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John Glassford and Company

I found the "[Inventory of Goods and Chattels](#)" for my ggggggrandfather, Samuel Pruitt and it reveals he was indebted to John Glassford and Company, the prominent mercantile firm engaged in the tobacco trade in Virginia and Maryland. I understand that the extensive surviving [records](#) of this firm are maintained on microfilm by the Library of Congress. I'm curious if anyone is familiar with these records and if there is a place other than the Library of Congress where the content can be examined. Thanks, and I hope everyone has a great New Year. I hope one of your New Year's resolutions is to work even harder on your Pruitt-Pruett-Prewitt genealogy and help your fellow genealogists on this site.

Comments



Karen Schooler (James Pruitt) Jan 7, 12

I think it is that you are the administrator for this site (cousin!) You are doing a terrific job, too!

I think that it's great that you are checking into this "indebtedness." I wish that this information would include the name of Samuel Pruitt's parents! It would answer so many questions if we were able to verify who his parents really are. There are so many different ideas on family trees on the Internet, and it's difficult to know what records people are using to base their trees on! I'm happy that our DNA matches confirm that the Samuel I - Samuel II - Samuel III - Samuel IV - James Montgomery part of our Pruitt family tree must be accurate!



Bill Pruiett Jan 7, 12

Thank you, Karen. It looks like I'll have to visit the Library of Congress to view the records of John Glassford and Co. There are a couple of years of records from Bladensburg (1753-1754) that overlap Samuel Pruitt's lifetime. There's also a Prince George's Co. List of Debts for 1767 that might be of interest. Bladensburg was/is in PG County, but Samuel lived nearby in Frederick Co. (later Montgomery Co.). I don't hold out much hope that there will be anything in these records about Samuel's parents, but I agree that's the holy grail of our research right now. I also agree about all the bogus information on other sites, like [Ancestry.com](#), about Samuel's family tree and economic circumstances. It appears that Samuel Pruitt I was a fairly common planter of his day. Most tobacco farmers leased their land from one of the major landowners of the time (like the Beale's in Samuel's case) and they ran up debts because of the ups and downs of the business. They didn't pass on much to their children either, and in this case, Samuel's sons felt it was necessary to head south to Virginia in search of land after the death of their father.

It would be interesting to see if any of the Virginia Pruitts are in Glassford's Virginia records. I'm not familiar with some of the locations mentioned in the LOC index of records, like Boyd's Hole and Cabin Point. If any of the Virginia Pruitts want me to search any locations and years on their Pruitts, just include a post here. I think information like this helps us flesh out the lives of our ancestors. To me, that's the most rewarding part of doing this kind of research.



Megan Lounsberry Jan 16, 12

Hi Bill. So sorry I'm just getting around to this. I did a search in WorldCat to see what other libraries might have these microfilm. I was able to find a record for "Records, 1758-1817; John Glassford and Company." The summary of content is "Filmed from the originals in the Library of Congress. Contains v. 164-228 (account books for Virginia) of the Records of John Glassford and Company. / Reproduction: Microfilm. / [Washington, D.C.] / Library of Congress Photoduplication Service. / 1980. / 20 microfilm reels ; 35 mm. / Bio/History : Scottish mercantile firm in Glasgow." These can be found at Prince William Public Library in Va and Colonial Williamsburg Found Res Libr, Williamsburg, VA.

I also found "Records of John Glassford and Company, 1743-1886 (bulk 1760-1820). The abstract for this WorldCat records reads, "Ledgers, journals, daybooks, inventories, cashbooks, and letterbooks of the various mercantile firms in Maryland and Virginia representing or succeeding the Glasgow, Scotland, firm of John Glassford and Company in the Chesapeake tobacco trade. Under the name Glassford and Company, the firm operated stores in Maryland at Baltimore, Bladensburg, Chaptico, Georgetown (later part of Washington, D.C.), Leonardtown, Lower Marlboro, Newport, Nottingham, Piscataway, Port Tobacco, and Upper Marlboro. Stores were operated in Alexandria and Colchester, Va., under the name Glassford, Henderson & Co., and at Dumfries and Norfolk, Va., under Glassford, Gordon, Monteath & Co. Successor and related firms represented include Boyle, Scott & Co.; Findlay, Hopkins & Co.; Henderson, Fergusson & Gibson; James Brown & Co.; James Gordon & Co.; Jamieson, Johnstone & Co.; Shortridge, Gordon & Co.; Thompson, Edelen & Company; and Vincent & Fergusson. Individuals represented include William Bayles, William Byrd III, John Campbell, Landon Carter, George William Fairfax, Robert Fergusson, William Fitzhugh, Henry Glassford, John Glassford, James Gordon, Alexander Hamilton, Archibald Henderson, Neil Jamieson, Henry Lee, Richard Lee, George Mason, Walter Monteath, George Plater, Henry Riddell, Hector Ross, George Washington, and Lawrence Washington." These can be found at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens, Library of Congress, and Center For Research Libraries in Chicago, IL.

And lastly, Records, 1758-1817 John Glassford and Company. Abstract: These papers include ledgers, journals, cash sales, lists of debts, firm accounts of the company and its successors; also included are records of transactions of several large firms, which, by a system of branch stores, supplied areas in Maryland and Virginia. Prominent names found in these records are George Mason, Col. Henry Lee, George William Fairfax, Edward Washington, Captain George Plater, Col. Benjamin Young, Captain William Baylis, Hector Ross, and Richard Lee. This is located at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library in Delaware.

Sorry for such a long post, but I wanted to be descriptive and hopefully not waste your time. Also, you may have already found this info; my apologies, if so. You may be able to interlibrary loan these materials through your local library. I work at LSU's Interlibrary Loan department, so if ever, you have questions or need help with locating materials, please feel free to ask.



Bill Pruiett Jan 17, 12

Thank you, Megan, for so thoroughly researching this. The Prince William Public Library is relatively close to me, but if they only have Virginia records, that won't help. My next step will be to call the Library of Congress and see about the interlibrary loan possibility. Otherwise, I'll head down to DC and take a look in person.

I did a little checking on Stephen West, the other creditor listed on Samuel Pruitt's Inventory, and he was a prominent Maryland merchant. Poor Elizabeth (Hawker) Pruitt, Samuel's widow, must have had quite a few debts to take care of when Samuel died. No wonder she married John Riddle so soon after the death of her husband, and no wonder the sons immediately headed for far southern Virginia. While Samuel Pruitt's having debts was not unusual for Maryland tobacco planters during this time, it must have been tough on the entire family when he died.



George Farris, Jr. Jan 17, 12

Hi Bill:

Sometimes we just have to pay it forward. Presently, I'm driving to Pittsylvania County, VA to research my Witcher line. However, I live in DC and I'm willing to do what I can to assist you with your LOC problem. Try giving me a call on my mobile (202) 368-6666.

Fraternal regards,
George

FARRIS
CPT, IN
USA, (R)



Bill Pruiett Jan 18, 12

Thanks, George. I talked to someone at the LOC yesterday and he suggested I come there on a Saturday to avoid the traffic. I think it's going to be pretty tedious going through the microfilm, but if I can find a relevant ledger account or other record, it might provide a little insight into how the Maryland Pruitts lived. I'll be looking for other linked family names including the Hawkers/Hockers, Butts, Selbys, Duwalls and Boydstons.



A.L. Murphy Jan 24, 12

So the Pruitts also have a cross over to the Montgomery lines also huh? One of my great grandmothers was a Jane Montgomery that married a Ramsay/Ramsey. I know in the Smith Family genealogy book they listed a Hugh Montgomery migrating from Maryland to Anson county, NC among their family, I believe.

Also if these individuals had interplay with George Washington, a lot of it will be noted among George's diaries that can be read on the National Archives website, I believe it is; in his own personal notations. Also many of the letters sent to him at Mt. Vernon by his various business Overseers of his business interests in a couple of states are posted there to with commentaries on different individuals. Some of these are golden nuggets of information of different families.

As well as I remember William Ramsey of Alexandria, VA was a representative of the above company also with Scottish Investments and was a personal friend of George Washington. William among other things seem to speculate in land holdings and bought several among the Ramsey family, especially out in W. VA when things started heating up during the French and Indian Wars. Washington himself had a farm and business (general store or farm supplies) in this WV area and got his apprenticeship as a surveyor and his first commission, along with his first command in this same area of WV.



Karen Schooler (James Pruitt) Jan 25, 12

My ggggrandfather was James Montgomery Pruitt, son of Samuel Pruitt IV and Adecia D. Farlow Montgomery. I believe her grandfather was a Hugh Montgomery; however, he moved from Virginia to South Carolina - probably not the Hugh Montgomery you're talking about.

That's interesting about George Washington's records . . .



Bill Pruiett Jun 24, 12

I finally made it to the Library of Congress to see the Glassford ledgers. Unfortunately, the only surviving records that overlapped the years Samuel Pruitt and his family lived in Maryland were from the year 1753. Looking through all the records for that year, I found none that mentioned the Pruitts. However, I did find records for other families that lived in Samuel's neighborhood of Rock Creek, Frederick Co., Md. For example: the Duwall and Owen families whose sons married Pruitt daughters; John Riddle who married Samuel Pruitt's widow, Elizabeth (Hawker) Pruitt, after Samuel's death in late 1760; and the Snowden and Beall families which owned most of the land around Rock Creek (later part of Montgomery County, Md. and the District of Columbia). Samuel Pruitt leased land from Nathaniel Beall.

I was surprised to find records for the Swearingen and Butts families in the Glassford Rock Creek ledgers. I knew these families lived in Maryland around this time, but thought they lived further east and would have dealt with the Glassford outlet in Upper Marlboro, Md. What makes this interesting to me is that my mother was descended from Lydia Butts, the daughter of a Butts/Swearingen union. Lydia Butts married Elizabeth (Hawker) Pruitt's cousin, Ambrose Cook Hawker, around 1759 in Frederick Co., Md. and their daughter, another Elizabeth Hawker, married William Seal, my mother's ggggrandfather, in Pittsylvania Co., Va. in 1790. Now, I know that the ancestors of my mother and father lived near each other even earlier than I originally thought. The families probably came in contact with each other in Maryland in the 1730s and 1740s. After the early 1800s, the families took separate paths, the Seals going to Tennessee and the Pruitts later going to Ohio. When my mother and father met outside a bus station in Cincinnati in 1942, little did they know they were reuniting families with such a long history together.



Bill Pruiett
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