

THE WORLD OF MARY BALL: CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEATH OF MARY BALL'S MOTHER

Part five of a seven-part series that links the early years of Mary Ball, the mother of George Washington, to her Northern Neck heritage and her Washington connections.

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FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

SINCE MARY HUES had only dower rights in Joseph Ball's estate and could not inherit it outright, Hues' own failing health may have accelerated the drafting of his will to provide her with more security.

By the end of 1713, the reason for his haste was evident, as he succumbed. Mary Johnson Ball Hues, twice widowed in the span of 15 months, continued to benefit from both properties.

ONLINE >> See Paula Felder's series at fredericksburg.com/maryball.

She very likely stayed on with her young daughter, Mary, at her dower property, where Joseph Ball had left generous provisions and furniture.

But with her other daughter, Elizabeth Johnson, specified in Hues' will as the eventual recipient of his farm, it would have been a logical time for her to assign to Elizabeth the task of readying the farm at Cherry Point to become the family home.

A SON-IN-LAW JOINS THE FAMILY

An estimated time for this arrangement to commence would be about 1717 or 1718, when Elizabeth married Samuel Bonum, a young man from Westmoreland County. Although he had no substantial estate of his own, young Bonum could manage the Cherry Point farm. This

would also have been a logical time for Mary Ball Hues to move with her young daughter Mary to the household being formed at Cherry Point.

Bonum had important connections that would benefit the family. His aunt Rebecca had been the first wife of George Eskridge, who was now a prominent lawyer in the Northern Neck and a Burgess for Westmoreland County.

Eskridge's participation in the household at Cherry Point was the beginning of an important chain of events in Mary Ball's life.

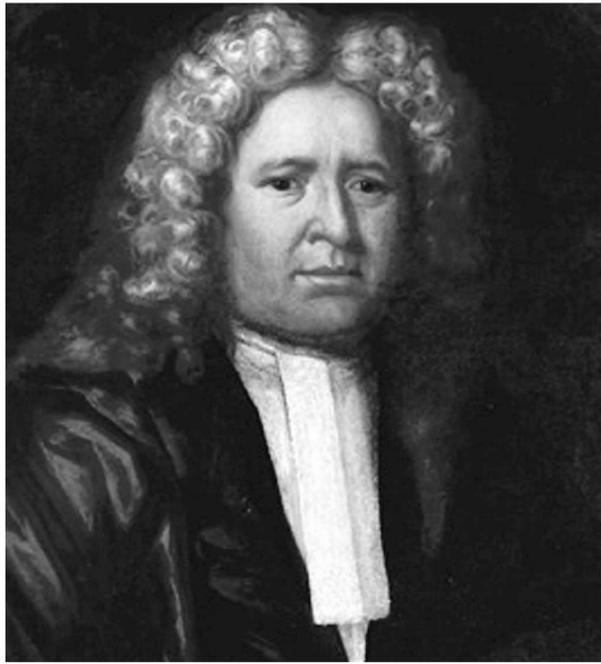
MARY HUES' LAST ILLNESS

When she fell ill in December 1720, Mary Hues felt a sufficient kinship with her new son-in-law to consider his uncle George Eskridge her "trustworthy and well beloved friend" and to name him as her executor.

In her own will, having achieved her goals through the estate plans of her husbands, Mary Hues was preoccupied with her aspirations for her young daughter.

She confirmed the gift of a riding horse she had already given Mary, instructing that another be purchased, a "young Pacing horse together with a silk plush side saddle to be purchased by my executors out of my estate."

Except for one outfit willed to her older daughter, all her clothing was to go to Mary. Mary was also to receive her mother's two gold rings—one a gold loop and the other with a stone—two tablecloths, a dozen napkins, plates and dishes, and furnishings for the feather bed that Joseph Ball had left her (with curtain, quilt and blanket). At the age



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George Eskridge (c. 1666-1735) had served in the House of Burgesses from 1705 and held every important county post, though he no longer sat as a justice because he practiced law for his many clients. In Williamsburg, he was now allied with the most important conservatives in the colony, who were already growing resentful of the arbitrary and restrictive government imposed by the Crown. He held seats on the most important committees and was often called upon to draft communications to the governor.

of 18, she was to receive "a young likely negro woman."

GEORGE ESKRIDGE AS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF MARY BALL'S INHERITANCE

With Mary Hues' death, her dower rights in Joseph Ball's estate ceased, although George Eskridge continued to represent her estate in matters before the Lancaster court. The Northumberland court appointed him as the administrator of Mary Ball's inheritance.

Historians and genealogists

have made much of the widow's request that George Eskridge be her executor and see to young Mary Ball's "tutelage and government during her minority."

But she had no need of a home. She shared with her half sister her mother's home, in which she had probably lived for several years and which contained furnishings that would come to her as a Ball legacy. There were, too, her horses, cattle and slaves. And there was Elizabeth's new family to assist.

THE LATER HISTORY OF CHERRY POINT

Mary Ball had family of her own through her half sister, Elizabeth, who inherited the house at Cherry Point after the death of their mother.

Elizabeth's two sons by Samuel Bonum did not live to maturity. By 1739 she had married a neighbor, James Straughan, and had begun a new family that occupied the land at Cherry Point for another half-century.

By James Straughan she had two daughters. (Mary would surely have been godmother to some of these nieces and nephews.)

Elizabeth herself died about 1742 and only one of her children lived, a daughter also named Elizabeth Straughan. This second Elizabeth married four times while continuing to live at Cherry Point. She had at least five children.

The surviving family members were displaced from Cherry Point in 1782. They moved to Berkeley County (in West Virginia today) and were befriended by Robert Lewis, the agent for his uncle George Washington.

In his will, George Washington left a bequest of \$300 to "Sally B. Haynie (a distant relation of mine)." Sally was Mary Ball Washington's great-niece.

There is no record that George Eskridge was appointed her guardian or that she lived in his home. It is much more likely that Mary Hues intended for Joseph

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