
In Search of “Mr. Ball”: An Exercise in Finding Fathers

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Even for unconventional families, records can be found. Problems can be solved. Not in the traditional way, not with standard techniques, not by looking in the usual or easily available places—but records are there.

The problem is a classic “dead end.” A mother and her offspring emerge in a newly settled area. They create a few records, but not one states their origins or the identity of the husband and father. No male of that surname can be found in their area who might qualify for that role. Family tradition offers very little to help. Other researchers advance theories that complicate the problem rather than resolve it. What does a genealogist *do* with such a line? Are “traditional” assumptions reliable, or do they blind the researcher to alternative solutions? If conventional research fails, then how does one find the evidence to “prove” paternity and extend the line?

THE CASE

Margaret and Ferdinand Ball well illustrate the problem: a middle-aged mother with a young adult son, emerging in 1855 in newly formed Madison County, Texas.¹ No other male Ball had been found there contemporaneously. Over the next two decades, Margaret and Ferdinand created a handful of documents. Not one hinted at an identity for the missing husband and father. Ferdinand’s wife kept a Bible record—entering birth data for herself, Ferdinand, and Margaret. Insofar as that record goes, one might assume that Ferdinand was immaculately conceived. Aside from the 1860 and 1870 censuses of Madison, which agreed that mother and son were born somewhere in Louisiana, no evidence of origins seemed to exist.

Tradition offered little more. Margaret’s memory has been venerated, but no one could say with certainty the name Ferdinand’s father bore. Some thought it might be James, Ferdinand’s own middle name. According to a family account of “flip-flopped” names: Margaret’s son Ferdinand James named his first son James Ferdinand, who then named his own first son Ferdinand James. The pattern of transposition, they believed, dated back to Ferdinand’s own father—who should, therefore, be James or James Ferdinand.

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Descendants also related shreds of three other handed-down memories. *One*, when Ferdinand was an infant, his father went away on business and never came back; Margaret then took her young son to live with her family. *Two*, this “Mr. Ball” supposedly was a Virginian. *Three*, when Ferdinand’s children were small they were awakened one night by loud voices and a discordant scene. A “crippled trader” by the name of Ball had come by, but Ferdinand and his mother did not want him to stay. The only explanation that the children had for the old man’s rejection was, “he deals in slaves.” If the trader’s relationship was ever stated, it was not remembered.²

THE CLASSIC APPROACH

Family researchers pursued the problem in customary genealogical fashion. Moving back in time from the 1855 appearance of Margaret and Ferdinand in Madison County, Texas, they combed all censuses, all states, for 1850, 1840, and 1830—searching for the supposed family unit consisting of

Ball, <i>James?</i>	male	born	circa 1800	Virginia
" Margaret	female	born	25 November 1803?	Louisiana
" Ferdinand James	male	born	18 December 1824	Louisiana

No such family unit was found. They next proceeded to search published abstracts of every state—for all individuals named James, Margaret, or Ferdinand Ball. Each likely possibility was pursued in repositories with unpublished records, ranging across much of the eastern half of the United States. Again, years of effort and expense met with failure. No such individual was found who had other family members with names and ages to match the mother and son in Texas.

False leads are a common frustration in family research, and this case was no exception. Like most genealogists, Ferdinand’s descendants developed extensive contacts with other researchers known to be tracing Ball lines. The response was generous, but no one had information on individuals whose personal details might fit the problem—that is, none but one. The professed solution to this Ball dilemma came in the form of a forged Bible record, manufactured by a misguided family in another state that wished to claim a certain illustrious line to whom they had no documentary links. To “help out” their Texas correspondents, they wove into that same “record” a set of parents for Ferdinand. A fuller treatment of a portion of this problem appears in print elsewhere.³

The three common approaches to genealogical research had been tried: a literature survey, an examination of original materials bearing the names of known ancestors in their known places of residence, and correspondence with others working on the same surname. These approaches failed for the same reason that they often fail in difficult cases: records were never created on the sought-after family unit because no such *family unit* existed. Those people lived, loved, and died—yes—but not under the identities and situations commonly presumed for them.

THE LOGICAL STRATEGY

The fundamental principle of genealogy is simple: *begin with the known, then proceed to the unknown*. The one known relationship in this case was that Margaret was the mother of Ferdinand. The only known place of residence was Madison County. Clearly, before an ephemeral father could be chased with any hope of success, research must focus upon Margaret and all possible clues must be coaxed from the records of Madison—“burned” county, though it was. Building upon this principle, a five-step strategy was developed:

1. Identify the woman who emerged in Texas as Margaret Ball—i.e., her origins and her family.
2. Reconstruct Margaret’s life—day by day, from birth to death, if possible.
3. Microscopically examine her location and activities at the time Ferdinand was conceived—i.e., mid-March 1824.
4. Identify any and all males named *Ball* who can be placed in that specific locale in that time period—using all original resources available in and for that area.
5. Reconstruct the life of each of these male Balls—seeking possible evidence connecting them to Margaret and/or elements of the family tradition.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFYING MARGARET

A circuitous and exhaustive search revealed a chain of evidence that positively identified Margaret—a chain that wove through several burned counties, multiple name changes, and illegitimacies in two generations. As previously reported in this same journal,⁴ Margaret was born in Saint Landry Parish, Louisiana, in November 1802. Her mother was the New York-born, twice-widowed Sally (née Voorhies) (Link) LaCombe. Her father was the Acadian-born Jean Doucet. At fourteen, Margaret married young Jacob Hook and moved with him upstate to Ouachita Parish—where his older brother George, the family head, was a recent parish sheriff, an innkeeper, and a well-to-do planter.⁵

STEP TWO: RECONSTRUCTING MARGARET’S LIFE

Jacob died in 1821, as reported in the prior essay that established Margaret’s identity. Their posthumous son Samuel was born soon after Jacob’s death.⁶ In early 1824, Margaret was still in Ouachita Parish, actively involved in the affairs of her in-laws. By September, at which time she was still widowed but six months pregnant, she had returned to Saint Landry Parish, where she settled among the rapidly branching family of her birth. In 1826, she wed again—a brief but disastrous union—then quietly spent the next quarter-century, devoted to her two sons and the practice of nursing that made her a valued “doctor” in her neighborhood. As Marguerite *LaCombe*, she appears on the 1850 census of that parish, listed consecutively with Samuel *Hook* and Ferdinand *Hook*.⁷

After helping her son Samuel buy a small tract of land in 1850 (via a deed that also used the names *LaCombe* and *Hook*),⁸ Margaret and her second son Ferdinand followed other family members to Texas. There, in Grimes County in 1852, Ferdinand married into the family of a prominent Baptist minister, doing so as Ferdinand *Ball*.⁹ By 1855 he was firmly established under that name in Madison County; within another year, his widowed mother also would be known as Margaret Ball, rather than Margaret Hook or Margaret LaCombe.¹⁰

The question remains: *who, then, was the "Mr. Ball" from whom this family acquired its name?*

STEP THREE: THE CRUCIAL YEARS, UNDER A MICROSCOPE

The supreme genealogical issue—*paternity*—always hinges upon one simple fact: a mother and a father have to be in proximity at the time a child is conceived (at least in eras prior to modern medical maneuvers). Thus, the identification of "Mr. Ball" centers upon Margaret's whereabouts and associates immediately prior to mid-March 1824.

A gap exists in Ouachita records that directly treat Margaret, skipping from the 1820 enumeration of her household to the early 1824 acceptance of her Hook child's partial inheritance.¹¹ That lapse can be reasonably filled—but not by a routine courthouse search for existing records under the names Margaret Hook, Jacob Hook, Marguerite LaCombe, or Ball. The records that document her existence on specific days, those that suggest the life she led at Ouachita, and the crucial ones that link her to "Mr. Ball," were primarily records created by her in-laws and their associates—people whose surnames first had to be discovered. Closing that gap also hinged upon understanding the nature, the activities, and even the terrain of the close-knit community into which the child Margaret was drawn when she first married.

Husband and Marriage

Jacob Hook was also a fatherless orphan. About the time that Jacob and Margaret arrived in Ouachita, his oldest brother George died, leaving a prosperous plantation centered upon Bayou de Siard and scattered tracts in other locales. The homeplace was retained by George's well-placed widow Eleanor, previously the wife of the New York-born bigamist Abraham Morehouse, for whom Morehouse Parish would soon be named.¹² In early 1821, Jacob's two surviving brothers, the bachelors Philip and Samuel, bought from George's estate a tract of 120 arpents on Bayou Bartholomew.¹³ Four months later, they sold most of the tract to Jacob, noting that his portion was to be laid off in a manner that would include "the improvements of said Jacob."¹⁴

This tract on which Jacob settled Margaret was not prime land. It was both out-lying and low-lying—primeval forest trapped in the bend of a horseshoe where flooding was frequent and crops uncertain. Jacob owned no slaves to help him clear the land or put it into production. When he died, apparently in mid-1821, he left an

eighteen-year-old, pregnant widow and insufficient property to probate. Margaret's continued existence, alone, on their improvement would have been unthinkable. The tract was abandoned. Parish land records indicate that it remained vacant for generations thereafter.

In-laws and Widowhood

A genealogical reconstruction of the Hook family, in both Ouachita and Saint Landry parishes, yielded still-more surnames for whom records should be sought—records that *perhaps* might reveal more about Margaret's life during the widowhood in which she met "Mr. Ball." Jacob's father Barney,¹⁵ for his second wife, had wed Juliana Izador. After burying Barney, Juliana married twice again—first to William Thomas and second to Dr. John Sappington.¹⁶ Under the Sappington name, the most-useful records were found.

Eight farmsteads away from Jacob and Margaret, at the time of the 1820 census, lived Jacob's aging mother with two of her bachelor sons.¹⁷ All considerations suggest Juliana's home as the logical shelter for Jacob's pregnant widow, herself years away from legal adulthood. Margaret's poverty, youth, and vulnerability; the fact that she had no family of her own within two hundred miles; the fact that Juliana Sappington had been a family neighbor in Saint Landry Parish for most of Margaret's childhood; the subsequent assignment to Margaret of a slave woman from Juliana's estate; and Margaret's lifelong occupation of nursing—all combine to suggest her ill mother-in-law as the likeliest person to take the penniless girl under her wing, in exchange for nursing and household help.

As 1823 rolled into 1824, Juliana Sappington died. On 19 January, acting on behalf of her infant son Samuel Hook, Margaret joined the other heirs in signing over shares to their brother Philip Hook, who then conveyed the Sappington farm to the half-brother Alexis Sappington.¹⁸ If it is correctly presumed that Margaret had joined her mother-in-law's household, then she was again without a home. The pattern of respectability that the Hook-Sappington family displayed at Ouachita would not have condoned her continued residence, alone, with a bachelor brother-in-law in his virile twenties. Margaret's remaining in-laws included only one person with whom she could now have lived respectably. That sole female was her sister-in-law Eleanor, widow of George, who remained in the plantation home that George had operated as an inn. At Eleanor's, on bustling Bayou de Siard, Margaret's circle of acquaintances would have widened to include entrepreneurs from other states, such as that which "Mr. Ball" proved to be.

It is also the records of Eleanor (Morehouse) Hook that introduce into Margaret's family a name exceedingly uncommon in their society, *Ferdinand*. No individual with the given name Ferdinand has been documented contemporaneously in the area of Margaret's birth. Only two such men have been found coexisting with Margaret in Ouachita. The first, Ferdinand Stow, seems never to have associated with Margaret's family. However, the second was an old Morehouse friend, also from

New York—Ferdinand Morgan, brother of the parish judge. Indeed, Eleanor had named her last Morehouse son *Charles Ferdinand* after this friend; and, in the same month in which Margaret's mother-in-law died and Margaret would have sought a home elsewhere, Ferdinand Morgan appeared at the "family meeting" held to deliberate the financial interests of Eleanor's Morehouse minors.¹⁹

The time line is worth special note: these events transpired two months before Margaret conceived Ferdinand James Ball.

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL FATHERS

Prior researchers had reported that Ouachita Parish's surviving records are conveniently indexed and that eight entries—all in the deed books—appear under the surname *Ball* prior to the late-1800s.²⁰ In each case, the given name was the same although the stated origins ranged across two states. Perhaps coincidentally, that given name was the very common (and ideally suited) *James*. To summarize these documents:

1. 8 July 1818
James Ball [no residence cited] to James McLawchlin, sale of slave. Witnesses: John R. Oald [?] and Thos. Ballew.²¹
2. 14 June 1823
James Ball of Sumner County, Tennessee, presents power of attorney from Harril Cain of Clark County, Arkansas, regarding estate of John Hull of Ouachita.²²
3. 24 June 1823
James Ball of Sumner County, Tennessee, from Ben^a Harrison and wife Jemima Ratliff, purchase of two slaves. Witnesses: Dr. Jno. M. A. Hamblin and John Pirkey.²³
4. 19 May 1824
In Natchitoches Parish. James Ball of Arkansas Territory from Mrs. Ellen Neilson and Miss Elizabeth Harman, purchase of land in Ouachita Parish on Bayou [de] Siard, adjoining Owens, Gleeson, and Hamilton.²⁴
5. 7 September 1824
James Ball of Clark County, Arkansas, to Nancy M. Kirkpatrick, sale of land on Bayou de Siard, adjoining David Gleason and Nancy M. Kirkpatrick, purchased from the legal heir of Warner Harman. Witnesses: Jno. Hughes and F. Morgan.²⁵
6. 15 February 1825
In Rapides Parish. James Ball of Arkansas Territory from Elizabeth Harmon [*sic*], sale of rights to same tract of land on Bayou [de] Saird.²⁶
7. 17 March 1825
James Ball, attorney in fact of Harel [*sic*] Cain, to Nicholas Moore of Ouachita. Sale of land in Ouachita on Bayou La Loutre. Witnesses: John H. Harmanson.²⁷
8. 1 April 1826
James Ball, attorney in fact of Harrel Caine [*sic*], to John F. Ailes, sale of land on Bayou La Loutre.²⁸

Obviously, none of the eight records named a Margaret or a Ferdinand Ball. None named any family members for the cited James Ball(s). None carried any reference to the seven family names previously associated with Margaret—LaCombe, Doucet, Hook, Sappington, Morehouse, Thomas, and Izador. None referred to land in the Bayou Bartholomew area in which Margaret resided. The only obvious element that suggested a remote possibility of a link was the location of the Harman land on Bayou de Saird—the same watercourse on which George and Eleanor Hook resided. However, that bayou was a major waterway; thus, the two tracts of land might be as far as twenty or thirty miles apart.

Two assessments made by the prior researcher who worked in this county *appeared* justified: first, the records of this man (or these men) offered no evidence to prove the paternity of Ferdinand. Second, the Ouachita Parish courthouse files offered no evidence to resolve the question.

Both assessments were entirely wrong. Insufficient records had been found because the Ball search had not proceeded beyond the obvious and the convenient. No facts or details seemed to solve the problem because the correlation and analysis of evidence within the known records had dealt with only the superficial. Many valuable records remained unexposed by the initial search of extant indexes. Some were discovered only by *extending the search to include all associates of anyone surnamed Hook and Ball*. Others were uncovered only by examining each leaf of unindexed court minutes and each packet of original files in basement storage.

Analysis of the Basic Eight Records

The eight documents indexed under the name *James Ball* offered vital data in two other areas:

(1)

IDENTIFICATION

All eight were executed by the same man—a fact suggested by all of the abstracts above, except the 1818 deed. The hypothesis was proved when research progressed past the record books used by the prior researcher. In the basement of the parish clerk's office, there was found a file of unindexed *original deeds*. All eight of Ball's documents were there. Three carried matching signatures:

1.	1818	Ball	[no residence cited]	to McLawchlin	Sale of slave
3.	1823	Ball	of Sumner Co., Tenn.	from Harrison/Ratliff	Purchase of slaves
5.	1824	Ball	of Clark Co., Ark.	to Kirkpatrick	Sale of Harman land

By extension, one may add to the list the two documents by which Ball acquired the land that he sold under no. 5 above:

4.	1824	Ball	of Arkansas	from Harman	Purchase of land
6.	1825	Ball	of Arkansas	from Harman	Rights to land

The positive connection of this James Ball to the final three documents (nos. 2, 7, and 8) came when the search was extended to cover associates. Recorded succession

(probate) records for John Hull of document no. 2 revealed nothing more about Ball. When the basement storage was combed for a possible packet of originals, it yielded another James Ball signature—and another match.²⁹

Extending the search to include *associates* of this James Ball also turned up another record from the same set of deed books—one that very much pertained to Ball but was not indexed under his name:

9. 16 April 1825

James Mason, protest of draft. On this day, Samuel Chambers of Arkansas Territory presented to Doct. James W. Mason, for his acceptance, a draft for \$30.00, signed by James Ball and drawn on Mason in favor of Chambers. Mason averred that he held no funds belonging to Ball. At the request of Chambers, Parish Judge Oliver J. Morgan lodged a protest against Ball, that held him liable for damages, costs, and interests.³⁰

(2)

LINKS TO MARGARET

Although no known relatives or in-laws of Margaret (née LaCombe) Hook *alias* Ball appear in the nine documents above, those records are exceptionally rich in links between her and James. Consider the following summary of Ball associates, drawn sequentially from these nine items above and from subsequent research on each of the individuals:

James McLawchlin

- 8 July 1818 James McLawchlin bought a slave from James Ball.³¹
 6 December 1820 James McLawchlin and Jacob Hook attended the family meeting called on behalf of the minor heirs of George Hook.³²
 [McLawchlin's wife, Sarah Morrison, was the sister of Marie Morrison who became George Hook's first wife in 1798.³³]

Jemima Ratliff

- 24 June 1823 Jemima, through her husband Benjamin Harrison, sold two slaves to Ball, stating that the sale was made to liquidate "a debt due the heirs of William Burney."³⁴
 ca. fall 1820 Widow William Burney is enumerated four houses from both Jacob Hook and Juliana Sappington.³⁵
 1820–30 Jemima and Benjamin Harrison repeatedly appear (as neighbors and witnesses) in deeds to property adjoining the homeplace of Jacob and Margaret Hook.³⁶

Jno. M. A. Hamblin

- 24 June 1823 Hamblin witnessed James's purchase of the Harrison-Ratliff slaves.³⁷
 8 January 1821 Hamblin was the official witness to numerous purchases at George Hook's estate sale.³⁸

David Gleason

- 19 May 1824 Gleason is named as neighbor of the land which Ball purchased from heirs of Harman.³⁹
- August 1806 Gleason is named as a close neighbor of George Hook in the memoirs of the Reverend Learner Blackman.⁴⁰
- 26 February 1798 Gleason witnessed the marriage of George Hook to Marie Morrison.⁴¹

John Hughes

- 7 September 1824 Hughes witnessed Ball's sale of the Harman land, which adjoined Hook's neighbor, Gleason.⁴²
- 9 May 1821 Hughes witnessed Jacob's purchase from Philip and Samuel Hook.⁴³
- 18 May 1814 Hughes attended the family meeting held for the Morehouse minors, whose mother was now married to George Hook.⁴⁴
- 24 June 1829 Hughes is named as neighboring landowner to both Gleason (above) and Ferdinand Morgan (below).⁴⁵

F.[erdinand] Morgan

- 7 September 1824 Morgan witnessed Ball's sale of the Harman land.⁴⁶
- 12 January 1824 Morgan attended the family meeting for the heirs of George Hook.⁴⁷
- 9 June 1818 Morgan witnessed three land sales for George Hook.⁴⁸

Nancy M. Kirkpatrick

- 7 September 1824 Nancy (widow Hezekiah) Kirkpatrick bought Harman land from Ball.⁴⁹
- 18 May 1814 Hezekiah Kirkpatrick attended the family meeting held for the Morehouse minors, whose mother was now married to George Hook.⁵⁰

John Harmanson

- 17 March 1825 Harmanson witnessed Ball's sale of land on Bayou LaLoutre.⁵¹
- 19 January 1824 Harmanson and Margaret Hook witnessed Philip Hook's sale of his maternal inheritance to Alexis Sappington.⁵²

John F. Ailes

- 1 April 1826 Ailes purchased from Ball, agent of Cain, land on Bayou LaLoutre.⁵³
- 8 September 1823 Ailes is appointed curator ad hoc for Lucretia C. Morehouse, daughter of Eleanor Hook.⁵⁴

James W. Mason

- ca. April 1825 Ball, in Arkansas, wrote a draft against funds supposedly held by Mason.⁵⁵
- 24 June 1829 Mason and Ferdinand Morgan are identified as brothers-in-law in a pair of mortgages executed this day.⁵⁶

Virtually every document executed by James Ball in Ouachita Parish during 1818–25 brought him into the neighborhood of the Hooks and the circle of acquaintances of Margaret or her in-laws. Should this be coincidence, then it defies heavy odds—given the fact that Ouachita Parish sprawled over some 5,500

square miles. A web of evidence had, by this point, begun to draw James Ball into necessary proximity with Margaret Hook. It would irrevocably entangle him as research progressed.

STEP FIVE: RECONSTRUCTING JAMES BALL

Conventional searches of Ouachita's courthouse routinely cover marriages, successions, deeds, and mortgages. Early tax records appear nonexistent, save a published one of 1808.⁵⁷ Proceedings in civil and criminal matters are widely reputed to be ravaged by time; a few remaining record books have inadequate indexes, and original papers are either unknown or considered too problematic to research fruitfully. However, the researcher who persists past these obstacles may be well rewarded. This Ball case certainly proves the point.

An item-by-item search of loose court suits revealed one spectacular and complex case that spun off into others—i.e., *Samuel D. Brown v. James Ball*. On 31 July 1823, at New Orleans, Brown drafted an order to a Ouachita acquaintance, requesting that the latter “deliver to James Ball [one] Sampson Muse[’s] note . . . in the amount of \$682.38. Doing so, will allow me to pay you in a short time the amount I owe you.” *The Ouachita contact who was to deliver the note to James Ball was Philip Hook.*⁵⁸

By the end of the year, the maze of debts had even more ensnared James Ball amid the Hook family, as the following chronology indicates.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| October 1823 | Josiah Leith of Ouachita met with James Ball in Little Rock, where Leith had come to collect a debt owed to Philip Hook by Ball's friend, General Edward Hogan. [On 19 January 1824, this same Josiah Leith joined Margaret Hook in witnessing a deed between Philip Hook and Alexis Sappington.] ⁵⁹ |
| 23–26 December 1823 | Brown filed charges in Ouachita, swearing that “James Ball of the Territory of Arkansas is justly indebted to him in the sum of \$682.00 for money . . . collected of Sampson Muse.” ⁶⁰ |
| 23 December 1823 | Judge Oliver Morgan responded to the complaint by issuing an appearance citation to Ball. Sheriff Jonathan Morgan (another brother of Ferdinand) reported that he had left the summons “at the last residence of the within named James Ball in this parish.” ⁶¹ |
| 26 December 1823 | Brown posted a guaranty bond for \$1,200. His sureties were Philip and Samuel Hook. ⁶² |
| 27 December 1823 | Judge Morgan ordered the seizure of any “goods, chattels, land, and tenements of said James Ball” which might be in that parish. None were found, so the order remained unexecuted. ⁶³ |
| 18 February 1824 | James McLawchlin, justice of the peace on Bayou de Saird [and Hook brother-in-law], ordered James Ball to appear <i>in his office</i> on 24 March to answer a second charge by Brown, for a debt of \$48.00 that Ball owed on behalf of General Hogan of Arkansas. ⁶⁴ |

The last document is of utmost significance. *In the very week that Margaret Hook should have conceived Ferdinand Ball, James Ball is ordered to appear before the justice of the peace serving Margaret's neighborhood*—himself a Hook in-law—to answer charges brought against Ball with the aid of Margaret's own brothers-in-law, Philip and Samuel Hook.

This trio of cases stayed before the courts of Ouachita for nearly two years. By 1 March 1824, Ball was back in the parish. On that day, Sheriff Morgan carried out the December order and seized two horses Ball had brought into the parish. On the assigned court day, James lodged his own suit against Brown, alleging a false seizure. A summons was issued to a key witness on Brown's behalf—Alexis Sappington, the only brother-in-law of Margaret who had not yet become embroiled in the dispute.⁶⁵ An April jury (which included Ferdinand Morgan) found for Ball, upon the instructions of Judge Morgan. Brown's appeal was denied and, on 7 May 1824, Ball signed his receipt for Brown's payment of "the Amt. of all accounts and demands up to this date." That signature matches all others found for James Ball within this parish.⁶⁶

The countersuit of *Ball v. Brown* remained on the books, amid sundry legal maneuvers, as did the case of *Ball v. Leith* that developed into *Ball v. Leith and Hook*. Both were ultimately dismissed; but in April 1825, Ball filed a petition most useful to this genealogical problem. He sought a judgment against Brown for \$1,200—\$600 for the goods seized and \$600 in damages for the "upward of 2 months" that he was forced to stay in Ouachita awaiting the outcome of the suit.⁶⁷ Court documents define that period quite precisely: his horses were seized on 1 March 1824. On 7 May he acknowledged Brown's payment of court costs.

Ball then proceeded to business elsewhere—more specifically to Natchitoches, where he bought from the Harman heirs the land they had left behind in George Hook's neighborhood. His forced stay on Bayou de Saird had not been a total loss. Speculator Ball had sniffed out a piece of abandoned neighboring property on which he would turn a 300 percent profit.⁶⁸

Within four months, the pregnant Margaret Hook had left her in-laws and returned to her own family in Opelousas, selling her inheritance from the Widow Sappington for money to survive.⁶⁹ Never again does any known record place her in the company of the in-laws whom she would have insulted, as well as embarrassed, by an assignation with their adversary, "Mr. Ball."

EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

James Ball of Clark County, Arkansas, clearly meets the tests of *association*, *proximity*, and *timeliness*. In the month that Margaret Hook conceived Ferdinand Ball—indeed, for two weeks prior to the calculated date of conception and for seven weeks thereafter—this "Mr. Ball" was confined in her neighborhood by a lawsuit prosecuted against him with the aid of all her brothers-in-law. A researcher could not hope for more-solid documentation of association, proximity, and timeliness.

Beyond this, the tests of tradition should also be applied. Descendants of Margaret and Ferdinand relate a family account with four testable elements: (1) "Mr. Ball" is believed to be one James or James Ferdinand; (2) he went away on business and left Margaret when Ferdinand was small, forcing her to return to her family; (3) he was a Virginian by birth; and (4) he was, possibly, the old lame trader whom Margaret and Ferdinand turned away about 1860, because he dealt in slaves.

The evidence that has been gathered plainly supports points 1 and 2. It also suggests trading activities on his part. The remaining question is fundamental: *who was this James Ball?* Outside of his cameo appearances in Ouachita, is the mold and the substance of his life compatible with the remainder of the family tradition?

The Legend and the Man

In 1860, a frontier journalist reminisced in the *Arkansas Gazette*, fondly recalling the early days and early men that shaped the territory:

The times . . . produced characters precisely suited. . . . Men sprung up, from whatever quarter no one knew, and took possession of everything afloat in the way of pre-emptions and all manner of land-claims. They traveled continually [under conditions] to shame a modern mail contractor. . . . As skilled a speculator as ever wandered about the country, was old Jim Ball—Major Ball—created a major by the general courtesy of the time. . . . Some one may be living who remembers his advent in the Territory, and who might give an inkling of his previous history; it is very doubtful, however, for he seemed either to have been dropped from the clouds, or ejected from the earth—and in those times, pedigrees and particulars were subjects seldom sought after or discussed.⁷⁰

Ball's biographer described him well. From the day in 1820 that James Ball left his lawful wife in Sumner County, Tennessee (he was embarrassed in his affairs and sought fortune in Arkansas—promising to return soon—as his wife put it in a later divorce petition),⁷¹ he was virtually the prototype of the fabled Arkansas traveler. From the day he sold the plantation that his prominent father-in-law had set up for him,⁷² there is no evidence that he bought land to farm. His horse was his home. He was the kind of man commonly assumed to have left few, if any, records. Yet his trail has been documented through at least twenty counties in six states. Mere abstracts of the paperwork that he generated amount to hundreds of pages of very small print.

Major Ball traded in land scrip as well as land.⁷³ He bought and sold both horse-flesh⁷⁴ and human flesh—and won some in card games as well.⁷⁵ He bought up debts and prosecuted claims.⁷⁶ As the Arkansas folklorist recalled, "Old Jim Ball never did a very heavy business; but it was amazingly complicated. . . . His saddle bags were plethoric with papers, all carefully done up in bundles, endorsed, and looking valuable and important. . . . no one could approach him in assuming the absorbed business bearing of a man struggling with weighty concerns."⁷⁷

Jim Ball was also a charmer. He mesmerized the small neighboring lad of 1830 who would grow up to write about him.⁷⁸ He made friends in every town and in the highest places—convincing quite a few to entrust to him their affairs. More to the point, he charmed the ladies with his fiddle, his verse, and his cooking. He was, it is said, “a large, finely formed man, and always maintained, whether conversing with Governor Pope, discussing land titles, playing ‘Sugar in the Gourd,’ swabbing a squirrel, or improvising a verse, [his] majestic dignity . . . would have done honor to a Spanish grandee, or the Sovereign Pontiff of Rome.”⁷⁹

James Ball was assuredly a trader, as tradition holds. Beyond doubt, too, he would have mesmerized the young and unsophisticated Margaret. For “Major Ball,” a March interlude along Bayou de Siard with an impressionable girl would have been a pleasant dalliance until his *business* called him elsewhere (not to mention a means of getting even with those troublesome Hooks, who had kept him from his pressing affairs).⁸⁰ According to the lad who revered him into his old age, he loved a joke and he thrived on scrapes. He was not at all daunted by a narrow escape. But he made certain that he slipped through the hands of would-be wives, after leaving behind in Tennessee the speculator’s daughter who had managed to snare him for nine years.⁸¹ Possibly Margaret hoped for marriage to the important and charming “Mr. Ball,” but the still-married James⁸² would have had nothing of the sort in mind.

Ferdinand’s children recounted a *crippled* trader who visited the family’s homestead—a visit that should have occurred shortly before the Civil War. Old Jim Ball’s chronicler had similar memories, albeit more precisely expressed. “His locks were very grey when he left Arkansas [in the early 1840s]; and *rheumatism was making unappeasable demands upon the strength and vigor of his frame.*”⁸³ In his 1860 column, that same writer called for news of the fate of “old Jim Ball.” Modern attempts to track him through his last years have fared little better. He left a fine paper trail from Indian Territory down to Austin between 1841 and 1853, except for a spell when he was “too ill to attend his affairs.”⁸⁴ Finally, on 5 May 1853, he did the unthinkable—he drafted a deed purporting to sell the entire contents of his saddlebags for \$2,000.⁸⁵ The man said to have paid this munificent sum was a young Tennessean named Gibson May, a man whom censuses and tax rolls depict as the proverbial “poor, dirt farmer.”⁸⁶ Possibly Ball felt physically incapable of continuing the rugged trail that had been his home for thirty-three years and swapped his possessions for the promise of care from someone whose family he had known “back home.” Possibly he had other reasons. In 1859 Gibson May also dropped off the Fannin tax rolls. In 1860 the census taker found him downstate in Milam,⁸⁷ one county away from Madison, where Margaret and Ferdinand made their home.

What of Ball’s own birthplace? James Ball was, indisputably, a Virginian—born there about 1790. The records first cited in this paper, from the Ouachita Parish deeds, clearly connect the “Arkansas traveler” to prior roots in Sumner County, Tennessee. Legend in Fannin County, Texas, does the same—more

colorfully describing him as “a thoroughbred, deep-dyed democrat, and a personal friend of Gen. Jackson, having been an officer under the General in his Indian wars, and an eye witness of his victory over the British at New Orleans.”⁸⁸ Tennessee’s records do document an acquaintance with old Andy—for his in-laws and himself—but not his alleged war service.⁸⁹

Records of Sumner County also yield positive documentation of James’s parental ties. Sued in 1814 by his father-in-law, the famed Cumberland lawyer Dr. Redmond D. Barry, James stated (over signatures matching those left in Louisiana and Arkansas) that he had gone to Amherst County, Virginia, shortly after his 1811 marriage. He had taken horses with him, acting upon Barry’s directions to trade them for a Negro woman. Instead, he brought back a *man* named Joe and faced a doubly angered father-in-law when Joe soon died.⁹⁰ On 18 August 1817, one John Ball of Amherst drafted his will in which he left to his son James Ball (residence unstated) “one negro man named Joe, which said negro he the said James Ball has heretofore received.”⁹¹ The following 4 November, “James Ball of Sumner County, Tennessee, [one of] the surviving heirs of John Ball, dec’d,” joined his widowed mother Betsey in selling the family land.⁹²

CONCLUSION

No record has been found which names Major James “Jim” Ball as father of Ferdinand. It is probable that none will be. However, this James Ball of Clark County, Arkansas, meets all tests that can reasonably be applied: his proximity to Ferdinand’s mother in the crucial month, his exclusivity as the only documentable Ball in the area in which Ferdinand was conceived, and his incredibly close match to every element of the family tradition. He bore the “right” given name. He was a Virginian by birth. He was a trader by profession, dealing in slaves as well. And, when last seen by his chroniclers, he suffered greatly from the crippling disease of arthritis.

Conversely, no reliable evidence has emerged that casts noteworthy doubt upon this conclusion. All genealogists face one stark reality: *proving* paternity beyond any question is never possible in historical research. The best one can do is to accumulate a body of well-documented evidence that points convincingly in the same direction, while leaving no contraindications inadequately answered.

Long-standing stalemates in genealogical research, of the nature suffered by the offspring of Ferdinand James Ball, may well be self-imposed ones. Even for unconventional families, records can be found. Problems can be solved. Not in the traditional way, not with standard techniques, not by looking in the usual or easily available places—but records are there.

The worst mistake a researcher can make is a superficial search. One should not fall into the rut of using only materials that are published. Or limit a search to the one name of interest. Or try to keep research notes “lean and clean” by recording just the obvious. Or walk away from a repository until *all* existing records have been combed. Above all, one must not treat lightly the ties that bind our ancestors

to their larger family, neighbors, or circle of friends. To do so is to miss the clues that point to the answer one seeks—the kind of answer that makes one ultimately say: “Well, of course. It’s perfectly logical. Everything fits. How could this have been missed for all these years?”

A spiderweb is woven of fragile threads—each so delicate that it, alone, may be invisible to the casual eye. Yet, crisscrossed and encircled, these slender strands form a web quite capable of ensnaring the spider’s most-evasive prey. Genealogical evidence can be much the same, if the researcher accumulates enough of the needed strands and weaves the web with judiciousness, thoroughness, and perseverance.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. See the above-cited “In Search of Margaret Ball.”
2. R. C. Ball to E. S. Mills, 12 February 1986. According to Mr. Ball, the tradition of the nighttime disturbance created by the appearance of the crippled trader at Ferdinand’s home was passed down by Ezra Ball (born to Ferdinand and wife in 1859), who heard the story from an older brother.
3. Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Unravelling Balls of Yarn: Lessons in the Use of a Skeptical Eye (as Taught by William Bartholomew Ball and William F. Ball, Esq.),” *Genealogical Journal* 19, Nos. 1–2 (1991): 5–21 (to be released mid-1992).
4. Mills, “In Search of Margaret Ball.”
5. For George Hook as sheriff, see *State v. Joseph Barbier* and *State v. Pierre Soubercaze*, February 1814, Criminal Court Files, Ouachita Parish—cited by E. Russ Williams, Jr., *Ouachita Valley in the Era of Transition, 1804–1820* (Monroe: Monroe–Ouachita Valley Bicentennial Commission, 1982), 19, 41. For George as innkeeper and planter, see the journal of Reverend Learner Blackman, in John Griffin Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, for the author, 1887), 174–76; and 1820 Federal Census, Ouachita Parish, p. 107.
6. The 1850 census of St. Landry Parish places Samuel’s birth between 1 June 1821 and 31 May 1822; see family 135, dwelling 155. His father Jacob last appears on record on 9 May 1821; see Deed Book F: 11, Ouachita Parish. Thus, Samuel’s period of birth can be narrowed between 1 June 1821 and 9 February 1822.
7. Mills, “In Search of Margaret Ball,” 53–54.
8. Deed Bk. M: 596, St. Landry Parish. In colonial and antebellum Louisiana, females (married and widowed) continued to be known, legally, by their maiden surname.

9. Marriage Bk. H: 112, Grimes Co., Texas.
 10. 1855 tax roll (for Margaret Hook) and 1856–75 tax rolls (for Margaret Ball), Madison Co., Texas, available on microfilm from the Texas State Library, Austin.
 11. Deed Bk. F: 292–93, Ouachita Ph.
 12. Succ. of George Hook, No. A553, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.
 13. Deed Book A: 553, Ouachita Ph.
 14. Deed Book F: 11, Ouachita Ph.
 15. Catholic priests of Spanish Louisiana, when baptizing and marrying offspring of this family, “translated” Barney’s name into the saint’s names that Catholic custom required; thus, *Barney* is rendered as the English *Benedict* and the French *Benoit*. See Alberta Ducote, *Early Baptism Records: St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, 1796–1824: Avoyelles Parish* (Mansura: St. Paul’s Church, 1980), 35; and inquisition into marriages illegally performed by Commandant Jean Filhiol in absence of a priest (for 26 February 1798 marriage of George Hook, son of Benedic Hook of “Barclay” Co., Va., to Marie Morrison), in *Records of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas, 1576–1803*, 12 rolls (microfilm publication, Univ. of Notre Dame, 1967), Roll 1. The records that Hook created in Virginia, prior to his removal to the west, give his name as *Barney* or *Barnett*; see tax and deed abstracts provided by Lewis Preston Summers, *Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769–1800*, 1 vol. in 2 parts (1929; reprinted, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1970), 6, 59, 83.
 16. This lady’s marital adventures were pieced together from sundry records; for example, see marriage of Jacob Hook (born Bardstown, Ky., son of Benoit Hook and Julianna Izador) and burial of William Thomas, Jr. (son of William Thomas and Julienne Izader, remarried to Dr. Sappington), Bk 1: 144, 159, St. Landry Catholic Church. See also Alexis Sappington, only heir of Dr. John Sappington, to Philip Hook, Deed Book 3: 127, St. Landry Parish; Natchez Records [Translated Spanish Archives], Book E: 69–77, Office of the Chancery Clerk, Adams Co., Miss.; and Succ. of Juliana Sappington, No. A929, Ouachita Parish.
 17. 1820 Fed. Cens., Ouachita Ph., pp. 109–10.
 18. Succ. of Juliana Sappington (opened 3 January 1824), No. A929, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.; Deed Bk. F: 291–92, Ouachita Ph.
 19. Succ. of Abraham Morehouse, No. 731, Ouachita Ph. Ironically, Senator Ferdinand Morgan was killed on the streets of Monroe when he attempted to use a sword cane upon his namesake, Eleanor’s son Charles Ferdinand. The younger man’s brother-in-law, R. H. Sterling (husband of Eliza Caroline Morehouse), came to Charles Ferdinand’s defense and slew Morgan. For an account of this incident, see Fay Hempstead, *Historical Review of Arkansas: Its Commerce, Industry and Modern Affairs*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1911), 1: 86.
 20. Yet-another possibility had to be considered in the process of identifying all potential Balls. A navigable river cut through Ouachita Parish, and steamboat traffic had penetrated all of Louisiana’s major waterways. Might there have been other Balls coming into the parish who were oriented toward river commerce rather than conventional trade? If so, then newspapers from Louisiana’s port cities represented the most-promising resource for documenting such a man.
- Extant newspapers from Louisiana’s interior in that era are scarce. None exist for Ouachita, virtually none for Alexandria, and only a run from 1825–27 for Natchitoches—all on the Red River (rather than the Black) and none for the crucial spring of 1824. However, the *Natchitoches Courier* of 24 April 1826 notes the arrival of one Captain Ball of New Orleans, master of the steamboat *Planter*. Again, the given name is *James*.
- Civil and maritime files at New Orleans proved productive in a negative sense; their generous resources on this James Ball and his family offer nothing to connect any of them to Ouachita, to St. Landry, or to Margaret and her kinspeople. To briefly summarize: this maritime James first appeared in New Orleans on 20 April 1826, registering the new steamship he held in partnership with speculators from Natchitoches. Again, with his Natchitoches colleagues, he re-registered the vessel each March in 1827, 1828, and 1829. See Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana, *Ship Registers and Enrollments of New Orleans, Louisiana*, 6 vols. (Baton Rouge?: Work Projects Administration and Hill Memorial Library of Louisiana State Univ., 1942), 2:14, 126.

In July of 1829, “Mr. James Ball of Wilmington, Vt.” was laid to rest in Girod Street Cemetery. Soon joining him there were his Wilmington kinsmen and ship co-owners, Jonathan and Russell Ball. A study of all documents created by Jonathan and Russell yielded not even fragile threads that might tie this family to Margaret and her son Ferdinand. For detail given here, see Girod Street Cemetery Card File, Historic New Orleans Collection (Royal Street); Will Book 4: 295, Register of Probate Office, New Orleans; Succ. of Russell Ball, Successions, 1805–46, Pt. 16–B, 1831–32, Microcopy VCH 280, New Orleans Public Library; and Notarial Registers of H. Pedesclaux, 4: 51–53, Office of the Keeper of Notarial Archives, New Orleans.

21. Deed Bk. D: 457–58, Ouachita Ph.
22. Deed Bk. F: 238, Ouachita Ph.
23. Deed Bk. F: 236–37, Ouachita Ph.
24. Deed Bk. F: 336–37, Ouachita Ph.
25. Deed Bk. F: 360, Ouachita Ph.
26. Deed Bk. G: 116, Ouachita Ph.
27. Deed Bk. F: 401, 522–23, Ouachita Ph.
28. Deed Bk. F: 523, Ouachita Ph.
29. Succ. of John Hull, No. A578, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.
30. Deed Bk. F: 407, Ouachita Ph.
31. Deed Bk. D: 457–58.
32. Succ. of George Hook, A553, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.

33. See Ducote, *Early Baptism Records . . . Avoyelles Parish*, Book 1: 57–58, for baptisms of children born to “Jacobo” [James] MacLaughlin and Sarah Morrison, with grandparents named in each case. The MacLaughlins [McLawchlins], Morrisons, and Hooks did not actually live in Avoyelles Parish; periodically, the Avoyelles priest, John Brady, rode circuit through Ouachita.

Moreover, the association between Ball’s contact, McLawchlin, and Margaret’s family can be extended thirty years into the past and directly connected to Margaret’s *birth* family—as well as to her in-laws. James Morrison, the father-in-law of McLawchlin, has been found at Natchez, on 12 August 1790, in the presence of Solomon Link, the first husband of Margaret’s mother. Perhaps the Natchez association is mere coincidence. See Natchez Records Bk D: 88, Adams Co., Miss.

34. Deed Bk. F: 236–37, Ouachita Ph.
35. 1820 Fed. Cens., Ouachita Ph., pp. 109–10.
36. See, for example, Deed Bks. H: 97, 121, 304, 471; and I: 265, Ouachita Ph.
37. Deed Bk. F: 236–37, Ouachita Ph.
38. Succ. of George Hook, A553, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.
39. Deed Bk. F: 336–37, Ouachita Ph.
40. Memoirs of Rev. Learner Blackman, in Jones, *A Complete History of Methodism . . . Mississippi Conference*, I: 174–76.
41. See Hook-Morrison marriage of 26 February 1798, itemized amid inquisition regarding Commandant Jean Filhiol, *Records of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas*, Roll 1.
42. Deed Bk. F: 360, Ouachita Ph.
43. Deed Bk. F: 11, Ouachita Ph.
44. Succ. of Abraham Morehouse, No. 731, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.
45. See Original Mortgage Files (unnumbered), Office of the Clerk of Court, Ouachita Ph., for mortgage of Ferdinand Morgan and wife to Consolidated Association, 24 June 1829, naming neighbors David Gleason and John Hughes.
46. Deed Bk. F: 360, Ouachita Ph.
47. Succ. of George Hook, No. A553, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.

48. Deed Bk. D: 440–45, Ouachita Ph.
49. Deed Bk. F: 360, Ouachita Ph.
50. Succ. of Abraham Morehouse, No. 731, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.
51. Deed Bk. F: 401, Ouachita Ph.
52. Deed Bk. F: 292, Ouachita Ph.
53. Deed Bk. F: 523, Ouachita Ph.
54. Succ. of Abraham Morehouse, No. 731, Basement files, Ouachita Ph.
55. Deed Bk. F: 407, Ouachita Ph.
56. 24 June 1829, mortgage, Ferdinand Morgan and wife Hannah S. Tennille, daughter of Benjamin Tennille, to Consolidated Association, op. cit.; mortgage of James W. Mason and wife Melinda Tennille, to Consolidated Association, Ouachita Ph., same file.
57. Williams, *Ouachita Valley in the Era of Transition*, 38–39.
58. Civil Suit A374, *Brown v. Ball*, Ouachita Ph.
59. Civil Suit A409, *Ball v. Leith and Hook*; and Deed Bk. F: 292, Ouachita Ph.
60. Civil Suit A374, *Brown v. Ball*.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Civil Suit A215 *Ball v. Brown*; Civil Suit A409, *Ball v. Leith and Hook*.
65. Civil Suit A215, *Ball v. Brown*.
66. Civil Suit A374, *Brown v. Ball*.
67. Civil Suit A215, *Ball v. Brown*.
68. Deed Bk. F: 338, 360, Ouachita Ph.
69. Deed Bk. F: 631, St. Landry Ph.
70. [William Quisenbury], "Old Jim Ball—Major Ball," *Arkansas Gazette*, 25 February 1860, p. 2, cols. 5–7.
71. Gale W. Bamman and Debbie W. Spero, *Tennessee Divorces, 1797–1858* (Nashville: Privately printed, 1985), 4.
72. Deed Bks. 7: 354; and 9: 61, Sumner Co., Tenn.
73. For example, see Ball to Turner, Deed Bk. B: 21, Clark Co., Ark; Graves to Ball, Deed Bk. E: 448–51, Washington Co., Ark; Rogers to Ball, Deed Bk. E: 134, Arkansas Co., Ark.; and Ball to Asher, Deed Bk. F: 171, Pulaski Co., Ark.
74. See, for example, Marybelle W. Chase, *1842 Cherokee Claims, Skin Bayou District* (Tulsa: Privately printed, 1988), 176–77, for *Elliky Williams v. The United States*, complaining of horse theft by Major Ball. According to Quisenbury's newspaper sketch of Ball, the horses that the Major dealt in were frequently Indian ponies that strayed away from their owners. Indeed, "every Indian pony was, ipso facto of being an Indian pony, the property of Major Ball."
75. One such case at Natchez, when the fiddling "major" waltzed off with a slave woman named Matilda, resulted in legal charges against him by the tavern keeper, who did not dare to admit to the card game (a public offense for which he was periodically fined), so he accused Ball of "finding and keeping" a slave woman that he had "casually lost." See *Terrell v. Ball*, Civil Suits, Drawer 113, Basement files, Adams Co., Miss.
76. The most noted of the claims prosecuted by James Ball was the celebrated case of *Jean Filhiol v. The United States*, based upon the Filhiol family's claim to hold Hot Springs, Arkansas, under a Spanish grant. Ball acted under authorization from Grammont Filhiol, son of the original claimant, who had been the last commandant of the Ouachita Post. The surveyor of the claim was James McLaughlin, brother-in-law of George Hook. After Ball dropped the prosecution, it was picked up by Rezin Bowie, brother of the better-known Jim Bowie. For a legal synopsis of the case, see *Cases Decided in the Court of Claims at The Term of 1892–93, with Abstracts of Decisions of the Supreme Court*, Charles C. Nott and Archibald Hopkins, eds., vol. 28 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 110–26.

77. Quisenbury, "Old Jim Ball—Major Ball."

78. Quisenbury's father (William Quisenbury, Sr.) and James Ball appear as neighbors on the 1830 federal census of Crawford Co., Ark. The young "Will" would harbor a fondness for Ball throughout his life. See also the "William Quesenbury Journal, August 29, 1845—29 March 1846," in the Papers of William Quesenbury, at Duke Univ. Library, Durham, N.C. (especially pp. 13–15 and 104).

79. Quisenbury, "Old Jim Ball—Major Ball."

80. Ball eventually seized one other opportunity to get even with the Hook brothers. During his twenty years in Arkansas, Ball appears to have conceded to jury duty only once—the October 1827 trial at Little Rock of *Samuel Hook v. Thomas James* [Hook's in-law]. Considering the silver tongue accredited to Ball and his accumulated grievances against Hook, it is perhaps not coincidental that the jury was persuaded to rule against Samuel. See Records of the Superior Court, 1822–33, Box III, p. 97, Territory of Arkansas, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

81. James Ball married Evalina Barry on 22 February 1811. See Edythe Rucker Whitley, *Marriages of Sumner County, Tennessee, 1787–1838* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1981), 20.

82. Evalina did not sue for divorce until 1831, after being virtually forced into it by criminal charges against her and Matthew Brooks for living in adultery. See Lawsuit 9308, Loose Records, Sumner Co., Tenn. Once free of Ball, Evalina did not marry Brooks. On 4 September 1838, in Davidson Co., Tenn., she wed Robert J. Clow before the Baptist minister R. B. C. Howell. The following 11 September, Howell also performed the marriage of Evalina and James's daughter Elizabeth Ball to Andrew J. Hughes. See Silas Emmett Lucas, Jr., and Ella Lee Sheffield, *35,000 Tennessee Marriage Records and Bonds, 1783–1870*, 3 vols. (Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1981), 1: 264 and 2: 176.

83. Quisenbury, "Old Jim Ball—Major Ball."

84. See, for example, Surveyor's Record Bk. A: 67–68 (August 1841, survey for James Ball), Civil Court Minutes, Book A: 51 (November 1842, *Coffee v. Ball*), Deed Bk. B: 446 (May 1844, Ball from Bosler), all in Fannin Co., Texas; also 6 November 1844, *Clarksville Northern Standard* (for Ball's notice of a lost claim); Surveyor Bk. A: 19–20, Grayson Co., Texas (September 1845, Ball to Bean); Quisenbury Journal (September 1845, when young Quisenbury finds Ball at nearby Fort Towson, in Indian Territory, and the two get "gloriously drunk"; also December 1845, when Ball joins Quisenbury at Austin and Quisenbury unexplainedly neglects his journal for a week); 16 February 1846, *Clarksville Northern Standard* (list of letters in post office at Bonham); Civil Court Minute Bk. A: 440–41, Fannin Co. (April 1847, *Ball v. Shannon*); Estate Box L 10, Fannin Co. (November 1848, Ball as administrator of estate of Archibold P. Houston). From 1848 to 1852, Ball is lost from records; he reemerges in September 1852, pleading ill health in the interval and reactivated his claim against the Houston estate, as well as sundry other suits.

85. Deeds, Bonds, Etc., Book G: 377, Fannin Co., Tex.

86. 1850 Fed. Cens., Population Schedule, Fannin Co., p. 177, family/dwelling 422; the Fannin Co. tax rolls are available on microfilm from the Texas State Library.

87. 1860 Fed. Cens., Pop. Sch., Milam Co., p. 35, family 158, Gibson May.

88. W. A. Carter, *History of Fannin County, Texas: History, Statistics, and Biographies* (Bonham: N.p., 1885), 47–48.

89. Ball and Andrew Jackson appear two households apart on the 28–29 May 1809 list, "Intruders, Limestone Settlement" [i.e., whites living illegally on Indian land]; see Roll 4 [arranged by date], micropublication M208, *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee*, National Archives and Records Administration. For a sketch of Ball's father-in-law, see Jay Guy Sisco, *Historic Sumner County, Tennessee, with Genealogies of the Bledsoe, Cage and Douglass Families* (Nashville: Folk-Keelin Printing Co., 1909), 220–21.

90. *Barry v. Ball and Barry*, Box 9B, Tenn. Supreme Court Files, Tenn. State Archives, Nashville.

91. Will Book 5: 660–62, Amherst Co., Va.

92. Deed Book N: 459, Amherst Co.; see also *Lynchburg Press*, 6 August 1822, for legal notice of suit *Milly Ann Proffitt v. James Ball* and Deed Bk. 3: 488–89, Nelson Co., Va., for Rowland Proffitt to James Ball.

