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**UNRAVELLING BALLS OF YARN:  
Lessons in the Use of a Skeptical Eye**

(As Taught by William Bartholomew Ball and William F. Ball, Esq.)

by Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, FASG\*

Most genealogists consider themselves fortunate to discover a line that has been researched extensively already. Many times that blessing is a dubious one, however—thanks to earlier researchers who have merged identities, renamed individuals, or married people to partners they never met in real life. If one is quite unlucky, forerunners through the relevant archives and libraries also may have muddled the records, before they broadcast them, in an effort to buttress whatever they believed to be fact.

The motive that leads well-meaning researchers to such capers is perhaps understandable, if not condonable. When family historians feel they have finally identified an elusive individual, some are tempted to "help" others by inserting "appropriate" facts or identifiers into the documents. Middle names, initials, relationships, and places are all popular additives. The beneficiaries of such help, of course, are frequently *victims*. The illogic that prompts the alteration of records has a way of manifesting itself in other irrational conclusions; and subsequent researchers discover that they cannot establish an identity or family for their own ancestor without first sorting out, testing, eliminating, and correcting the erroneous information already disseminated. As the challenger of long-touted beliefs, the careful researcher bears the burden of *disproof* as well as proof.

This problem has been faced by descendants of several William Balls who resided in the states of South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi between the American Revolution and the Civil War. The convenient existence of a relatively rare set of church records, naming one William Ball as an infant born 31 May 1777 at Midway in present Liberty County, Georgia, to the wife of a Revolutionary officer named Edward Ball,<sup>1</sup> has nurtured disparate claims as to which adult William should be allowed to bask in the heroism of that infant's father. The resulting multiplicity of

manufactured lineages prompted the Daughters of the American Revolution to close the Lt. Edward Ball line some years ago, until the tangled Williams could be unknotted and a clear identity established for the proper son and heir. Meanwhile, erroneous lineages remain accepted by some other organizations and have been perpetuated by sundry publications.<sup>2</sup>

The present article will unravel the threads that have illogically tied together two of the William Balls. In the case of one, herein identified as William F. Ball, Esq., his cradle in the family of Lt. Edward Ball can be clearly established. In the case of the other, an early Mississippi farmer known to descendants as William Bartholomew Ball, his paternity still eludes researchers. As is frequently the case, the William who fell out of the lieutenant's family tree was the presumed progenitor of the individual who commissioned this exhaustive study—not that the point mattered, ultimately, since the project also disproved his long-alleged descent from William Bartholomew as well.<sup>3</sup>

Decades of cooperative research in the mid-1900s between offspring of Lt. Edward's son Sampson Edward and those of William Bartholomew generated a massive amount of widely distributed information. Prominent among this material was a manuscript that attempted to account for the descendants of one William Ball and wife Margaret (née Sampson) who "came from Middlesex, England and settled in St. John's Parish, South Carolina, in 1700."<sup>4</sup> Subsequently enlarged upon and disseminated by the official historian of the Ball Family Association Reunion of Mississippi, it is hereinafter referred to as "the Ball genealogy." It is replete with source citations (in erratic form) and is impressively sprinkled with "actual" abstracts and transcripts. To many Ball researchers, it is an accepted Bible.

For researchers who have absolutely no interest in the family, the Ball problem is nonetheless instructive—illustrating why one must *reason* as one reads, the folly of accepting any published statement at face value, the ease with which fancy can be threaded amid fact, and a few tests that the critical researcher can and should apply when lucky enough to inherit an "already done" lineage. For researchers who may be tempted themselves to "help others" by amplifying the documents they use, the admonition in this case is clearly that offered by Sir Walter Scott: *Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!*

### William Bartholomew Ball: The Proven Basics

As an early pioneer of the burned Mississippi counties of Jackson and Greene, William Bartholomew left few clues to his origins. The 1820–40 censuses of those counties consistently assign his birth to the decade 1760–70.<sup>5</sup> On 1 January 1796, he posted bond in Richmond County, Georgia, to marry Charlotte Lee.<sup>6</sup> The tract of public land that he settled in Mississippi in 1811<sup>7</sup> was last taxed to him in 1841—then to his estate in 1846, after an unexplained hiatus.<sup>8</sup> Beyond these facts, the published reconstruction of his life, origins, parentage, and lineage has been spun into that proverbial "tangled web," by adding threads of fancy to actual documentation. Space limitations upon the present article prohibit a comprehensive correction of the published work. The purpose now is to separate William Bartholomew from the William who was actually the son of Lt. Edward Ball.

### Testing the Published Claims

According to the Ball genealogy:

Edward Ball, Planter, and Rebecca (Baker) Jones married Jan. 21st 1773, in St. John's Parish, Midway, Georgia. . . . a lieutenant in 1777 in Captain John Bacon's Company of Riflemen in Georgia [he] was killed in 1779. [His children were]:

- I. Elizabeth Ball, born Nov., 1773. Baptized in Midway Congregational Church, April 16th, 1774. Died Sept. 13, 1774.
- II. Sampson Edward Ball, born Aug. 27, 1775. Baptized in Midway Congregational Church, November, 1775.
- III. *William Bartholomew Ball*, born May 31, 1777. Baptized in Midway Congregational Church June 22, 1777.
- IV. John Osgood Ball, born in 1779, in South Carolina, Craven County, after his father's death.<sup>9</sup>

The Ball genealogy fails its first test with its citation of birth for "William Bartholomew." The register of Midway Congregational Church reports the event differently:

1777. *William*—to Edward and Rebecca Ball, May 31.<sup>10</sup>

Conspicuously absent is any middle name. The birthdate itself is problematic, in light of the consistent census references to a 1760–70 birth for William Bartholomew of Mississippi.

The Ball genealogy continues to reinforce its claim that William-of-Edward was one and the same as William Bartholomew by offering the following scenario:

Edward Ball's wife, Rebecca, fled from Midway, Georgia during Revolution to Edward's plantation in Craven, S.C. . . . At this time Edward

Ball's son, Sampson Edward Ball, was three years of age, and *William Bartholomew Ball* was five years of age.

Rebecca Ball, widow of Edward Ball, married Rev. Thomas Quarterman in South Carolina and returned to their home in Midway, Ga. CA 1782 or 1783. . . . Her will dated Dec. 2, 1793, is recorded in Liberty Co., Ga., in 1794. *In her will she names as legatees her children*, to wit: (1) Rebecca (Jones) Iverson, (2) Samuel Jones and wife, Mary Way, (3) Sarah (Jones) Cassells, (4) *William Bartholomew Ball*, (5) Susannah Quarterman, (6) Robert Quarterman, (7) A "Child in Esse." . . . No mention is made in her will of her sons, Sampson Edward Ball and John Osgood Ball.<sup>11</sup>

A markedly different account appears in the actual will:

It is my Will the said Estate shall be made into Three parts; Two of Those parts to be divided equally among my Three Children Rebecca Iverson, Samuel Jones, and Sarah Cassells, to them, their heirs & assigns forever. The other remaining third part to be divided among my other Children, Namely *William Ball*, Sampson Edward Ball, Susannah Quarterman, and Robert Quarterman to them, their Heirs & Assigns forever.<sup>12</sup>

Again, one point is obvious: Rebecca's son William is assigned no middle name, although she uses one for his younger brother Sampson Edward.

As its narrative develops, the Ball genealogy continues its concerted attempt to link the Mississippi William to Sampson Edward, proven son of Edward and Rebecca.

Sampson Edward Ball was 18 years of age and *his brother, William Bartholomew Ball*, was 16 years of age when their mother died. It is hard to speculate as to how these boys fared after their mother's death. . . . The next authentic record to be found of these two Ball boys—Sampson Edward and *William Bartholomew*, follows:

William Bartholomew Ball married Charlotte Lee in Richmond County, Ga., on Jan. 1, 1796. . . . He was 19 years of age and Charlotte Lee was 15 years old when they married, and Marriage Bond was needed. Sampson Edward Ball's name appears in 1800, Aug. 10, on a muster roll of the 1st company of militia of Liberty Co., Ga. . . . From this we know that he was still living in the old home area of Liberty County.<sup>13</sup>

The cited date of the marriage was, more correctly, the date the bond was signed and the license issued. The justice of the peace to whom the license was directed appears not to have filed a return stating the actual date of the marriage.<sup>14</sup> The existing paperwork makes no reference to the age of either party or to any consent being obtained from parents or guardians—a significant point since the three extant census entries for William show that he would have been 26–36 years of age, not 19. The insertion of ages into the Ball genealogy's discussion of the record is surely intended to enhance the author's contention that the groom was the same as the child born in 1777. In making this point he

compounds confusion by asserting, in contradiction to Georgia's contemporary law and custom: "A marriage bond was not necessary in that day unless the parties were not of age."<sup>15</sup>

The placement of William in Richmond in 1796, while Sampson Edward remained in Liberty, artificially separates the two teenaged orphans of Edward and Rebecca. The Ball genealogy does not explain that separation. As it proceeds to discuss William of Richmond and Sampson Edward of Liberty, however, its detail reveals a telltale—but unmentioned—dichotomy of *life style* and *social standing*.

William Bartholomew Ball of Stiles Militia District, Richmond County, Georgia returned for taxes in 1799, *18 acres of pine land* in Richmond County, on Butler's Creek, also 1 poll or head tax and paid .32 cents. Butler's Creek at that time was farm and forest land . . . Eighteen acres was a modest home site for that period.<sup>16</sup>

Eighteen acres of Georgia piney woods would have represented not merely a "modest home site," but a poverty-level farm. If William Ball of Richmond, a man who owned no slaves, were the same as William of Liberty, then he had fallen considerably from his birth station as son of a man who left his sons over a thousand acres and thirty-two slaves.<sup>17</sup>

The physical and social distance between William of Richmond and the Balls of Liberty becomes increasingly apparent as the Ball genealogy extends its chronicle across the next several decades. When the array of presented "documents" are reduced to tabular form, several inconsistencies become obvious; and more become apparent when name comparisons are made with the actual records. The alleged activities are as follows:<sup>18</sup>

1799	Richmond Co., Ga.	"William Bartholomew" paid tax
1804	Liberty Co., Ga.	"William B." received grant
1805	Richmond Co., Ga.	"William Bartholomew" registered for land lottery
1807	Richmond Co., Ga.	"William" appears on tax roll, poll tax only
1809	Baldwin Co., Ga.	"William" paid poll and tax on lottery lot no. 144
1809	Richmond Co., Ga.	"William Bartholomew" received passport to travel west
1811	Jackson Co., Miss.	"William Bartholomew" received grant of 600 acres
1816	Jackson Co., Miss.	"William and Edward" signed a petition to Congress
1823	Baldwin Co., Ga.	"William of Baldwin" named as a brother in letter of Sampson Edward
1834	Houston Co., Ga.	"William B." wrote letter regarding Indian depredation claim of his father Edward

William's apparent double-residence in Mississippi and Georgia during the 1811-34 period is alleged to be exactly that—a double-residence. Again arbitrarily linking William and Sampson Edward, the Ball genealogy discusses the passports issued to each of them in the following manner:

A passport was issued on October 2, 1809 for *William B. Ball* (no family) of Richmond County, Georgia and a passport for Edward Ball, Liberty County, Georgia on February 26, 1810, his wife, five children, and thirteen slaves, to travel Westward through Creek Indian territory.<sup>19</sup>

To the contrary, the actual passport for William reads as follows:

Monday 2d October 1809. On recommendation ORDERED That Passports through the Creek Nation be prepared for *William Ball* [no middle name] and *George FOULDS and their families*.<sup>20</sup>

Having dispatched William westward, *sans* family, author Ball continues:

William Bartholomew Ball must have been making a prospective trip to Mississippi. He received a grant of 600 acres of land in Jackson County, Miss. in 1811 . . . His brother, Sampson Edward, was Westward on the same road near Columbia, Miss., not too far distant for those days. . . . [On] a petition to Congress by inhabitants of Jackson County, Mississippi, signed by 72 petitioners, the fourth and fifth names were Edward and William Ball signed on Dec. 11, 1816. . . . At this particular time, William Bartholomew Ball apparently owned land he claimed in Mississippi, and his family was still living in Richmond County, Ga. His brother Sampson Edward Ball and his family had by this time gotten established in Balltown, near Columbia, Miss., which was connected by road to the land claimed by William Bartholomew Ball. . . . Charlotte Ball is listed in the 1820 census of Georgia.<sup>21</sup>

The twice-told "link" between William and Sampson Edward is as strained as the explanation of William's residency in two states. An examination of extant federal land records indicates that Sampson Edward *purchased* a tract designated as Northwest ¼ of Section 36, Township 4 North, Range 11 West of the Washington Land Office District, while William *preempted* a tract (i.e., *squatted* on unclaimed public land) in Section 6, Township 1 North, Range 4 West of the St. Stephens [Alabama] Land Office District.<sup>22</sup> By platting these legal descriptions upon a land map, it becomes obvious that the residences were nearly a hundred miles apart, as the crow flies. The twice-asserted point that they were "connected by road" calls for a considerable stretch of the imagination when the plats are overlaid against contemporary maps that trace the primitive road system of the region; and the

genealogy's attempt to assign "prestige" to the family by naming a town in its honor also misses the mark. Balltown, which lay some miles southeast of Sampson Edward's place of settlement, was so named because it was the site where Choctaw tribes of that region historically met for their ceremonial games of stickball.<sup>23</sup>

Readers who are impressed by the coupling of the alleged brothers, "Edward and William Ball," as the "fourth and fifth names" on the petition referred to Congress on 11 December 1816, are also misled. At least two versions of that petition are available to researchers. The one commonly consulted is the typescript published in Carter's *Territorial Papers*; also available is the original, now preserved in the National Archives.<sup>24</sup> On both, William appears as signer 15, Edward as signer 73. Curiously, the signature of William is markedly different from that which appears on the marriage bond signed by William when he sought a license to marry Charlotte Lee; but the signature of Edward is a quite-conclusive identifier—clearly reading *Edward M. Ball*, not *Sampson Edward Ball*. Rather than reinforcing the alleged link between William Bartholomew Ball and Sampson Edward, son of Edward, the petition merely reflects the fact that the eldest son of William Bartholomew and Charlotte—Edward Marshall Ball—had reached adulthood.

The published assertion that Charlotte maintained a residence in Georgia and appears as a householder on the 1820 census is unsupported by evidence. Census entries for known children who survived to 1850 or later consistently indicate Mississippi origins for those born after the issuance of the 1809 passport to one William of Richmond. While that document surely treats the Mississippi William—no other William Ball resided in Richmond in that era and no other William Ball can be found west of the Creek nation in that era—the compiler of the family genealogy still did not resist the temptation to strengthen his argument by embroidering the affidavit attached to the passport. He alleges:

Sept. 25th, 1809. State of Georgia - Richmond County

Be it known to all whom it may concern that I have for a number of years past been personally acquainted with *William Bartholomew Ball* and that he hath always behaved himself as an honest industrious good citizen. . . . [six signatures follow].<sup>25</sup>

By contrast, the actual document reads:

<p><i>State of Georgia</i> <i>Richmond County</i></p>	}	<p>Be it known to all whom it may Concern that I have for a number of years last been personally acquainted with <i>William Ball</i> and that he hath always behaved</p>
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himself as an honest Industrious good Citizen. September the 25th 1809. Certified by: [nine signatures follow.]<sup>26</sup>

Extant records treating preemption land claims in Mississippi include William Ball's testimony that he settled near the Pascagoula (or Chickasawha) River in October 1811. The land lay along the old Greene-Jackson county line; land subsequently entered by William's sons fell just below it. Although the courthouse records of both counties have been destroyed for this period, tax rolls exist from 1816<sup>27</sup> and provide valuable insight not covered in the published genealogy. These lists verify the years that each of William's older sons reached the age of liability for poll tax (twenty-one years). More to the point, they speak to William's age and circumstances as well. Not until 1828 was his title to the preempted land perfected enough for him to pay property tax; but never was he assessed a poll. He was clearly past poll age (i.e., fifty years) by the time the county was organized. That fact is consistent with the 1760-70 birth period assigned to him by the 1820-40 censuses. If he were the William born of Edward's marriage in 1777, then one must believe that a thirty-nine-year old William, who migrated from Georgia with at least one family that knew him personally, managed to pass himself off as fifty and succeeded in evading his taxes for another eleven years of liability.

In review, the existing records left by William Ball of Richmond County, Georgia, and Greene and Jackson counties, Mississippi, (born 1760-70) contain not the first shred of evidence to link him to William-of-Edward, born 1777 in the area that became Liberty County, Georgia. The fabric of all the documents cited, transcribed, and abstracted by the Ball genealogy, in its effort to make the connection, had been overcast with new threads—either a nonexistent middle name or an alleged relationship—and had missed the crucial detail almost entirely.

### Developing New Evidence

Who, then, was the Liberty William? His identity is quite clearly established—and quite distinctly separated from William of Richmond—by a detailed study of the *unpublished* tax and court records of Richmond, Baldwin, and Liberty counties. While the Ball genealogy implies that tax rolls were duly examined—via its statements that “William Bartholomew” was taxed in Richmond in 1799 and 1807, and in Baldwin in 1809, these three incidences represent only randomly published occasions in which *someone* of

the name William Ball paid some type of tax. Prior researchers do not appear to have attempted a year-by-year tracking, by which one might establish a consistent pattern of residence, or to have made a comparative analysis of property and lifestyle. Once performed, those exercises proved well worth the effort.<sup>28</sup>

#### Richmond County

1797 <sup>29</sup> William Ball	18 acres pine land, 0 slaves, 1 poll
1800 William Ball	[does not appear on extant tax roll]
1803 William Ball	Served on jury <sup>30</sup>
1805 William Ball	Drew 2 blanks in land lottery <sup>31</sup>
1806 William Ball	Bought shotgun from estate of George Low <sup>32</sup>
1806 William Ball	Named among jurors empaneled for December <sup>33</sup>
1807 William Ball	0 acres, 0 slaves, 1 poll
1807 William Ball	Drew Lot 144, Dist. 6, Baldwin Co. <sup>34</sup>
1808 William Ball	Granted patent to Lot 144 <sup>35</sup>
1809 William Ball	Taxed for 202.5 acres pine land, Lot 144, Baldwin, 0 slaves, 1 poll
1809 William Ball	Received passport to go west; Character affidavit signed by Isaac Low [brother of George]
1810 William Ball	Mare seized to settle debt <sup>36</sup>
1810 William Ball	Dropped from tax roll
[1811 William Ball	Settled on Pascagoula River, Mississippi]

#### Liberty County

1800 William Ball	0 land, 2 slaves, 1 poll [listed consecutively with:]
Sampson Ball	365 acres, 16 slaves, 1 poll
1801 William Ball	0 land, 2 slaves, 1 poll
1806 William F. Ball	0 land, 1 carriage, 3 slaves, 1 poll [2 entries from Robert Quarterman]
Sampson E. Ball	300 acres, 1 carriage, 16 slaves, 1 poll
1807 William F. Ball	0 land, 1 carriage, 3 slaves, 1 poll [3 listings from Thomas & Robert Quarterman]
Sampson E. Ball	400 acres, 1 carriage, 17 slaves, 1 poll
1809 Sampson E. Ball	400 acres, [rest of entry is torn away]
William F. Ball	[no listing—cf. Baldwin Co.]

#### Baldwin County

1809 William Ball	202.5 acres, 2d class, gr. McFarland, 14 slaves
" "	"Guard. for Martha Childresberger"
1810 William Ball	[ditto]
1811 William Ball	202.5 acres, 3d class, gr. Curry, 15 slaves
" "	"Guard. for Martha C. Burgen"
1813 William Ball	202.5 acres, [etc.], 17 slaves
" "	"Guard. for Martha Childers Burgen"
1814 William Ball	202.5 acres, [carriage, etc.], 17 slaves
" "	"Agent for Martha Childers Burgen"
1815 William Ball	202.5 acres, [carriage, etc.], 8 slaves
" "	"Agent for Martha C. Burgen"

1816	William Ball	202.5 acres, [carriage, etc.], 9 slaves
"	"	"Agent for Martha C. Burgen"
1817	William Ball	202.5 acres, [carriage, etc.], 0 slaves
"	"	"Agent for Martha C. Burgen"
"	"	300 acres, Camden Co., "original grantee: E. Ball"
"	"	200 acres, Camden Co., "original grantee: E. Ball—waters of St. Mary's"

This summarized data clearly defines two separate William Balls and two separate migrations. The entries themselves offer the cross-references necessary to establish identities. In order to properly interpret this data, one needs only to know that by law and custom of that era in Georgia, *a landowner was taxed in the county in which he lived, not in the county in which the land was located*. The point helps to clarify the one key year in which the property—but not the residence—of the two Williams overlap in Baldwin.

#### William Ball of Richmond:

Present in Richmond from 1796 to 1809, at least intermittently, William did not long possess those eighteen acres of piney woods, and he had no other taxable property until making a lucky draw in Georgia's land lottery of 1807. That land happened to fall in the newly created county of Baldwin, to which William did *not* remove after receiving his patent in 1808. The destruction of Baldwin's land records has prevented documenting his disposal of that land; but dispose of it he clearly did, since he was not taxed on it subsequently in either county. Moreover, the inferior court of Richmond, in June 1810, ordered the sale of a mare seized from him in settlement of a court suit; had William still owned the lottery land, that tract would have been attached—rather than property "of a perishable nature," as the mare was termed. In the meanwhile, William had applied for a passport to go west, a venture that required some cash outlay. As did many lucky drawers of Georgia's free land (and many recipients of military bounty land everywhere), it is probable that he sold the *title* to his uncleared piney-woods, lottery land and used that cash to move on to another newly opening area where more fertile soil could be had at no cost.

#### William F. Ball, Esq., of Liberty and Baldwin:

Emerging on Liberty's first extant tax roll in 1800, the William who was listed there consecutively with Sampson Ball was, beyond reasonable doubt, the William-brother-of-Sampson who

had been born 23 years earlier in that same county. The 1806 and 1807 rolls not only identify him more fully as William F. Ball, but they place his residence amid Robert and Thomas *Quarterman* and thereby reinforce his identity as the William whose mother later married the Reverend Quarterman and bore a son Robert. Not coincidentally, the year that William F. Ball is dropped from the Liberty County rolls is the year that one William Ball emerges as a tax payer in the state capital at Milledgeville (Baldwin County). Following this William annually through 1817 (and later) rewards the researcher with a more definitive connection: his taxation in Baldwin for land previously granted to one "E. Ball" on St. Mary's River in Camden County. In 1773 and 1774, the colony of Georgia had issued five grants in St. Mary's Parish [Camden] to Edward Ball.<sup>37</sup>

The taxation of William of Baldwin on behalf of "Martha Childresberger" or "Martha Childers Burgen" serves as yet-another marker of his identity. In the 1960s, a New York City descendant of this William sent to other researchers photocopies of pages kept in "an old account book" or "plantation book" by his great-grandmother Elizabeth Jane (née Ball) (Allen) Mounger—a daughter of the Milledgeville William. In that family record, she cites her birth on 2 July 1814, to William Ball ("born May 31st 1777, Saturday Evening"), as well as the first marriage of her father to Mary *Burgen* on "27th September 1804."<sup>38</sup>

The continued presence of this William Ball in Baldwin can be documented through 1830. He appears on both the 1820 and 1830 censuses of that county, with an age and a household composition compatible with the family account book.<sup>39</sup> In both years, William Bartholomew is enumerated in Mississippi, with the full family attributed to him by records maintained by his descendants. In that same period, William of Milledgeville is frequently mentioned in records of the county's inferior court as one of Baldwin's judges—a profession compatible with his taxable property (land, slaves, carriage) and one distinctly different from that of the nonslaveholding farmer William Bartholomew.

After the census of 1830, William Ball, Esq., removed from Baldwin to the new county of Houston. There in 1834, he drafted a letter to Governor Wilson Lumpkin, in which he inquired about the settlement of an old Indian depredations claim dating back to the Creek confiscation of slaves belonging to the estate of his father Edward.<sup>40</sup> The Ball genealogy "transcribes" the letter with a signature line that reads "/s/ William B. Ball" and proceeds to say:

[The writer's] son, William Daniel Ball, married Mary Hines in 1826, and they were living in Perry, Houston County, Ga., in 1834, so his father, *William Bartholomew Ball*, must have been visiting him when he wrote this letter to the Governor of Georgia. William B. Ball was not in the 1840 Census of Baldwin County, Ga., but we do find him in 1840 Census of Greene County, Mississippi.<sup>41</sup>

True to the pattern already noted, the original document is signed *William Ball*—with no middle initial, no reference to the name Bartholomew, and no reference to any residence in Mississippi. Plunging further into its own quagmire, the Ball genealogy presents a “transcript” of a related 1822 document, in which Andrew Walthour, former executor of the will of Edward Ball, identified the heirs to the slave confiscation claim as “Sampson Edward and William (Bartholomew) Ball, the only legatees and heirs of the said Edward Ball.”<sup>42</sup> At least in this incidence, the genealogy places the gratuitous middle name in parentheses—a clue to the fact that the original does not carry that name at all (although it is an ambiguous clue, since the accepted procedure for editorial additions requires the use of *brackets* rather than parentheses).

In discussing the 1834 letter, author Ball's “identification” of William Daniel Ball as a son of William Ball, Esq., and grandson of Edward further knots his Balls of yarn. Both William Bartholomew and William F. Ball, Esq., had sons named William, but neither was William *Daniel*. The son of the justice is identified, instead, as “William B.” in the will of his father that was offered for probate in Houston County on 6 March 1837.<sup>43</sup> The family record maintained in the plantation account book identifies him more fully as William Baker Ball—that is, he bore as a middle name the surname of his maternal grandmother, Rebecca (née Baker) (Jones) (Ball) Quarterman. When Judge Ball's son married Mary Hines in Baldwin County on 9 May 1826, the record identified him as William B., not William *Daniel*.<sup>44</sup>

### Genealogical Summary

#### William Ball

**William Ball**, born 1760–70, place unknown; died between the dates of the 1841 and 1846 tax rolls of Greene County, Mississippi; married circa 1 January 1796, Richmond County, Georgia, **Charlotte Lee**, who had been born 1780–81 in Georgia and died after 1860.<sup>45</sup>

The present writer has not attempted to compile a genealogy of this couple's descendants or to test systematically the correctness of that which has been assembled by others. For the purposes of this paper—i.e., separating William Bartholomew Ball from William F. Ball, Esq.—it will suffice to list the ten children of William Bartholomew that all branches of the family appear to agree upon, together with the limited detail that the present researcher has verified.

1. Edward Marshall Ball, born in Georgia in 1796 (according to a pension application filed in 1881) or 1797 (according to the age given for him when he volunteered for infantry duty in the Civil War); married Elizabeth Scarborough; said to be “blind and feeble” when last found on record, 30 June 1883, at Hineston in Rapides Parish, La.<sup>46</sup>
2. James S. Ball, born 1799 in Georgia, according to the 1860 census; that birth year is compatible with his first poll assessment in Jackson County, 1820; married Sarah [allegedly Roberts]; died after 1860.<sup>47</sup>
3. Sarah Ann Ball.
4. Eliza Ball; said to have married Irvin Barnes Roberts and moved to Hinds County, Miss.
5. William S. (or L.) Ball, born 1803–6, according to the assessment rolls of Greene County which did not tax him on the poll list of 1824, but did include him on the next extant roll (1827). William S. drops out of the area's few surviving records at that time, except for a reappearance as a poll on the 1838 roll of Greene County.
6. Bartholomew Ball, born 1807, according to the date of his emergence on Greene County's poll lists. As Bartholomew Ball, Esq., he continues to appear through 1834, and is taxed on the 1839 and 1843 rolls of Hinds County, Miss.
7. Susan R. Ball, said to have married James N. Beard and removed to Cherokee County, TX.
8. Margaret Ball, said to have married Burrell (or Hugh) Eubanks and to have died in Monroe (Ouachita Parish), Louisiana.
9. Harriet Ball, said to have married Edward Lyles and moved to Jasper Co., Mississippi, then Monroe Parish, La.; then Southeast Texas.
10. Henry Augustus Ball, born in Mississippi in 1821, according to the 1850 census. He was still alive on 15 December 1899, when he appealed to the US land office for a patent to the land preempted by his father in 1811.<sup>48</sup>

#### William F. Ball, Esq.

**William F. Ball** was born at Midway, in St. John's Parish, Georgia, on 31 May 1777, as son of the Revolutionary War lieutenant, Edward Ball, by his wife Rebecca Baker, the Widow Jones; died shortly before the March 1837 probate of his will. On 27 September 1804, William F. married **Mary Burgen**, who died 26 January 1806. He wed secondly, 16 June 1808, **Elizabeth Gray**, who had been born 24 November 1789.<sup>49</sup>

The only child of William F. and Mary (née Burgen) Ball was:

1. William Baker Ball, born 4 August 1805.

Children of William F. and Elizabeth (née Gray) Ball were:

2. James Gray Madison Ball, born 31 July 1809 in Baldwin Co.
3. Eliza Ann Ball, born 5 February 1811 and died 20 May 1811, Baldwin Co.
4. Edward Ball, born 3 May 1812 and died 12 February 1815, Baldwin Co.
5. Elizabeth Jane Ball, born 2 July 1814 in Baldwin.
6. Amanda Melvina Ball, born 16 July 1818 in Baldwin.
7. Sarah Ann Ball, born 8 December 1820 in Baldwin.

### Conclusion

The proper identification of any man (or woman) must be based on far more than the *name* that person bears. Names are common, especially within different branches of the same family, as is suspected in the case of the present pair of Williams. Names can change—or can be changed with ease by those who misread or misrepresent them, as also shown by the case at hand. Solid distinctions between men of the same name are established by thoroughly examining all extant records, in their *original* form; and by extracting from each as many pieces of minute detail as possible. Each of those details then become a personal “marker,” that clearly brands one man differently from others of the same name.

Prior researchers of the Ball family well illustrate the hazards of *superficial* research. In the year 1809, William Ball of Richmond is taxed for 202.5 acres in Baldwin County. In that same year, the name William Ball appears on the Baldwin list, charged with 202.5 acres. The coincidence is convenient; were no other detail available, an hypothesis might be put forth that the two entries represent a cross-reference for the same property. However, other detail is available; and each serves as yet another distinguishing marker. The 202.5 acres of Baldwin land taxed to William in Richmond is said to have been granted *to him*, while the 202.5 acres taxed to William in Baldwin was identified as a grant to one McFarland.<sup>50</sup> The 202.5 acres of the Richmond William was taxed as *pine land* [third class], while the 202.5 acres of the Baldwin William was assessed as a *second class* tract. The Richmond William was taxed on no slaves, while the Baldwin William owned fourteen. Past this point, the stack of personal markers continues to show differences in lifestyles, family connections, and residential patterns. When such differences in detail are heeded, the researcher has little need to resort to such

folly as the “helpful” insertion of middle names to distinguish between individuals whose first and last names happen to be the same.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. “Midway Congregational Church Records, 1754–1863,” Vol. 3, Part II-C, page 72; microfilm drawer 76, roll 1, Georgia State Archives. See also James Stacy, *History and Published Records of the Midway Congregational Church, Liberty County, Georgia* (1951; reprinted, Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Co., 1979), 92.
2. See for example, George R. Watson, Sr., *Ball Families of the South* (Hattiesburg, Miss.: Privately printed, 1980); and Charles Owen Johnson, ed., *The Order of the First Families of Mississippi, 1699–1817* (n.p.: The Society, 1981), 2, 104.
3. For the correct identification of the descending line erroneously attributed to William Bartholomew Ball, see Elizabeth Shown Mills and Sharon Sholars Brown, “In Search of ‘Mr. Ball’: An Exercise in Finding Fathers,” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 80 (June 1992): 115–33.
4. Thomas I. Ball, in 1968, donated his 136-page typescript, “The Bartholomew Ball Family,” to the newly formed Ball Family Association Reunion. The association’s historian, George R. Watson, subsequently revised and enlarged the Ball manuscript prior to publishing his own book cited in note 2 above. Since 1980, with the assistance of sundry members of the association, Watson’s account has undergone several manuscript revisions that have circulated among researchers. The page numbers cited in this paper are those found on the updated Watson version held by R. C. Ball. Generically referred to in the text as “The Ball Genealogy,” it is more precisely cited in these notes as Watson, “Ball Families (Revised).”
5. 1820 US Census, Greene Co., Miss., page 45; 1830 US Census, Greene Co., page 175; 1840 US Census, Greene Co., pages 149–50.
6. *Richmond County, Georgia, Marriage Bonds (1785–1849), A–Cupper*, unpaginated, alphabetized, Microfilm Drawer 40, Box 73; Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta.
7. Mississippi Private Land Claim 74, William Ball; Record Group 49, Records of the Bureau of Land Management, National Archives and



- Records Administration (hereinafter NARA), Washington, D.C.
8. 1841 and 1846 Land Tax Rolls, Greene County, Mississippi, vol. 433, Record Group 29, Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.
  9. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 167-68.
  10. "Midway Congregational Church Records, 1754-1863," 3:II-C:72.
  11. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 170-71.
  12. Wills and Appraisements (1789-1823): 50-51, Liberty County.
  13. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 182.
  14. Ball-Lee marriage bond, *op. cit.*
  15. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 77D.
  16. *Ibid.*
  17. Indian Depredations Claim, William Ball, File II, Record Group 4-2-46, Box 7, Location No. 1759-04, Georgia Department of Archives and History.
  18. This table of events has been extracted from pages 77-77G and 182-182J of the Ball genealogy.
  19. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 77E.
  20. For an expertly prepared and published transcript of these passports, see Dorothy Williams Potter, *Passports of Southeastern Pioneers, 1770-1821* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1982); for Ball, see p. 245.
  21. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 77E-G, 82C.
  22. Land Entry File, Sampson E. Ball, NW $\frac{1}{2}$  S36, T4N R11E, Washington Land Office District; and Mississippi Private Land Claim 74, William Ball, both in Record Group 49, NARA.
  23. This matter of Balltown illustrates how family tradition is frequently confused. Before settling in Mississippi, at the site discussed in the quoted passage, Sampson Edward Ball briefly lived near present Angie, Washington Parish, Louisiana. Generations of his family have since lived at the Washington Parish site. In the late 1800s, a post office was located among them and was designated Balltown. After being bypassed in the early 1900s by both the railroad and the state highway in favor of Angie, the post-hamlet died.
  24. "Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of Jackson County," [undated; referred to Congress on 11 December 1816] (14th Cong., 2d sess.), Record Group 233, House of Representatives, NARA. The commonly consulted transcript appears in Clarence Edwin Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States, vol. 6, Mississippi Territory, 1809-1817* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), 736-38.
  25. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 77F.
  26. Indian Depredations Claim, William Ball, *op. cit.*
  27. Volumes 433-34 and 453, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
  28. The tax registers will not be individually cited here; all are available on microfilm, by year and county, at Georgia's State Archives.
  29. This is the roll to which Thomas Ball refers as 1799. The extant portions of the document bear no date. The State Archives has dated it "1793-1800." Its date can be pinpointed at 1797 via a chain of documents relating to other taxpayers.
    - A. Henry Hatcher in this year is taxed one poll—no land. County deed records show that he bought his first land on 1 April 1799 [Deed Bk G:490]. Hence, this undated roll would not be for 1799 or else Henry should have been taxed for land as well.
    - B. Archibald Hatcher in this year is taxed on 3400 acres of pine land, 300 of which he purchased on 7 October 1797 [Deed Bk N:429]. Hence, the roll was drawn after October 1797.
    - C. The widow Ruth Hunt and infant son are taxed this year on two lots. Her husband's will was proved 27 September 1797 [Wills A:223] and his estate sold those lots on 13 Sep 1798 [Deed Bk G:295-99]. The year 1798 can thus be eliminated, since the widow should not be taxed on land that was sold before the end of the year. Thus we are left with the year 1797 as the only option.
  30. Superior Court Minutes, 7, 1801-1804: 142, Richmond Co., Ga.
  31. Virginia E. and Ralph V. Wood, comps., *1805 Georgia Land Lottery* (Cambridge: Greenwood Press, 1964), 15.
  32. Inventories, Accounts, Sales, Divisions & Years' Support A, 1799-1813: 184, Richmond Co., Ga.
  33. Court of Ordinary Minutes, 1804-1819: 81, Richmond Co., Ga.
  34. Silas Emmett Lucas, comp., *The Second or 1807 Land Lottery of Georgia* (Vidalia, Ga.: Privately printed, 1968), 23.
  35. William Ball Patent, Lot 144, Baldwin Co.; 1807 Land Lottery Grant Book, District 6: 75, Surveyor General's Office, Atlanta.
  36. Inferior Court Book, 1805-18:108, Richmond Co., Ga.
  37. Land Grant Books F: 399, 968; G: 352; I: 801; and M: 13-14; Surveyor General's Office, Atlanta.
  38. In 1984, a photocopy of this family record was supplied to R. C. Ball by Mrs. Evelyn Hight of Houston, Texas.
  39. 1820 US Census, Baldwin Co., Ga., page 56; 1830 US Census, Baldwin Co., Ga., page 39.
  40. Indian Depredations Claim, William Ball, *op. cit.*
  41. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 182D.
  42. Watson, "Ball Families (Revised)," 182A-B.
  43. Will Book 1: 105-6, Houston Co., Ga.
  44. Marriage Book A: 60, Baldwin Co., Ga.
  45. 1850 US Census, Greene Co., Miss., page 38-B, #97/97; 1860 US Census, Greene Co., Miss., page 5, #32/32 (household of James S. Ball, with Charlotte).
  46. Compiled Service Record of Edward M. Ball, private, Co. G, 8th Miss. Inf., CSA; Bounty Land Application 33842, Edward M. Ball, private, Capt. Bates's Co. E, Mississippi Militia, Creek War of 1813; Pension application of Edward M. Ball, 22 Nov 1879 [same service, Creek War of 1813]; NARA. Edward M. Ball, aged 64 at his enlistment in the CSA infantry, was shortly thereafter dismissed for old age.
  47. 1860 US Census, Greene Co., Miss., page 5, #32/32.
  48. 1850 US Census, Greene Co., Miss., page 38-B, #97/97; Private Land Claim 74, William Ball.
  49. William Ball Family Record, Plantation Account Ledger of Elizabeth Jane (née Ball) (Allen) Mounger, *op. cit.* Subsequent data on the children of William F. Ball, Esq., comes also from this family record.
  50. In fact, 202.5 acres was the standard lot drawn for Baldwin Land Districts 6-20 in the 1806 and 1807 lotteries, so a lot of this size was neither peculiar nor unique. See Hall's *Original County Map of Georgia: Showing Present and Original Counties with Land Districts* (Atlanta, 1895).