

II. COLONEL BALL IN VIRGINIA.

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Most writers follow Hayden in saying that Colonel Ball was born about 1615. Practically nothing is known of his early life, and we can only infer that he was educated in or about London. That he studied law there is a small amount of evidence, as later he showed more than ordinary knowledge in the principles of Common Law, which he interpreted for his fellow colonists in Virginia. Hayden asserts, on the basis of a letter written by a member of the Ball family, that Colonel Ball was married July 2nd, 1638, in London to Miss Hannah Atherall or Atherold, the daughter of Thomas Atherold, a barrister-at-law, who was living at Gray's Inn during 1610-11. He appears to have been the son of Thomas Atherold, of Burgh, Suffolk, and was born about 1590; his mother was Mary Vessey. Hannah Atherold's mother was Mary Harvey, a daughter of John Harvey, of London.¹

Mr. W. B. Wright, who has made a careful inquiry into the antecedents of Colonel William Ball, asserts that he was spoken of in the "Cheshire Visitation" as a soldier under Fairfax. Wright also thinks there is much evidence that William Ball served in the Royal Army and to have taken part in the Civil Wars, remaining true to the royal standards and serving faithfully under the banners of the ill-fated Charles. He is commonly regarded to have been present at the battles of Naseby and Marston Moor. By the defeat of the Royal Army, Colonel Ball lost the greater part of his estates, which were by no means inconsiderable. In company with other royalists he fled to Virginia, the most loyal of the king's possessions,

1. Foster's Collectanea.

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and the last to surrender to Cromwell's authority. Baill probably left England soon after the death of Charles I., arriving in Virginia about the year 1650.

There is much truth in Hayden's supposition that Colonel Baill had an elder brother in Virginia before his arrival. He appears not to have taken a land grant at first, nor does his name figure in records of that colony until eight years after his supposed arrival. We might infer from this that he and his family lived with relatives waiting for the Stuarts to be restored to power in England; and his first plans on coming to Virginia may have been to remain there only so long as the troubled conditions existed in the Mother Country.

There is some evidence, however, that he spent these years operating a vessel between England and Virginia. He first appears in the Colonial records as a "Merchant."¹ On December 7th, 1658, he was made executor of the estate of John Edwards, which gave Baill the power to sell the Edwards' estate, his horses, cattle, and negroes; and it made provision that Colonel Baill should receive a share in the ship "Susan" and to make returns to Spencer Pigott, of Duke's Place, London.²

The culture of tobacco had by 1655 become an important industry of Virginia, and was the chief, if not the only source of income to the colonists. By 1650 Augustine Herrman, of New Amsterdam, and George Hack, of Virginia, had built up a large trade in tobacco between the Colony and London. It is, therefore, quite probable that William Baill became a tobacco

1. Hayden, Va. Gen., p. 49.

2. Virginia Mag. Hist. and Biog. Vol. V. p. 259.

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merchant, carrying the produce to England and disposing of it there.

If Ball first came to Virginia with the intention of remaining only so long as the Protectorate existed in England, he soon decided to cast his lot with the fortunes of the New World. After 1660 he took an active part in the religious, political and social life of Virginia. In 1660 he was a member of a court to make a treaty with the Indians and to establish a boundary for the occupation of land by the whitemen.¹ In 1661 his name still appears in the Northumberland County Records as a merchant. Later he became a planter, and on January 18th, 1663, received a grant of land on Narrow Neck Creek in Lancaster County.² Four years later he appears in the records as Major Ball, and together with Thomas Chetwood received a grant of sixteen hundred acres in the County of Rappahannock on the north side of the river of the same name. A few months later he acquired three hundred additional acres of rich bottom land adjoining the estate of Daniel Fox, whose friendship Ball appears to have cultivated, and who later became the Colonel's son-in-law, marrying his only daughter, Hannah.

It was on the Lancaster County estate, however, where Colonel Ball built the beautiful Georgian mansion which later was to become famous. He named it "Millenbeck," probably after some place in Warwickshire or Northamptonshire. The estate was held for four successive generations by William Balls, and with "Epping Forest," the home of Mary Ball (Washington),

1. Wm. and Mary Col. Quart. Vol. IV, p. 178.

2. Hayden, Va. Gen., p. 51.

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played a prominent part in the annals of Virginian history.

It seems highly probable, moreover, that Ball remained something of a merchant after he became a Lancaster County planter, and he undoubtedly made frequent trips back to London, for in those days it was a common practice for one planter, skilled in business usages, to see about the marketing of his own as well as the tobacco of two or three of his closest neighbours or best friends.

From 1672 Ball took an active part in the administration work of his adopted county and colony. He first received the title of "Colonel" in that year. Hayden is of the opinion that he was the County Lieutenant of Lancaster for that year, inasmuch as we find that Robert Jones had to pay him on March 19th of that year over fifteen hundred pounds of tobacco.¹ Palmer, in his Introduction (p. xvi.) to Vol. I. Calendar Papers, has given us the following description of the General Court of Virginia, and with it the origin of the Virginian title of Colonel.

"This august and aristocratic body was always composed of the class known at that time as 'gentlemen,' men of wealth, family and influence, and whose official station added much to their influence. They, with the Governor, formed the executive council, who dispensed the entire patronage of the colony in the way of official appointment, at the same time that each individual himself was himself commissioned 'Colonel' by royal authority" . . . "The Gover-

1. Hayden Va. Gen., p. 51, from Northumberland Co. Va. records.

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nor was Lieutenant-General, the Councillors, Lieutenants of Counties with the title of Colonel, and in counties where a Councillor resided, some other person was appointed with rank of Major '' (p. 354).

Hayden,¹ in the light of this information, concludes that Colonel Ball may have been a Colonel of Foot or Horse and not County Lieutenant. With this assertion Stanard agrees and believes that Ball, if not County Lieutenant, was doubtless Presiding Magistrate and Colonel Commandant of the County. "I do not think he was County Lieutenant, his name does not occur as a member of the General Court."²

From 1675-7 Colonel Ball served on various committees in Lancaster County. March 28th, 1675-6 he and Lieutenant-Colonel John Carter were empowered by the General Assembly of Virginia to mobilise men and horses in defence of the colony against Indian depredations, to be lead by Nathaniel Bacon.³ He was presiding member of various courts held in Lancaster County, and received this honour for being the only resident Colonel in that county.

August 14th, 1677, Colonel Ball and his neighbour John Washington were present at a meeting to impress upon the citizens the necessity of making immediate payment of a tax imposed upon the people by the General Assembly to put down Bacon's rebellion which had lately arisen.⁴ From 1670 on until his death in 1680 he was a member of the Burgesses of Lancaster County.⁵

1. Va. Gen., p. 52.

2. Ibid.

3. Hening, W. W., Statutes of Va., Vol. II, p. 329.

4. Wm. and Mary Col. Quart, Vol. II, p. 48.

5. Ibid, Vol. IV, p. 48.

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Colonel Ball was an earnest and devout churchman, and was a zealous supporter of the Virginian branch of the Church of England; he was at various times a member of committees appointed for arranging the government for its support.¹ He and John Washington were wardens of Christ Church, Lancaster County.

At the time of his death, Colonel Ball owned nearly two thousand acres of land in Lancaster and Rappahannock Counties. Of this, "Millenbeck" comprised five hundred and forty acres. He died at "Millenbeck" November, 1680. His will is dated October 15th, 1680, and probated November, 1680. Hayden reproduces the will in full.² Colonel Ball willed his favourite estate to his eldest son, William, after making ample provision for his wife, his other son, Joseph, and daughter, Hannah, both of whom he saw successfully married. Mrs. Hannah Ball, his widow, continued to live at Millenbeck with her elder son until her death in 1695. Her will is on record in Lancaster County and is dated June 25th, 1695.

1. Wright, W. B., Ball Family records, p. 175.

2. Hayden, Va. Gen., p. 50.