

## 527 THOMSON, WILLIAM

Bookbinder

Botetourt County

Bookbinder in Botetourt County, an indentured-servant who absconded in 1774.

The only evidence that Thomson may have been a part of the Virginia print trade is found in a single advertisement seeking his arrest as a run-away indentured servant, to wit:

### ***FIVE POUNDS REWARD.***

Run away last Night from the Subscriber, in *Botetourt*, an *English* Servant Man named WILLIAM THOMSON, by Trade a Bookbinder, about 35 Years of Age, five Feet five or six Inches high, dark Hair, gray Eyes, of a tawny Complexion, and pretty much marked with the Smallpox; had on, when he went away, a new Wool Hat, *Virginia* Cloth Coat of a Copperas Colour, a Waistcoat filled with red and blue Yarn, Linen Breeches, blue Worsted Stockings, Shoes, and two Pair of Shoe Buckles, one Silver, the other Brass, and he took with him an old smooth Bore Gun. Whoever secures said Servant in any jail, so that his Owner may get him again, shall have the above Reward, besides what the Law allows. JAMES ALCORN.

James Alcorn (d. 1781) is more-easily tracked than Thomson, as a result of his property-holding status. He was one of three brothers who settled at the junction of Looney's Mill Creek and the upper James River (known then as Back Creek) in the early 1750s, then within Augusta County. He served in the Augusta militia force raised by Col. William Preston (1729-83) in the French & Indian War, and so received land-warrants as bounties for that service; Alcorn used those grants to expand his land-holdings in the southern valley, in what became Botetourt and Montgomery Counties. Alcorn continued to serve in the Valley's militia for the rest of his life, and so died at the Battle of Guilford Court House in March 1781.

Being a sizeable land-owner in Botetourt, and with his homestead sited about a dozen miles from the then county seat of Fincastle, it is improbable that Alcorn brought Thomson to the Virginia frontier to bind books. He may have done so as a local convenience, but his primary function was certainly that of farm laborer, which would explain the flight of a well-trained artisan from such a situation. It also appears that his flight corresponded with his master's return home after serving in Lord Dunmore's War against the Shawnee in the nearby Ohio Country; the last battle in that conflict took place at Point Pleasant on the Ohio, within the borders of Botetourt as then set, just six weeks before this run-away notice was published.

### ***Personal Data***

Born: ca. 1739 In England.

Sources: *Virginia Gazette* [Williamsburg: Purdie & Dixon], (24 Nov. 1774). Information on Alcorn drawn from the works of W. A. Crozier, the frequently-published compiler/transcriber of early Virginia's manuscript public records, here mostly from his *Virginia County Records* and *Virginia Colonial Militia*.