

Some Arlington Area People: Their Moments and Influence

By MELVIN LEE STEADMAN, JR.*

Fairfax County, of which Arlington was a part, was settled by a cross-section of wayward and aimless persons, the straight-laced and narrow as well as the cheerful and less radical elements. The motley and the dignified, the yeoman and the cavalier, the indentured and the free made their way over the trails. Most were neither rich nor great and all types settled here.

The Ball family has over 5,000 recorded descendants. In several generations Shreves and Balls have inter-married. Our own Mrs. Frank L. Ball Sr., was Marie Shreve, and is a kinswoman of the speaker and his wife. The first of the Ball family, Richard, was born in Norfolk County, Virginia, and married Elizabeth Linton, daughter of Moses Linton. They moved from the Elizabeth River area to Stafford County, which then included the present Arlington County, and settled on Hunting Creek.

John Ball, their son, was the founder of the family in Arlington. He married Winifred Williams, a young Welsh heiress, daughter of William ap Williams of "Lanternam", Charles County, Maryland, who was a native of Wales. This union brought forth a large family. In his will, which was recorded in 1722 in the Will Book of Stafford County, John showed his desire to keep all his land holdings in the family.

"In the name of God Amen: I John Ball of the County of Stafford and in the Parish of Overwharton being sick and weak but blessed be God in my perfect senses Do ordain this my last Will & Testament revoking and disnulling all other will or wills heretofore made by me or intended to be made in manner and form as followeth, first I resign my soul to Almighty God who gave it me, and hope that through Merits Death and passion of my dear Saviour Jesus Christ hope for full pardon and remission of all my sins and hope that I shall meet my Blessed Saviour in a Joyful Resurrection at the last Day. Next I desire my Body to the Earth whence it came to be decently buried by my executrix hereafter named.

Item: I give and bequeath to my well beloved son James Ball that plantation where he now dwells and as much of that tract of land joining at both ends of the said plantation as shall make the quantity of one hundred acres to him and his heirs lawfully begotten for ever, but in default of such heirs then to fall to George Ball my youngest son to him and his heirs lawfully begotten for ever if in default of such heirs then to fall to the next male heir of the kin for ever.

* Based on a talk given before the Arlington Historical Society, March 14, 1969.

Item: I give and bequeath to my youngest son George Ball all the reversion of that tract of land situate lying and being the remaining part of that tract of land that James Ball hath one hundred acres with the old plantation the remainder of the said tract lying eastward from the said plantation which I give to George Ball all that remaining part as aforesaid with the two plantations that is upon the said land to him the said George Ball and to his heirs lawfully begotten by him for ever and in default of such heirs then to the next male heirs forever.

Item: I give and bequeath unto my son Moses Ball all that Land and plantation and Water Mill that belongeth to me on the North side of Great Hunting Creek to him and his heirs lawfully begotten and in default of such heirs, that then to fall to the next male heirs for ever.

Item: I give and bequeath unto my son Moses Ball all that Land plantation and all the land that lyeth on the south side of Great Hunting Creek belonging to me, all the said land and plantation I do give it my son John Ball to his heirs lawfully begotten for ever and in default of such heirs then to fall to his brother Moses Ball and his heirs lawfully begotten and in default of such heirs then to the next male heirs forever.

Item: I give and bequeath to my daughter Mary Ball all that tract of land lying on the south side of Doegg's Run and adjoining on Col. George Mason's containing three hundred acres, the said land I give unto her and her heirs lawfully (begotten) of her Body for ever but if in default of such heirs then to fall to her brother James Ball to him and his heirs for ever.

Item: I give one cow and calf one feather bed and Iron Pott which is all I give unto my daughter Mary Ball of my estate whatsoever.

Item: I give and bequeath unto my daughter Dinah Ball all that tract of land lying of the south side of Doegg's run joining on Richard Carpenters called Barneby, the said land I give to her and her heirs lawfully begotten of her body for ever but in default of such heirs that then to fall to her sister Martha Ball to her and her heirs forever.

Item: I give to my daughter Martha Ball and my daughter Ann Ball all that Tract of land lying situate and being on both sides of Piney Branch containing Five Hundred Ninety five acres equally to be divided between my two daughters Martha & Ann and to their heirs lawfully begotten of their bodys for ever but in default of such heirs that then to fall to the next male heir.

Item: I give and bequeath to my son James Ball one case of Pistols & Holsters it being all that I design that he shall have of my estate with the land before mentioned to cutting him off from all ye rest.

Item: I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife all my Estate but what is already given, after all my honest and lawful debts be paid, to which all my stock of cattle and all my stock of horses and mares and all my household stuff of what sort soever and all my Tobacco both at home and abroad and all my debts both of Tobacco and Moneys belonging to or appertaining to me, as witness my hand and seal this 14th of August in the year of our Lord 1722. I doe appoint my loving and dear wife Winifred Ball my lawfull and whole executrix of this my last will and Testament and I do desire Captain Simon Peirson may assist my wife in her Executorship.

JOHN BALL (SEAL)

Signed Sealed in the presence of us

GABRIEL ADAMS

JAMES (X) DAVIS

ALICE (X) BOYSTON

MARGARET (X) FARRELL

[Probated November 14, 1722 in *Will Book K, Page 35*, Stafford County Virginia. This book was lost during the Civil War. The will was copied during the early 1800's and is among family papers. It is published here for the first time.]

One of John's daughters, Mary Ball, married John Jackson, and it was their descendant, James, who shot Ellsworth in the Marshall House in Alexandria. Two of John's sons, John and Moses, moved to the Glen-carlyn section in the 1740's. John, the oldest son, who lived from 1714 to 1746, married Elizabeth Payne, had five daughters but no male issue. Moses, born May 2, 1717, at Hunting Creek, is important in Arlington County history. He lived in a house he built just 400 yards south of Carlin Springs and married Ann Brashear of Prince Georges County, Maryland. Apparently he had financial difficulties in his old age as he borrowed from General George Washington.

Moses and his wife had eight children, of whom John, born July 25, 1746, is probably the best remembered. Ensign John Ball served as clerk of the Falls Church (Episcopal), of which he was a member, from 1773 until after 1776, and also served as lay-reader. Later, he became a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church as most members of the family have been since, and was a member of Fairfax Chapel located at present day Seven Corners. He became a prosperous farmer and owned some slaves. The home he built for his family was on what is now the south side of Washington Boulevard near Kann's Department Store. Nine children were born to Ensign John Ball and his wife Mary Ann Thrift. Some of the children married into the Thrift, Ball, and Shreve families. One married two Marcey sisters, Catherine and Elizabeth. The Marceys, almost as prolific as the Shreves and the Balls, were of French ancestry.

In the next generation, Robert Ball (1776-1861) married his double cousin, Ann Thrift, daughter of Jabez and Priscilla (Ball) Thrift. He was an officer in the War of 1812 and took part in the less than glorious Battle of Bladensburg. As business manager for George Washington Parke Custis, he became the favorite of General Lee. Just before the General left Arlington at the outbreak of war, he paid a visit to Robert Ball, and the chair General Lee sat in is still a prized possession of the Ball family. Robert's son, Robert, Jr., was a member of the jury at Mrs. Surratt's trial in the aftermath of Lincoln's death. Members of the Ball family have been honorable citizens. Of course, in our own time, the well-known and greatly beloved Senator Frank L. Ball, Sr. was the outstanding member of the family. The family contributed a great deal to the local scene and have always been interesting.

Another group of interest to us is the Shreve family. A 300-year old document tells the story of Sir William Shreve, the first of the family in England. Sir William, a man of noble birth and largely of Greek ancestry, married Lady Elizabeth Fairfax. A grandson, Thomas, left England and settled in Rhode Island, thus founding the family in America. Benjamin, a descendant of Thomas, settled in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, and married a Quakeress, Rebecca French. Their son, Samuel, born in 1725, became a colonel in the New Jersey revolutionary forces, and later in the 1780's moved to what is now Arlington where he became noted for his fine horses. One, a blood bay named Liberty, became the ancestor of many of the horses once bred in Arlington County. Colonel Samuel Shreve died here at his plantation, "Springfield", now North Abingdon Street. In a later generation, William Henry Shreve of "Mt. Pleasant", married Mary Southern of "Mason's Island" and studied horticulture.

The Shreve family has produced many ministers, doctors, and other individuals of interest. One of these, Richard Southern Shreve, became a noted Methodist preacher. When he and his entire family, with the exception of his five-year old daughter, died very tragically, they were brought back to the family church, Dulin Chapel in Falls Church, and burial was in the family cemetery in Arlington. Contemporaries said that never before had there been a funeral like it. The stores in Falls Church and the few that were in Arlington, all closed in respect and so that everyone might attend the services.

One of the most colorful religious figures in Virginia was Elhanen Winchester Wakefield. Born in Ohio in 1834, he led an adventurous life and finally settled in Virginia. He felt called to the ministry and spent the rest of his days preaching in this area. A man of many peculiarities as well as strong beliefs, he would not cut his beard or his hair, nor would he ride a horse on Sunday. Consequently, while his horse grazed in the pasture, he, with his pockets full of corn pone which had been baked before

the Sabbath, walked the full circuit of his churches in Arlington, Annandale, Fairfax, Dunn Loring, and Vale. At 79 he married his second wife, 23 year old Ada Haines, and lived to be 90.

Time does not permit discussion of the Lipscombs (who came from King William County), nor the families of Birch, Adams, Murray, and many others who came here. I'll conclude by reading an old document concerning an exciting event in the Arlington of long ago. The paper contains depositions made for the trial of Ginny, a servant of Elizabeth Hall. This has never been published and came from the papers of Captain Henry W. Febrey, a local Magistrate. Allowances must be made for composition and errors in spelling.

"I told Jinney to go to the spring, and she the said Ginney told the gir[] Selena to go I told Jinney to hurry about dinner that it was late I laid myself back on the bench upon which I was sitting and fel[] of in a dose of sleap when I roused up I asked Ginney where was Selena and she said that she had sent hir to the spring I asked hir why, she had done that contrary to my orders she gave me some of hir insolence and I slaped hir in the mouth she then took a piece of pine bord and put it in the fire I told hir that was wrong as she knew I wanted to have the ashes saved that I wanted to make lye that I was having nothing but harde wood burned she then took it out of the fire. She againe put it in the fire I told hir to take the bord out of the fire againe she then caut me and put my head between hir knees and pushed me in the fire I beged and pled with hir not to treat me so my clothes were all in flames Jinney wrand out and shut the door and held it so that I could not get out I tore of my clothes as bes I could she againe came in and threw me in the fire the second time I againe beged and pled with hir not to do me so if she would not I would not have hir whipped I would get hir master to set hir free. And I would give hir all the money that I had she again went out and held the dore I got the fire out as best I could I tried to get out at the dore and could not I then thought of the windows and wrant to of them and in attempting to get out she hird me and came in and caught me and puled me back and in doing so I fel in the Cradle on hir child I told hir that she would kill hir child she caught it by the arme and threw it on the bead or back in the cradle I know not which she dragged me back to the fire and threw me in the fire the third time she also caught up hir child's clothes and the clothes that I had torne off and held them over the fire when they were all in flames she held them on my head she againe went out of the dore and held it I then thought of a bucket of water I wran to it and puled it over and in doing so it fel in the tube that was sitting under it with some persimmons in it I furst put my head in it as far as I could, for my hair was all on fire I then sat down in it I againe wran to the window and succeeded in getting out and got on the stile she wrant and caught me by the leg and arme and struggled harde to drag me back I partially succeeded in getting loose she then caught me by the arme and around the neck in strugling I got loose and got over the stile and hollowed murder as loud as I could but I did not run far before I fel[] she then saw the servant man William and called him and told him to w[run] here for this [?] tras[h] was almost burned to death she then told him to w[run]e for his master and I beg[g]ed him not for I was afraid if he left me she would

murder me while I was pleading with him my son came and I told him to go for his father and he did so.

Elizabeth Hall . . .”

“When the girl hollowed for me and told me to w[run] I saw some one getting over the stile and I saw some one hold of this woman Jinny I thought it was Mrs. Hall hold of the woman, Salina, then I wrun on and got up to hir sais [?] I what the name of God is the matter sais [says] she Bil[l] Sprigs take me to the barn sais [says] I oh no Mistres[s] I cant take you to the Barne I am going to take you to the house sais I Salina go bring me a sheat or quilt to put around hir [her] Bil[l] Sprigs dont carry me to the house for I am afraid that Jinney will kill me said I oh no mistress she shant kill you for I will stay there with you so I staid in here with hir puled off hir drawers shoes & stockens and greesed hir with catfish oile.

his

William x Spriggs

mark”

“ . . . but Mistress would not let it be done
Answer to question Mistress said that Jinney had almost burned hir up alive and tel bil Spriges to hurry to the house to hir

I first saw mistress getting over the stile and Jinney was hold of hir mistriss was trying to get away from Jinney and did get away and wran down the hill towards the corne house and fell

When Jinney met me with the tub she seemed to be scared

hir

Saline x

mark”