

## UNRAVELING THE HALIFAX COUNTY THAXTONS

In this mailing, we have decided to embarrass ourselves by putting forth our theories on the origins of various Halifax County, Virginia, Thaxton families. We would appreciate any comments or criticisms. We want to emphasize that we are speculating (a fancy word for GUESSING) on much of this material, and we will explain our reasoning for each undocumented statement. We realize that our views differ from those of other Halifax County researchers; we certainly are not ruling out other interpretations of the available information.

Many of the uncertainties might be cleared up when we give a thorough going-over to Halifax County deeds and court records this summer. (We will both be spending the summer in Salt Lake City again, thanks to the law firm Karra worked for last summer.) For now, we will hypothesize on the origins of the following Thaxton families which appear in the 1810 tax lists of Halifax County.

### I. William, Thomas, and Lucy Thaxton

These three families appear on Berryman Green's list, enumerated 30 Apr 1810. William and Lucy Clay (daughter of Charles Clay) were married in Cumberland Co., VA, in 1770. Three years earlier, William Thaxton of Amelia County, VA, purchased 295 acres of land "on both sides of Falling Creek" in Prince Edward Co., VA, from John Thaxton. William only paid 10 pounds for the land, which was the same land purchased by Abel Thaxton in 1761. We now have reason to believe that John Thaxton was a son of Abel, so it is not unlikely that William Thaxton was also a son. That would explain why John could sell the land without going through probate, and why William paid such a low price for it.

In 1781, William of "Hallifax" tried to sell the 295 acres to William Cottrill of King William Co., VA. Witnesses to the deed were Ambrose Jones, Jr., Francis Robertson, J Haynes, and Peter Thaxton. For some reason, a second deed was necessary, and in 1782 "William Thaxton and Lucy his wife of Hallifax County, Virginia," sold the land to Cottrill. Witnesses on that deed were Nicholas Davis, Thos Tuggle, William Hubbard, and James Thaxton ("James X"). A side note: this Nicholas Davis was also connected to the Thaxton family. His father, Stephen Davis, willed 1,000 pounds of tobacco each to Sarah and Elizabeth Thaxton in 1781. In 1785, Elizabeth (then Bird) filed suit to collect her tobacco, and in 1786, Sarah Thaxton did the same.

William and Lucy accumulated a good amount of land and personal property, including slaves, in Halifax and Pittsylvania Counties, VA. In 1782, William had 7

"white souls" and 22 blacks in his household, and in 1800, he had seven slaves over 16 years old. William died about 1803, presumably in Halifax County, naming 8 children in his will:

A. Martha Green — b. ca 1772, md. Vincent DeGraffenreid in 1789. They lived in Person Co., NC, Christian Co., KY, and Jasper Co., MO., where she died in 1851.

B. Elizabeth "Betsy" — b. 1770s, md. Jeremiah Johnston in 1794. Was she a widow by 1812? She was mentioned in her mother's will in 1825, but we don't know where she was at that time.

C. Lucy — b. 1770s, md. 1) Absalom Overby in 1795. They moved to Madison Co., KY, where we believe she married 2) Robert Epperson in 1805. She died there about 1821.

D. Charles — b. ca 1770s, md. Nancy G. Ward (daughter of Samuel) in 1801. They moved to Georgia in the 1800s. Charles died in Monroe Co., GA, in 1825.

E. William — b. ca 1783, md. Alsey Davey (daughter of James and Elizabeth) in 1805 in Person Co., NC. He died in Halifax Co., VA, in 1854.

F. Yelverton — b. ca 1787, md. Dicy Ward (daughter of Samuel) in 1806. They moved to Georgia soon afterward. He died in Butts Co., GA, in 1864.

G. Thomas — b. ca 1788, md. Isabella — probably around 1808. They moved to Georgia about 1815, and are last found in Henry Co., GA, in the 1860 census.

H. Mary Clay — b. ca 1790? md. John Hale in 1812. They moved to Mercer Co., KY, then later to Georgia. We last have Mary in an Oglethorpe Co., GA, land deed in 1845.

One final note: In 1823, a Sally Thaxton executed a deed granting "Capt. William Thaxton my nephew" all her personal property and slaves after her death. According to our records, the only William Thaxton in Halifax County old enough to be a grantee is William Jr., born in 1783. (That could also explain how William Jr. ended up with so many slaves in his estate.) Therefore, it appears that this Sally could be a sister of old William. (There were two women in Halifax County named Sarah or Sallie who had married Thaxtons, but their husbands were not dead, and it is unlikely they would call William their "nephew.") Could she be the Sarah who, along with Elizabeth Thaxton Bird, were legatees of Stephen Davis in Prince Edward Co., VA, in 1781?

## II. PETER THAXTON

Peter Thaxton was enumerated by Green on 26 Mar 1810. It is undoubted that Peter was the second child of James Thaxton ("James X") and Elizabeth Clark, born 10 Dec 1758 near the Goochland-Prince Edward County line. As already mentioned, Peter

witnessed a land deed between William Thaxton and William Cotrill in Prince Edward Co., VA, in 1781. (A year later, Peter's father witnessed a second deed between those men.)

In the early 1780s, Peter moved to Halifax Co., VA. He probably had already married Sarah "Sallie" —, as they had their first child about 1780. Peter and Sallie appear regularly in Halifax County court records, often involving his position as constable, but they do not appear at all in early Halifax County land deeds. Peter was not poor, however: In the 1810 tax list, he had two (white) tithables, two slaves, and six horses, which was a respectable estate in comparison with his neighbors. Peter died in 1835, when his will was probated, naming four children:

A. Susannah — she died unmarried in Halifax County in 1865.

B. Elizabeth — md. Robert Thaxton in 1809. (See separate discussion of ROBERT THAXTON in Section III.) Is she the Elizabeth Thaxton who died in Halifax County in 1853? It seems to fit, except for the identity of the John and Elizabeth Thaxton who were living with her in 1850.

C. Claiborne — md. Amy Boyd in 1827. He had a large family and died in Halifax County in 1867.

D. John — We tend to think this John was b. ca 1799 and later moved to Christian Co., KY, where he married Emily Torian in 1836. (The Torians were a large Halifax Co., VA, family who also lived in Berryman Green's enumeration district in 1810.) This John died in Christian Co. in 1854, and some of his children — including his oldest child, Peter — later moved to Graves Co., KY. One of this John's sons, John Jr., had a 45-year-old cousin, Robert Thaxton of Virginia, living with him in the 1880 census. Is this Claiborne's son Robert? The ages are slightly off, but the census ages in 1850 and 1860 Halifax Co., VA, are very inconsistent. (We do not believe that Peter's son John was the one who married Elizabeth Whitt in 1806; see separate discussion of JOHN THAXTON in Section VI.)

### III. ROBERT THAXTON

Robert Thaxton was enumerated by Green on 23 Mar 1810. According to the 1820 census of Halifax County, he was born between 1775 and 1794. He married Elizabeth Thaxton in Halifax County 28 Aug 1809 (bond date). William Thaxton was surety, and Peter Thaxton consented (for Elizabeth). Since Robert apparently was of legal age at the time of his marriage, his birth date must fall between 1775 and 1788.

The fact that a William Thaxton was surety for Robert's marriage raises

questions about the connection between the two. There are at least two possibilities:

(1) Robert could be an additional child of the William Thaxton who married Lucy Clay. That would explain why an Elizabeth Thaxton (Robert's wife?) witnessed Mary Clay Thaxton's marriage in 1811, and would also be consistent with the fact that Robert had several slaves in 1820, and the family of William and Lucy were big slave owners. We tend to discount that possibility, however, because: William did not name Robert as a child in his will (which might be only a partial listing, we realize), and because Robert did not reside near the rest of the William and Lucy's family and did not have transactions with them. If it is Robert's wife Elizabeth who witnessed Mary's marriage, it could have been because she was a daughter of Peter, who did have some dealings with the older William's family. Elizabeth could also have received some slaves from Peter upon her marriage.

(2) Robert could be a son of the other William Thaxton in Halifax County. (See separate discussion of WILLIAM THAXTON in Section V.) This William, whom we call "Illinois William," married Sarah Gravitt in Caswell Co., NC, in 1783. (Caswell and Person Counties, NC, are adjacent to Halifax County, VA, and many families conducted business on both sides of the border.) Most of this William's family went west about 1812, but we believe some of his descendants might have remained (or died previously) in Halifax County. In a biography of William's son, Doctor Clay Thaxton, b. 1799 in Halifax County, it is stated that Doctor was the "seventh son" of William. Our research has turned up only two definite sons of William older than Doctor, so we think some of the unidentified Thaxton males in Halifax County might also be William's sons. We think Robert is a possibility, but we have very little proof of that, other than William's role at Robert's marriage and the fact that Doctor Clay Thaxton named his first son Robert.

Robert Thaxton appears in the 1820 census of Halifax County, but presumably died before the 1830 census, when Elizabeth appears as the head of the household. Robert and Elizabeth apparently had four children:

A. Samuel — b. ca 1810. He married Parthena Fowlkes and remained in Halifax County.

B. Susan Ann — b. ca 1818-1820. md. William Henry Guthrie ca 1837 in Halifax County. She apparently died in Halifax County after 1880.

C. Sally — md. Joseph Fowlkes in Person Co., NC, in 1841, and apparently was dead by 1850?

D. possibly another daughter, indicated by the presence of three girls under 10 in the 1820 census of Halifax County.

#### IV. GEORGE THAXTON

George Thaxton was listed by Green on 21 Mar 1810. We don't have much information on George, who appears rarely in Halifax County records. We believe he must have been born before 1767, because we first have him witnessing a land deed in 1783, which he probably could not have done before reaching the age of 16. The deed was between Roger Atkinson of Dinwiddie Co., VA, and William Thaxton of Halifax County. That is the William who married Lucy Clay; see separate discussion of WILLIAM THAXTON in Section I. George also witnessed the marriage of William and Lucy's oldest child, Martha, in 1789.

George married Sarah — probably between 1790 and 1800. George and Sarah witnessed the will of Yancey Bailey of Person Co., NC, in 1804, in one of their few court appearances. George's own will was probated in Halifax County in 1831, naming six children:

A. Nancy — b. ca 1802, md. James Ventioner and moved to Indiana, then to Texas. We last have her in the 1860 census of Wise Co., Texas.

B. Lucy H — b. ca 1804. md. 1) William M. Cearnel. They moved to Dade Co., MO, where she md. 2) Samuel H. Thomas. We last have her in the 1860 census of Anderson Co., TX.

C. Jordan — b. ca 1806. He married Sarah — and settled in Person Co., NC. We last have him there in 1860.

D. James M — b. ca 1809. He md. Polly Stokes in Callaway Co., MO, in 1839, and died in Lawrence Co., MO, in 1864. Some of the Link and Guthrie families of Halifax County also located in Lawrence Co., MO.

E. Parthena — b. ca 1810. She was mentioned in George's will, but we have no other information on her. We assume she was a twin of Parmelia.

F. Parmelia — b. ca 1810. She md. S.N. McMillen in Dade Co., MO, in 1844. She died there in 1868.

#### V. WILLIAM and LARKIN THAXTON

William Thaxton and his son Larkin were enumerated by Green on 09 Mar 1810, the same day as Elizabeth Thaxton. (See separate discussion of JOHN THAXTON in Section VI.) Some information about this William appears in the discussion of ROBERT THAXTON in Section III, but here we will try to give more background information.

According to his Revolutionary War pension application, this William's "father and mother died when he was very young <and> he never received any education."

William also stated that he was "not old enough to be drafted" into service. Considering that the Americans would take almost anyone, William must have been pretty young. In 1848, William stated that he was 81, but earlier in the same month he stated that he did not remember what year he was born. From all circumstances, it appears that William might have been born about 1766 in Virginia.

There is a strong connection between William Thaxton and our Thomas Thaxton, who was born about 1744 and served in the war from Hillsboro District (Caswell and Orange Counties) NC. William served in the War from the same area as a substitute for Nathaniel Reed and Henry Cobb, who were in-laws of Thomas Thaxton. In addition, Thomas Thaxton was bondsman for William's marriage to Sarah Gravitt in 1783. Thomas Thaxton later moved to South Carolina and then Allen Co., KY, where he died in 1824. William Thaxton remained in the Halifax County area until about 1811, when he and most of his family moved to Breckenridge Co., KY. A few years later, they settled in Greene Co., IL, where William died in 1850.

We have only six known children born to William Thaxton and Sarah Gravitt:

A. Elizabeth — b. ca 1787. She md. William Waltrip in Halifax County in 1802. They later moved to Breckenridge Co., KY, and then to Greene Co., IL, where she died in 1855.

B. Larkin — b. ca 1790. He md. Catharine Dudley in Breckenridge Co., KY, in 1812, and died in Greene Co., IL, in 1839.

C. Beanum — b. ca 1792. He md. 1) Ann Banning, and 2) Nancy Vaught in Greene Co., IL. He died ca 1860 in Saline Co., IL.

D. Doctor Clay — b. 1799. He md. Caroline Whitaker in Greene Co., IL, in 1827. He died there in 1889.

E. Polly (Mary) — b. ca 1800?. She md. John Stokes in Madison Co., IL, in 1820. We have nothing further on her.

F. Starlin — b. ca 1802? He md. Susan Painter in Greene Co., IL, in 1823, and died in Scott Co., IL, in the 1840s.

As mentioned in the discussion of ROBERT THAXTON (Section III), we believe William Thaxton had several more children. A biography of Doctor Clay Thaxton published while he (Doctor) was still living emphasizes that Doctor was the "seventh son" of William, and there are some sizeable gaps in the ages of William's known children. For those reasons, combined with a lack of other possibilities, we think Robert might have been one of the missing sons. We also believe that another son was John Thaxton, discussed in the following section.

## VII. JOHN THAXTON

We are using a discussion of John Thaxton to cover the Elizabeth Thaxton who was enumerated by Green on 09 Mar 1810, because we are convinced that she is the Elizabeth Whitt who married John Thaxton in Halifax County in 1806. We believe that John Thaxton died within a few years of their marriage, leaving her with two young sons.

We base our conclusions on the following facts: In the 1810 tax list, she was enumerated on the same day as a Mary Whitt and William Whitt, indicating proximity. In 1820, she had two young boys and lived three doors down from Mary Whitt. This Elizabeth was also the right age to be John's widow, since she was old enough to sign her own consent for their marriage in 1806. This Elizabeth and her two sons had located in Person County, NC (across the border from Halifax Co., VA), by 1840, when she is living with her younger son John. In 1850, Elizabeth is living with her son John next door to William G. Thaxton in Person County. (William G. and John are the right age to be the two young boys with Elizabeth in the 1820 census.) Because William G. and John both appear in the 1860 Person County census, but Elizabeth does not, we assume she died there between 1850 and 1860.

There are a few problems with this scenario. First, according to the 1850 and 1860 censuses, William G. would have been born about 1806, which is a little close to the marriage date of John Thaxton and Elizabeth Whitt, which was also 1806. This does not really concern us unduly, because census dates are often unreliable and we would unquestionably assume it if we were unaware of Elizabeth's marriage date. (One other note: Elizabeth lived near John K. Whitlow in 1810, and Elizabeth's son William G. later married Whitlow's daughter Mary Ann.)

Because we believe that Elizabeth Whitt's husband John Thaxton died by 1810, we have ruled him out as a son of Peter Thaxton, who named a son John in his will in 1835. As we have already mentioned (in the discussion of PETER THAXTON in Section II), we believe that Peter's son John could be the one b. 1799 who ended up in Christian Co., KY.

We think there is a good chance that the John Thaxton who married Elizabeth Whitt was one of the missing sons of "Illinois William" Thaxton. (See discussion of WILLIAM and LARKIN THAXTON in Section V, and also the discussion of ROBERT THAXTON in Section III.) John's widow lived near William's family in Halifax Co., VA, and John apparently was the right age to fill in some of the gaps in William's family. We have no other direct proof, however.