

as The Bland Family of Rutherford County, North Carolina (1978). The publication coincided with the birth of my daughter, Christina Louise, and Margaret was good enough to send her an autographed copy. Christina did not have much use for the book, so I borrowed it from her and read and reread it. As the title of her work implied, Margaret's thematic parameters limited her work to study of a particular branch. She did, however, preface her work by tracing the Rutherford County Blands back to James Bland of Stafford County, Virginia. She also touched briefly on the London and Virginia family of patrician Blands of the 16th and 17th century that I call in this work the James River Blands. These, I discovered, were the Blands that kept popping up in colonial histories. Margaret claimed there was no relation between the James River family and James Bland from whom we descended. Immediately the question arose: How could two such large families settle in Virginia in such a close proximity of time and geographic space, and not be somehow related? As I would learn, it was an old question that has long fascinated Bland researchers.

Any real search for answers, however, was long in coming. In 1978 and 1979, I was absorbed with the new experience of teaching and was writing my doctoral dissertation. Then in the summer of 1979 I went home to visit my parents and relatives for two weeks, visited many relatives I had long since forgotten, and talked to many of them about their past. I left North Carolina with some ten hours of taped interviews with aunts, grandaunts, and my mother and father. Though I was innocent of the implications and magnitude of such an undertaking, I promised myself that summer that when my dissertation was completed I would write a big comprehensive book about the entire American Bland family from its earliest English origins. The beginning was delayed for almost a year by a series of events that have nothing to do with genealogy, but by the summer of 1980 I was back at it. While my doctoral research coexisted with genealogy as a conflicting imperative, increasingly it became clear that the genie was out of the bottle and my soul would know no rest until I had written the history conceived in my mind's eye during the summer of 1979.

By this time I had gathered a lot of factual information about the James River Blands and their London antecedents. Some former curator at the Erie County, New York library had collected an unusually large amount of Virginia and English historical documents, including the Harleian Society Publication's extensive collection of English Parish records. Also, the Church of Latter Day Saints Genealogical Library had a branch office near my home. In addition, Professor Elspeth Veale, in England, had sent me some records on the old Skinner's Guild of London that shed light upon the lives of Adam Bland (c.1528-1594) and his son Peter. I had my own copy of Nicholas Carlisle's Collections For a History of the Ancient Family of Bland (1826); Charles Campbell's The Bland Papers (1840); and a dozen closely written pages about the Bland family for Ralph Thoresby's Ducatus Leodensis (1715), the oldest extant information about the Bland family that I know of.

But as summer 1980 turned to autumn, it became increasingly clear that I had made no substantial progress in locating information that would link the two Virginia families. I had struck up a communication with Mrs. George (Nel Westbrook) Ford, who like me, descended from Robert Bland (1733-1787) of Edgefield County, South Carolina. And I had contacted Mrs. Roland (Jessamine Bland) James, of Tucson, Arizona, who had furnished me two fat letters chocked full of historical data about the Stafford County Blands. But at the end of summer 1980 I was dead in the water.

The breakthrough occurred during three days of research at the Virginia State Library in Richmond October 14-16, 1980. There I discovered Urilla Moore Bland's 1977 paper, "The Bland Family Revised,"<sup>1</sup> in a catalog of holdings at the University of Virginia's Alderman Library. I called ahead to ask for a copy which I picked up on my return trip to New York. Later, I discovered that Urilla Bland had written an earlier piece called "Additional Collections for the Ancient Family of Bland" (1974), and I ordered that work also. In her first paper Urilla Bland expressed what I have called her vision of unity, the idea that the two major Bland families in America

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 34, note 1.

were descended from a common English grandfather, Adam Bland of London. The second paper was constructed around Miss Bland's 1975-1976 correspondence with Leslie Dawson, an attorney who had thoroughly researched the Maryland records. Dawson was interested in the Blands through his research on the Davis family, because his ancestor William Davis had married Ellen Bland, daughter of James Bland, (1655-1708). Dawson had explored the idea that Thomas Bland (c.1634-1700), the fraudulent lawyer who practiced in Maryland from about 1672-1693, might be the father or brother of, or closely related to, James Bland. More or less, his hunches were similar to those drawn, many years ago, by Urilla Bland's father. Together, Dawson and Urilla Bland raised formidable issues with indirect evidence, that pointed to a close relationship between Thomas and James Bland.

Most important, Miss Bland, Mr. Dawson and I were asking the same questions. Immediately upon my return to New York, I made contact with Urilla Bland and Leslie Dawson, both of whom were extremely helpful and cooperative in providing documentation, ideas and other information. In my communication with Miss Bland and Mr. Dawson, I moved from an original skepticism about Urilla's vision of unity to reluctant belief. Quite incidentally, Urilla Bland helped me widen the circle of knowledge about my book, when, in answer to a question I posed to her, she suggested I write to William Graham Bland of Jacksonville Florida. If my acquaintance with Urilla Bland and Leslie Dawson got me moving from the still waters I was in during fall 1980, Graham Bland became the friend in need who spread word of my work far and wide, and also encouraged me tremendously by his warm, friendly and encouraging letters. Graham put me in touch with Mary Wallace Day of Kenesaw Georgia and Albert Hunter, a retired professor now living at State College Pennsylvania both Bland descendants. Mary Wallace Day was indispensable as an intelligent critic in helping me develop Chapter XI. Al Hunter began corresponding with me in July and spread the word about my book to researchers,

particularly in the midwest. By this gradually enlarging body of contacts, I was able to meet and communicate with others who were actively or passively interested in the Bland family's history, and my own understanding of the dimensions of the family's growth was considerably enhanced by these new contacts.

My original goal was to trace the chief features of the family's origins in England and its settlement in America through the 18th century. About June 1981, the present title began to take hold in my mind. My correspondence with Al Hunter caused me to extend the scope of this book to 1900. The book begins in 1555, actually July 12 of that year when John Bland, the Marian Martyr, a cousin of Adam Bland, was executed for religious heresy. The year 1538 might have been an apt starting point, for it was in that year that King Henry VIII ordered maintenance by parishes of christenings, marriages and burials. Although the venerable Carlisle found traces of the name as far back in time as 1132, these parish records are, aside from sketchy guild and court records, the first objective English sources. The latter date is not always adhered to, but generally I have cut off discussion of family lines at about 1900, for two reasons: First, extension of all known lines into the 20th century would double the length of the book. Second, my hunch is that anyone living today who has any connection with the Bland family could easily trace their family back four generations. Having done so, the researcher in most cases could link his family to one of the lines in the book and trace his ancestry all the way back to England.

The book is about the two major families of Blands in America,<sup>1</sup> their English

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<sup>1</sup> As I hope to have made clear, it is by no means certain that there are only two families, although certainly there were only two major families. Exceptions are discussed on pp. 463-483; 494, Note 2; and in Appendix I, pp. 586-590. Additionally, the Kansas Census for 1880, Greenwood County, Salem Township, records John Bland, age 47, from England, and his wife Isabella, age 40. Their nine children included William, 19; Thomas, 17; Emily, 14; James, 12; Ann, 10; Elizabeth, 8; and Isabella, 6, all born in England. Additionally, John, 4, and Fred, 1, were born in Kansas, suggesting the family moved to America about 1875. By 1900, one of these children, James, had married Minnie B. \_\_\_\_\_, of Kansas, and had a family that included John D., born December 1893; James W., December 1895; William R., October 1897; and Freddie E., October 1898. If, as in the case of James, other sons of John and Isabella married and had children, there must be by 1982, a great many Blands stemming from this family who are spread all over the United States. Cf. pp. 361-367 and 392-400. Ch. VIII.

antecedents and their growth and expansion during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is driven by Urilla Bland's vision of unity that all who belong to one of these two major families have common ancestral grandparents, Adam Bland and his wife Joan Atkyns, of London. The idea of a common English ancestry is the overarching theme.

The book is divided into four major parts. One (Chapters I-III, pages 1-75), is about the English family of Adam Bland and Joan Atkyns. Two (Chapters IV and V, pages 76-190) examines the nature of the English family's settlement in Virginia during the 17th century and its flourishing as the James River Bland family in the 18th century. Part Three (Chapter VI, pages 191-254), is the buckle that holds together the earlier and later chapters. It examines all the evidence yet produced to substantiate a close relationship between James Bland, of Stafford County, and the James River family.

Part Four (Chapters VII-XI, pages 255-543) is a sequential study of the lines of descent from James Bland and his four sons, William, James, John and Robert. Thus, each major line of the Bland family, beginning at about 1700, is traced to about 1900.

Everyone who has researched their family's history is familiar with immense evidentiary holes. In the case of the Blands, there are many such gaps, brought about by loss over historical time, fires, destruction in war time, etc. These losses have created many voids in our understanding. To name a few, Thomas Bland of Maryland formulated a will in 1700 in which he wrote on the back side names of a number of people to whom he willed gold rings. The list of names, which could be critical to the question of whether Thomas was related to James Bland, is missing from American sources and may be lost.<sup>1</sup> This is only a part of the question of James Bland's parentage left seemingly unanswered by evidentiary voids. Similarly, the wills of James' sons, William and James, which would supply critical information about several issues, have been lost. For example, William's will would answer whether John Bland, who died

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 220, note 1.

in Nelson County, Kentucky, in 1795, was the son of William or of his younger brother John,<sup>1</sup> and whether Robert Bland, who died in Loudon County, Virginia, in 1760, was the son or grandson of James Bland (c.1655-1708).<sup>2</sup> It is further true, as many have observed, that the documentary research on the Blands in Virginia and Maryland is well nigh exhausted, yet somehow one must get around this apparent dead end. This book, which draws heavily upon traditional sources, was never intended to be the definitive book. Large as it is, it can be no more than an entree to future research. Every book, if it is worth anything, raises more questions than it answers, and I certainly hope that will be the case with this book. For that reason I have determined to break the Rankean syndrome that will admit no questions and no answers not grounded in eyewitness observation or genuine immediate documents. I have given myself ample latitude to speculate about possibilities wherever it has seemed necessary, always taking care to identify speculation. When conflicts in evidence occur, I have often reached conclusions, cited my reasons, and moved on. In other cases, I have presented available information and stated possibilities, without coming to any conclusions myself. In either case, I have footnoted my work so that readers may identify my sources, examine them and evaluate the validity of my observations. I will be deeply disappointed if this book becomes a panacea. Rather, I hope that the conclusions reached in A Vision of Unity will serve as vehicles to discovery of an ever evolving body of new genealogical information about the family. New evidence leading to new inferential and direct conclusions should turn up constantly, and as new insights emerge, old data will take on ever changing and new meanings. Thus, historical evidence is ever evolving, ever new, never static and stale. The vital key to increased understanding is, it seems to me, a healthy, amicable and open exchange of critical ideas and information between interested parties. Several critical tasks lay ahead. There needs to be an intensive study of the various Bland families in London from 1538 to 1650, about the time when the family began to settle

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1 Cf. discussion pp. 420-425.

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in Virginia. Someone needs to do a thorough job of historical research into the James River Bland family during its 19th century phase of dissolution. There needs to be state by state research on the settlements in Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas through about 1850. The mingling of the various family branches in Kentucky between about 1780-1850 needs to be researched, and finally, the mid-19th century settlements in the midwestern states, Indiana in particular, but also Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and Kansas.

To realize these various goals and ideals, the Bland family needs a cadre of younger researchers. Traditionally, genealogy is a hobby for the elderly who have retired and begun to reflect upon the worth of their own life. Genealogy is a bit like children: it is one of our cheats against death. As my introductory paragraph illustrates, it is not a subject that often interests the young. That is why it is especially gratifying to see a young person like fifteen year old Stephen McLeod, of Tallahassee, Florida, become interested in his family history. Stephen has traced a very extensive genealogy that reaches back to the two sons of James Bland (twelfth generation) and his first wife Jemima Alderman: Daniel White Bland (1796-1871) and William Bland (1797-1873). But in addition to young researchers, the Bland family needs more historical consciousness. As shown in these seven hundred odd pages of narrative, maps, tables and photographs, the family has a very complex and diverse historical heritage of which anyone could be proud. Raised consciousness may include attendance at family reunions by the young members of a family, or organizing a family reunion if there is none. Reunions are a wonderful place for the young to meet the old. How often I have wished that I had been more interested in the past when my grandfather was alive, for he, born in 1876, knew men and women whose memory reached deep into the 19th century. No one probed those memories and now, sadly, he is gone and his reminiscences are known only to God. Attention to the knowledge of the elders is the only corrective to such a tragedy. One family of Blands which is very history conscious, and thus a model to others, is the Duplin-New Hanover County, North Carolina

family that descends from James Bland (1707-1774), of Prince William County, Virginia and New Hanover County. This family includes at least three major branch historians, including the late Milton Wilson, William Graham Bland, and Stephen McLeod. I should also note that although their present members are quite dispersed geographically, I have been very impressed by their knowledge of each other. Finally, this family congregates annually for a family reunion. My own attention to family has not measured up to the ideal set forth here, but I was able to write the concluding chapter of this book chiefly on the basis of taped conversations with various surviving members of the family. Although many of the facts brought out may not seem novel to today's generation, at some future time, a reader may be absolutely delighted with the photographs and the memories that lace this last chapter.

Although I could not have written this book without the assistance of many persons, conclusions reached are my own. I have mentioned above the extensive assistance given me during the preparatory phase of this book's development by Nel Ford, Jessamine James, Urilla Bland, Leslie Dawson, William Graham Bland, Albert Hunter and Mary Wallace Day. At the same time, the book could not have attained its final depth without the unstinting aid and cooperation provided by Grace Awerdick, of Apex, North Carolina; Luella Bland, of Brownstown, Indiana; Virginia Bland Cowden, of Bloomington, Indiana; Marian Daniels, of San Benito, Texas; Castelloe Bland Denton, of Charlotte, North Carolina; Bertha Dunn, of Delia, Kansas; Alice Phillips Garrison, of Sanford, North Carolina; Max Kessinger, of Wichita, Kansas; Pearl King, of Denver, Colorado; Betty Lovvorn, of Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Stephen McLeod; Jane Mitby, of Denver, Colorado; Willie Lee Bland Moseley, of Stateboro, Georgia; Berniece Mumford, of Carlsbad, New Mexico; Elva Reitz, of Sun City, Arizona; Marjorie Sayles, of Abilene, Texas; Richard B. Smith, of DeKalb, Illinois; Eleanor Hayes Smith, of Tucson, Arizona; Betty Turpin, of Colorado Springs, Colorado; Robert Wheeler, of Lebanon, Oregon; and Pansy Lea Willburn, of Modesto, California. It has been my pleasure to speak to many of these persons by phone, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities to visit personally



with Urilla Moore Bland and her brothers, Theodorick and Robert, Virginia Cowden, Theodore Cyrus Bland of Harrells North Carolina, Anne Katherine Scott Bland of Rose Hill North Carolina, and Alice Phillips Garrison. I am also appreciative of the interest and confidence in my work shown by all the subscribers to the book. Such an expression of support for my work, which began in solitude, has made it one of the most enjoyable and gratifying experiences of my life, one I shall never forget.

In preparation of this work, I was aided immensely by Betty Esperson, an old friend who typed the manuscript and took special pains to do it just the way I wanted it done. Bryon Young designed the cover for the softbound copies, (hardbound copies are more durable and less fancy). Finally, in closing, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my family: to my father Bruce Steven Bland, whose material support and constant encouragement has been a source of inspiration. I also appreciate the many priceless photographs shared with me by Margaret Bland Magliocco, Hestine Bland Potts, Virginia Viril Bland Long, Billie Clifton Bland, Hilda Smart and my father, who gave me free use of two old photo albums formerly owned by Wilma Bland. Finally I want to say a special thanks to my wife Mary Jane Migliore Bland and to our two children, Christina Louise Bland and Thomas Eliot Bland for their patience and forbearance during this long period of preparation. It is fair to say that A Vision of Unity changed the rythm of our lives. The disappointed expression on a little girls face after her father says "not now dear, Daddy's busy" has been a persistent and unspoken source of pain to me. By recompense, I hope that many years from now, Christina and Tommy and their children and grandchildren will have this book to read, a fond father's exploration of the past dedicated to the legacy of their future.

At long last it is done, the book is finished. My soul is rested.

Charles Lewis Bland  
Buffalo New York  
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