

Sothel (or Sothell), Anna Willix Riscoe Blount ^[1]

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Mattie Erma E. Parker, 1994

Related Entry: [Seth Sothel](#) ^[2]

D. 1695

Anna Willix Riscoe Blount Sothel (or Sothell), wife of [Governor Seth Sothel](#) ^[2], was the daughter of Belshazzar Willix of [Exeter, N.H.](#) ^[3], and his wife Anna. Her father, described as "a man of more than ordinary education," was born in 1595 in Alford, Lincolnshire, England, the son of Belshazzar Willix, a man of substantial means, and his wife Anne. The younger Belshazzar migrated to New England at an unknown date and by 1640 was living with his wife and children in Exeter, where he owned a small tract of land.

In 1648 Anna's mother was waylaid, robbed, and murdered on the road from Dover to Exeter. She left three daughters: Hazelelponi, the eldest, then about twelve, Anna, and Susannah. Soon after the mother's death the family moved to [Salisbury, Mass.](#) ^[4], where the father married Mary Hauxworth, a widow. Following his death in about March 1650/51, two of the children, presumably the younger two, were boarded for a time with a neighbor, Robert Tuck. Their stepmother, who became mentally ill, may already have been too sick to care for them. Within a few years all three sisters became servants. Hazelelponi served in a home in Weymouth, Anna became a servant in the residence of the Reverend Timothy Dalton in Hampton, and Susannah took service in a house nearby.

Anna remained in the Dalton home until 1666, by which time both Dalton and his widow had died. She then went to Boston and lived for a time in the home of Hazelelponi, who had married one John Gee. Soon Anna married and went with her husband, Robert Riscoe, to the northern Carolina colony, then called [Albemarle](#) ^[5], where the couple was living by September 1670.

Riscoe, a mariner, was master and part owner of the *Good Hope*, a brigantine of ten tons that traded between Albemarle and New England. He seems also to have sailed to England and Ireland on occasion. In 1673 he was sued in [Rhode Island](#) ^[6] by [Thomas Miller](#) ^[7], a prominent Albemarle settler and later acting governor, who charged Riscoe with breach of covenant because Riscoe had landed him in New England after agreeing to take him to Ireland. The court ruled in Riscoe's favor, as the *Good Hope* had been damaged during the voyage from Albemarle and was not in condition for a crossing to Europe.

By 13 June 1683 Riscoe had died and Anna had remarried. Her second husband was [James Blount](#) ^[8], who like Anna was recently widowed. Blount was a prosperous planter of [Chowan Precinct](#) ^[9] and a member of the [Albemarle](#) ^[5] Council. He died in the spring or summer of 1686, leaving Anna a substantial estate for her lifetime, with right to dispose of sixty pounds by will. At some subsequent date she married the governor of Albemarle, [Seth Sothel](#) ^[2], who was one of the [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[10] of Carolina. Sothel, like Blount, lived in [Chowan Precinct](#) ^[9].

Anna's marriage to Sothel included the turbulent period of the [Albemarle](#) ^[5] colonists' revolt against the governor, which ended with the trial and banishment of Sothel by the Assembly. It also included the period in which Sothel was governor of South Carolina, where he went after his banishment from [Albemarle](#) ^[5] and assumed the governorship by virtue of his status as a Proprietor. At least nominally, Anna was first lady for a time in each of the Carolina colonies, although it is not certain that she actively filled the role in South Carolina. Presumably she accompanied Sothel into exile, but she appears to have been in Albemarle at least briefly while Sothel was in South Carolina.

Although Sothel's banishment from Albemarle was only for one year, it is not certain that he and Anna ever again lived in the colony. Their home plantation in Chowan appears to have been leased before Sothel went to South Carolina and to have remained in the possession of others after his return. There is evidence that the couple was living in Virginia at the time of Sothel's death, but it is not conclusive.

Sothel died before 3 Feb. 1693/94, when his will was proved. He bequeathed most of his land and practically all of his movable property to Anna. The next fall Anna married John Lear of Nansemond County, Va. Lear, who had emigrated from England about the middle of the century, was a member of the Virginia Council and a man of substantial means. Like Anna, he had been married and widowed three times.

Anna's marriage to Lear was brief, for she died before May 1695. Lear was dead by the following December. There is no evidence that Anna had children by any of her husbands, although she acquired stepchildren through her marriages to Blount and Lear. Her will has not survived, but she appears to have bequeathed much of her estate to her sisters.

At the time of Anna's death, Hazelelponi was living in Ipswich, Mass., the widow of her second husband, Obadiah Wood. Susannah and her husband, Francis Jones, were then living in Portsmouth, N.H. In May 1695 the three appointed

Hazelelponi's son-in-law, Thomas Pickering, to go to [Albemarle](#) ^[5] as their attorney and represent their interests in Anna's estate. Although there was extensive litigation over the property, Pickering appears to have established the sisters' right to at least 12,000 acres, including the Sothel's home plantation on Salmon Creek. In 1697 Hazelelponi, Susannah, and Francis sold their interest in the estate to Pickering.

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