

Among Cousins

The Bland Family Newsletter



Volume 7, Number 2

July - December 1989

Dear Cousins,

Invitations have been mailed out for the Fifth National Bland Reunion, to be held August 12-13, 1989 at Cumberland Mississippi, a small town near Starkville. If for some reason, you did not get your invitation and order form, please write to me or call at the number listed below. This years reunion will be sponsored by Angelia Bland Alford of Meban Mississippi, and the Reunion will honor the Bland's who were descended from Joseph Bland of Duplin County N.C. (C1750-1800, AC 3-1, pp. 16-120).

Charles L. Bland, A Vision of Unity: The Bland Family in England and America, 1555-1900, (1982), 610pp. Indexed, is published twice annually, May 31 and October 31. Payment of \$74.95 (\$59.95 for libraries), must reach the publisher by May 1 and October 1.

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Among Cousins: The Bland Family Newsletter, is conceived as an organic extension of A Vision of Unity: The Bland Family in England and America.

These works do not represent one person's efforts, but a gathering of many people's research, compiled to share with many.

The editor assumes responsibility for preparation, sale and distribution, and reserves editorial rights over all material received.

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Special Reunion Rates of \$30. per room, no matter the occupancy, have been established at The Regal Inn, Starkville. The Regal Inn will be Reunion headquarters for out-of towners. The Manager asks that reservations be made as soon as possible, but no later than August 1, 1989. The special rates will hold only if a minimum number of rooms are reserved.

Similarly, in order to plan the Reunion and project the approximate number in attendance, Angelia Alford asks that you return the order form, even if it is without payment. This will help to make the necessary head count. You should send your paid reservation form to Angelia no later than August 5.

On behalf of Angelia Alford and her family, I look forward to seeing you in Mississippi August 12-13.

Other Reunions: Clyde Bland informed me that there was a very successful Reunion of the Chatham County, North Carolina Blands, June 4, 1989, at Pittsboro North Carolina. This was the core group for the 1988 National Reunion, and Clyde reported that everyone was still exited about that event. Clyde Bland and his wife Hazel, expressed appreciation for the notes of thanks they received from many of those in attendance at last year's National Reunion.

Address Change: Please note the change of address and phone number that appears on page one. To repeat:

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Loss of Vision of Unity, Manuscript: During a recent move, I lost the manuscript of A Vision of Unity. A replacement copy was made of the narrative, without difficulty. The acute loss is the photographs, which will have to be reconstructed. Some are in the public domain, others are irreplaceable. I will be writing to the original donors during the summer for second copies, but in some cases, I do not expect replacements to be forthcoming, and will use different photographs. This will result in a second edition of the book, hopefully to be ready by October 1989. Remember, however, that if you already own the book, only the photos will be different. The narrative will remain the same.

Library Placements: An anonymous donor has asked that two copies of the book, A Vision of Unity be placed in one of the major state libraries in Alabama and Mississippi. I have yet to determine which libraries those should be, but will announce them at the National Reunion in Mississippi.

Apology: In a previous number, (AC 3-2, p. 21) I wrote about a member of the King and Queen Virginia Family, John Bland, (C1766-1846), "no one has thought that he might be a younger son of William Bland Senior, (C1725-1783). I hasten to add that I do not have proof but inherent logic compels me to list him that way." Thus, after entering the required qualifications for the record, I began to assume the connection, a view that was not shared by my correspondent Carol Adams of Charleston South Carolina, who descends from John.

That was 1985. By 1987, I had prepared a key to lines of descent for subscribers and correspondents and in my mind apparently transposed qualified assumption for fact, (AC 5-1, pp. 51-53 and 54). At that point Mrs. Adams fell victim to her usual appearance as the first name in my alphabetical list of subscribers and correspondents that appears at the back of the Newsletter. When describing the way to use the "Key" that appears to the left of the list, I wrote "If you descend from William Bland of King and Queen County, your code is 13 and you would profit from writing to Carol Adams of Charleston South Carolina." Mrs. Adams protests that this is an error, because she does not accept the link between William Bland and John Bland. But Carol Adams indicates that she is willing to share information with persons descended from John Bland (C1766-1846) of King and Queen County Virginia. My apologies. Beginning with this issue, I will revise the use of the key, using my own name as an example.

Index for Volumes 6 and 7 I realize that I have been remiss in preparing these indexes. I will complete them during the Fall of 1989 and either send them out via a special mailing (free of charge to subscribers), or enclose them with Volume 8, number 1, February 1990.

Thanks for Special Contributions:

Joyce Bland McCool and Jane Midtby. Commencing with the last issue (AC 7-1, pp. 32-39), we began the task of publishing the 1850 Census for the Bland Family, covering the New England States of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts New Hampshire, and the Northeastern States of New Jersey and New York. In this issue, we will cover the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland and District of Columbia as well as Indiana (CF below, pp. 32ff.) Much of the non-census background about Indiana is derived from the research of Jane C. Midtby of Denver Colorado. This project is the fruit of the efforts in 1986-1987 of Joyce Bland McCool of Overland Park Kansas who did the basic research work for an annotated 1850 Census for the Bland Family. I, as well as other Bland family researchers, are grateful to Joyce McCool for this work and to Jane Midtby, for all her fine work on the state of Indiana.

Also, in this number, I will summarize the names of known soldiers who fought in the War of 1812, information also gathered by Mrs. McCool, (see below, pp. 27-31). I will ask that anyone who visits the National Archives in Washington or any branch of the Archives, make an attempt to retrieve the service files of at least a few of these soldiers. In this issue, I will outline the findings of a few whose records I was able to retrieve in a visit to the National Archives in Summer 1987.

Gordon and Frances Owens: I would like to say a special word of thanks to Gordon and Virginia Owens of Newton Square Pennsylvania, for their willingness to undertake a review of the papers of Mrs. Lee (Dorothy James) Herrington, filed at the Westfield New Jersey Public Library. This project is still in progress.

Albert and Mildred Hunter: A special thanks is also due to Albert and Mildred Hunter for indexing Nicholas Carlisle, Collections for a History of the Ancient Family of Bland (1826). The Hunters provided me with a hard copy index, cross listed etc. and a floppy disk back up record. I am grateful to the Hunters for this prodigious effort, which makes accessible to Bland researchers many names, heretofore buried in this wonderful but unwieldy and unindexed work.

Harriet Bland Green, Olympic Gold Medalist:

In the last number, I made mention of Harriet Claiborne Bland Green, 1 of St. Louis Missouri. Known as "the fleetest female in these parts". Harriet was the granddaughter of Judge Charles Clelland Bland, and the niece of Richard Parks "Silver Dick" Bland, (VU pp. 466-472). She was a Gold Medalist in the 1936 Olympics, for her role in the 400 meter relay. Thanks to Ruth Bland White of Nashville Tennessee, we have for display, a photo of Harriet Bland which hangs at the St. Louis Cardinals Stadium in the Hall of Fame Museum, St. Louis Missouri.



Harriet C. Bland
1936 Olympic
Gold Medalist

1 Harriet C. Bland married William Green of Webster Groves Missouri, in 1938. They had one son, William Bland Green, and two grandchildren. Harriet Bland was a member of Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1974, Harriet Bland Green suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and has since been confined to a wheelchair.

The 1936 Olympics story reveals an interesting story about Harriet C. Bland.² The Eleventh Modern Olympiad, held in Berlin, which by 1936 had become an oppressive, racist police state, was a tribute of sorts to the persistence and promotion of Chancellor Adolph Hitler and his Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. The 1936 Olympics were meant to be a deceptive window through which an unwary world saw Germany internally at peace. Also, it was an opportunity for Hitler to display what he thought was the best of his Master Race. By now, the feat of American runner Jesse Owens in bursting this racist baloon has become an Olympics legend. Less well known is the story of the two Missourians, Harriet Bland and Helen Stephens, an 18 year old in 1936 who was known as the fastest woman in the world, and Annette Rogers and Elizabeth Robinson from Chicago. These young women were coached by Dee Beckman, of St. Louis, a member of the 1928 Olympic Team and the first woman Olympic Coach.

In 1928, Betty Robinson won the gold medal for the 100 yard dash (12.2 seconds) at Amsterdam, becoming the first woman Track and Field Champion. She also won a Silver Medal in the 400 Yard Relay. Owing to injuries suffered in a plane crash, Robinson was unable to compete in the 1932 games. Annette Rogers, born in 1914, was a member of the Gold Medal-Winning 400 Yard Relay team at the 1932 Olympics.

Born in 1915, Harriet Bland recalled, "I enjoyed running . . . I could run fast, I knew that . . . I won every race I was in." Harriet qualified for the 1932 Olympics Team, but was prevented from going by Olympics President Avery Brundage. No reason for her disqualification was ever given, but she was determined to compete in the Olympics. Her family employed Dee Beckman to give Harriet special attention and training. 3

² This essay is derived from the following published sources: Duff Hart-Davis, Hitler's Games: The 1936 Olympics (1986); Richard D. Mandell, The Nazi Olympics, (1971); and Frederick W. Rubien, Ed., Report of the American Olympic Committee, (1936). I am also grateful to Dorothea Gilbreath, St. Louis Missouri, for the following articles: Jack Herman, "Harriet Bland Green: A Proud Grandmother", St. Louis Globe Democrat, September 26, 1972; Robert L. Burnes, "The Forgotten Champion", Ibid, February 28, 1978; June Wuest Becht, "'Golden Girls' of 1936 Made Olympic History", St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 10, 1983. I also consulted Newsweek, October 10, 1988, p. 14-20, for ragmentary information about Florence Joyner. Finally, I am grateful to June Wuest Becht, an Olympics Historian from St. Louis, for generously sharing with me her views about the 1936 Olympics during a phone conversation on June 30, 1989.

³ Helen Stephens later chuckled about this, "Harriet and Dee didn't always hit it off. Harriet was a happy, vibrant, enthusiastic kid and Dee was a tough disciplinarian. They didn't

In 1936, Bland qualified again, and the St. Louis Globe Democrat initiated a campaign that raised more than \$500. (a princely sum during the Great Depression), to send her to Berlin. In the first trial heat of Olympics Competition, in the 100 meter dash, Harriet Bland was eliminated. She had come down with pneumonia and "I tried to scratch . . . but our coach (Dee Beckman) said if I couldn't run in the 100 meters, I couldn't run the relay either. I led the field for 80 yards - I always started quickly - but my lungs gave out." This left Helen Stephens and Annette Rogers in the final. Stephens won, setting a world record of 11.5 seconds, beating the polish champion Stanislaw Walasiewicz, or as she was more simply known, Stella Walsh, across the finish line by two yards. ⁴ Stephens had been clocked at 11.4 seconds in a trial heat.

The four original entrants, Bland, Robinson, Rogers and Stephens made up the winning American Team in the 400 Meters Relay. Although Coach Beckman had switched the four women during practice, in order to fool spies, Harriet Bland ran the first stage for the American team. "I could always break fast and I had the lead when I handed the baton to Annette Rogers. She and Betty Robinson widened the lead and then Helen Stephens, running Anchor, just raced away from everybody. It still has to be, I think, the greatest thrill of my life." There remains a question, however, whether the American team would have won if the favored German team, which had set a world record of 46.4 seconds in the trial heat, had not collapsed. In the final, the third girl, _____

always agree . . . but maybe it was the best medicine. It sure worked.

⁴ Stephens had run at 11.4 seconds in a trial heat. In 1935, Helen Stephens high school coach had entered her into the National AAU meet in St. Louis, which was attended by some 4,000, who were on hand to see Walsh, "the fastest woman in the world." At the 1932 Olympics, the Polish runner had broken the 1928 record set by Elizabeth Robinson for the 100 Meter Dash. Walsh called Stephens "that greenie from the sticks" and Stephens countered with, "who is Stella Walsh?" Thus, Their race in 1936 could be labeled a grudge match. A ferocious competitor, Stephens was "almost six feet tall flat chested, long necked and appeared rather rangily relaxed. . . outsized and almost as effective as a man." Stephens held the 100 meter dash record until 1960, when Wilma Rudolph ran it at 11.3. In the 1988 Olympics, Florence "Flo Jo" Joyner ran the 100 meter dash in trial heats of 10.49, 10.62 and 10.88. June W. Becht believes it is pointless to compare the athletes of the 30s with those of the 80s, because of the more primitive conditions in which the earlier athletes competed. For example, athletes like Harriet Bland and Helen Stephens, dug starting positions for themselves and ran on a cinder track, whereas Flo Jo used starting blocks and ran on an all weather track.

Marie Dollinger, left a ten meter lead over the Americans. The anchor, Ilse Dorffeldt was poised with all her splendid Germanic will to maintain her lead over her American opponent, Helen Stephens. Dorffeldt, who was the normal lead off runner and accustomed to shifting the baton in her hands, must have become unnerved as being pitted against the lightning fast Stephens. At the pass-off, Dorffeldt began her dash, then staggered to a stop. She had unnecessarily attempted to change hands and dropped the baton, which disqualified her team. "She shrieked with grief as her hands rushed wildly to her head in an effort to block out the unanimous gasp of disgust from her assembled countrymen," (Mandell, p. 174), including Adolph Hitler, who had leapt to his feet with joy when Dollinger opened up the big lead. With Dorffeldt's fatal error, Der Fuhrer's great ass thumped into his seat, and for once, he was at silent. Stephens crossed the finish line at 46.9, ten meters ahead of the nearest competitor, while the German team grieved from the sideline. Hitler comforted and ordered up a limousine escort for the losing German team, (it is one of those ironies of history that a concentration camp for Jews was flourishing at Oranienburg, about an hour's drive from this tender scene).

Would the Americans have won the Gold Medal without the accident? Should this victory be likened to Roger Maris' 61st Home Run? At the time, speculation raged over whether Stephens could have closed the formidable gap between the Americans and the Germans. To the Germans, it seemed unlikely that even Stephens could have brought it off. Olympics historian June Becht believes the Americans would still have won, because Stephens was gaining on Dorffeldt so quickly that she would have eked out a victory even if Dorffeldt had hung onto the baton. It is important for us to remember, however, that Stephens, as the last leg of the relay, had to rely on Harriet Bland, Annette Rogers and Elizabeth Robinson to get the baton to her in order to set her 46.9 mark. Harriet Bland was thus the beginning of the end for the German team, and the genesis of victory for her own.

Harriet Bland Green later commented that she thought she didn't gain the fame of her more illustrious colleagues Robinson, Stephens and Beckman, because she gave up competition in 1938 to get married to Mr. Green. ". . . that was more important to me than track. So I walked away from competition. Besides, I had achieved what I set out to do - make the Olympic Team and win a Gold Medal. There didn't seem any more worlds to conquer." Along the way, Harriet Bland had the honor of showing up Adolph Hitler and his terrible conception of the Master Race. Indeed, she can be proud and we can be proud to be her cousin.



1936 Olympic Gold Medalists, 400 Meter Relay, L-R: Harriet C Bland Green; Annette Rogers Kelly; Elizabeth Robinson Schwartz; Helen Stephens.

Courtesy June Wuest Becht

Transitions:

During this period, I received no notices regarding births or marriages.

I was deeply saddened to learn of the death on March 5, 1989 of Jessamine Bland James (1899-1989), of Tucson Arizona. Mrs. James was a well known Bland researcher and compiled for the public her very valuable Bland Family, Court and Bible Records, which provide basic documents in the development of the Bland

family of Northern Virginia and her family line as it migrated from Virginia to Garrard County Kentucky. Jessamine was the descendant and principle historian of James Bland (C1687-1756) of Prince William County, Virginia, (VU, pp. 401-416).

Jessamine Bland graduated from Georgetown College Kentucky in 1922 and came to Tucson in 1923. In Tucson, she married Roland James. Mrs. James was a member of the Daughters of American Revolution, the National Society of Daughters of American Colonialists, the Huguenot Society of Magna Charta, the National Society of Sons and Daughters of 1812, the National Society of Colonial Dames, the National Society of Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims, Descendants of the Founders of Hartford, the National Gavel Club and the Order of the First Families of Virginia, 1607-1624. 5

I should note that Mrs. James was one of the first Bland researchers I contacted back in 1979-1980, when I was beginning work on A Vision of Unity. I still remember how she chuckled at my anxious and breathless questions. She was one of my favorites and will surely be missed.

Another favorite of mine, since we first made contact was Linneous Preston Bland, Jr. (1900-1989), of Wakefield, Virginia, who died on on March 11, 1989. 6

Preston contacted me in 1984 and remained an avid and very stimulating correspondent until the last two years of his life, when he was unable to write or call. I remember him for his kindness and generosity to me, his willingness to disagree while retaining my personal friendship, and for his unbounded "joie de vivre", marvelous sense of humor and stoicism in face of incredible physical pain. Preston was also an active correspondent with many other Bland researchers, always a joy to work with. His search for the connection of his grandfather Zachariah Bland, though not completed in his lifetime, led him to many theories, which he shared with me and others, developing lines not previously known about. The development of information about John Bland (1739-1777, AC 7-1, pp. 10-11) of the James River Family and of John Bland (C1770-1842, AC 6-2, pp. 13-14) assumed to be a son of Osborne Bland, resulted from L.P. Bland's work. 7

5 I am grateful to Eleanor Hayes Smith of Tucson for sending me obituary notices of Mrs. James death.

6 I am grateful to L.P. Bland's children, especially, L.P. Bland and Nan Seely, for information about their father. I am also grateful to Bill and Vera Moore of Hopewell Virginia and Ruth Bland White of Nashville Tennessee to obituary notices they sent.

7 I think that L.P. descends from the King and Queen County Virginia family but the link of his grandfather Zachariah Bland to that family has not been found.

