

The signatories: Hamilton

James Hamilton, 2d Marquis of Hamilton, was born in 1589 into the premier hereditary peerage of Scotland. The son of John, 1st Marquis of Hamilton, and Lady Margaret Lyon of Glamis, he was descended through his mother from the Scottish King Robert II (as well as being eventually related to Lady Elizabeth Bowes Lyon – our modern Queen Elizabeth’s “Queen Mum” – who grew up in Glamis Castle in the early years of the 20th century).

He was descended, through his father, from several Scottish Kings, a shrewd series of dynastic alliances, including the marriage in 1474 of the 1st Lord Hamilton to a daughter of King James II, having made the Hamiltons one of Scotland’s most powerful families.

For many years Hamilton’s grandfather, James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran, was heir presumptive to the Scottish throne. If Mary Stuart (*aka* Mary Queen of Scots) had died without children, Arran would have succeeded her as king.

Mary Stuart had ascended to the throne as an infant upon the death of her father, King James V of Scotland, in 1542. In March 1543, the Scottish Parliament appointed Arran the Lord Governor, or Regent, of Scotland.

Arran has been variously described as faithless, inept, vacillating and indecisive. All agree that his overriding purpose in life was self-interest, occasionally broadening to include the advancement of his immediate family. As a Protestant lord, Arran proposed, first, the betrothal of the infant Queen Mary to his own son. When the other Scottish lords did not support him, he then proposed Mary’s betrothal to the 5-year-old son of Henry VIII. Their marriage would have united England and Scotland under a Protestant Tudor king. Mary’s mother, being both French and Catholic, was adamantly opposed to this marriage as were most Scots, concerned less with religion than with maintaining their national identity. When the Scottish Parliament refused to approve the match with England, Arran once again began plotting the marriage of the little queen to his own son. By 1548, however, he was drawn into the camp of the Queen Mother, converted to Roman Catholicism, and began to negotiate a marriage between Mary and the Dauphin (Crown Prince) of France.

The price of his support? A French dukedom.

The match with the Dauphin did come to fruition, 5-year-old Mary sailed off to France in 1548 to be raised at the court of her little fiancé’s parents and Arran gained the French title of Châtelherault. His blatant self-promotion, however, lessened his prestige and, although Arran remained Regent of Scotland in name for six more years, power really resided in the hands of the Queen Mother.

When Mary, widowed at 18, returned from France to rule in Scotland, Arran – hoping to regain power – once again changed sides and rejoined the Protestants, leading the Lords of the Congregation who carried the Reformation through the Scottish Parliament. He opposed the marriage of Queen Mary with Darnley, and was, in consequence, obliged to leave the kingdom when Mary insisted on marrying this highly unsatisfactory young

man. After the murder of Darnley and the abdication of Mary from the Scottish throne in favor of her infant son James, Arran made an unsuccessful attempt to regain the supreme rule by being named Regent for James. These upheavals affected Arran's lands and tenants, as well as his family, as opposing armies laid waste to Hamilton properties.

After Arran died in 1575, his son – whom his father had hoped at several times to marry to Mary Stuart - became the third Earl of Arran. A highly nervous and unstable young man, he was at one point incarcerated as insane. Badly treated in confinement, he was ultimately released and lived on unhappily and in seclusion until his death in 1609.

The real head of the Hamilton family was James Hamilton's second son, Lord John Hamilton of Arbroath. Lord John became a favorite of the young King James VI, who created him Marquis of Hamilton in 1599. Lord John's son, our James Hamilton (hereafter referred to simply as "Hamilton"), succeeded his father as 2nd Marquis of Hamilton in 1604 and his uncle as Earl of Arran in 1609.

Hamilton was one of the Scots peers who accompanied King James VI of Scotland to England when he also became King James I of England on the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. His family's ancestral stature and his father's connection with King James eased Hamilton's entry into court; his personal charm rapidly brought him a string of honors and offices. He was granted an English peerage as Earl of Cambridge in 1619, was appointed a gentleman of the bedchamber in 1621, a Knight of the Garter in 1623, and lord steward of King James' household in 1624 upon the death of his predecessor, Ludovic Stuart, Duke of Lennox (who had also signed the Peirce Patent).

Hamilton's first foray into colonial speculation was with the Somers Island Company.

Shipwrecked Englishmen heading for Virginia in a fleet commanded by Admiral Sir George Somers had first settled Bermuda in 1609. The crew and passengers – including future *Mayflower* passenger Stephen Hopkins - were stranded in Bermuda for 10 months while they built two new ships, which they ultimately sailed to Virginia. Three men chose to remain behind on Bermuda.

Three years later, the Virginia Company of London laid claim to the island and sent additional settlers. In 1615 King James granted an independent charter to the Somers Island Company, which administered Bermuda until 1684.

It was as a member of the English Privy Council, to which he was appointed in 1617, that young Hamilton first became acquainted with England's foreign "plantations." Other members of the Privy Council, such as Ludovic Stuart, 2nd Duke of Lennox, and Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick – both of whom also signed the Pierce Patent - were taking the lead in supporting efforts to establish overseas English settlements. Hamilton was not one of the original investors in the Somers Island Company. He purchased his shares after the Company was formed, buying out Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford, the only woman among the 117 original "adventurers."

Although he never visited the island, Hamilton Parish in Bermuda is named for him. It is one of Bermuda's most eastern counties, located between St. George's and the City of Hamilton (the city is named for another, unrelated later Hamilton). Hamilton Parish is known for its limestone caves with their dramatic stalactites and stalagmites and deep subterranean passages.

Hamilton's next colonizing venture was as a member of the Council for New England; again in the company of Lennox and Warwick.

Hamilton's adventuring days were cut short, however, when he died of a malignant fever in 1625 at the age of 36. His death (popularly but undoubtedly erroneously attributed to poison administered by the Duke of Buckingham) is said to have hastened that of his much older friend, King James. Hearing of Hamilton's death

the King, who was gravely ill, said, "If the branches be thus cut down, the stock cannot long continue." The poet John Donne wrote "An Hymne to the Saints, and to the Marquesse Hamylton" to commemorate him.

Hamilton had married Lady Anne Cunningham, daughter of the Earl of Glencairn, in 1603. Their first child, another James (3rd Marquis and later first Duke of Hamilton), was born in 1606; another son and three daughters followed. Anna very capably managed the vast Hamilton estates in Scotland, where the children were raised. Anna, who outlived her husband by 22 years, was deeply Calvinist. She gained notoriety by raising a troop of horse in support of the covenanters during the English Civil War and by threatening to shoot her royalist son James, who was in command of the fleet of Charles I and planning to land troops on the east coast of Scotland. In 1649, this son led an army into England to free Charles I; he was defeated at the Battle of Preston and executed. This defeat did much to ensure the downfall of the Royalist cause and Charles I was executed not long after. All of the male children of royalist James having predeceased him, the Hamilton title was inherited by royalist James' younger brother William. After Charles I's execution, William (also a Royalist) was among the Scots who were defeated by Oliver Cromwell in 1651 at the Battle of Worcester. William died of his wounds. The title "Duchess of Hamilton" was inherited by Anne, daughter of royalist James, granddaughter of the signer of the Peirce Patent.