**The Lives of**

# Benjamin Spratley

**(c1754–1791/1792)**




**and his wife,**

# Susanna Sebrell

**(1755/1760–1794)**




**of**

**Blackwater Swamp, Surry County, Virginia**

**by Timothy Dean Hudson**

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## Life Along the Blackwater in Surry County, Virginia

Susanna Sebrell was born between about 1755 and 1760, the daughter of Nathaniel Sebrell Sr. and his second wife, Elizabeth Faulcon, of Surry County, Virginia [1]. Only two of Susanna's grandparents are documented. Her maternal grandfather was Nicholas Faulcon Sr., a wealthy Surry County tobacco farmer who died in 1783 [2]. Susanna was the namesake of her paternal grandmother, Susanna Sebrell Hancock, who died in November 1750 [3].

While Susanna Sebrell's birth almost certainly occurred in Surry County, Virginia, it is not clear precisely where her parents lived at the time of her birth in the latter 1750s. Her parents likely lived either on his southern Surry farm or near the James River at Hog Island, where he kept the tavern in 1750 [4]. In August 1762, Susanna's father bought a 400-acre farm on the northern bank of Blackwater Swamp, and she grew up there [5]. In 1788 as a young woman of about thirty years, Susanna signed her name in a clear and deliberate handwriting that indicates she received a better education than most of her contemporary females [6]:




Susan Sebrell's aunt, Ann Faulcon, married William Spratley on 5 April 1773 [7]. Spratley was the son of John Spratley (1720/1725–1758) and Mary Cocke (c1730–1773). The elder Spratley died in 1758 leaving a family of young children. When Mary Spratley's health failed in 1772, William assumed the responsibility of serving as guardian for his siblings, including his younger brother, Benjamin, born about 1754. Upon reaching the age of twenty-one, Benjamin Spratley appeared before the Surry Court on 22 August 1775, and *"acknowledged he has received full Satisfaction of William Spratley his late Guardian"* [8].

In his will written on 3 May 1758, John Spratley made this bequest:

> *I give and bequeath to my Son Benjamin a peace* [sic] *of Land on the north side of the said* [Blackwater] *Swamp where John Allen now lives to him and his Heirs for Ever.*

Benjamin Spratley's 250-acre tract of land on the north side of the Blackwater Swamp lay near the farm of Nathaniel Sebrell [9]. About 1778 or 1779, Susanna Sebrell married Benjamin Spratley, and they settled on his farm in southern Surry County, Virginia [10].

John Spratley was a wealthy man who owned large tracts of land on both sides of the Blackwater Swamp and twenty-six slaves. In his 1758 will, Spratley directed that when his eldest son, William, *"comes to Age all the Negroes…I have and their Increase may be appraisd* [sic] *and Equally divided between my Wife and Children"* [11]. William Spratley must have reached the age

of twenty-one about 1772, and on 22 June 1773, the Surry Court divided his slaves, giving Benjamin *"great Will," "Aggy and her child Phelby,"* Isaac, and Dick [12]. After the death of his mother in 1773, Benjamin inherited several additional enslaved people, for she directed that her property be divided among her children [13].

During the 1780s, Benjamin and Susanna Spratley lived on their farm along the north side of the Blackwater Swamp. The 1782 census of the district in southern Surry County on the north side of the Blackwater Swamp shows Benjamin Spratley's household consisting of four white people and ten slaves. This likely represented Benjamin, Susan, and their two eldest children, Mary, born about 1780, and Walter, born about 1782, or if Walter's birth had not yet occurred, the other white person may have been Benjamin's youngest brother, Thomas [14].

The early 1780s brought a profound shift in the Spratley household. In May 1782, Virginia's General Assembly passed a measure legalizing manumission of slaves, and this prompted many Virginian slaveholders who took literally the profession in the Declaration of Independence regarding the equality of all men to manumit those they had previously held as enslaved [15]. A number of Surry County men, including Benjamin Spratley, shared this sentiment, a unique concept of human rights far ahead of their time. It was also one that made Spratley distinctive in his immediate family, as all of his siblings and their children retained ownership of their slaves.

On 28 October 1783, Benjamin Spratley made this very unusual document, stating that,

> *...being fully persuaded that freedom is the natural right of all mankind, and that it is my duty to do unto others as I would desire to be done by in the like situation, and having under my care eleven negroes whom I have heretofore held as Slaves...I hereby emancipate and set free all and every one of the above named Slaves, and I do for myself my heirs, executors and administrators, relinquish all my right, title, interest, claim, or pretension of claim whatsoever, either to their persons or to any estate they may hereafter acquire, and having also seven of the above negroes now in their minority...I also hereby emancipate and set free, yet I believe it right for me to act as a Guardian over them until the males arrive to the age of twenty one, and the females to the age of eighteen years.*

Spratley's document gave the precise dates of birth for the seven younger slaves that he freed [16]. Since the Surry County Clerk of Court routinely assigned the surname of the former owner to manumitted slaves, Benjamin Spratley's act laid the foundation for the development of a large number of free black Spratleys in southeastern Virginia.

A 1785 census of their district in southern Surry County, titled, *"A List of the White People & their Improvements,"* records six white people living in one dwelling on the Spratley farm, along

with two *"out Houses"* likely a detached kitchen, stable, smokehouse, or dairy structure [17]. Their legal activity during the mid-1780s is reflected in several surviving transactions:

**25 Nov 1783** – for £60, Benjamin and Susanna sold to William Spratley Sr., his elder brother, a 37-acre tract of land on Cypress Swamp that Benjamin's father had left to him [18].

**11 May 1787** – Benjamin Spratley witnessed a transaction in which his brother-in-law and Susanna's uncle, Jacob Faulcon, purchased a 320-acre tract of land on Pigeon Swamp [19].

**14 Jun 1788** – Benjamin and Susanna sold a 67-acre tract of land on the north side of Cypress Swamp left him by his father to Frederick Lane for £73 14s *"Current Money of Virginia."* The original surviving document gives a sample of Benjamin's original signature [20]:




By 1788, Benjamin's health apparently declined enough to prompt him to write his will on 13 January 1789. He lived another three years, dying about January 1792 at the age of about thirty-seven. The precise malady which caused his early death is unknown. Given the circumstances of his demise and the known devastating toll of tuberculosis in that era, he may have succumbed to it. *"Consumption,"* as it was then known, continued to cut short the lives of his descendants, documented as causing the 1858 premature death of his grandson, Maj. James W. Spratley, and probably the early deaths of his sons. While speculative, tuberculosis was common and consistent with the pattern of early deaths in the family.

When he initially wrote his will in 1789, Benjamin failed to appoint executors. On 28 February 1792, *"Susanna Spratley widow and relict of Benjamin Spratley deceased,"* appeared before the Surry Court with her brother-in-law, Thomas Spratley, who served as her security on her bond as administrator of her husband's estate [21].

Although Benjamin had manumitted his slaves in 1783, Susanna Sebrell Spratley paid taxes on one slave, Jack, and on two horses or mares in 1792 and 1793 [22]. She herself died about April 1794, also in her mid to latter thirties. Following her death, the Surry Court appointed Thomas Spratley, as Benjamin's administrator. In his accounting of the Spratley estate, Thomas submitted receipts showing payment of 15 shillings for a coffin for Benjamin Spratley and 12 shillings for Susanna's coffin [23].

Susan Sebrell and Benjamin Spratley's premature deaths orphaned their six children, and on 27 February 1798, the Surry County Court appointed their uncle, David Sebrell, as their guardian.

Records show him carefully managing the accounts of his nieces and nephews over the next two decades. He also maintained the graves of his sister and brother-in-law for many years after their deaths, probably in the family cemetery on either the Spratley or Sebrell farms. On 2 December 1809, some fifteen years after his sister's death, he paid $8.00 for *"pailing the Grave Yard,"* indicating that he had it enclosed with a fence [24].

Susan's short life, though sparsely documented, left a lasting imprint on both the Sebrell and Spratley families that emerged along the Blackwater in southern Surry County, Virginia.

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## Children of Susanna Sebrell & Benjamin Spratley

The children of Susan Sebrell and Benjamin Spratley are documented by their estate records and include [1]:

1. **Mary Spratley** [Polly] (c1780–aft. 20 May 1839) remained single.
2. **Capt. Walter Spratley Sr.** (c1782–1833) married three times in Surry County, Virginia. His wives include Elizabeth Shackleford (c1790–1820/1821), Sarah W. Newsum (1794/–1821/1822), and Rebecca B. Carsley (1802/1804–c1869).
3. **Henry Spratley** (c1785–1803)
4. **Benjamin Spratley Jr.** (c1787–1803)
5. **Elizabeth Spratley** [Betsy] (1789–1812)
6. **Nathaniel Spratley** [Nate] (c1791–Oct 1846)

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## Biographical Sketches of the Children of Benjamin Spratley & Susanna Sebrell

### 1. Mary (Polly) Spratley

Mary Spratley [Polly] (c1780–aft. 20 May 1839) was born about 1780, her parents' eldest known child to survive infancy. When he wrote his will in 1789, Polly's father listed his children in their order of birth, naming Polly first. The accounts kept by Polly's uncle and guardian show him regularly paying for various items for her. In particular, David Sebrell frequently bought Polly new shoes. Although he paid for clothes for her brothers, David Sebrell's accounts do not show him buying nearly as many items for either them or Polly's sister, Elizabeth. Here is a list of the personal items he bought for Polly between 1798 and 1812:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 19 Sep 1798 – | pair shoes and a *"paper pin"* | $1.50 |
| 8 Jan 1800 – | pair shoes | $1.12 |
| 15 Nov 1800 – | pair shoes | $1.10 |
| | two yards of *"India Cotton"* | 83¢ |
| 10 May 1802 – | pair shoes | $1.50 |
| 1 Jan 1803 – | one yard of silk and four yards of Ribbon | $1.67 |
| 10 Jan 1803 – | pair shoes | $1.00 |
| | *"bombazette"* [bombazet – woven cloth for dresses] | $4.56 |
| 10 Dec 1803 – | pair shoes | $1.50 |
| | Pair silk mitts | $1.50 |
| 8 Feb 1805 – | pair shoes, five yards *"Cotton Cambric"* | $11.13 |
| 12 Jun 1805 – | ½ yard *"India Cotton"* and four skeins thread | 69¢ |
| | one yard *"India Cotton"* | 62¢ |
| | pair shoes | $1.33 |
| 28 Jan 1806 | pair shoes | $1.25 |
| 12 May 1806 | one yard *"India Cotton"* | 42¢ |
| 25 May 1806 | one *"Straw Bonnett"* | $3.00 |
| 17 July 1809 | pair shoes | $1.46 |
| 28 Feb 1810 | three yards flannel | $1.88 |

On 26 February 1812, David Sebrell paid $8.00 to Dr. Bailey for Polly's medical bills [1].

Polly Spratley remained single and spent her entire life in Surry County, Virginia. Her father's 414-acre farm remained intact through 1812, with taxes paid on the land as part of the Benjamin Spratley Estate. Polly's youngest brother came of age that year, and she and her two surviving siblings, Walter and Nathaniel, then divided the tract. In 1813, Polly began paying land taxes on the portion of her father's old farm that she inherited [2].

On 31 March 1818, Polly bought 33⅓ acres of land from her brother and sister-in-law, Walter and Elizabeth Spratley,

> *It being one third of one fourth of the whole tract whereof Benjamin Spratley late of the said County died seized and possessed, and which descended to the said Walter Spratley by the death of his sister Elizabeth Spratley.*

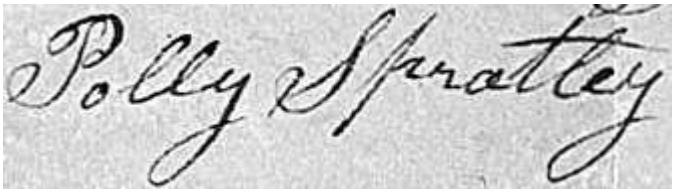
Polly paid them $166.66⅔ for their interest in their sister's land [3]. A few months later, on July 17th, Polly's aunt, Mary Ann Sebrell, wrote her will and made these bequests:

> *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…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….I desire that my wearing apparel may be divided between Mary Spratley, Martha Ann Nicholas Sebrell, Jane Carseley and Nancy Maria Elvina Sebrell…*

Mary Ann named Polly's brother, Walter Spratley, as her executor. On 1 May 1827, Walter paid Polly $291.00¼ as part of her portion of their aunt's estate [4].

It appears that Polly spent her adult life living with her two brothers, Walter and Nathaniel. The 1820 Surry County household of Polly's youngest brother, Nathaniel Spratley, includes an adult female of Polly's age, and the 1830 Surry County household of Polly's second brother, Walter Spratley, includes an older female of Polly's age. Polly is probably the second adult female in both of her brothers' households [5].

On 8 January 1828, Walter Spratley served as trustee to secure payment to Samuel Booth of a bond due him to Thomas West. Until Booth received payment, West gave Spratley title to *"one certain Negroe Girl slave called called Esther aged about Thirteen Years."* Polly Spratley witnessed West's mortgage, along with her nephew, Benjamin R. Spratley, Walter's son. Her clear and distinct signature reveals that she had received a solid education as a child [6]:




On 20 May 1839, Polly sold her 200 acres on the east side of Cypress Swamp to her youngest brother, Nathaniel Spratley, for $160. Their nephew, Albert G. Spratley, witnessed the transaction [7]. There are no further known records of Polly Spratley after she sold her land. She does not appear as the head of her own household in Surry County in 1840, nor do the households of either of her brothers include an older female her age. Although all we know for certain is that she died after 20 May 1839, this is a slight indication that she died in late 1839 or early 1840 at the age of about sixty years [8].

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## 2. Capt. Walter Spratley Sr.

Walter Spratley Sr. (c1782–1833) was the elder of two first cousins by this name who lived in Surry County in the early 1800s, both namesakes of their uncle who died during the Revolutionary War while serving in the 4th Virginia Regiment in the Continental Army. They adopted the usage of *"Sr."* and *"Jr."* to distinguish themselves in most official records [9]. See the detailed biography of Walter Spratley Sr. for details of his life.

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## 3. Henry Spratley

Henry Spratley (c1785–1803) died towards the end of 1803, after his younger brother's death.

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## 4. Benjamin Spratley Jr.

Benjamin Spratley Jr. (c1787–1803) received some formal education, for his uncle and guardian, David Sebrell, paid his tuition in 1800. In early 1803, his uncle bought him one pair of shoes before his death about March or April 1803.

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## 5. Elizabeth (Betsy) Spratley

Elizabeth Spratley [Betsy] (1789–1812) was not yet born when her father wrote his will on 30 January 1789, for in his list of children, he referred to her as *"that which my wife is now pregnant with."* Her uncle and guardian, David Sebrell, did not charge her for tuition, so it does not appear she received any formal education like her brothers, Benjamin and Nathaniel.

On 22 February 1808, her uncle bought her one pair of shoes for $1.50, 4½ yards of cotton cloth for $1.69, and paid 19¢ for partial payment of a dress. On 2 December 1809, he paid $1.50 for another pair of shoes, and paid $3.00 for a second pair of shoes, a hair comb, and one yard of *"Cambrick"* cloth. It appears that Elizabeth died early in 1812, with her interest in her parents' estate going to her three surviving siblings, Polly, Walter, and Nathaniel [10].

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## 6. Nathaniel Spratley

Nathaniel Spratley [Nate] (c1791–Oct 1846) was an infant when his father died in early 1792, and about three years of age when his mother died in April 1794. His maternal uncle, David Sebrell, served as his guardian and Nathaniel undoubtedly grew up on his grandfather's farm along the Blackwater River. See the detailed biography of Nathaniel Spratley for more details.

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## 1789 Will of Benjamin Spratley

**Surry County VA Will Book 12 (1783–1792), pp. 318–319**

*In the name of God Amen this thirtieth day of January one thousand seven hundred and eighty nine, I* ***Benjamin Spratley*** *of Surry county* [sic] *being sick but perfect mind and memory do make this my last Will and testament, and as to my worldly goods which it hath been pleased God to give me I give and dispose of as follows –*

*Item*

*I give and bequeath to my loving wife Susanna Spratley my whole estate during her life or widowhood but in case she should marry, then the said Susanna Spratley to have one third of my Estate during her life and at her death to be equally divided among all of my Children and their heirs for ever –*

*Item My will and desire is that is* [it] *should be wholly in her disposure to raise the Children –*

*Item*

*The remainding* [sic] *two thirds of my Estate my will and desire is to be equally divided among all my Children also makeing* [sic] *the like provision for that which she is now pregnant with if it should be raised they enjoying the said Estate when the youngest comes of age but in case of any of my Children Polly Spratley, Walter Spratley, Henry Spratley, Benjamin Spratley, and that which my wife is now pregnant with should dye* [sic] *before they have any lawful heirs of their body then there* [sic] *part to be equally divided among the surviving above named Children, ratifying and confirming this to be my last will and testament.* */s/* ***Benj[a] Spratley***

*Sealed signed and acknow*
*Ledged in the presence of*

***Richard Rowell Jr***
***John Cocks***

*In the ninth line where it is said, her life or widowhood, aught to be said when the youngest came of age, this being wrote before witnessed.*

*At a Court held for Surry County February 28th 1792. The within written last Will and testament of the within name Benjamin Spratley deceased was presented in Court and being proved by the oaths of Richard Rowell junior and John Cocks the witnesses thereto is by the Court ordered to be recorded. There being no Executors nominated in the said Will, on the motion of Susanna Spratley, relict of the said Benjamin, and Thomas Spratley, who made oath and gave bond agreeable to law certificate is granted them for obtaining Letters of Administration, with the will annexed of the Estate of the said deceased. Teste,*

/s/ ***Jacob Faulcon****, C.S.C.*

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## Notes

**Life Along the Blackwater in Surry County, Virginia**

1. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 3 (1815–1821), pp. 140–142; Surry County VA Wills & Inventories (1797–1879), LDS Film #4124856, Images #1146–1147, #1323–1324 (Will of Nathaniel Sebrell, written 25 December 1813, filed 22 April 1816). Nathaniel identified Susanna Spratley as his daughter in his 1813 will. While the precise date on which Sebrell married Elizabeth Faulcon is unclear, Nathaniel's first wife died prior to April 1752, and Sebrell married Elizabeth a few years later. Although Susanna's precise date of birth is unconfirmed, given that her eldest-known child was born about 1780, she must have married Benjamin Spratley about 1778 or 1779. His birth is documented as occurring about 1754, with Susanna presumably a few years younger. This implies that Susanna was the daughter of Elizabeth Faulcon.
2. Surry County VA Will Book 12 (1783–1792), pp. 17–19; Surry County VA Wills, Inventories & Estate Inventories #2 (1770–1873), LDS Film #4125015, Images #427–428 (Will of Nicholas Faulcon Sr., written 6 January 1781, filed in court on 23 December 1783). Nicholas Faulcon Sr. made a bequest to *"my Daughter Elizabeth Sebrell"* and *"her Husband Nathaniel Sebrell."*
3. Surry County VA Deeds, Wills, Etc. Book 9 (1738–1754), p. 419 (Will of Susanna Sebrell, dated November 5, filed in court November 20, 1750). Susanna named Nathaniel Sebrell as her son.
4. See the detailed Nathaniel Sebrell Sr. Biography for more information on his activities.
5. Surry County VA Deed Book 8 (1760–1769), pp. 133–135 (Samuel and Mary Pretlow to Nathaniel Sebrell, 9 August 1762; witnesses: Charles Friend, John Ruffin, Nicholas Faulcon Jr.); pp. 139–141 (John Ruffin to Nathaniel Sebrell, 9 August 1762; witnesses: Samuel Pretlow, Charles Friend, Nicholas Faulcon Jr.).
6. Surry County VA Indentures (1699–1796), LDS Film #4123079, Images #478–479 (Benjamin and Susanna Spratley to Frederick Lane, 14 June 1788). This original document was filmed by the LDS in the *"Indentures,"* and this is the original document recorded in Surry County VA Deed Book 13 (1788–1792), pp. 17–18.
7. Surry County VA Marriage Bonds, 1773, LDS Film #4129115, Images #8–9 (William Spratley to *"Ann Faulcon Daughter of Nicholas Faulcon Sen$^{r}$"*). In his 1781 will, Nicholas Faulcon Sr. identified Ann Spratley as his daughter (Surry County VA Will Book 12 (1783–1792), pp. 17–19).
8. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 10 (1754–1768), pp. 155–156 (Will of John Spratley, written 3 May 1758, filed in court 19 July 1758). Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 10a (1768–1779) (Will of Mary Spratley, written 19 March 1773, filed in court 23 November 1773). Surry County VA Order Book (1764–1774), pp. 335–336 (*"Benjamin, Ann, Walter and Thomas Spratley's Orphans of John Spratley Decd. made Choice of William Spratley for their Guardian,"* 22 December 1772). Surry County VA Guardians Accounts (1762–1783), p. 318 (Benjamin Spratley Acknowledgement, 22 August 1775). Both John and Mary Spratley identified Benjamin as their son in their wills.
9. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 10 (1754–1768), pp. 155–156 (Will of John Spratley, written 3 May 1758, filed in court 19 July 1758). 1782–1800 Surry County VA Land Tax Books, LDS Film #8742699, Image #10 (1782), column 2, #12: Benjamin Spratley, 250 acres.
10. The marriage record of Susanna Sebrell and Benjamin Spratley does not exist. However, their eldest known child, Mary (Polly) Spratley, was born about 1780, probably placing their marriage about 1778–1780.
11. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 10 (1754–1768), pp. 155–156 (Will of John Spratley, written 3 May 1758, filed in court 19 July 1758); pp. 173–175 (Inventory of John Spratley Estate, made 25 November 1758, filed with Surry Court on 19 December 1758).
12. Surry County VA Order Book (1764–1774), p. 379 (Court session of 22 June 1773); pp. 383–384 (Division of slaves of *"John Spratley Gent$^{n}$ Deced."*). The heirs of John Spratley included his widow, Mrs. Mary Spratley, and William, John, Benjamin, Ann, Thomas & Walter Spratley.
13. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 10a (1768–1779) (Will of Mary Spratley, written 19 March 1773, filed in court 23 November 1773).
14. *"Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations: 1782 to 1785, Virginia."* Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1908, p. 43. Surry County VA Census of Persons and Buildings (1772–1785), LDS Film #4131664, Images #10, 13 (*"A List of Souls…John Watkins & James Kee Gent. Set of Souls Octo$^{r}$ 1782;"* Image #11, column #2, #8: *"Benjamin Spratley,"* 4 whites, 10 blacks).
15. Hening, William Waller, ed. *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619.* Richmond, VA: J. & G. Cochran, 1821, Vol. XI, pp. 39–40 (*"An act to authorize the manumission of slaves,"* approved May 1782).
16. Surry County VA Deed Book 12 (1783–1787), pp. 19–20 (Benjamin Spratley manumits slaves Will (aged 34), Natt (27), Lucy (37), Betty (26), Simon (15), Jane (11), Mary (8), Sally (5), Cuffy (6), Annaky (3), and Judy (six months)).
17. *"Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations: 1782 to 1785, Virginia,"* p. 78. Surry County VA Census of Persons and Buildings (1772–1785), LDS Film #4131664, Image #42 (*"A List of the White People & their Improvements in District N$^{o}$ 6 – taken by W$^{m}$ Spratley, 1785;"*), column 1, #3: *"Benj$^{a}$ Spratley," "White People:"* 6; *"Dwelling Houses:"* 1; *"out Houses:"* 2).

18. Surry County VA Deed Book 12 (1783–1787), pp. 17–18 (Benjamin and Susanna Spratley to William Spratley, 25 November 1783).
19. Surry County VA Deed Book 12 (1783–1787), pp. 269–272 (Charles Judkins to Jacob Faulcon, 11 May 1787; witnesses: Frederick Lane, Henry Lane, Benjamin Spratley).
20. Surry County VA Deed Book 13 (1788–1792), pp. 17–18 (Benjamin Spratley to Frederick Lane, 14 June 1788). Surry County VA Indentures (1699–1796), LDS Film #4123079, Images #478–479 (Benjamin and Susanna Spratley to Frederick Lane, 14 June 1788).
21. Surry County VA Will Book 12 (1783–1792), pp. 318–319 (Will of Benjamin Spratley, written 13 January 1789, filed in court 28 February 1792). Surry County VA Order Book (1789–1794), p. 312 (Court session of 28 February 1792); p. 313 (Susanna Spratley appointed administrator of Benjamin Spratley's estate, Thomas Spratley, security).
22. 1792–1793 Surry County VA Personal Property Tax Books, LDS Film #8458765, 1792: Image #346, line #10: *"Susannah Spratley;"* 1793: Image #429, line #19: *"Sussanna Spratley;"* LDS Film #8188299, Image #136, line #19: *"Sussanna Spratley."*
23. Surry County VA Will Book 1 (1792–1804), pp. 282–284 (Account of Benjamin Spratley Estate, filed 24 July 1798). Either Thomas Spratley or commissioners appointed to complete the administration of Benjamin Spratley's estate after Thomas' death recorded payment of £95 8s 0½d for:

    *To Board, Clothing & Schooling of Mary Spratley, Walter Spratley, Henry Spratley, Benjamin Spratley, Elizabeth Spratley & Nathaniel Spratley, orphans of the said Benjamin Spratley decd. from April 1794 to the 31st December 1797.*

    This implies that Susanna Sebrell Spratley died in April 1794. Administrator Thomas Spratley filed undated records of payments of 15 shillings, *"To Cash paid for a Coffin for Benjamin Spratley,"* and 12 shillings *"To Cash paid for a Coffin for Susanna Spratley."* In 1794, the taxes on three horses were not paid in Susanna's name, but in the name of *"Estate of Benja. Spratly Decd."* This further indicates that she died before the personal property taxes were paid in 1794.
24. Surry County VA Guardians Bonds (1797–1814), p. 3 (David Sebrell appointed guardian to Benjamin Spratley's Orphans, 27 February 1798). Surry County VA Fiduciary Accounts (1831–1839), pp. 233, 239 (Accounts of Walter and Elizabeth Spratley, orphans of Benjamin Spratley, filed by their guardian, David Sebrell, and approved by the Surry County Court on 24 October 1836). The Spratley orphans included Walter, Henry, Benjamin, Betsy, and Nathaniel Spratley; Polly was not listed as an orphan, an accidental omission, for later records show Sebrell acting as her guardian as well. William Spratley served as the security on Sebrell's guardian's bond; his identity is unclear, but since Benjamin's brother by that name died in about 1795, William Spratley Jr., son of the elder William, probably served as security. On 2 December 1809, David Sebrell charged the four surviving children of his sister $2.00 each *"paid for Silling and smokehouse and pailing the Grave Yard in."*

**Children of Benjamin Spratley & Susanna Sebrell**

1. Surry County VA Guardians Bonds (1797–1814), p. 3 (Guardian of Walter, Henry, Benjamin, Betsy and Nathaniel Spratley, 27 February 1798). Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 4 (1822–1827), pp. 614–616 (Nathaniel Sebrell Estate Account, filed 26 October 1826). References above show that the children of Benjamin and Susan Sebrell Spratley who survived infancy included Mary, Walter, Henry, Benjamin Jr., Elizabeth, and Nathaniel Spratley. Three of them died young, and by 1826, the surviving heirs of Susan Sebrell Spratley included only Walter, Polly, and Nathaniel Spratley.

**Biographical Sketches of the Children of Benjamin Spratley & Susanna Sebrell**

1. Surry County VA Will Book 12 (1783–1792), pp. 318–319 (Will of Benjamin Spratley, written 13 January 1789, filed in court 28 February 1792). Surry County VA Fiduciary Accounts (1831–1839), pp. 240–245 (*"Miss Polly Spratley Orphan of Benjamin Spratley deceased. In account with David Sebrell her guardian,"* approved by the Surry County Court on 23 January 1837). On 13 January 1789, Benjamin Spratley listed his children as, *"Polly Spratley, Walter Spratley, Henry Spratley, Benjamin Spratley, and that which my wife is now pregnant with."*
2. 1812 Surry County VA Land Tax Books, *"Est. Benjamin Spratley,"* 414 acres. 1813 Surry County VA Land Tax Books, *"Nathaniel Spratley"* and *"Polly Spratley,"* both taxed for 133 acres.
3. Surry County VA Deed Book 5 (1815–1818), pp. 464–465 (Walter and Elizabeth Spratley to Mary Spratley, 31 March 1818).
4. 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 Wills, Etc. Book 5 (1827–1830), pp. 118–119 (Mary Ann Sebrell Estate Account, Walter Spratley, Executor, filed 25 June 1827).
5. 1820 Surry County VA Federal Census, p. 278b, line #8: *"Nathl Spratley."* 1830 Surry County VA Federal Census, p. 179, line #3: Walter Spratley. Nathaniel's 1820 household included two females aged over twenty-six and under

forty-five, which fits the ages of Nathaniel's wife, Lucy Cox Spratley, and Polly. Walter's 1830 household included adult females aged 20–30, which would be his wife, Rebecca B. Carsley Spratley, and a female aged 40–50, which fits Polly's age range.

6. Surry County VA Indentures (1770–1835), LDS Film #4121786, Images 197–198 (Thomas West indebted to Samuel Booth, to Walter Spratley, Trustee, 8 January 1828; witnesses: Benjamin R. Spratley, Polly Spratley). Surry County VA Deed Book 8 (1826–1830), p. 391 (Walter Spratley release to Thomas West, 19 November 1828; witness: J. N. Spratley).
7. Surry County VA Deed Book 11 (1839–1843), p. 53 (Polly Spratley to Nathaniel Spratley, 20 May 1839).
8. 1840 Surry County VA Federal Census, p. 233, line #16: *"Mary Spratley f.n."* This household is not our Polly Spratley, but that of a *"free negro."* The enumeration marked her as a *"free colored person,"* aged 55–100. This Mary Spratley is the former slave owned by Polly's father, Benjamin Spratley, that he manumitted on 28 October 1783. Benjamin stated that Mary would turn eighteen in January 1793, indicating that her birth occurred in January 1775. See Surry County VA Deed Book 12 (1783–1797), pp. 19–20 (Benjamin Spratley manumits eleven slaves, 28 October 1783).
9. Compiled Military Service Record, Walter Spratley, Corporal, 4th Virginia Regiment, Revolutionary War. Surry County VA Wills, Etc. Book 10a (1768–1779), pp. 481–482 (Will of Walter Spratley, 10 April 1776, filed in court 23 December 1777). In his will, Walter Spratley named his siblings, including brothers William Spratley and Benjamin Spratley. Both of them had sons of their own, with Benjamin's son being the elder. The first cousins adopted the monikers *"Sr."* and *"Jr."* to distinguish them from each other.
10. Surry County VA Will Book 12 (1783–1792), pp. 318–319 (Will of Benjamin Spratley, written 13 January 1789, filed in court 28 February 1792). Surry County VA Will Book 1 (1792–1804), pp. 282–284 (Account of Benjamin Spratley Estate, filed 24 July 1798). Surry County VA Guardians Bonds (1797–1814), p. 3 (David Sebrell appointed guardian to Benjamin Spratley's Orphans, Walter, Henry, Benjamin, Betsy, and Nathaniel Spratley, 27 February 1798). Surry County VA Fiduciary Accounts (1831–1839), pp. 221–224 (Accounts of Henry and Benjamin Spratley Jr., orphans of Benjamin Spratley, filed by their guardian, David Sebrell, and approved by the Surry County Court on 24 October 1836); pp. 236–240 (Account of *"Miss Elizabeth Spratley, orphan of Benjamin Spratley,"* filed by guardian David Sebrell, approved by Surry County Court on 28 November 1836). Either Benjamin's executor, Thomas Spratley, or the commissioners appointed to complete the administration of Benjamin Spratley's estate after Thomas' death recorded payment of £95 8s 0½d for:

    *To Board, Clothing & Schooling of Mary Spratley, Walter Spratley, Henry Spratley, Benjamin Spratley, Elizabeth Spratley & Nathaniel Spratley, orphans of the said Benjamin Spratley decd. from April 1794 to the 31st December 1797.*

    For 1803, David Sebrell charged the account of Benjamin Jr. $12.38 for three months' board, one pair of shoes, and for his coffin, suggesting that he died about March or April 1803. His share of his father's estate was divided among his five siblings, Walter, Mary, Nathaniel, Henry, and Elizabeth. Henry died later in 1803, with his share of his father's estate divided among his four siblings, Walter, Polly, Nathaniel, and Elizabeth.

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