Mary Ann Sebrell
(1765/1775–1818)

of

Blackwater Swamp, Surry County, Virginia,

Daughter of Nathaniel Sebrell Sr. & Elizabeth Faulcon

by Timothy Dean Hudson

Mary Ann Sebrell (1765/1775–1818) had the same first given name as her sister who married John Stiles in 1782. However, the records distinctively refer to her as *"Mary Ann,"* whereas her sister was merely called *"Mary Sebrell"* on her 1782 marriage bond [1].

Mary Ann Sebrell never married and appears to have spent her life living in her parents' household. No known evidence points to either a specific or approximate year for her birth. She is undoubtedly one of the females aged between twenty-six and forty-five living in her father's 1810 household, placing her birth after 1765. Given her mother's likely childbearing window, Mary Ann was probably born between 1765 and the early 1770s [2].

Due to the patriarchal nature of Virginia society of this era, the surviving records give no indication of Mary Ann's very existence until her brother wrote his will on 2 December 1808. After the death of his wife, Sen. Nicholas Sebrell left his estate in Surry County to *"my beloved sister Mary Ann Sebrell."*

In addition to being close in age, Nicholas and Mary Ann had lived in the same household well into adulthood. Beginning in 1799, Nicholas served both as Surry Court Justice and either Surry's representative to the General Assembly or their senator. He lived in their father's household until October 1808, when he married a widow from across the county line in Southampton County. He then moved to his wife's plantation in Southampton, joining their youngest brother, James Sebrell, who had settled there about 1795.

Three tragedies struck the Sebrells in Southampton County in 1810–1811. It is unclear whether these deaths reflect a period of widespread illness in the region or were simply an unfortunate coincidence. The clustering of these deaths in such close succession is striking. Sen. Nicholas Sebrell died in October 1810, followed by James Sebrell's death on 21 May 1811, and the death of Nicholas's wife, Elizabeth, in June or July 1811 [3].

In early May 1811, several weeks prior to James' death, Mary Ann was in Southampton County, perhaps tending to her brother and his family. While there, on May 4th, Mary Ann witnessed the will of Ann Simmons Kirby, the aunt of James' wife, Nancy Simmons Sebrell. Ann Kirby died several months later, in October 1811 [4].

Mary Ann Sebrell had three older sisters, Mary, Susanna, and Elizabeth Sebrell, all of whom married and had children. Mary and Susanna both died as young adult women in the 1780s and 1790s, while Elizabeth died about 1810 or 1811. Thus, Mary Ann was the only daughter to survive both of her parents. In his will made on Christmas Day 1813, Nathaniel Sebrell Sr. made several bequests to Mary Ann, leaving her

> *…the land and plantation whereon I now live which I bought of Henry Watkins, containing one hundred acres during her single life and at her death or marriage I give the same to my son David Sebrell and to his heirs forever.*

Nathaniel also left to his daughter,

> *…my negroe* [sic] *woman Judah, and Negro Girl Nancy, my two best feather beds and furniture, best Desk, and Cast falling walnut Table, three trunks and one large blue painted chest to her and her heirs forever.*

Nathaniel Sebrell died in the fall of 1815 at the age of ninety-two years [5].

Mary Ann did not enjoy her father's extended longevity, surviving him by merely three years. Her health apparently declined by mid-1818, prompting her to sign her will on 17 July 1818. She left her property to a few of her nieces and nephews, including Mary and Nathaniel Spratley, children of her sister Susanna; Jane Carsley, daughter of her sister Elizabeth; Martha Ann Nicholas Sebrell, daughter of her brother David; and to the four young children of her brother James.

Mary Ann Sebrell appears to have died about a month afterwards, for on September 28th, Walter Spratley filed her will with the Surry County Court, which then confirmed Spratley's appointment as her executor. Walter's youngest brother, Nathaniel, and his first cousin, Peter T. Spratley, served as the securities on his executor's bond [6].

Walter Spratley had an inventory of his aunt's estate made on 5 January 1819, and the items give an insight into Mary Ann's probable daily activities. The inventory listed an extensive amount of fabric of varying colors and descriptions, suggesting that she and possibly the two enslaved women left her in her father's will, Juda and Nancy, worked as seamstresses [7].

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1818 Will of Mary Ann Sebrell

Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 3 (1815–1821), pp. 314–315

*I **Mary Ann Sebrell** of Surry county in the state of Virginia being low in health but of a sound mind and memory do make and publish the following as and for my last will and Testament.*

Item 1st. I give and bequeath unto my niece Mary Spratley one Bed and furniture, one Trunk and six (silver) Tea spoons to her and to her heirs.

Item 2nd. I give and bequeath unto my Nephew Nathl Spratley One Desk to him and his heirs.

Item 3rd. I give unto my niece Martha Ann Nicholas Sebrell Daughter of my Bro. David one Trunk and one bed and furniture.

Item 4th. I give unto my niece Jane Carseley one Trunk and a part of my wearing apparel.

Item 5th. The rest and residue of my estate I desire may be divided into four equal parts. One part thereof I give and bequeath unto my niece and nephew Mary Spratley and Nathl Spratley. One other part thereof I give unto Martha Ann Nicholas Sebrell daughter of my Brother David. One other part thereof I give unto Nephew James Henry Sebrell son of my Brother James and the fourth and last part I desire may be equally divided between William Jones Sebrell, Nicholas Monroe Sebrell and Nancy Mariah Avelina Sebrell children of my Brother James.

It is my will and desire that my niece Martha Ann Nicholas Sebrell shall receive two years Board and Schooling with some genteel and well qualified teachers out of her proportion of my estate.

I desire that my wearing apparel may be divided between Mary Spratley, Martha Ann Nicholas Sebrell, Jane Carseley and Nancy Maria Avelina Sebrell. And lastly I nominate and appoint my nephew Walter Spratley executor of this my last Will and Testament. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this 17th day of July in the year of our Lord 1818.

Mary Ann Sebrell [her mark]

Signed, Sealed published and declared as
and for her last Will and Testament
at whose instance and request we have
subscribed our names as witnesses to
the same.

Peter T. Spratley
John Spratley

At a Court held for Surry county [sic] *September the 28th 1818.*

The within written last Will and Testament and last Will of ***Mary Ann Sebrell*** *deceased, was presented into Court by Walter Spratley Sen. the executor therein named, the same being proved by the oaths of Peter T. Spratley and John Spratley the witnesses* thereto [and] *is by the Court ordered to be recorded. And on Motion of the said executor, who made oath and gave bond with Peter T. Spratley and Nathaniel Spratley his securities in the penal sum of two thousand dollars, Conditioned as the Law directs. Certificate is granted him for obtaining a probate thereof in due form.*

teste.

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1819 Inventory of the Estate of Mary Ann Sebrell

Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 3 (1815–1821), pp. 364–366

An Inventory and appraisement of the estate of ***Mary Ann Sebrell*** *dec^{d} made this 5th day of January 1819 by the undersigned in formity* [sic] *to an order of the W. P. Court of Surry to us directed*

	$	Cts
Negro Girl Juda	*300.*	*00*
Negro Gal Nancy	*450.*	*00*
One Bed and furniture	*40.*	*00*
One ditto	*35.*	*00*
One Chest	*2.*	*50*
One Black Desk	*18.*	*00*
One large Trunk	*6.*	*00*
One Small do	*2.*	*00*
One other do	*3.*	*00*
One Small do	*1.*	*00*
Small Trunk and Dressing Box	*1.*	*00*
Sugar Box and Vials	*1.*	*00*
Three Waiters		*.50*
One large Chest	*3.*	*50*
One Small do		*.75*
47½ yds figur'd home Spun @ 50¢ pr y^{d}	*23.*	*75*
7¾ yds white Dimity @ 45¢ pr y^{d}	*3.*	*48¾*
6 yds Blue figured Cloth @ 45¢ y^{d}	*2.*	*70*
5¼ yds figured white Cloth @ 50¢ y^{d}	*2.*	*62½*
9 yds ditto do do @ 50¢ y^{d}	*4.*	*50*
4½ yds Mixed Cloth @ 37½¢ y^{d}	*1.*	*68¾*
4½ yds Gray mixed Cloth @ 45¢ y^{d}	*2.*	*02½*
5½ yds Striped Cloth @ 37½¢ y^{d}	*2.*	*06¼*
5½ yds Striped Cloth @ 37½¢ y^{d}	*2.*	*06¼*
4 Domestic hankerchiefs [sic] *@ 12½¢ each*		*.50*
1½ Yds figured Cloth @ 37½¢ y^{d}		*.56¼*
Amount Carried forward	*912.*	*21¼*

	$	Cts
Amount brought forward	*$912.*	*21¼*
One home Spun waiscoat [sic] *pattern*		*.50*
1½ yards White Flannel @ 75¢ pr y^{d}	*1.*	*12½*
2 pair do Socks @ 2/3 each		*.75*
12½ yards do Cloth @ 31¢ pr y^{d}	*3.*	*87½*
3 yds do Cloth @ 30¢ pr y^{d}		*.90*

2 Remnants Striped Cloth.....@..... .25
4½ Yds black Cambrick.....@ 50¢ pr yd.....2.25
7 Taylets.....@ 75¢ each.....5.25
3 Towels.....@ 50¢ each.....1.50
One Counter pin Striped.....3.00
2 Pr Sheets (Common) and one pillow Case.....6.00
5 Bed Qui[l]ts.....12.00
2 White and figured table Cloths.....4.00
3 Toilets and Napkins.....1.50
6 White Counterpins.....24.00
2 Checked do.....4.00
One unfinished Red quilt.....1.50
One New Cotton shirt.....1.25
Two Checked pillow Cases..... .25
47½ yards fringe at 6¢ pr yd.....2.85
One Cotton bag..... .12½
5 Baskets and one Bucket.....1.50
Lott Crockery Ware and Bottles.....1.50
Tin and Pewter.....1.25
4 Stone pots..... .75
Shoe tread..... .18¾
2 Jugs and two stone Pots.....1.50
22lb pounds Soap.....@ 12½¢ pr lb.....2.75
One Side Saddle and Bridle.....8.00

Amount Carried forward $1006.52½

Amount Brought forward..... $1006.52½
2 Baskets, Collar, Harness, and Garter loom..... .62½
3 Harnesses, one Slay House tub and bird Cage.....1.25
One dutch Oven, one pot, one Skillet and pot rack.....3.00
One Narrow axe..... .25
One Cart and Wheels..... .50
One Cupboard.....2.00
6 lbs Spun Cotton.....75¢ pr lbs.....4.00
1 Round Box and Deer Skin.....1.25
½ Dozen Tea Spoons.....4.50

$1024.40

The above is a True inventory of the Late Mary Ann Sebrell deceased estate.

***Walter Spratley** Exor.*

The worshipful court of Surry. May it please & According to an order we the subscribers have appraised the Estate of Mary Ann Sebrell dec^{d} in Current Money to us the best of our judgement and respectfully return an account of the same.

John Spratley
William Spratley
John Cocks

At a court held for Surry County April 26th 1819.

The within Inventory and appraisement of the estate of Mary Ann Sebrell deceased, was returned and ordered to be recorded. teste.

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Notes

1. Surry County VA Marriage Bonds, 1782, LDS Film #4129125, Images #40–41; Surry County VA Marriage Register (1763–1853), p. 11, LDS Film #7579167, Image 133 (John Stiles to Mary Sebrell, *"Spinster;"* 9 December 1782).
2. 1810 Surry County VA Federal Census, p. 615, line #13: *"Nath^{l} Sebrell."*
3. Southampton County VA Will Book 7 (1810–1815), pp. 17–18 (Will of Nicholas Sebrell, written 2 December 1808, filed in court 15 October 1810); pp. 72–73 (Will of Elizabeth Sebrell, written 30 May 1811, filed with the Southampton County Court in July 1811); pp. 157–158 (Account of Nicholas Sebrell Estate, filed 15 June 1812). Virginia State Library, Archives and Manuscripts Room, Manuscript #42981: Sebrell Family Bible Record, 1801–1904. Although filed as a *"Bible Record"* in the Virginia State Library, the Sebrell family record is recorded in a 1797 edition of *"The Virginia Almanack."* This entry appears immediately after the births of James Sebrell's children: *"James Sebrell departed this life the 21st May 1811."*
4. Southampton County VA Will Book 7 (1810–1815), p. 99 (Will of Ann Kirby, written 4 May 1811, filed in court in October 1811).
5. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 3 (1815–1821), pp. 140–142 (Will of Nathaniel Sebrell, written 25 December 1813, filed 22 April 1816). "*The American Beacon and Commercial Diary*" (Norfolk, VA), 1 November 1816, p. 3, column 1. "*The New–York Herald*" (New York, NY), 9 November 1816, p. 3, column 1.
6. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 3 (1815–1821), pp. 314–315 (Will of Mary Ann Sebrell, written 17 July 1818, filed in court on 28 September 1818). Surry County VA Executors Bonds (1816–1831), p. 12 (Bond of *"Walter Spratley Sen^{r},"* executor of Mary Ann Sebrell, 28 September 1818; securities: Peter T. Spratley, Nathaniel Spratley).
7. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 3 (1815–1821), pp. 364–366 (Inventory of Mary Ann Sebrell Estate, made 5 January 1819, filed with Surry County Court 26 April 1819, executor: Walter Spratley; appraisers: John Spratley, William Spratley, John Cocks).

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