



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 175

Name: Bland, Damoris (___) Wyatt

Dates: (- aft 1679)

Colonial Society: MD

Date added to ROA: 10-8-2024

Service: Midwife; Historic Founder (migrated to Maryland, c. 1649)

Authority: Merritt, Elizabeth, ed., Archives of Maryland, Vol. 66...(Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1954), 261; Newman, Harry Wright, Anne Arundel Gentry (Maryland: s.p., 1933), 347.

Biography:

Damoris's birth date and last name at birth are not known. She was apparently a widow with a daughter, Mary, when she married Nicholas Wyatt.

Nicholas and Damoris lived in Lower Norfolk County, Virginia, but moved to Maryland around 1649. They were among the earliest settlers on the Severn River, near present-day Annapolis. Little is known about Nicholas. He was a Puritan who became a Quaker after moving to Maryland. He was fined for refusing to swear an oath and refusing to bear arms in the militia. He "seems to have acquired vast wealth. . . while living a virtually anonymous life."

Damoris served her community as a midwife. A court case, which refers to her as an "approved midwife," gives a glimpse of her activities. The case alleges that Edward Gardner asked Damoris to "take One Dorothy Bruton into her house who was then very Sick and bigg with Child and . . . entertaine and take care off and administer such things as she the said Damoris should thinke convenient for her." Damoris cared for Dorothy for twenty-one days, apparently successfully, but she had to go to court to get paid. Another court case mentions a woman left for Damoris "to cure her of a sore legg," suggesting that Damoris was a healer as well as a midwife.

Damoris and Nicholas had two children: Sarah and Samuel. Sarah married Edward Dorsey, a successful young planter who would rise to prominence in the Maryland courts and legislature. Samuel died young, between 1671 and 1673.

Nicholas died in 1673. Damoris married Thomas Bland, an attorney, around 1675.

Two years before he died, Nicholas had dictated a brief will while he was seriously ill. That will gave a plantation to each of his children and made Damoris his executor. Damoris's son-in-law, Edward Dorsey, caused Nicholas's will to be voided and had himself appointed administrator of Nicholas's estate. There



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followed several years of contentious litigation between Damoris and the Blands and the Dorseys. The litigation was eventually resolved in 1679. No surviving records mention Damoris after that date.