

A. Introduction

There is a widespread belief that Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck, the first Virginian ancestor of George Washington's mother, Mary Ball, was descended from the family of Ball of Barkham (later Wokingham), notwithstanding that the arms claimed by the Virginia family match the arms of the Balls of Northamptonshire.

Per Heck (1928): "There have been few Colonial American pedigrees more difficult to trace in England than that of Colonel William Ball, the great-grandfather of Washington on his mother's side. And there are few other instances where such a long and persistent effort has been made to determine the English branch without much success."^{A1}

Per Walne (1959): "On few families can so much ink have been spilt to so inconclusive a result as is the case with the Ball family."^{A2}

Per Walne again: "It was perhaps unfortunate that by the time Joseph Ball II began to conduct his own researches into his ancestry in the 1740s, during his long residence in England, passage of time appears to have dimmed to the point of extinction the clear light of true knowledge of his family's origins."^{A3}

Unfortunately for anyone interested in pursuing the English ancestry of the Balls of Virginia, it rapidly becomes apparent that families bearing the name Ball were numerous and widespread, as exemplified by the large number of Balls whose wills survive^{A4} or who are recorded as matriculating at the Universities of Oxford^{A5} and Cambridge.^{A6}