

## **THE RED BOLLINGS**

James F. Richardson\*

A clear April day saw the inhabitants of Jamestown attending a singular ceremony, the wedding of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. It was not the first wedding in the New World, but in 1614 a mixed marriage between an Indian princess and a well-bred Englishman created alarm and interest on both sides of the Atlantic.

Pocahontas was born in 1595 or 1596, the daughter of the mighty Powhatan, chief of forty Algonquin villages. Her father had taken his name from the main village. John Rolfe was the son of Dorothy Mason and Eustacius Rolfe of Heacham, Norfolk, in England. The Reverend Alex Whittaker presided, and Governor Thomas Dale was a special guest.

After the death of Elizabeth I, the end of English struggles with Scotland and Spain freed English capital and manpower for exploration, trade and colonization. English incursions into North America, and those of other countries searching for a Northwest Passage to the Indies, threatened Powhatan's rule. He was unsuccessful in repulsing the 1607 settlement at Jamestown by force of arms, but would have starved the settlers out had not Captain John Smith obtained corn from more distant Indians.

John Smith was exploring and seeking trade when he was captured by one of Powhatan's chiefs, and the fabled story of his salvation by Pocahontas began. It is thought possible that the "sparing of life ritual" was orchestrated by Powhatan as a prelude to Smith being recognized as a friend. It worked on both the Indians and on Smith, who regarded Pocahontas as the savior of his life, and even on later settlers who credited her with warnings of Indian attacks. Later, John Smith was severely injured in a gunpowder explosion. It was feared he would die, but he survived.

In 1613, a newly-arrived ship captain, Samuel Argall, persuaded Pocahontas aboard his ship and carried her off to Jamestown for ransom.

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John Rolfe arrived from England in 1610. In route his ship was wrecked on Bermuda. There his child was born and shortly after died. Soon after arriving at Jamestown his wife died as well. Casting about in his loneliness, he sailed to Trinidad in 1611 and bought tobacco seed which produced a more palatable leaf than the local Virginia variety. This saved the colony financially. Fifty thousand pounds of tobacco were exported in 1618.

John Rolfe and Pocahontas met and fell in love during her forced visit to Jamestown. Governor Sir Thomas Dale, when asked permission for their marriage, agreed seeing the union as a knot to bind the peace between the Indians and the colonists. The Rolfes built a house on the James River, where John raised tobacco and Pocahontas gave birth to their son, Thomas, named after the governor.

Sir Thomas Dale arranged a trip to England with the Rolfes and a retinue of Indians. Pocahontas evidently performed well among her curious English relatives. She tried hard to assimilate the dress and manner of an English lady. Rolfe was appointed secretary and recorder of the colony, and they were soon to return to Jamestown. While waiting to board ship, Pocahontas, whose health had been failing, died. Thomas was left in England to be raised and educated by relatives. Having been baptized as a Christian at Jamestown, Pocahontas was buried at St. George's Church, Gravesend in England, March 21, 1617. Five years later John Rolfe followed his wife in death. It was said, "She died among his people: He was massacred by hers." There is evidence to support his being killed in the massacre of 1622. It seems more likely he died prior to that event of natural causes.

Thomas returned to Virginia in 1635, having been raised and educated by his uncle, Henry Rolfe. All trade and association with the Indians was temporarily prohibited. He petitioned, however, to seek his mother's people and was there well received.

Thomas took up the lands of his father and mother in Virginia and married Jane Poythress, daughter of Francis Poythress, a member of the House of Burgesses. They had one daughter, Jane Rolfe.

Jane Rolfe, granddaughter of Pocahontas, married Col. Robert Bolling in 1675. She died shortly after giving birth to her son, John

Bolling, in 1676. John Bolling is the beginning of the Bolling line, known as the "Red Bollings." After Jane Rolfe Bolling's death, Robert married Ann Stith. They had five sons and two daughters and began the line known as the "White Bollings." Robert Bolling would be the seventh great-grandfather of those in Greenville County who have linear connections.

The first recorded appearance of the name "Bolling" was in 1086. Robert's ancestry can be traced through recorded charts and deeds in Yorkshire, England, to 1165. Bolling Hall in Bradford, Yorkshire, is the ancestral seat of the Bollings. Tristram Bolling's son, Edward, by his second marriage was the descending line to Robert Bolling, who sailed to the New World to seek his fortune at the tender age of fourteen, which he did successfully. He was a highly regarded citizen, militiaman, member of the House of Burgesses, and the first of the Bolling line in this country.

Robert Bolling's plantation, called Kippax, was on the side of the James River near Petersburg. John Bolling lived at Cobbs. His plantation on the Appomattox River was also near Petersburg. William Byrd of Westover called it one the best homes in the country.

William Bolling of Bolling Hall had two deaf daughters and brought the Scottish teacher, John Brainwood, to Virginia to educate them and in time established the first school for the deaf in America at Cobbs Plantation.

Thomas Bolling's brother, the William Bolling whose line we are following, inherited Cobbs. Three of his four children and two grandchildren were deaf and mute. It will be noted that he married his first cousin, Elizabeth Gay. Prior to and after his time, unions with cousins, especially with the Randolph family, were frequently seen. Cobbs Plantation did not survive the Civil War, having been burned by the Union troops.

John Bolling, Jr., a member of the militia and the House of Burgesses, married Elizabeth Blair and contributed mightily to the Virginia population with twenty-two children, one of which was William. William was the eldest and received vast lands in present-day Henry County. He married Amelia Randolph (again a cousin) on January 1, 1755, at Curles Neck Plantation, the family home of the

Randolphs. They lived in Henry County on the land of his inheritance and a large tract from her father in the same area. This was also a time of great movement south and west, clearing land for cultivation and travel. One route used was known as "Bolling's Path." Such paths were eventually widened for horses and carts.

William Bolling joined the troopers as a sergeant and was with George Washington in the French and Indian War in 1757. Eighteen years later he took allegiance against George III and enlisted with his three sons in the Henry County militia. It is recorded that Colonel William Bolling died in service in 1776.

William's son, Samuel Bolling, had joined the Henry County militia in 1775 along with his father and two brothers, John and Archibald. Also appearing on the list were Tully Choice, Sr. and his two sons, Tully, Jr. and William Choice.

Tully Choice was soon to be Samuel Bolling's brother-in-law. At the age of nineteen, Samuel married Abigail Choice. On September 6, 1780, Samuel and Abigail sold 207 acres on Snow Creek in Henry County. They joined with other relatives and friends, Choice and Tarrant, and headed south. The upper counties of South Carolina were settled mostly by Virginians. In the years 1784-1786, Samuel took up state land grants in the Ninety-Six District (later Laurens and Greenville Counties). He had two tracts on Rabon Creek below the Indian Boundary Line, one bordering his brother-in-law, Tully Choice, Jr. He had two other tracts totaling 1,024 acres. He was said to have built the first frame house in the upper part of South Carolina. He became a prosperous farmer and had ten children, one of whom was Tully Bolling, father of Thaddeus Bolling, who built the house at Tullyton Plantation. Abigail and Samuel are buried off Marlar Road, approximately three miles south of Tullyton. The old box graves with marble tops are all that remains on the site today. His name appears on the Lebanon Church Monument of Revolutionary soldiers. Tully Choice is buried one-and-a-half miles south of Tullyton on Craigo Road. Tully Bolling married Catherine Gaines. They had one child, Thaddeus.

Catherine Gaines is said to have died at her own hand at age thirty-six without further issue. Tully Bolling then married Mary Anne Mims with multiple issue. Two daughters married men from

Florida, and Tully developed extensive pursuits there including orange groves on the site of the present Disney World complex. He acquired the land that became Tullyton Plantation in 1839 and sold it to his son Thaddeus on the same day. He was interested in education and contributed to the establishment of the Greenville Female Academy. He was involved in the social and business life of Greenville Village and was credited with the prevention of a duel during a political discussion at the Mansion house in 1831. He died in 1844 and is buried along with his first wife, Catherine, at Fork Shoals Church Cemetery.

Thaddeus Choice Bolling built the present house at Tullyton Plantation and married Louisa Ware in 1840, taking residence that year. They had four children, two sons and two daughters. It was a tragic family in that Robert Tully was drowned in the St. Johns River while helping manage the family affairs in Florida. T. C. Bolling's second son, Pendleton, left Furman without graduating to join the Confederate forces. He was killed probably in the Wilderness Campaign, but the records are unclear. One daughter died in childbirth, and it is suggested that the other may have married a physical abuser.

Thaddeus Choice Bolling, despite the tragedies of his family, continued to expand his business interests in Greenville County, in Edgefield County, and in Florida. He became postmaster of Tullyton Post Office until its transfer to Cedar Falls in 1849. Tully Sullivan had been the first postmaster in 1820. At that time the post office was probably in the smaller structure, now in ruins, behind the present house. By T. C. Bolling's time, the post office was probably in the brick room of the main house.

T. C. Bolling sold the plantation to the Rev. Charles B. Stewart in 1859 and moved to Greenville, where he died in 1866. He and his wife Louisa, who outlived him many years, are buried in Springwood Cemetery.

The Bolling name is now extinct in this area. Many of Samuel's other male children moved west with the depletion of the land in 1820-1840 by poor agricultural practices.