

FINDING THOMAS'S FATHER: An 18th Century Prince William County Virginia Case Study

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Thomas Stone left few records when he died in 1791 in Prince William County Virginia. No document or reference names his parentage. Finding Thomas's father took thirty years. Using indirect evidence and helped by technological advances, Thomas's father has been found. This lecture demonstrates the process of creating a proof argument to identify Thomas's father.

1. Introduction

- Parts of a Proof Argument
- Getting to Know Your Research Local
- The FAN club principle

2. What the Records Reveal

- His will: Thomas signed his will in 1782 naming wife Sarah and 5 children-- James and George, Mary Leatherwood, Sarah Bradfield, Elizabeth Bradfield and grandson Thomas, son of James.
He left land to grandson Thomas and to son George. Witnesses were Elizabeth Bobo, Howson Hooe, & George Latham.
- His inventory: Neighbors John Kincheloe, Zachariah Bradfield S^r and Robert Spittle appraised Thomas's estate on 30 Dec 1791 and returned it to court on 2 May 1792. Value -£55/9/5
- Thomas first appeared in public records in the 1735-6 rent roll. He is found in extant rent roles or tithable lists up until 1779.
- Thomas or his estate or son James or grandson Thomas appeared in Prince William County tax records until 1834 when grandson Thomas sold the land he inherited.
- Thomas appeared in personal property taxes from 1782 – 1788.
- Thomas is found voting for Col. Henry Lee in extant Election of Burgesses records.
- Thomas received a land warrant in 1741 and a land patent in 1743.
- Thomas witnessed the will of his neighbor Edward Barry in 1747
- Thomas was appointed "surveyor of the road in the room and precinct of Samuel Stone" in 1755.

- In 1771 Thomas along with Obed Calvert and Esther Calvert posted administrative bond for estate of George Calvert.

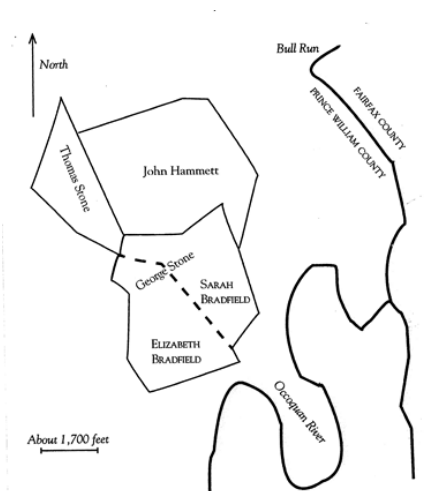
3. More of what the LAND Records Reveal

- Thomas bequeathed two tracts of land in his will: one tract to his grandson Thomas Stone whose father James Stone was to have life use of it; the other tract to son George. If George died without heirs the land was to be divided between George's sisters Sarah and Elizabeth Bradfield.
- Leonard and Sarah Stone Bradfield sold their 140 acres in 1804 to Rutt Johnson.
- The children of Zachariah and Elizabeth Stone Bradfield sold Elizabeth's 153 acres beginning in 1826.
- Title searches show present day location of Thomas's lands.
- Explanation of Northern Neck Land Proprietary land granting process
- Recreation of Thomas's neighborhood with the help of DeedMapper
 - Wm Bland, Francis Stone, James Bland 1711 patent
 - Thomas Stone 1741 survey
 - Joshua Davis 1726 patent
 - Charles Maurice/Morris & James Bland 1741 survey
 - John Dunkan's 1731 survey
 - John Bland's 1774 survey
 - Stapleton-Rainie 1775 deed
 - John Hooe 1780 survey/patent
- Emergence of Francis Stone Jr., early Prince William County land owner, as candidate for Thomas's father
- Thomas Stone in association with Samuel Stone
- Table of survey evidence

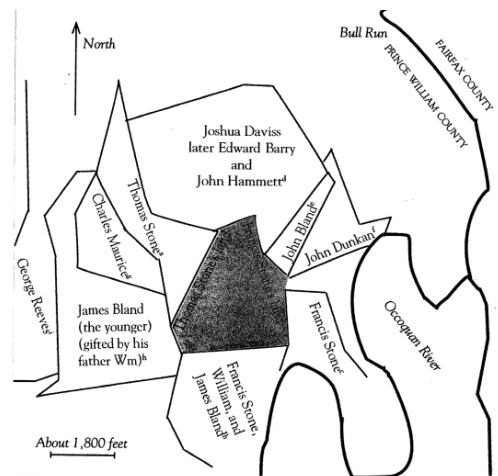
4. Conclusion

- "Genealogists learn the descent of land is the purest proof of relationship and the ownership of land provides the surest proof of identity."
Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Land Records," syllabus material, Course 4: Advanced Research Methodology and Evidence Analysis (Birmingham, Ala: Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research, 2006), 4W2.
- Stone Surname DNA Study
- Puzzles
- Points of the proof argument:
 - Land records place Thomas Stone in the same neighborhood as Francis Stone Jr.

- Current location of the lands devised by Thomas show it to be on land once owned by Francis Stone Jr.
- Prince William County tithable lists and rent rolls from 1736 to 1767 as well as deeds and court records connect Thomas Stone and a Samuel Stone in location and similar social standing.
- Land descriptions found in at least three land records name either Thomas Stone or Samuel Stone as owner of land once belonging to Francis Stone.
- Edward Barry, owner of land adjoining land of Thomas and Francis Stone, served as a surety for the estate of Francis Stone. Thomas and Samuel Stone witnessed the will of Edward Barry.
- Thomas Stone along with Francis Stone's widow Esther Calvert, wife of George Calvert, and Obed Calvert, son of George Calvert, posted bond for the administration of Calvert's estate. Thomas and Obed served as co-executors for George's estate.
- Francis and Thomas were apparently a generation removed in age.
- No other candidate exists in that time period and location to be Thomas's father.



Current Location of Land Devised by Thomas



Reconstruction of Thomas and Francis Stone's Neighborhood

Pamela S Eagleson, "Leaving No Stone Unturned: A Father for Thomas Stone (d. 1791) of Prince William County, Virginia," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 95:2 (June 2010), 121-136.

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*RootsWeb is currently unavailable due to problems generated during a process to improve the site. This entry cannot currently be accessed through its Rootsweb site (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jcat2/18centvalaw.html>) but was accessed by using Wayback Machine. <http://www.wayback.com/>.