



William Bull and Sarah Wells

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Today it may seem strange that we do not know the exact date of William Bull's death. But, things were different then in rural areas of colonial New York. We can bracket his death by dates on documents. Sixteen months elapsed between the time William drew his will in February of 1755 and when it was entered into probate in June of 1756. An interest payment on a loan was recorded in September of 1775 that further narrows the date. Beyond that we are left to estimate.

You might think to look for a gravestone marker. If you have visited the Hamptonburg Cemetery adjoining the Bull Stone House, you would have seen lots of dates on headstones. But, as you climb to the highest point, where the oldest burials are, you'll see that the graves are only marked by upturned fieldstones. One of them marks the burial of William Bull. The others mark the graves of other family members. Such was the practice there two and a half centuries ago.

William and Sarah, The Final Years

William Bull died sometime between September 1755 and June 1756, most probably in the late spring of 1756, aged about 66 years. He was buried on a knoll northeast of the Stone House overlooking the farm he had cleared from the wilderness. Afterward, when several of his children were buried here also, the place came to be called Burying Hill.

The will of William Bull is dated 20 Feb. 1755; it was proved 19 June 1756 before William Finn, Esqr., Surrogate of Orange County, N.Y.; and probated 1 Jul. 1756 by Sir Charles Hardy, in Prerogative Court. When New York became a state, many of the old provincial records were left in New York County, though much of this material was later copied and transferred to Albany. Thus this will is found

on file both in the Surrogate's Office of the City of New York, and in the Office of the Secretary of State at Albany. The following text is taken from an original copy found at the Stone House, made out by Goldsbrow Banyar, Deputy Secretary to Gov. Hardy:

*In the Name of
God, Amen, I,
William Bull, of
Goshen in the
County of Orange
in the Province of
New York...*

*In the Name of God, Amen, I,
William Bull, of Goshen in the
County of Orange in the
Province of New York,
Meason, being of sound and
perfect memory (blessed be
God) do this Twentyeth Day
of February in the year of our
Lord one thousand Seven
Hundred and Fifty-five make
and Publish this my Last Will
and Testament in manner
Following.*

*First, I give and Bequeath to
my Dear Wife Sarah Bull my
Dwelling house and Farm
whereon I now Live During
her Natural Life If she so*

*Long continue my Widdow And I Leave her all
my Negroes and Movable Estate In trust for the*

uses and purposes hereinafter mentioned: That is to say, That my Daughters Mary, Margaret, Catharine, Anne and Elinor and my youngest son Richard Shall Live with my said Wife in my Dwelling house and be maintained Cloathed and Supported by her out of the Benefit of my said farm, Negroes and Stocks and such Industry and Benefit as my said Wife and said Children shall make upon the said farm until they are married or Come of Age, and that my Wife shall pay Each of my said five Daughters at the time of their marriage or when they Come of Age the sum of Seventy Pounds New York Currenney to be paid out of my Movable Estate and the money which my sons are to pay out of the Lands hereinafter Devised to them And It is my Will that if any of my said five Daughters shall Happen to die before they are married or of Age the Portion hereby Bequeathed to the Daughter or Daughters so Happening to Die shall be Equally Divided among the Survivors of my said five Daughters and their heirs;

[The will continues and describes in detail the lands and property that William leaves to each of his sons and daughters. The entire document is reproduced on pages 82-85 in the Blue Book.]

From the will we learn how the twelve children of William and Sarah were situated in 1755. The eldest, John, was then aged 34, while Eleanor, the youngest, was only a child of 10. John was married with several children, presumably living on his 100 acre lot received from Mme. Denne in 1729. William, 32, lived with his wife and two children at Stony Ford on the portion north of the Wallkill of the 500 acre grant his father had obtained in 1724. Thomas, 28, also with a wife and two children, lived across the river from his brother on the southern portion of the 500 acre grant. Just north of Thomas lived his sister Sarah, 30, with her husband George Booth and several children, residing on the southern portion of the large tract purchased by Booth's father. Isaac Bull, 26, with a wife and two children,

lived on his farm south of the Stone House, which was part of the 2600 acre grant in 1723. Esther, 24, had married John Miller and lived with two children on the Wallkill near present Montgomery. The younger daughters: Mary, 22, Margaret, 19, Catharine, 17, Ann, 15, and Eleanor, 10, and the youngest son Richard, 12, all remained at home with their parents.

As executrix of the will, Sarah was sworn "to make and exhibit a true and perfect Inventory" of her husband's estate. This appears to have been made but it is no longer found with the copy of the will at the Stone House. There is an almost illegible penciled notation on the front of the will stating, "1831 - let P. Bull have the Inventory. E. Bull." Apparently Ebenezer Bull loaned the paper to his cousin,

Peter Bull, and for some reason it was never returned. If ever found, this would be an interesting document, detailing the economic circumstances of our grandsire. At his death, he was evidently comfortably well-to-do, and could provide generously for his large family. He had certainly come a long way from the "five guineas and a few books" with which he arrived in this country.

It is not generally recalled that Sarah Wells remarried after the death of William Bull. We do

not know the exact date that this took place, though Eager states she was "between sixty and seventy years old," indicating a date between 1756 and 1764. From the receipts noted on the Colden bond we find Sarah referred to as "the widow Bull" on 23 May 1759, so the marriage took place after that. Her second husband was Johannes Miller, a widower, one of the first settlers in the town of Montgomery. His son, John Miller, had previously married her daughter Esther. At this time, she probably left the Stone House and moved into the Miller household on the Wallkill. Here they lived until Mr. Miller's

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On the day of Sarah's funeral, a short family memorial was written down to preserve the memory of the pioneer generation, taken by her grandsons Peter Bull and Jesse Booth. Today this memorial remains as the sole source for most of the data it contains.

William Bull was born Febr. 1689 and departed this life Febr. 1755; from Ireland, Dublin, though born in England.

Sarah, his wife, was born April 6, 1694 and departed this life April 21st, 1796; from N. Jersey & Staten Island.

N.B.: The above were the first couple of White People that was Married in the Township of Goshen in the first settling thereof, and she (the said Sarah Wells) the first White Woman that came to the said Township, who lived 102 years and 15 days.

This Catalogue of the family was made on the Day of her funeral April 23, 1796 by Jesse Booth & Peter Bull.

	Grand Children	G Grand Children	GG Grand Children
John Bull was born May 3th, 1721	12	61	4
William Bull junr was born Mar. 13th, 1723	6	15	0
Sarah Booth was born Sept. 1th, 1725	8	23	3
Thomas Bull was born Dec. 27th, 1727	12	22	0
Isaac Bull was born Nov. 17th, 1729	6	21	0
Esther Miller was born May 29th, 1731	8	18	6
Mary Booth was born Feb. 3th, 1733	10	17	0
Margaret Horton was born May 1th, 1736	7	7	0
Catharine Faulkener was born May 24th, 1738	7	2	0
Ann Eager was born Nov. 4th, 1740	10	17	0
Richard Bull was born May 29th, 17 43	5	6	0
Eleanor Weller was born Mar. 4th, 1745	7	3	0
	98	212	13

12 + 98 + 212 + 13 = Total 335

It is worthy of Remark that in so numerous a family but four Natural children could be found on the said Day of April 1796 which are not included."

It can truly be said that this single page memorial represents the beginnings from which the present genealogical work has sprung. It is probable that the framed copy of this memorial now existing at the Stone House was Peter Bull's own copy, since it lists the family of Isaac Bull at the bottom, of whom Peter was the second child, and also lists Peter's seven children. Two other copies, probably from 1810, still exist.

death in 1782, he then being about 90 years old. Following the French and Indian War, Sarah Wells once again found herself a widow. Approaching her ninetieth year, however, she

probably continued to live with her widowed daughter, Esther. That she remained sprightly in her old age, we are assured in a funny little story attributed to Mrs. James Denniston

Bull. When the story teller was a small child, she had been taken down to the Wallkill with some other children by Sarah Wells, the latter being "over a hundred years old." Sarah wanted to fish and have the children keep quiet. They, however, ran around and yelled, so Sarah Wells caught the relater, turned her over and spanked her. (This story was related to Robert Jackson by W. Sheldon Bull in 1928, who said that Mrs. J. D. Bull had told it to him. He evidently thought that Mrs. Bull was the spanked child, but that cannot be since she was not born until 1800.)

Sarah's age may have been somewhat exaggerated above (she was perhaps only 95) but the fact remains that she did live to the remarkable age of 102 years, and when she died in 1796, there were counted 335 of her descendants down to the fourth generation. To illustrate this, a family legend relates how the aged Sarah once awakened her daughter (who would have been Esther) with this admonishment, "Arise, daughter, and go to thy daughter, for thy daughter's daughter has borne a daughter."

It can truly be said that this single page

In our next installment, we read about the impact that two 18th century wars had on our ancestors. The French and Indian War began in 1754 and the threat of Indian massacre hung heavy over the Hamptonburg community until peace was finally negotiated in 1763. Then, scarcely more than a decade later, the Revolutionary War brought the threat of conflict into every town and neighborhood and forced families to choose sides.

"Tales from the Blue Book", the William Bull and Sarah Wells Stone House Assn., edited 2015 by Robert Eager

Source: Emma McWhorter, Dolly Booth, Philip Seaman, History and Genealogy of the William Bull and Sarah Wells Family (Printed by The Service Press, Middletown, NY, T. Emmett Henderson, Publisher), pp 81-88, 93-96.

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Sarah was brought back to the old Stone House which she and William Bull had built with such loving care, and was buried beside her first husband atop the knoll at Burying Hill, overlooking the prosperous fields she had helped to clear, and where she had reared her children.

Thus closes the first generation of our Bull family in America, which not only founded a family but participated in founding a nation. We take pride that they displayed the intelligence, the individual action, and the joy of living that have gone into making our country, and her sister to the north, significant in the world. And we are grateful that this heritage has been transmitted to succeeding generations.