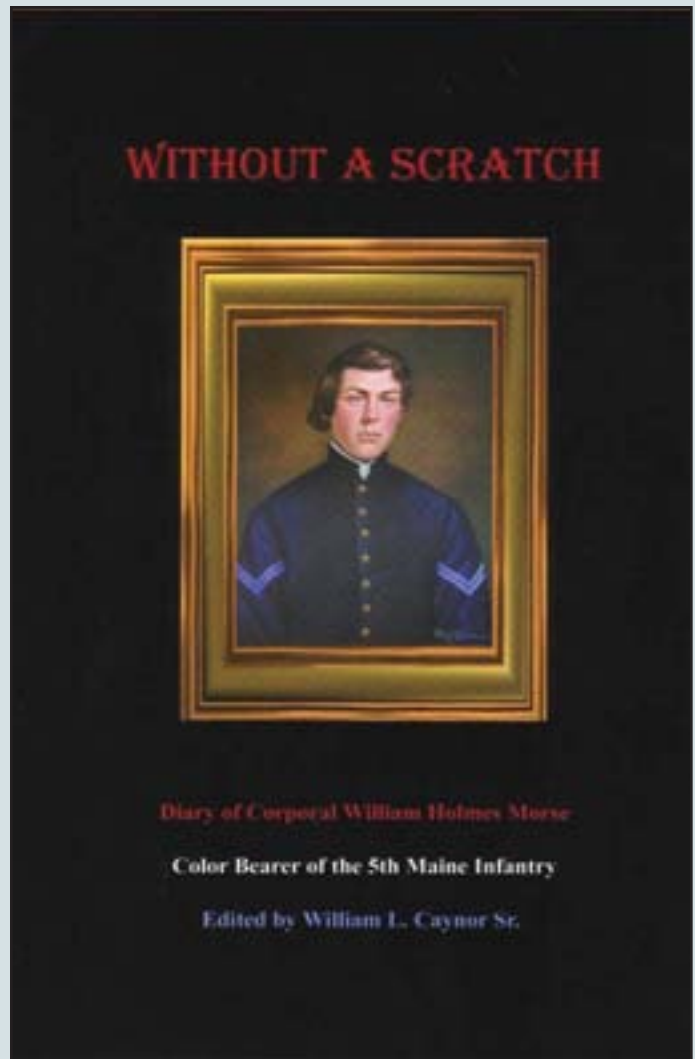
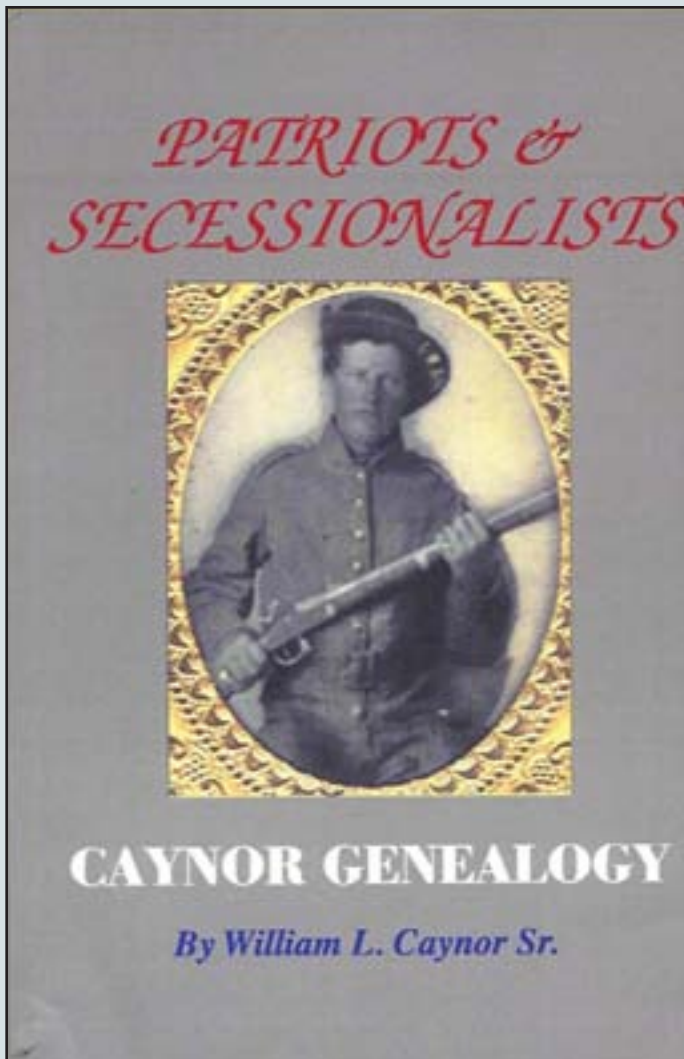
It took me approximately one year to reach finality with the completion of a 362 page Caynor Genealogy book called "Patriots and Secessionists". The title was derived from irony of one generation fighting for American independence

and another fighting for southern independence.

This documented lineage has allowed me to become a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and the adjutant of the state societies of the Military Stars and Bars and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The journey has further allowed me to not only connect with my family's past but to explore history and writing in a new way.

I took this experience of writing and my passion of history to another level when I came across a diary of a union civil war soldier in 2005 and began to research the history behind the soldier and the unit he served.

One of my first observations of the men during these turbulent times was their strength and ability to endure the hardships of war and live to "tell the tale". These were strong and heroic men indeed. I most recently published a book on this soldier named Corporal William Holmes



Morse of the 5<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry, called “Without a Scratch”.

The title exemplifies Morse’s fearless daily struggle for survival as a color bearer. Morse stood in the front line of battle with nothing more than an American flag for his protection while shot and shell frequently rained around him, yet he was never harmed in his 42 months of service.

It is an excellent portrayal of a courageous young American who served his country beyond the call of duty. Copies of “Patriots and Secessionalists” were given to family members and donated to the historical societies, state archives and libraries where my family originated, so that future researchers can read the history instead of taking the long journey that I have endured.

“Without a Scratch” is for the reader interested in the trials and tribulations of the union infantry soldier during America’s War Between the States and will be sold in local book stores such as Title Wave in Anchorage.

For the persons wishing to research their ancestry, I would recommend beginning by finding out as much as possible from your elderly family members and then sign up for an online subscription with ancestry.com. This you can research in your home before traveling outside for further details.

Ancestry.com has census reports, service records and more. Start with the census reports. You should be able to locate an ancestor born before 1930, all you need is a name; the state and county of where they lived is

even more helpful.

This will typically lead you to parents, brothers and sisters, etc. Each piece will lead you to another so take your time and enjoy unraveling your heritage.

The adventures have taught me a great deal and to appreciate even more. Although I know in my mind and heart that the journey has not ended, but merely just begun.