

Catherine L. Knorr; "Marriages Sussex County, VA, 1754-1810.

Preface

Honestly, there is nothing so peaceful as a Virginia Court House. One cannot associate with their present day tranquility any scenes of strife, bitter legal battles or heated debates. Sussex is a shining example of the calm that prevails under the shade of giant old oaks.

The first to welcome one is usually a nobly beautiful bird dog who advances with waving plume and trusting friendliness in his lippid eyes. Too dignified to be effusive he does his duty as a gentleman and a host, then retires to his shady spot again.

Next a deputy clerk who greets one then the clerk himself. The pattern is always the same, and it is one not to be tampered with. It is perfect just as it is.

The clerk, Mr. William B. Coker, Jr., makes it very plain that one is welcome to work in his Sussex County records, so copying begins.

Surry County first saw English colonists 5 May 1607. Capt. George Percy reports "Fine paths in the woods, most pleasant springs and the goodliest corn fields I have seen in any country." Surry was part of the original shire, James City County, until 1652 when it was set up as a new county. Surry, a long narrow county running northeast and southwest was bisected by the Blackwater River which later became the dividing line between Surry and Sussex. North of that body of water was well settled by 1700, but the territory south of Blackwater was not legally opened for settlement until 1710. (Hening's Statutes Vol.IV p.546)

The Council had ordered on 23 August 1702 that the land south of Blackwater be laid open after November 20th, and that all her Majesty's subjects should have liberty to take up and patent land there.

In 1753 a petition was handed to the general assembly from the inhabitants of Surry County living south of the Blackwater for the erection of a new county. On 1 February 1754 an act for the creation of Sussex County became effective. (Hening's Statutes Vol.VI p.384). The severance was natural and logical; vast distances had delayed legal accomplishments as well as religious affairs in Surry.

In 1752 Virginia was divided into four military districts each with its own officer. Sussex, falling into the Southern District, was commanded by Col. George Washington. On his expedition to acquaint the French with the Colony's plans to fortify the western frontier of Virginia the 21 year old Washington was joined by such Sussex men as Capt. Henry Harrison and Capt. James Wyche.

Albemarle Parish, formed from Southwark and Lawne's Creek Parishes on 1 November 1738 had as vestrymen in 1754, when Sussex was formed, Robert Jones, Jr., Thomas Avent, James Chappell, Moses Johnson, Ephraim Parnes, Augustine Claiborne, James Gee, Howell Briggs and John Mason, Jr.

The first Burgesses who represented Sussex County in the Gen. Assembly of 14 February 1754 were Gray Briggs and John Edmunds. Ruffin replaced John Edmunds who accepted a surveyor's place, 22 1754. (Stanard's Colonial Virginia Register p 131 and 133).

The first Gentleman Justices were: John Avert, James Jones, William Lightfoot, James Mason, John Mason, Nicholas Massenburg, E Pettway, Thomas Vines, James Wyche, John Wyche, Howell Briggs, and James Geo.

The first Clerk was Augustine Claiborne and the first Sheriff James Chappell.

It is a pleasure to report that Sussex was a center for horse racing in Colonial days. Blooded racing stock was being imported and champions as Jolly Roger, Silver Heels, Merry Tom, Sterling, Aristocrat and Fearnaught were Sussex owned and raced in Sussex.

To the Revolutionary Army Sussex gave 1 general, 12 colonels, 3 majors, 17 captains, 8 lieutenants, 2 surgeons, and numerous lesser officers as well as privates.

It is impossible to over estimate the importance of Sussex in the history and development of Virginia and of America.

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NOTE: THE UNDERLINED FAMILIES OF WYCHE; ROBERT JONES, Jr; JAMES CHAPPELL, BRIGGS, JAMES JONESE, were all inter-marriage "collateral" lines for this JONES Lineage.