

Colonel William Ball, the Emigrant

My name is Dette Reh and I am representing the family of Colonel William Ball.

Colonel William Ball was the Great Grandfather of George Washington. He is also my 9th Great Grandfather. He was born in 1615 in London, England.

William served in the Royal Army of King Charles I during the long English Civil Wars. These wars were devastating in terms of human cost. With the defeat of the Royal Army, and the beheading of Charles I, William lost a large portion of the family estates. William, exiled from England, emigrated with other loyal Royalists, to Virginia in 1635.

Evidence of his return to England was his marriage to Hannah Atherold in 1638 in London. The couple had three children, William, Joseph and Hannah. William continued a semi nomadic life, travelling back and forth from Virginia to England. He became a merchant, trading European goods and the colony's tobacco. He succeeded in this venture by securing cargo space on ships plying the Atlantic waters.

It is thought that his wife and children may have stayed in England for several years before sailing for Virginia. Several reasons are proffered for this stay: they were hoping for the return of the Stuart monarchy; or for the ability to procure the necessary goods for the colonists; or for William to secure land and a home for them in Lancaster county. Hannah and her children finally came to Virginia in 1650.

In 1661 William Ball, the Emigrant, was listed in the Northumberland County Records as "William Ball, Merchant." His will of 1680 shows he was still engaged in merchandizing when he died. It is thought that William and his sons may have had a strong connection to the ships HOPE and MERCHANT.

No land grant appears in Ball's name until 1663, when he received three hundred acres on Narrow Neck Creek (now Ball Point) on the west side of the Corrotman River in Lancaster County. Over time he acquired approximately 2000 acres of land. William built a beautiful Georgian home near the mouth of the river. It was known as "Millenbeck" and was said to have played a prominent part in the history of the area. His estate was willed to his wife and children upon Ball's death and remained in the Ball family for four generations.

Military titles were never assumed in those days, they were conferred by the authority of the Royal Governor of the colony, who under the Royal Charter, was its Commander in Chief. At the time William was living in the colony, there was such extreme danger from the incursion of neighboring Indian tribes that some form of military organization was necessary for its defense. Certain counties were placed under Lieutenants whose duty it was to provide people with arms and ammunition, and to organize and command them in time of danger. In 1672 William was so empowered by the Virginia Assembly.

These County Lieutenants were also often "clothed with a judicial character." These men would be affirmed as Judges and Magistrates and therefore wearing the appropriate clothing of robes, gowns, collars, and wigs of these Judges and Magistrates. And, also, as members of the General Court, they became members of the Executive Council of the Royal Colony of Virginia.

It is known that William Ball served on an Indian peace-treaty council and administered Lancaster County affairs as a Colonel. He helped to quell Bacon's Rebellion*. In a list of civil and military officers of Lancaster County in 1680, Colonel William Ball is listed first on both lists. He was also doubtless Presiding Magistrate and Colonel Commandant of the County. He was the only Colonel given on the lists.

Colonel William Ball also served in the House of Burgesses from 1670-1680.

Colonel William Ball's second son, Joseph, (my 8th Great Grandfather) was married twice. Joseph's first wife was (1) Elizabeth Romney with whom he had five children. His second wife was (2) Mrs. Mary Johnson, a widow, with whom he had a daughter, Mary Ball. Mary Ball was the mother of George Washington.

A quote from the book "Mary Ball, Mother of George Washington" written by Nancy Bird Turner and Sidney Gunn, said this about the Northern Neck of Virginia:

"Never in history perhaps have so much worth and valor come out of so small an area, in so comparatively short a space of time. In the course of a few generations those little green acres have produced presidents, statesmen, and world-known warriors. It produced also, incidentally, their forebears."

"For example, on a certain November day, on the river edge of one of the lower counties that round from the Rappahannock, a child named Mary Ball was born, and this little girl was to be the mother of George Washington...the glory of the Northern Neck and the rest of the land as well." p.3

- Bacon's Rebellion – an armed rebellion held in Virginia 1676-1677, led by Nathaniel Bacon against the Royal Governor William Berkeley, who refused Bacon's request to drive the native Americans out of Virginia.

References

"The Mother of Washington" Nancy Byrd Turner and Sidney Gunn

"Virginia Genealogies" By Rev. Horace Hayden

"Gordon Kinship" – Nancy Mc Bride

