

PART FOUR

THE BLAND FAMILY OF STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

CHAPTER VII

THE FAMILY OF JAMES BLAND: SEVENTH GENERATIONPrologue: Two Cousins

So, if one accepts Urilla Bland's vision of unity between the two major Bland families in Virginia, as I do, this story boils down to a tale of two cousins. Richard Bland (fifth generation, 1665-1720) was the founder of the 18th Century James River Blands in the southern part of Virginia, while James Bland (seventh generation, C. 1655-1708) was the founder of the 18th Century family of Stafford County, Virginia Blands. Both their lives bridged the 17th and 18th centuries, and both had families which multiplied prolifically in the new world. Both, according to the vision of unity, descended from common ancestral grandparents, Adam Bland of London and his wife, Joan Atkyns. Both had parents who struggled uniquely and against bitter odds to create a viable bridgehead for settlement and continuity in the new world. The struggle by Richard Bland's mother, Anna Bennett, to hold onto her husband's property along the James River, against the persistent claims of John Bland (fourth generation), his wife, Sarah Greene, and son, Giles Bland, was told in Chapter IV. It is intriguing to ponder what would have happened had Sarah Greene ultimately prevailed in her claims against Anna Bennett. As it was, Giles Bland's partial success greatly diminished the Bland family's land holdings in Virginia. Quite probably, Anna would have been forced to return to London with her three sons, who would have grown up as Englishmen (one did settle and die in England anyway), and probably would have had a slight impact upon the American

18th Century. As it was, the James River Blands had a substantial and respectable family history in Virginia during the 18th century, which is told in Chapter V. There seemed to be, however, only a small amount of movement beyond 18th century Virginia by this family. As a result, with only a few exceptions, the James River family seems to be historically moribund in an 18th century experience.¹

This is far from true in the case of the Stafford County Blands. The story of Thomas Bland of Maryland (sixth generation, C. 1634-1700), as well as his assumed son James Bland, has been told in Chapter VI. The present chapter takes up with James during the last years of his life, when he had moved to Stafford County, Virginia, in 1701 or 1702, and settled on 600 acres of land along Powell's Creek near what was later Dumfries, Virginia. James' children remained in the Virginia Northern Neck, and historical traces of them are found in the Stafford, Prince William, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudon arc of territory along the Potomac. James' sons died between 1744-1762. However, his grandchildren and later descendants were living during the critical last half of the 18th century, when, following the American Revolution, vast land grants were awarded in the west. Many of these later Blands remained in Virginia, but many others migrated to North Carolina, South Carolina, the Kentucky territory, and to the region that later became West Virginia. Afterward, there seems to have been a move, with Kentucky as a kind of staging area or clearinghouse, to the mid-West, particularly to southern Indiana. And from these (then) western sites, the family moved kaleidoscopically out across the country as the west

¹ Notwithstanding this, many persons have traced matrilineal descent from this family.

was settled during the last half of the 19th century. It was a prolific and wide-ranging family with strong roots that have persisted until the present day.

The Family of James Bland: Seventh Generation

Little is known of James Bland from 1701, when he purchased 600 acres of land along Powell's Creek in Stafford County, Virginia, until he died in 1708. All that is known is that he returned to St. Mary's County, Maryland, to post bond of 100 Pounds Sterling in his capacity as administrator of the estate of Robert Woodward.¹ It has generally been assumed that James was a lone Bland of his generation in Stafford County, but this may not be so. Susannah Bland (1609-), fourth generation daughter of John Bland and Susan Deblere, who married Thomas Pearson, settled and died in Stafford County, Virginia. Susannah was dead long before James Bland came to the county, but her children, especially a daughter who married into the West family,² were living there and may have had an active cousin relationship to James. Also, though no linkage has been made of them to later generations, there was in 1710 an Arthur Bland living in St. Mary's County, Maryland,³ and in 1704, there was a Henry Bland living in King and Queen County,⁴ Virginia.

1 Maryland Test. and Proc., Lib 19C, Folio 139, cited in UMBI, p. 41.

2 See discussion in Chapter III, pp. 55-56.

3 See discussion in Chapter VI, p. 252, esp. note 2.

4 Malcolm Hart Harris, Old King and Queen County History (1977), pp. 309-310, 553.

There is no evidence that these were members of the James River family, and they were too old to have been James' children.¹ They could have been siblings, or cousins, of James Bland. Whether further substantiation of these speculations could be accomplished is unknown.² If so, it could further complicate the assumption that all or most of the 18th century Blands in the Virginia Northern Neck descend from James Bland, and should remind all genealogists that everything is tenuous, nothing is ever really settled, and that as surely as in the field of scientific research, new discoveries can shatter the most cherished myths or beliefs.

When he died, James was married to a woman named Margaret _____. No one has ever determined her maiden name. All that is known of her is that in 1723 she was still living on the widow's third of property left her by her husband. In that year, a registrar for the quitrent rolls for Overwharton Parish entered her name but made no charge of her for the 200 acres she owned, writing only, "can't hear of her."³ Urilla Bland has suggested that Margaret's maiden name may have been Sisson, Woodward or Harrison. In Chapter VI, I suggested that her maiden name may have been Lunnell or Lundell or Sisson.⁴ But these ideas remain speculative and do not have enough evidentiary power behind

¹ James Bland's will of 1708 mentions neither Henry nor Arthur.

² Arthur and Henry were names given to some of James Bland's known descendants during the 18th century.

³ George S. King, Registers of Overwharton Parish, Stafford County, Virginia, 1723-1758 (1961), p. 147.

⁴ Cf. Chapter VI, p. 223, note 1.

them to suggest even the pretense of an indirect conclusion. Urilla Bland's inquiry in the Genealogical Helper for March 1973, produced no result.¹ My reasons for offering Lunnell or Lundell as a possibility have to do with the fact that Alice Sisson, for whom James Bland stood bond in 1698, was formerly a Lunnell by marriage, and her children bore names strikingly similar in pattern to those of James Bland and Margaret, as well as their children and grandchildren.² Also, in Maryland, there was obviously a close relationship between the Blands, Sissons, Howards and Lunnells, or Lundells. Urilla Bland's hunches about Margaret's maiden name derive basically from the same factual closeness in family relationships. Additionally, however, Urilla Bland's great-grandparents, Thomas Bland (1793-1867) and Mary Newlon (1796-1879) had a daughter named Mary Sisson Bland (1832-1886). No one in Urilla Bland's family has ever been able to figure out the source of Mary's middle name.³ Urilla Bland adhered to her assertion that Margaret was a Sisson until 1976, when Mr. Leslie Dawson, after analyzing the will of Alice Sisson dated 1706/1707, discovered that such a conclusion was unwarranted.⁴ A genealogy of the Sissons, dated June 25, 1971, and provided Urilla Bland by the Maryland Historical Society, discusses a New England family by the name of Sisson but sheds

¹ UMBI, I, p. 40.

² In fairness, however, it should be noted that the monotonous repetition of William, James, Robert, John and Thomas in this family, none of them unusual names, and in a time before the use of middle names was common, presents the most conscientious genealogist with a bewildering array of conflicting evidence which is almost impossible to reconcile with certainty.

³ Cf. discussion in Chapter VIII, pp. 385-386; cf. p. 223, note 1.

⁴ Leslie Dawson to Urilla Bland, June 11, 1976, cited in UMBII, pp. 24, 40.

no light on the Virginia/Maryland Sissons. In the end, Margaret _____ Bland's maiden name remains unknown. The researcher who finally establishes her maiden name will have made a substantial contribution to Bland genealogy.

James Bland made his will December 22, 1708 and it was probated March 9, 1708/1709. An inventory of James Bland's estate showed him to be a fairly well-off farmer. His worldly goods included 25,000 pounds of tobacco, including 8,100 pounds in cash, seven cows, one bull and a mare, all valued at 7,200 pounds of tobacco, and the balance in miscellaneous furniture and household items.

Because the language used by James Bland in his will, as well as the property dispensation, is critical to understanding later family structure, it is reprinted in full:

In the name of God, Amen, I, James Bland of the County of Stafford in the Colony of Virginia, being sick of body, but of sound and perfect sense and memory, praise be therefore given to Almighty God for it, do make and ordain this my last will and testimony in manner and form, as followeth:

First and principally, I commend my soul to Almighty God who gave it, hoping in and by the merits, death and passion of my saviour Jesus Christ, to have free pardon and remission of all my sins and to enter into eternal life, and secondly, I commit my body to the ground to be decently buried at the discretion of my excr,s hereafter mentioned.

Item: My will and mind is, that all my debts be fully satisfied and paid. Item: My will and mind is, that my loving wife, Margaret, shall fully possess my now dwelling plantation, and the land from the mouth of the creek to the first branch above the said plantation, during her natural life, and after her decease to fall to my loving son, Robert Bland and his heirs lawfully begot. Item: I give and bequeath to my loving son William Bland, 150 acres of land beginning at the upper side of the above said branch and so running up the creek, the full complement of 150 acres aforesaid to him and his heirs lawfully begot. Item: I give to my two sons, James Bland and John Bland, all of the reversion of my land, the said tract beginning where my son William leaves off, and so running to the head of my line, and to be equally divided, between them, when my sons shall

would suggest that the four daughters also were her natural children, but that the three elder sons, William, James and John, were James' children by a prior marriage. If that was the case, however, why would these older sons have been entrusted with tuition of the younger children, rather than Margaret? This arrangement, coupled with the observation of the Overwharton Parish registrar about Margaret in 1723, "can't hear of her,"¹ reinforces the observation that Margaret was the mother only of the younger children, and was also mentally or intellectually incompetent. It leaves open the possibility that James Bland was married sometime before to another woman, who would have been the mother of his older children, and that perhaps he married her in England, prior to migrating to Virginia.

3. Contemporary legal practice stipulated that "tuition" was applicable to children under age 15 for boys, and 13 for girls. Thus, Robert and his four sisters were born sometime between 1693 and 1708. On the other hand, William and James were born no later than 1687, and John, who was old enough to receive land and too old to be placed under tuition or to have custodial responsibility for the younger children, was probably born in 1688. Thus, there was a gap of at least five years, and probably more, between the older three sons and their siblings. The three older sons were probably the only surviving children of James' earlier marriage.

4. Robert, the youngest son, was entitled to receive 200 acres of land upon his mother's demise, whereas ironically, the older brother were given immediate possession of smaller portions of land. William

¹ Cf. p. 259, note 1. A similar sentiment is expressed by Caroline Beall Price, Ancestral Beginnings in America (1928), pp. 48-54. Mrs. Price's information is copied almost exactly in Ruth Thayer Ravenscroft Royal and Magna Charta (1959), pp. 104-107, who cites Price as her source.

was given 150 acres, and James and John received 125 acres each. Thus, Robert was in a slightly favored long-run position, one that could have led to jealousy among his elder brothers, not an insignificant note in light of later developments to be discussed in succeeding chapters, particularly in Chapter X, which examines the life of, and descendants of Robert Bland.

Thus, a composite picture of James Bland is suggested: He was born about 1655,¹ and lived in America, shuttling back and forth between Maryland and the Virginia Northern Neck, from about 1683 to 1708. He settled in Stafford County, Virginia, during 1701 or 1702 after purchasing 600 acres of land there. James died late in 1708. At the time of his death, he was married to a woman named Margaret, for whom he made generous provision for her wellbeing, but did not entrust to her the business of his estate or the education ("tuition") of his minor children, which he left to his older sons. This suggests that James was married sometime before to another woman, who was the mother of his older sons.

The next three chapters trace the growth of the families and descendants of these children of James Bland through about 1900. First, however, it would be useful to delineate some of the geographic parameters that are germane to the growth of the Bland family.

¹ As far as I can tell, the first person who fixed the 1655 date was Homer Jones. Cf. letter, Homer Jones to Nel Ford, March 4, 1958. Like most genealogists writing to a client, Mr. Jones kept source information close to his chest. One must learn to live with such frustration. To my knowledge, the older writers never speculated on James' birthdate, but I am intrigued by the thought that Jones had substantial evidence to back up his statement. Such source information, naturally, would be invaluable in the quest for definitive knowledge about James Bland's parentage.

County Formation in the Virginia Northern Neck: 1660-1760

Charles River County was one of the original eight counties formed in 1634 from the Hundreds of the defunct Virginia Company. In March 1642/1643, Charles River was renamed York County.¹ Over the next two decades the shape of York County changed several times, fragmenting into New Kent County, Gloucester County, and Northumberland, which in turn was fragmented into Lancaster and Westmoreland counties by the early 1650's. In 1661, Westmoreland formed its western area into the Potomac Parish, which in 1664 became Stafford County.² The character of Stafford remained constant then for sixty-six years. By 1700, the principal parish in Stafford was Overwharton, which by 1724 was populated by some 650 families.³

Prince William County was formed in 1730 and 1731 from parts of Stafford and King George Counties. The original Prince William comprised the present-day county of the same name, as well as what would become Fairfax, Fauquier, Arlington and Loudon Counties. In 1742, the fragmentation of Prince William began. That year, Truro Parish became Fairfax County and was cut off permanently from Prince William. In 1744, within Prince William, Dettingen Parish was formed from Hamilton Parish, with one of its churches being at Quantico, near Dumfries.⁴

¹ Cf. p. 76B.

² Workers of the Writers' Program of the WPA, Prince William: The Story of Its People and Its Places (1941), p. 24.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 30.

MAP VII

Northern Virginia 1770. Following the Organization of Loudon County in 1757, and Fauquier County in 1759



JOHN HENRY, 1770.

Source: H. C. Groome, *Fauquier During the Proprietorship* (1927, reprint 1967).

Permission to reprint this map was granted by the Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland.

The Truro Parish/Fairfax County land consisted of about 963 square miles, that began at the juncture of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers, and continued westward into the northwestern corner of present-day Virginia. In 1757, Fairfax County was divided and the western territory was called Loudon County.¹ Then in 1759, Fauquier County was formed from Prince William. The maps of Virginia that follow this page show the close proximity of all these counties. In the discussion about the family of James Bland that follows, the reader will see references not only to Stafford County, but to Prince William, Fairfax, Fauquier and Loudon as well as to Truro, Overwharton, Dettingen and Hamilton Parishes. The above should put such references in perspective. Territorially, the locations are in close proximity. The Bland family, with its various branches which lived in the area, included the original James Bland (seventh generation) and his wife, Margaret, his children, and their descendants.

The Westward Expansion

Many Bland ancestors served in the war of the American Revolution and were rewarded in various degrees with land grants, some in the state for which they fought, some in the new western territories. The number of acres awarded depended upon many factors, including the rank of the recipient. Theodorick Bland (seventh generation), as noted in Chapter V, was a Colonel who raised his own regiment and served between 1777-1780, for which he was awarded about 13,500 acres in Nelson County, Kentucky.²

¹ James Head, A Comprehensive History and Description of Loudon County, Virginia (1908), pp. 107-109.

² Cf. Chapter V, p. 180, note 1.

Robert Bland (ninth generation), however, received a grant of 300 acres in the 96th District of South Carolina for his service as a private in the war. This was one of several reasons why Virginians began to migrate in huge numbers during the 1780's, pouring across the Blue Ridge mountains in great numbers to settle in areas where civil law was primitive, but individual opportunity seemed great. Kentucky, which was officially a county of Virginia until 1792, but had been a separatist hotbed since the end of the Revolutionary War, was one destination, and in fact for the Blands, was a kind of clearinghouse for further westward movement.

It appears that the children of James Bland (seventh generation) remained in Virginia, but their children and grandchildren moved out in substantial numbers. The earliest migrations appear to have been into the eastern part of North Carolina, into New Hanover, Duplin, Chatham, Randolph and Pitt Counties, and to the Edgefield County area in South Carolina. Subsequently, however, these migrants and their children moved again, joining the Blands who were moving into Kentucky directly from Virginia. Gathering in Kentucky, reuniting and mingling in a myriad of familial arrangements, these Blands then moved out to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and especially by the 1830's, to Greene County in the southern part of Indiana,¹ which was located near the Kentucky-Indiana border. For example, information in Chapter IX will show that in a row of houses enumerated in the 1850 census, there were Blands who originated from Virginia and North Carolina, and had in common:(1) that they had spent some time in Kentucky; (2) some were descendants of William Bland and some of John Bland (eighth generation); (3) all were descendants of James Bland, who died in Stafford County, Virginia in 1708. From these midwestern locations, of course, the Bland family spread so that it is found today in every state in the union.

¹ Some went directly to Indiana.