

HOW MANY THOMAS'S?

Every family with roots in the early settlement of America has an Ancestor who was the first to make the crossing. In the Whitlock family this ancestor was Thomas Whitlock but the question has always been was there really only ONE Thomas? The more research I do into the 17th century settlement records for Virginia the more evidence there seems to be that there was not only more than one Thomas there was possibly four!!

Needless to say the scarcity of information has led to a blending of unrelated facts into one rather confusing puzzle. In this article I will attempt outline my reasons for believing the various Thomas Whitlocks were at least three separate persons. Firstly I think there is no question that the Thomas Whitlock 1620?-1703 who settled in New Jersey in the 1640's has no connection to the Thomas Whitlocks who appear in Virginia. So concentrating on the Virginia entries what do we have:

- 1.) A Thomas Whitlock transported by Richard Bennett (brother in law to Sir. Bulstrode Whitelocke) - 1638 strangely there is a Silvester Fitcher? (Thatcher?) with Thomas - Two names that are linked in later years.
- 2.) In May 1650 another Silvester Thatcher and Thomas Whitlock transported by Mr. James Williamson.
- 3.) In July 1650 Robert Bird takes land next to that of Silvester Thatcher and Thomas Whitlock but the first record of land to Thatcher and Whitlock does not occur until Oct. 1650.
- 4.) Oct. 1656 Thomas Whitlock receives grant of 1000 acres - Thatcher is mentioned in grant but copy of such poor quality I cannot tell in what capacity. In 1662 Mr. John Hull says 1000 acs granted to Thatcher 6 Oct. 1656.
- 5.) 1659 Thomas Whitlock is dead, leaving his estate to wife Mary and young son Thomas. I would say Thomas was very young as his father entreats his mother "further I desire my said wife to be good to my...(br)ing him up in the fear of God & to let him be sent to School according as in her mature care shall be thought Good"
- 6.) 1678 Thomas Whitlock, Jr. is dead. He mentions in his will his Uncle Robert Gullock, his Mother Mary Whitlock and his sisters Katherine & Eliza Rowsey and his brother Edward Rowsey.
- 7.) 1680 Another? Thomas Whitlock is dead and Anthony Whitlock of Lambeth, Surrey, England is granted Letters of Administration.

QUESTIONS:

Q.) Are we talking about different Thomas Whitlocks.

A.) If Thomas had a valid will in 1659 why would Letters of Administration be granted in 1680? One possible explanation for this that in his will of 1659 Thomas Whitlock Sr. mentions that his son, Thomas is under age 21 and from the line "further I desire my said wife to be good to my ...(br)ing him up in the fear of God & to let him be sent to School according as in her mature care shall be thought Good." we get the impression Thomas Jr. is very young. Thus there is the possibility that Thomas Jr. was still not 21 at his death in 1678. This would mean the land being held in trust for him would revert to Thomas Sr.'s wife, Mary. Mary, in the meantime has remarried and thus lost her dower rights so is no longer the wife of Thomas Whitlock Sr. and cannot inherit the land in question. This would mean the granting of Letters of Administration to the next of kin, in this case to Anthony, nephew of Thomas Whitlock, Sr.

Q.) Are we talking about different parcels of land?

A.) On Apr. 5, 1682 James Whitlock, as Attorney for Anthony Whitlock sells to Thomas Swinburne "The land which Thomas Whitlock SENR died seized of according to patent dated 20 Feb. 1662. The patent of 20 Feb. 1662 relates to a Mr. John Hull purchasing 500 Acres of land "now in the possession of Silvester Thatcher".."being part of 1000 acres granted to Silvester Thatcher 6 Oct. 1656". Thus, yes, we seem to be talking about the same parcel of land. This is further born out by the absence of any deeds referring to a Thomas Whitlock, neighbour of a Thomas Whitlock so it appears that the only Thomas Whitlocks on the Rappahannock River were Thomas Whitlock (1615-1659) and Thomas Whitlock (1658?-1678), father and son.

Q.) If Thomas's mother had married again and the Rowseys were Thomas' half brothers and sisters then why was his mother's name not Mary Rowsey?

A.) Thomas may still have referred to his mother as Mary Whitlock even though she was now Mrs. Rowsey.

Q.) Anthony was heir to Thomas Whitlock born in 1615, a fact we know from the deposition given by John Whitlock (1625-1708) and Johanna (Whitlock) Harris (1617-1684) in 1680. Thus Thomas Whitlock (b.1615) has to be Thomas Whitlock the elder because in 1659 Thomas Whitlock Jr. was under 21. Why then is Anthony inheriting land belonging to Thomas Whitlock who died in 1659?

A.) Again could it be that Thomas Whitlock Jr. was still not 21 by the time of his death in 1678? Thus the land did not yet belong to him? This is partially born out by the hint that Thomas Jr. was very young when his father died in 1659.

Thus a review of the facts seems to point the following: firstly there were three Thomas Whitlocks who were early settlers in America, Thomas Whitlock (1620?-1703) who settled in New Jersey in the 1640's, Thomas Whitlock born in Wokingham, Berkshire in 1615 and died in Rappahannock County in 1659, Thomas Whitlock Jr. born in Virginia about 1658 and died there in 1678.

Secondly because Thomas Whitlock died before age 21 he had not yet inherited the land held in trust for him and no mention of land is made in his will. (Confirmed by Lucy Atkins.pmw). Thirdly because Mary (Gullock) Whitlock had remarried she was no longer eligible to inherit her late husband's estate and it went to the next of kin, Anthony Whitlock of Lambeth, Surrey, England.

The only way to solve this mystery then seems to be to determine Thomas Whitlock Jr.'s age at the time of his death in 1678. If he was under 21 then the foregoing is likely and if not then we are back at square one.

Of course the question still remains is who was James Whitlock of Virginia who acted as attorney for Anthony Whitlock as it is clear none of the American families are direct descendants of either of the Thomas Whitlocks of Virginia. All the clues certainly point to the Whitlocks of Virginia being part of the Whitlocks of Wokingham family but finding the connection is another matter.