

THE GENN FAMILY OF CANADA

CHAPTER 4 - VIRGINIA, BRITISH NORTH AMERICA 1684 - 1780

The Genn name first appears in Virginia colonial records in 1674, with a John Genn being sent as an indentured servant to a plantation in Virginia. From the Bristol Register of Servants Sent to Foreign Plantations, 1654 - 1686, we find the following:

20 Oct 1674 John Beare to John Genn, 4 years Virginia.

Four other entries in the Bristol Register show that between 1662 and 1667, Rosse Hamm, Edward Harding, Anne Yeats and John Shelly were sent to the plantation of John Beare. We construe that the names got switched and the entry should read:

20 Oct 1674 John Genn to John Beare, 4 years Virginia.

John Beare's marriage and subsequent land deals appear in subsequent records, suggesting that he was the owner of the plantation. John Genn's name does not seem to reappear in subsequent records. His indenture would have terminated late in 1678.

The Genn name next appears in Virginia colonial records in 1684 with a James Genn who was granted probate on a will in Northumberland County, Virginia. Northumberland County, occupies a portion of the west shore of Chesapeake Bay and would have been one of the earliest areas settled. Failing evidence to the contrary, we construe that this James Genn is the son of John Genn, sent out to join his father on completion of his father's indenture. This idea is quite speculative.

A land grant to a Thomas Mathew in 1679/80 lists James Jenn among the 76 names on the grant. The reference to James Genn in the will of Thomas Mathew, 6 May 1703, would suggest that the James Jenn and James Genn are one and the same.

These documents will be discussed in this chapter. A search of Virginia land records of the period discloses no land transactions involving the Genns prior to 1718.

The next four generations produced a total of ten James Genns. In order to distinguish between them, we have suffixed each with a number. The one previously mentioned is James Genn (0). He died in 1709.

While the Genn and Ginn names appear to be independent and

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distinct on English soil, in Virginia the converse is true. Both spellings are used in the same family, applied to the same individual and are sometimes both used in the same document.

The land first occupied by James Genn and his wife Mary at Cherry Point, Northumberland County, Virginia is shown on an early map as Ginn's Island. Ginn's Island is the present site of Lewisetta, Northumberland County. It is a possibility that the name was Ginn when it arrived in Virginia.

James Genn (0) appears regularly in Northumberland County court records between 1684 and 1709. The following is the chronology from these court records:

20 August 1684, probate granted on the will of Weltham Bonas by oaths of James Genn (0) and Samuel Buckley.

21 January 1688, James Genn (0) was arrested at the suit of Mary Hawkins, but she failed to prosecute. If this, per chance, was the result of a paternity claim that was resolved by a marriage, it would account for the 1703 reference to James Genn and his wife Mary, and would also introduce son Thomas or James, born about 1690.

In the fall of 1689 James Genn served as a juror in Northumberland County Court in the case of Garner vs. Flynt. Flynt had failed to pay on a wager to Garner on a horse race at Cherry Point.

19 March 1690, James Genn (0) won a suit against Daniel Noale who carried off his canoe. Noale was fined 600 pounds of tobacco.

20 May 1691, suit between James Genn (0) and John Cratter. Cratter owes Genn 13,595 pounds of Tobacco. Adjusted to 682 pounds.

15 February 1693, James Genn (0) released from fine for not appearing in court.

17 November 1697, the will of William Parker was proved by James Genn (0) and Ignatius Olliver.

6 May 1703, will of Thomas Mathew, "prob. in London," was proved in Northumberland County, Virginia. To James Genn (0) and Mary his wife he left a life interest in tenancy on his land at Cherry Point. More on this later.

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22 February 1704/05 a land grant in Northumberland of 2950 acres to George Eskeridge listed 59 names as *head rights* including James Genn, Mary Genn and Thomas Genn.

21 March 1704/05, the will of Thomas Fflynt was probated on oaths by James Genn (0), Francis Dawson and Richard Booth.

20 April 1709, probate of the last will of James Genn (0) granted to James Genn (1) and Thomas Genn (1). We assumed James and Thomas to be his sons.

16 June 1714 a land grant in New Kent County of 4185 acres to Nicholas Meriwether, William Meriwether and David Meriwether listed 84 names as *head rights* including James Genn, Mary Genn and Thomas Genn and also included the rest of the 59 names from the 22 February 1704/05 land grant. Mary Genn, we suggest, is the wife of James Genn (0) mentioned in the probate entry of 6 May 1703. Thomas and James, would be their children, Thomas Genn (1) and James Genn (1), who appear as executors in the probate of James Genn (0), 20 April 1709.

As the next four generations include six Thomas Genns, we have taken the liberty of numbering them as well. The Genns mentioned in the 1714 land grant are therefore, Thomas Genn (1), Mary Genn and James Genn (1). In the following pages we trace the Canadian Genns to Thomas Genn (1).

Excerpts from the will of Thomas Mathew, dated 6 May 1703, probated by Canterbury Court, London, 28 February 1706-7 and proved in Northumberland County, Virginia, 20 August 1712, read as follows:

I, Thomas Mathew, formerly of Cherry Point in the Parish of Bowtracy in the County of Northumberland in Virginia, Merchant, ... my body I desire may be buried and if I die in or about London as near to my dearly beloved son William as it can be had in the church of St.Dunstan's-in-the-East. ... From as for what remains real or personal ... in the County of Northumberland, Cherry Point ... I bequeath one half ...to my dear son John ... and the other half ... to my dear children Thomas and Anna ... my loving Brother-in-Law Capt. John Cralle and my old and faithful servant, James Genn

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and Mary his wife have manifested every great faithfulness and industry in the management of my affairs both whilst I dwell in Virginia and since I came thence I desire and will that my said brother Cralle and the said James Genn and his said wife may quietly remain and reside in and upon and in the peaceable possession of the houses and lands now in their respective tenures during their respective lives and I leave to all my children to be their heir grateful ...

Thomas Mathew seems to have arrived in Virginia sometime around 1660 to join his father, also Thomas Mathew. In February 1662 Thomas Mathew, Jr. witnessed a document for his father. A land claim in the name of Thomas Mathew, Sr. dated 20 October 1663 indicates that Thomas Mathew, Jr. had traveled to Virginia five times. The Will of Thomas Mathew, Jr. (above) discloses that James Genn managed the affairs of Thomas Mathew, Jr. since he arrived in Virginia, which suggests that James Genn may also have been in Virginia since about 1660. They may have known each other in London.

The Thomas Mathews', Sr. and Jr., professional endeavors include Planter, Rancher, Merchant, Manufactured, Miller, Captain, Attorney, Trustee, Bondsman, Justice and Sheriff. It is not clear what aspects of the business was managed by James Genn but his bequest of life tenancy would suggest that he may have managed a plantation.

A most illustrious event in the life of Thomas Mathew began in July 1675 when Doeg Indians stole some of his hogs. English settlers avenged the event by killing some Indians. The Indians returned and killed Thomas Mathew's herdsman, Robert Henn and later returned and killed Thomas Matthew's son. The English settlers were outraged and avenged the killings by slaughtering Doeg and Susquehannock Indians. The Indians retaliated with more attacks. Governor Sir William Berkeley made no attempt to protect the settlers so Nathaniel Bacon, Jr. was chosen by the settlers to lead an attack on the Indians, which he proceeded to do without a commission from the Governor. Bacon died in October 1676 ending the conflict. Governor Berkeley proceeded to hang all those that supported him. In 1804, with the help of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Mathew published, *The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion, 1675-1676*.

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Following are two maps of Cherry Point, the first one was dated 1798, the second one is current. The early map identifies Ginn's Island Acres as the eastern end of Cherry Point, the present site of the village of Lewisetta. By rough measure Ginn's Island scales off to be about 300 Acres. Capt. John Crallie Land is shown to the south-west on the other side of Kingscote Creek. A sign at the present intersection of roads 624 and 625 reads "Cralle Cove, Private". One source reports that the land that Mathew left to Cralle was never reclaimed by Mathew's heirs but was included as part of Cralle's estate. The same may have happened to Ginn's Island.

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