

# Bynums in America

John Bynum (c1616 – 1691): The First Two Generations

**1. John Bynum (c1616 – 1691)** John Bynum, the ancestor of the majority of American Bynums, makes his first appearance in Surry County, Virginia in 1663. Surry County had been formed in 1652 from the part of James City County which lay south of the James River. Records before 1652, which were kept in the James City courthouse, no longer exist and there is no mention of John Bynum in the first ten years of Surry records, nor in any Virginia patent records. With no record of John Bynum prior to 1663, the question of his origin may never be answered. However, it seems likely that he had been in Virginia prior to 1663, since a later record indicates he was in his late 40s at the time, a relatively old age for a recent immigrant.

On 28 February 1662/3, the widow of Henry Meadow sold 100 acres to “John Bineham”, apparently carrying out an agreement between her late husband and Bineham.[1] On 5 December 1663, George and Margaret Blow sold parts of a patent granted to Blow earlier that year, one of them to “John Bynam”. [2] Both of these parcels were within a mile of one another, in the eastern part of Surry County near the Isle of Wight county line. The parcel purchased from George Blow was located just west of Green Swamp, on the south side of a creek which is now called Mill Creek. John Bynum would live on this land for almost sixteen years.

The first surviving tithables list for Surry County is the 1668 tax list, on which John Bynum is listed as a single tithable. He was listed thereafter in the annual Surry tithables through 1690, for the first several years being adjacent to Richard Smith, who had married George Blow’s widow and who was apparently living on Blow’s land.[3] In each tithables list he was enumerated in Lawnes Creek parish, the parish covering the extreme eastern segment of Surry County.

He is mentioned relatively infrequently in other records, appearing in neither the court nor deed records for fifteen years after his land purchase. In late 1678 he was one of several persons indicted for not attending church, but successfully pleaded that “he did frequently goe to church before his sickness and that at the last court he was desperately sick.”[4] A few months later, on 4 March 1679, the inventory of John Twyford was presented to the Surry court by Richard Smith, who had married Twyford’s widow Mary (his former wife Margery Blow Smith evidently having died). According to this record, a small piece of land belonging to Twyford had been leased to John Bynum.[5] Later the same year, on 29 September 1679, John Bynum sold to Richard Jordan Sr. the land he had purchased from George Blow back in 1663.[6] The deed was signed by the marks of John and Rosamond Bynum, thus giving us our first mention of his wife. When both appeared in court on 6 January 1680 to acknowledge the sale, the clerk recorded her as “Rose his wife”.[7]

He apparently sold that land to move onto 215 acres for which a patent was issued eighteen months later on 23 April 1681.[8] This land was located on the Mill Branch (a different stream) about three miles further south but still near the Isle of Wight County line. Later that year, on 1 October 1681, John Bynum and his wife Rosamond sold 100 acres of this land “on the west side of the branch John now lives on” to William Webb.[9] The remaining portion 100 or so acres of the patent would remain in the Bynum family for several decades.

In the 1681 tithables, “Jno. Byneham Senr. & Junr.” are listed, the first appearance of his elder son. The following year, his son James Bynum first appears in the tithables. Through 1684, both sons are listed in the tithables with or near their father in Lawnes Creek parish. But by 1685, both sons were listed with Richard and George Blow, sons of George Blow Sr., in Southwarke parish. They were apparently living on Richard Blow’s land on Pigeon Creek, several miles to the northwest and across the parish border, perhaps with their older sister.

John Bynum’s birth year is roughly established by a subsequent court record. In May 1687 he petitioned the Surry Court: “*that he is seaventy yrs of age and thereby soe disabled that he is hardly able to keepe himself from being a parish charge and therefore humbly prayed that he might be exempted from paying levies, beareing of armes, and cleareing of high waies, and it appearing that he is very aged & poore, he is exempted for the future...*”[10] Beginning with the following year’s tax list, he was taxed only to the parish. This is a particularly interesting record because it suggests that he was in his late forties when he first appears in the Surry County records in 1663, and well into middle age when he married and had children. That is not inconsistent with the times, when men generally married late in life, partly due to the severe shortage of women, if at all. On the same day he made his petition, his wife Rosamond proved the will of their neighbor Alice Jordan.[11] Rosamond would evidently die before her husband, sometime in the next four years.

John Bynum appears in only a few other records, of a mostly inconsequential nature. In January 1687/8 he accused a neighbor named Joseph Wall of killing his yearling cow.[12] After a two-month delay, a jury was formed, found for Bynum, and awarded him three hundred pounds of tobacco in damages.[13] The loss of the cow was probably a serious one. When he died a few years later, the bulk of his estate consisted of one calf and three cows, one of which was barren.

This is nearly our final record for John Bynum. He appears in the June 1690 tithables, and for the first time was in Southwarke parish, apparently having moved to be near his sons. He is not in the June 1691 tithables, and had likely died before that list was compiled. On 7 July 1691 his eldest son John Bynum Jr. was granted administration of his father's estate.[14] At the same court, appraisers were appointed and John Bynum Jr. was ordered to produce an inventory. On 1 September 1691, John Bynum Jr. "*came into Court and declared that the appraisal of the said deceds Estate was burnt the last night in his house which by some accident with all that he had in it was burnt.*"[15] The inventory finally produced on 17 May 1692 showed a small estate, valued at 2,460 pounds of tobacco. It included "*one cow & calf, one barron cow, one yearling heipher, one old feather bed with a canvas ticking & ragged blkt, two old gunns, one iron pott & pott hooks, one brass mortar & pestle & brass ladle, one brass spoon, some old bowles & trays, one grubbing hoe, one old coate, one pr of old shooes & old stockings*" and some lumber and gunpowder.[16] There was no mention of Rosamond, nor any indication of a trade other than farming. From later records, it is clear that John Bynum Jr., the eldest son, inherited his father's land.

Rosamond Bynum is mentioned in the records only three times, all between 1679 and 1687. Whether she was married to John Bynum fifteen years earlier is impossible to determine. Thus we cannot be certain that she was the mother of the children. There are no clues to her age or to her maiden name. Some researchers have proposed the theory that she was a daughter of George and Margery Blow, but that is exceedingly unlikely (see Appendix).

John Bynum had two sons, John and James, and evidently a daughter named Elizabeth who married Richard Blow and then Robert Grice.

**ohn Bynum** (1664/5 – 1715) John Bynum, son of John Bynum I, first appears in the tithables in his father's Lawnes Creek parish household in 1681, suggesting he was born sometime in late 1664 or early 1665. (Males were taxable if they had reached the age of 16 by June 10 of the tax year, meaning that John Bynum turned 16 between June 1680 and June 1681.) He is listed as a tithable of his father in 1681, 1682 and 1683. In 1684 he is a tithable to a neighbor, Richard Jordan Jr., perhaps as an employee or apprentice. In 1685 and 1686, when he may have been of age, he is listed further west in Southwarke parish as a tithable of Richard Blow, probably his brother-in-law. It appears that he and his brother James had both moved from their father's plantation to live on Richard Blow's land at Pigeon Creek His first appearance in other records is his witness to a deed for nearby land on 6 July 1686, using a signature mark significantly different than his father's.[17] On 16 January 1687, George Blow Jr. sold him 100 acres on Pigeon Creek, part of Richard Blow's plantation which he had just recently gifted to his brother George Blow.[18] John Bynum evidently lived on this land for the remainder of his life. John Bynum is listed with George Blow Jr. in the 1687 tithables, alone in 1688, and as head of a household which included Robert Grice in 1689. Whomever he married, it probably took place about this time. Thereafter he is listed alone in the Southwarke parish tithables through 1703, the last year they exist.

He was administrator of his father's estate in 1691.[19] During that process, his house apparently burned down. On 1 September 1691 he "*came into court and declared that the appraisal of the said deceds estate was burnt the last night in his house which by some accident with all that he had in it was burnt.*"[20] He eventually produced an inventory on 17 May 1692.[21]

Like his father, John Bynum Jr. appears in few records. He appears next as a witness to the will of Elizabeth Simmons in 1695[22], was paid by the county for some unknown service in 1699[23], and served on the first of several juries in 1700. [24] He is listed among the Surry quit rents of 1704 holding 100 acres, the land he had purchased in 1687. He appears very infrequently in the court records as a creditor or debtor, though he is more often a creditor for modest sums.

Two references suggest he was a tradesman of some sort, perhaps a carpenter: The county paid him modest sums for "mending ye courthouse" in 1706 and for "mending ye prison" in 1711.[25] In the next record of interest, on 18 February 1713 he was granted a license to keep an ordinary at Ware Neck.[26] This license was evidently renewed on 19 May 1714.[27] Whether he was using his own house is unclear, but Ware Neck was not far from his land on Pigeon Creek.

On 20 July 1715, his widow Ann Bynum was granted administration of his estate, making oath "*that the sd Jno. Binum departed this life without making any will. . .*"[28] John Bynum had died owing two creditors, who sued Ann Bynum to recover from the estate. One of the debts was nearly £25, a reasonably substantial sum. When the suits were settled in 1716 she owed a total of nearly £30 to two creditors, who were paid out of the estate.[29] Ann Bynum had remarried to Robert Warren by 28 January 1717, when she and her new husband filed a supplemental inventory.[30] On 20 May 1719 they filed a final accounting, indicating that the majority of the estate had been used to pay the debts.[31]

The identity of his wife Ann is unknown. In fact, we cannot even be certain that she was the mother of his children since the only mention of her was after her husband's death. Some researchers have surmised that she was a sister or daughter of Robert Grice, whose 1720 will devised land to his "well beloved couzen John Bynam." [32] A close examination of the records discloses that this is extremely unlikely. Rather, it seems that Robert Grice was married to John Bynum's sister Elizabeth, the widow of Richard Blow, and that the "couzen" was his nephew. (see Appendix).

John Bynum had two sons, John and William. He may have had daughters, but the records don't offer us any clues that might identify any female children. Since he died intestate, his eldest son would have inherited his land. William Bynum was evidently the elder son, as a 1728 deed refers to the John Bynum land on Pigeon Swamp as William Bynum's.[33] Indeed, William Bynum sold that same land in 1730.[34]

**William Bynum** (c1690 – c1760) He migrated a few miles south of his father's lands, settling in Southampton County. [This line is continued in Chapter 3.](#)

**John Bynum** (c1695? – 1775) He migrated into the part of Lunenburg County which became Halifax and then Pittsylvania. [This line is continued in Chapter 4.](#) (See also the Appendix.)

**James Bynum** (1665/6 – c1723) His father appeared in all the Surry County tithables lists beginning with the earliest available list of 1668, but James Bynum appears for the first time in 1682, one year after his brother John. Males were taxable if they had reached the age of 16 by June 10 of the tax year, meaning that James Bynum turned 16 between June 1681 and June 1682. As the younger son, he may have been apprenticed to a neighbor named Marco McKinnie.[35] He was listed as a tithable of McKinnie in 1682 and 1683, in the same precinct of Lawnes Creek parish as his father. In 1684, he was listed as a tithable of George Morrell in the same precinct. In 1685 he and George Blow (Junior) were listed together, and his brother John Bynum was listed with Richard Blow, all in Southwarke parish. In 1686 he was back in Lawnes Creek parish, listed with Charles Savage. In 1687 he was again in Southwarke parish, listed with Richard Smith (who had married George Blow Sr.'s widow). From 1688 through the final surviving tithables list of 1704, he was individually taxed in Lawnes Creek parish. He was also, along with his brother John, listed in the Surry militia muster of 1687.[36]

James Bynum appears relatively infrequently in the deed and court records of Surry County. His first recorded land purchase was on 5 January 1691 when, as "James Bynham, planter", he bought 150 acres from Luke and Elizabeth Mizell on the north bank of the Blackwater River.[37] Luke Mizell sold an adjoining parcel to his brother Lawrence at the same time, which James Bynum would eventually acquire as well. Having become a freeholder, he was then eligible for jury service and other privileges. He began appearing in the Surry court records shortly thereafter, as a grand juror for the first of several times on 5 September 1693.[38] He would serve as a grand juror again in 1699.[39] On 14 July 1793, his wife Elizabeth Bynum witnessed and proved the nuncupative will of their neighbor Luke Mizell Jr.[40] After the widow failed to produce an inventory, James Bynum and three other neighbors were appointed to appraise the Luke Mizell estate on 1 May 1694.[41]

On 29 April 1698 James Bynum purchased 7 acres from Edward Newby which adjoined the land he already owned.[42] In 1701 the land south of the Blackwater was opened for patents, and James Bynum appears to have claimed 250 acres which he had surveyed in 1702.[43] There was no subsequent patent issued for the land, suggesting that he apparently temporarily abandoned plans to move across the river. A few years later, on 2 October 1703 he bought 100 acres adjoining his own land, the parcel that had belonged to Lawrence Mizell, from Lawrence's son Luke Mizell.[44] Curiously, there is no record of a subsequent sale of this land, and he evidently disposed of it almost immediately after the purchase. The 1704 Quit Rent roll shows him with only 157 acres, not the 257 he should have owned. This 157 acres was sold by James "Bineham" his wife Elizabeth on 2 July 1706, when it was described as the 150 acres bought from Luke Mizell in 1691 and the 7 acres purchased from Newby in 1698.[45] He used as his signature in this deed a distinctive "JB" mark, which he also used when witnessing other deeds.[46]

At that point he appears to have moved several miles south of the Blackwater into the part of Surry that was later Sussex County, in what had been Indian territory until it opened for patents in 1701. As mentioned above, in 1699 he had claimed 250 acres in the area and had it surveyed in 1702, though he never received a patent for it.[47] However, on 7 Mar 1705/6 he had 330 acres surveyed south of the Blackwater, and three days later had another 140 acres surveyed. [48] Patents for both the 330 acres and 140 acre parcels were issued eight years later, on 16 June 1714.[49] The two parcels adjoined one another north to south.

He clearly lived on the land he surveyed in 1706, for all subsequent references to him show that he was living in southern Surry County. He was security for James Turner's management of the estate of an orphan named Phillip Baily in southern Surry according to his petition of 25 November 1711.[50] and appears in one or two debt cases with people living in that area.[51] The will of George Nicholson, dated 12 February 1712/13 directed his heirs to confirm a sale to James Bynum of land between the Nottoway and Meherrin Rivers (in what was later either Sussex or Southampton County).[52] There is no deed for that land, so it's not clear if the sale was consummated.[53] He was then granted another 100 acres on Flatt Swamp, several miles further south, in neighboring Isle of Wight County near the North Carolina line on 11 April 1719.[54] This patent, which may have been posthumous, is the last record of James Bynum.

James Bynum evidently died sometime after April 1718, when the Surry court records cease, and the Fall of 1723. On 16 September 1723, William Bynum and his wife Mary sold both of James Bynum's two 1714 grants.[55] Several months

later, on 21 April 1724, "William Binam of...North Carilinah" sold the 1719 grant of 100 acres, describing it as a patent to "James Binam deceased."<sup>[56]</sup> Note that James Bynum's wife Elizabeth must also have been dead, else it would have been necessary for her to release her dower interest in these parcels.

Unfortunately, there are no Surry court orders for the period 1718-1741. James Bynum's estate records would have been among these missing records. Surry's wills do exist for the period, but there is no will recorded for James Bynum. Nor is one recorded in Isle of Wight County. He apparently died intestate, since it is clear that his eldest son was William Bynum, and it was he who inherited James Bynum's land. We can safely conclude that William Bynum was his son, and William Bynum's distinctive signature mark allows us to distinguish him from his first cousin of the same name. James Bynum's other children are inferred, but since we can distinguish the sons of his brother John Bynum, his children are clearly identifiable. James Bynum, by the time of his death, had moved considerably south of his brother, and his sons all seem to have moved into North Carolina at about the same time. I might also note that all the Bynums of Surry County used distinctive marks as their signatures, making it fairly easy to tell them apart. In addition, all three of the sons below migrated to the same area of Edgecombe County, North Carolina.

Elizabeth, the wife of James Bynum, was at one time thought by some to have been the daughter of Luke Mizell, but that seems extremely unlikely. No evidence exists that even hints at a relationship between the two families other than that they were neighbors for perhaps a three year period. (See separate explanation in the Appendix on the Mizell connection.)

**William Bynum** (c1690 – 1746) He appears to be the eldest son, based on his evidently inheriting James Bynum's lands. He migrated into North Carolina by 1724. This line is continued in Chapter 5.

**James Bynum** (1690s – 1763) That he was the son of James Bynum is suggested by geography, and by his association with William Bynum. This line is continued in Chapter 6.

**John Bynum ?** (c1700 – c1761?) The existence of a son named John is theorized, though he does not appear to have had children. Since it is unclear whether later references are to John, son of John (see 1.2 above), or to a second John Bynum (who must therefore be a son of James), the question is addressed in the Appendix.

**Elizabeth Bynum** (c1660? – by1720) We can make a reasonably good case that a daughter of John Bynum was the wife of, first, Richard Blow, and then of Robert Grice. She may have been his eldest child. This theory rests on two pieces of evidence: an apparent relationship between Richard Blow and the sons of John Bynum, and on the will of her second husband which calls a third-generation Bynum his "cousin." (See the Appendix for a more thorough and detailed explanation.)