

Heathcock Genealogy Database - Person Sheet



Name Ursula Fleming  ³⁰³⁰, 8G Grandmother

Birth England or VA

Death VA

Spouses

1 Capt. George Keeling , 8G Grandfather

Birth ca 1635, England¹⁷⁴⁹

Children Ursula (ca1660-)

Mary (1684-)

Richard

Notes for Ursula Fleming

Quite a few family websites carry a tree that asserts that Capt. George Keeling and Ursula Fleming were parents of Ursula Fleming, who married Thomas Henderson. However, I have not seen hard evidence, such as a will or family bible record, of the relationship.

Likewise, dozens of online family trees assert that Ursula Fleming was a descendant of the Scottish Earls of Wigton.³⁰³⁶ However, this remains controversial.

An early seed for the belief that the Virginia Flemings were descended from the Earls of Wigton was an ancient Fleming family letter, that was related in Volume 23 of the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography around 1900:

"An old record preserved in the Fleming family states that the immigrant ancestor was 'Sir Thomas Fleming, second son of the Earl of Wigdon in Scotland who married in England Miss Tarleton, and came to Virginia in 1616, settling first at Jamestown and afterwards removing to New Kent County 'where he lived and died.' Besides several daughters he left three sons 'Tarleton, John and Charles.' How far this statement in regard to the descent from the Earl of Wigton is correct has never been investigated, but certainly the date given for the immigration is too early. There may be other errors in the tradition.... It is quite possible that the Virginia Flemings descended from one of the younger sons of the Earl. A letter written in Virginia more than a hundred years ago which states that one of the family, the older brother of Judge Wm. Fleming, was then heir to the Earldom of Wigton, shows the antiquity of the tradition."

A related version, asserting that a Thomas Fleming, 2nd son of John Fleming was the Virginia immigrant, appeared in an 1880 book by Montgomery Seaver, entitled "Family Fleming Records." Seaver gave the following chronology:

- John Fleming 5th Lord Fleming: succeeded to title on death of brother James in 1558. Had issue:
- John Fleming 6th Lord Fleming of Biggar and Cumbernault, created, 1606, Earl of Wigton: d. 1619, and
- SIR THOMAS FLEMING: Knt, emigrated to the Va. Colony, 1616; lived in Kent County.

However, both these articles are incorrect in one important aspect--John Fleming, the 5th Lord Fleming and 2nd Earl of Wigton, did not have a son named Thomas.

In a 1957 book entitled "Finding Your Forefathers in America," by Archibald Bennett,³⁰³⁷ the Scottish Fleming families who held the earldom were analyzed. The John Fleming who was the 1st Earl of Wigton (d 1619) had four sons, John (2nd Earl), James, Malcolm, and Alexander. He does not appear to have had a son named Thomas.

On the other hand, Bennett concludes that John Fleming, 2nd Earl of Wigton (d 1650) had a son named Alexander Fleming, a merchant, who married Elspeth Anderson around 1644 and who disappeared from Scottish records shortly thereafter. In the meantime, the Wigton title passed to Alexander's brother, John Fleming, who became 3rd Earl of Wigton in May 1650, and died in 1665 leaving sons John and William. John Fleming became the 4th Earl of Wigton but died without issue, whereupon his younger brother William Fleming became the 5th Earl of Wigton. William's sons John (d 1744) and Charles (d 1747) became, respectively, the 6th and 7th Earls of Wigton. Neither had male issue and the Wigton earldom in Scotland had died out.

Bennett believed that Alexander Fleming, the 2nd son of the 2nd Earl of Wigton, who disappeared from the Scottish records shortly after his marriage in 1646 was the Alexander Fleming who came to Virginia in 1649-50. He came to be known as Captain Alexander Fleming and is well documented in early Virginia records.

However, both the 1880 Seaver book and the 1957 Bennett book have been soundly criticized and the possible connection of the Virginia Flemings with the Scottish Earls of Wigton is still controversial (see the Fleming family

forum on Genforum.com and search Wigton or Seaver).

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If the early Virginia Alexander Fleming was indeed the 2nd son of the 2nd Earl of Wigton, there is still a problem in identifying a son or sons who may have perpetuated the Fleming name in Virginia. The Scottish Alexander Fleming married Elspet (or Elizabeth) Anderson, in Scotland in the 1640s. Bennet concludes, partly on the basis of headright listings, that Alexander Fleming came to America along with his wife Eliza Fleming and son John Fleming, and possibly grandsons named Christopher, Patrick and William Fleming.

An early account of the FLEMING - EARL OF WIGTON.³⁰³⁸

The following report was written by Clayton Heathcock in Oct 2011 after a study of this matter:

Case for Captain Alexander Fleming of Early Virginia being Alexander Fleming, 2nd Son of John Fleming, 2nd Earl Wigton of Scotland.

Charles Woodson (b ca 1712) was son of Tarleton Woodson and Ursula Fleming, first cousins who were married 3 June 1710. He was an educated man who was had an interest in family history. He compiled a family history based on his research and the manuscript was distributed among his family members and their descendants. The manuscript would have been written in the late-1700s. The "letter" was referred to in an article printed in the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 23, page 214 (published around 1900):

"An old record preserved in the Fleming family states that the immigrant ancestor was 'Sir Thomas Fleming, second son of the Earl of Wigton in Scotland who married in England Miss Tarleton, and came to Virginia in 1616, settling first at Jamestown and afterwards removing to New Kent County 'where he lived and died.' Besides several daughters he left three sons 'Tarleton, John and Charles.' How far this statement in regard to the descent from the Earl of Wigton is correct has never been investigated, but certainly the date given for the immigration is too early. There may be other errors in the tradition.... It is quite possible that the Virginia Flemings descended from one of the younger sons of the Earl. A letter written in Virginia more than a hundred years ago which states that one of the family, the older brother of judge Wm. Fleming, was then heir to the Earldom of Wigton, shows the antiquity of the tradition."

Charles also wrote the following marginal note in a book:

"John Fleming, brother of the late Judge Fleming, of the court of appeals in Virginia, was heir to the earldom and estates of Wigton. He was an officer of the American Revolution and fell in the service of his country, refusing to leave her service for the immense estates and earldom of Wigton."

The note isn't dated but it must have been written after the Revolution. Finally, before his death, Charles Woodson had a new frame put on an old looking glass and on the new frame he inscribed:

"This glass belonged to Stephen Tarleton who was my great-grandfather and died in the year 1687. I have had the present frame put on it this 14th day of December, 1794."

This shows that Charles Woodson did have some interest in his ancestors. The great grandfather Stephen Tarleton was born in New Kent Co VA in the 1630s. He was a tobacco appraiser and was In Bacon's Rebellion.

Charles's story is partly incorrect, but given that it was first enunciated about 1780, it has to be taken seriously. He was born about 1712, only about 2-3 generations after the original immigrants would have arrived in Virginia (recall that he was the great grandson of a man who was born about 1635 and who would have known many of the original Virginia immigrants).

The feasibility of the Fleming family tradition was carefully evaluated by Archibald Bennett, in a 1957 book entitled "Finding Your Forefathers in America," and most of the facts I cite come from this source.

Judge William Fleming did have an older brother named John Fleming, but he died in 1767, before the American Revolution began. It was his son, also named John Fleming, who died in the Battle of Princeton on 3 January 1777. Also, if there really was a Fleming immigrant who was a male heir to the Wigton title, that man could not have been named Thomas Fleming. John Fleming, the 2nd Earl of Wigton, who died in 1650, had only three sons, John, who succeeded to the title as 3rd Earl but died without issue, Alexander, and William Fleming, who died with out issue in 1646. The succeeding Earls of Wigton, John (4th Earl), William (5th Earl) John (6th Earl) and Charles (7th Earl) died without sons (excepting those who succeeded to the title).

Therefore, while there is a kernel of plausibility in the idea that their could have been male Flemings in early Virginia who had a legitimate claim to the Wigton title, such a person could only have descended through Alexander Fleming, the 2nd son of the 2nd Earl of Wigton, since the possible male heirs of all of the Earls of Wigton from John Fleming, 1st Earl of Wigton, who died in 1619 either held the title or died without male heirs—except Alexander Fleming, the

2nd son of the 2nd Earl of Wigton.

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It turns out that there was an Alexander Fleming who came to Virginia about 1650. He came to be known as Captain Alexander Fleming and purchased land in Lancaster Co VA in 1655. Furthermore, there is no record of Alexander Fleming, 2nd son of the 2nd Earl of Wigton, in Scottish records after about 1644. Archibald Bennett also examined the 1672 will of Sir William Fleming, Alexander's brother. Sir William's heirs are "sister's children of the said Sir William" but there is no mention of a brother or children of a brother. Bennett concludes that if Alexander Fleming had been alive in Scotland, or had living children in Scotland in 1672, they would have been mentioned in the will. Captain Alexander Fleming died in Virginia in late 1668 or early 1669. He had children, but they may not have been known in Scotland.

There actually had been a claimant to the Wigton title, and the claim was eventually denied by the House of Lords. When Charles Fleming, 7th Earl of Wigton, died without issue in 1747, the earldom was temporarily assumed by Charles Ross Fleming, who claimed to be great grandson of the elder Alexander Fleming, 4th son of the 1st Earl of Wigton. The House of Lords examined his claim, expressed doubts about the authenticity of the documents on which the claim was based, and debarred him from the title on 25 March 1762. At this time, the Wigton title became dormant or extinct. Therefore, after that time, if a bona fide descendant of Alexander Fleming was still alive, he would actually have been the legal heir to the Wigton earldom and lands.

The very fact that Charles Ross Fleming assumed the Wigton title on 22 May 1747 is strong evidence that Alexander, son John Fleming, 2nd Earl Wigton, was not in Scotland. Nor could any of his sons have been in Scotland, as they would have had claim to the title, possibly priority claim since they would have been closer relatives of the recently deceased Earl. However, Alexander Fleming was in Scotland on 2 April 1646 when he was described as a merchant and was admitted a Burgess and Guild Brother, having married Elspeth, lawful daughter to the dec. William Anderson (Scottish Record Society 56:118; quoted by Bennett). This congruity of dates seems compelling to me—Alexander Fleming, who would have been an obvious heir to the Wigton title, was in Scotland in April 1646, but not around to challenge Charles Ross Fleming when he assumed the title just 13 months later, in May 1747. Very likely, he was not there because he had gone to Virginia!

There is evidence from headrights (N. M. Nugent, Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents) of the following Fleming immigrants:

Alexander Fleminge, 250 acs. 1658, for transportation of 5 persons
 Mr. Alex Fleming, 400 acs. 9 Dec 1662, for transportation of 8 persons
 Mr. Alexander Fleming, 280 acs. 20 Feb 1662, purchased from Jno. Barrow
 Mr. Alex. Fleming, 800 acs. 18 Mar 1662, purchased from Walter Dickeson
 Capt. Alexander Fleming, 250 acs. 1655, granted originally to Mr. Wm. Smart
 Capt. Alexander Fleming, 300 acs. Mar 1664, granted originally to Clemt. Herbert but deserted
 Cha. Flemin, 18 Feb 1653, one of 20 transported by Francis Emperor, Hugh Gale & Edward Morgan (shipowners)
 Patrick Flemin, 12 Oct 1652, one of 14 transported by Anthony Hoskins
 Christopher Fleminge, 1 Sep 1653, one of 200 transported by Col. William Clayborne
 Eliza. Fleming, 2 July 1650, one of 6 transported by John Oliver
 John Fleming, 8 Nov 1653, one of 25 transported by Joseph Croshaw
 John Fleminge, 250 acs, 28 Feb 1658, for transportation of 5 persons
 John Fleming, 493 acs. 20 Mar 1661, for transportation of 10 persons
 Richard Fleming, 29 Aug 1643, one of 15 transported by Robert Haies
 Robert Fleming, 8 Jan 1643, one of 9 transported by Thomas Dew, Gent.
 Willm. Fleminge, 16 Sep 1663, one of 10 servts transported by Coll. Abraham Wood

What do we make of this? Under the prevailing law, a person was entitled to patent 50 acres for himself and another 50 acres for each person for whom he paid passage from England to Virginia.

First, the date land was patented does not reveal when the immigrant for whom the headright was granted actually immigrated. It was not uncommon for people to locate and patent land, using headrights earned by people who had immigrated earlier, in some cases years earlier. Therefore, the date of the patent only tells us that the person for whom the headright was earned immigrated before that date.

One thing that is clear from the Fleming references in Cavaliers and Pioneers is that Alexander Fleming was a man of considerable wealth, since he patented a lot of land (more than 3000 acres)—much for people for whom he financed the England to Virginia passage but most land that he bought. This would be consistent with Alexander Fleming having been wealthy in England before he immigrated to America.

Bennett believed that the Eliza. Fleming, whose headright was used by John Oliver in 1650, was Elspet (Elizabeth) Anderson Fleming, wife of Alexander Fleming in Scotland. He also thought that Charlse Fleming, whose headright was exercised by Francis Emperor, Hugh Gale & Edward Morgan, was the son of Alexander Fleming, and that Charles Fleming was the son of John (and therefore grandson of Alexander). New Kent County deeds confirm that

Charles was the son of John Fleming—their lands in New Kent Co VA adjoined and after John Fleming died, Charles Fleming patented 100 acres originally granted to John Fleming.

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Others of the early Flemings who are mentioned in Cavaliers and Pioneers could also have been from the family. The most intriguing are Richard Fleming and Robert Fleming, both of whom earned headrights that were exercised in 1643. This was before Alexander Fleming could have left Scotland because he was named Burgess and Guild Brother, in 1646. Of course, it is possible that they were sons of Alexander and preceeded him to the New World. However, Robert was described as a servant and it doesn't seem likely that the son of a London merchant would be so described.

Patrick, Christopher and William are also mysteries. William was a name used in Scotland in the Fleming family, so he could reasonably have been another son of Alexander Fleming. Bennett wrote in 1957 that Charles, William and perhaps Christopher were sons of John Fleming, who was himself son of Alexander Fleming. Although Charles and William Fleming appear in later Virginia records, no more is seen of Christopher, Patrick or Robert Fleming.

Notes for George (Spouse 1)

George Keeling was born circa 1635. He married Ursula Fleming, circa 1658. She was possibly the daughter of Thomas and Judith Ursula Tarleton Fleming, and was born circa 1639. **[Note. Ursula's father was not Thomas Fleming--this is an incorrect legend.]**

George was elected Captain of the Militia on July 4, 1702, and Sheriff of New Kent County, on April 28, 1708. He was a Justice of the Peace in New Kent County, Virginia, and served as a member of the Vestry of St. Peter's Parish. Ursula Fleming Keeling died circa 1700, in New Kent County, Virginia, and her husband, George, died circa 1720, in Granville County, North Carolina.³⁰³⁴

It has been reported that Captain George Keeling was vestryman of Blissland Parish in New Kent Co about 1725 (Blissland Parish Vestry Book of the Episcopal Theological Seminary, near Alexandria.)³⁰³⁵

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