

VA.023 INFORMATION REGARDING THE FORMATION OF DIFFERENT COUNTIES IN THE STATE OF VIRGINIA.

Gathered & Entered by Robert R. Hill Sr. in July 1988.

SOURCE OF THE FOLLOWING: THE "VIRGINIA GENEALOGIST", VOL. 9, SERIES NO. 2, (APR-JUN) 1965, PAGE 60

ESSEX COUNTY

"Essex County was created in 1692 upon the abolition of (OLD) Rappahannock County and comprised its territory west of the Rappahannock River. Until 1720, when Spotsylvania County was formed, it extended north along the river and included parts of Caroline, Spotsylvania, Culpeper and Rappahannock counties. At that time it was bordered by Richmond County on the northeast, Middlesex County on the south and King & Queen County on the west. Between 1720 and 1728 Essex included the northern portion of Caroline County and in the latter year attained its present boundaries."

SURRY & SUSSEX COUNTIES

SOURCE OF THE FOLLOWING: THE "VIRGINIA GENEALOGIST," VOL. 23, SERIES NO. 2, (APR-JUN 1979) PAGE 125.

"Surry County was formed in 1652 from the portion of James City County (that was) south of the James River. It ran from the river to the North Carolina border.

SAME BOOK, PAGE 127: SUSSEX COUNTY was created in 1754 from the southern portion of Surry County.

OLD RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY was formed in 1656 from the upper part of OLD LANCASTER COUNTY and extended along both sides of the (Rappahannock?)river. By 1662 OLD RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY was divided into two Parishes. The lower Parish was named "FARNHAM" and the upper parish was named "SITTINGBOURNE." In 1683 that part of Old Farnham Parish on the south side of the river was set apart to form "SOUTH FARNHAM PARISH" and is now part of ESSEX COUNTY, while that part on the north side of the river was called "NORTH FARNHAM PARISH" and is now a part of Richmond County, in the Northern Neck.

The pioneers started to settle the Rappahannock Valley about 1650 and by 1652 they were organized as LANCASTER COUNTY.

THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND OF SOUTH FARNHAM PARISH (ESSEX

COUNTY, VIRGINIA) SET ASIDE FROM OLD FARNHAM PARISH IN 1683

"Gathered from Material Collected for the History of the Parish, for the Jamestown 350th Anniversary 1957," by JOSEPH S. EWING, rector..

There are two churches in South Farnham Parish, St. John's in

Tappahannock which was built in 1849 and St. Paul's near Miller' Tavern which was built in 1838. They replaced the two colonial brick churches, Upper & Lower Piscataway, which were built before 1709. Old Rappahannock County was formed in 1656 from the upper part of Old Lancaster County and extended along both side of the river.. By 1662 Old Rappahannock County was divided into two parishes. The lower parish was named Farnham and the upper parish Sittingbourne. In 1683 that part of Old Farnham Parish on the south side of the river was set apart to form South Farnham Parish and is now part of Essex County, while that part on the north side was called North Farnham Parish and is now a part of Richmond County, in the Northern Neck.

The pioneers started to settle the Rappahannock Valley about 1650 and by 1652 were organized as Lancaster County. That year the County Court in the name of the settlers called the Rev. Alexander Cooke from the James River to be their parson and to visit by boat at least six congregations in the upper and lower parts of the river. The only evidence left of Mr. Cooke's labors is the fact that by 1665 or soon after six church buildings had been built in the upper and lower part of the river. Four of these churches were in Old Rappahannock County. The upper church in Old Sittingbourne was on the north side of the river near the site of what later became the colonial port of Leedstown and the lower church of that parish was built ten miles down the river on the south side below the mouth of Occupacia Creek. In Old Farnham Parish, the upper church was on the south side of the river near Piscataway Creek and the lower church was about ten miles down on the north side of the river near Farnham Creek. The planters on the opposite shore from their parish church had to cross the river to worship at this time.

Old Sittingbourne and Old Farnham Parishes secured the Rev.

Francis Doughty to be their minister in 1665. He was an interesting character having started his ministry near New York City. He lived on his plantation in the vicinity of Old Leedstown and visited the churches in his "good barque The Returne."

Four of the eight vestrymen of Farnham Parish were members of Old Piscataway Church which became the first church of South Farnham Parish. They were Lt. Col. Thomas Goodrich of "Pigeon Hill," who was the leader of the northern forces in Bacon's Rebellion; John Gregory, part of whose plantation became known as "Mt. Clement" and "Croxtton's Mill; Thomas Button, whose plantation is now "Windsor Hill," and Anthony North, whose plantation joined Button's. This church is first mentioned in local records in the will of Thomas Cooper, written in 1675, when he requests that "he be buried with his wife in Piscataway Churchyard." Nathaniel Pendleton, a minister and a brother of Edmund Pendleton's grandfather, arrived in 1674 and preaches in this church.

Thomas Gordon became the minister of Old Piscataway Church before 1672 and soon became involved in Bacon's Rebellion. He married the widow Button and lived at "Windsor Hill." When Governor Berkeley returned to power, Gordon and his neighboring vestryman, Thomas Goodrich, were ordered to appear before the County Court on their knees with a rope around their necks and ask its pardon. Thomas Goodrich kept his lands, but Thomas Gordon was no longer allowed to serve as a minister in the colony. He and his wife sold "Windsor Hill" to Robert Tomlin and were heard of no more.

When Old Farnham Parish was divided in 1683, the Rev. Samuel Dudley was the minister of both Old Sittingbourne and Old Farnham. He continued to be the minister of the New South Farnham Parish with its Old Piscataway Church. He died two years later and Duell Pead, the popular minister of Christ Church Parish, Middlesex, added South Farnham Parish as a part of his work. However he went back to England in 1690.

The vestry of the new parish had to secure not only a glebe for the parson but also a second church. They decided to abandon the site of Old Piscataway Church near the river and

in 1692 purchased land near Hoskins Creek close to where the King's Highway crossed it for their upper church. There, sometime before 1728, the stately colonial brick church described by Bishop Meade was erected. The site can be seen on county road # 671, about 4 miles west of Tappahannock. The site for the lower church was a part of the "Mary Gold" plantation of Nicholas Smith, on the road between Ozeana and Upright. Here Lower Piscataway was built before 1706.

Since 1663 the planters down the county had been trying to establish a glebe on the river front near what became known as Glebe Landing. In 1699, a vestryman, Capt. Edward Thomas left the land upon which he was living to the parish for a glebe. This beautiful site was the first home of Parson Latane and was for over a hundred years a familiar land mark in possession of the parish. It is now the site of Markhaven Beach with a few bricks on top of the hill to mark the place of the house.

Louis Latane, a French Huguenot minister and his family, arrived in South Farnham Parish about 1701, to become its much loved and respected parson until his death in 1733. During his ministry the parish moved into its "golden age" and built the beautiful colonial churches and the brick glebe house. His education and character as well as his long life among the people of the parish and the ministry of the two parsons, who followed him, show conclusively that most of the colonial clergy served their parishes with honor and courage.

There is little left in the records about the Rev. William Phillips, who became the parson after Louis Latane until

1774. The Rev. William Stuart became the minister of the parish from 1747-1749 when he left for St. Paul's, King George County at the death of his father, the Rev. David Stuart.

The coming of the merchants from Scotland to live in the parish seems to coincide with the coming of the Rev. Alexander Cruden, from Aberdeen, Scotland to be the parson in 1752. He came from a scholarly family and was particularly close to the families of Dr. John Brockenbrough and Archibald Ritchie and was interested in the education of their

children. He went back to Scotland in 1776.

Here and there the records give some of the names of the wardens and vestrymen during the period. It is well to preserve them for their descendents have been a part of the backbone of the nation as it spread across the continent.

Hon. John Robinson, father of the Speaker, member of the Council and acting governor; William Johnson, John Waters, Anthony Smith, William Young, Edward Thomas, Edmund Pagett, William Covington, Francis Meriwether, James Fullerton, Robert Coleman, Francis Brown, Joseph Smith, Jonathan Fisher, Nicholas Smith, James Boughan, Thomas Sthreshly, William Roane, John Vass, Henry Robinson, Alexander Parker, James Rennolds, Abraham Montague, William Daingerfield, Francis Smith, William Tomlin, Daniel Dobyns, Henry Young, James Webb, John Clements, Thomas Waring, John Upshaw, LEONARD HILL, James Mills, William Montague, Thomas Roane, Isaac Scandreth, Dr. Charles, Mortimer, Samuel Peachy, Archibald Ritchie, James Campbell, Newman Brockenbrough, John Edmundson, William Smith, John Beale and Joshua Fry.

The people could not get a minister during the American Revolution and the churches were closed until 1791. The convention met in 1785 to organize the Diocese of Virginia, to which the parish sent Spencer Roane and Newman Brockenbrough as delegates. Dr. John Brockenbrough of Tappahannock, secured a teacher from Scotland to come in 1791, to instruct his children and those of Archibald Ritchie. His name was Andrew Syme. When Bishop Madison, the first Bishop of Virginia, was visiting in Dr. Brockenbrough's home, he convinced Mr. Smye that he should become as Episcopal minister. He was the first person to be ordained by a Bishop in Virginia and became the minister of South Farnham Parish. The people of all churches came to hear him. He went to Bristol Parish at the end of two years. The parish was without a minister for another twenty years. The final blow was struck in 1802 when the Virginia Assembly passed an act seizing the glebes, churches and other properties of the Episcopal Church.

But faith lives on in human hearts and minds, not in temples built of stone. The tragedy of the Richmond theater fire, in which Governor George William Smith, one of the sons of the

parish, was killed, seemed to re-light the fire of faith. Monumental Church was built in Richmond and Richard Channing More was elected the second bishop of Virginia and rector of the church.

The people of South Farnham Parish gathered together in 1820 and elected a vestry and called a minister, the Rev. John Reynolds, a Wesleyan Methodist from England. The members of the vestry were John Daingerfield and George W. Banks, Wardens; William B. Mathews, Secretary; Robert Weir, Lawrence Muse, Henry Young, John Belfield, Hubbard T. Minor and Dr. Austin Brockenbrough. They were to act as trustee for a Town Chapel, to be used by all churches. Thomas M. Henley deeded them a lot to be used for this purpose at the head of Duke Street in Tappahannock. The church was finished in 1826 in Flemish Bond, with colonial bricks and glazed headers, such as are found in Vawter's Church. The building is now occupied by the Modern Cleaners (laundry).

The Rev. John Peyton McGuire, "the Apostle to the Rappahannock" succeeded Mr. Reynolds in 1826 as parson of the two parishes of St. Anne and South Farnham. During the 26 years of his ministry, St. Pauls's Church was built in 1838. The Town Chapel was out grown and St. John's was built in 1849 at Tappahannock. When he left to become Headmaster of Episcopal High School, the life of the parish had been restored and the Rev. H.W.L. Temple became its rector. Mr. McGuire came back to retire in Tappahannock, after the Civil War and is buried with his second wife, Judith Brockenbrough, in St. John's churchyard.

The church buildings he left behind were new but the life of the church on Piscataway Creek goes back three hundred years.

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