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AMERICAN TAPESTRY

A Legacy of Vision, Courage, and Faith

MARCH 13, 2020 BY GENEALOGIST49

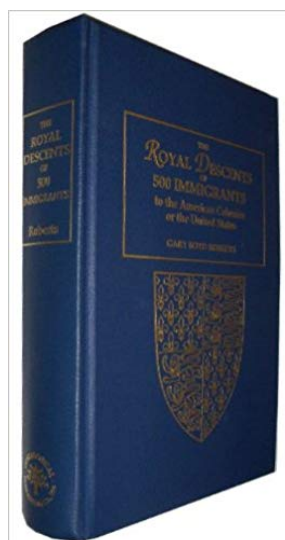
Builders of the Old Dominion 2

Christopher Branch and Mary Addie

A list of sources and a PDF Register of Descendants are included at the end.

Ancestry

For over 100 years, one of the most thoroughly researched early immigrants to Jamestown was my ancestor Christopher Branch. Since he and his wife Mary Addie were the first known American ancestors of President Thomas Jefferson (Dorman 366), it's understandable that much would be written about him. I was first aware of the connection when I came across a book at Clayton Library in Houston called



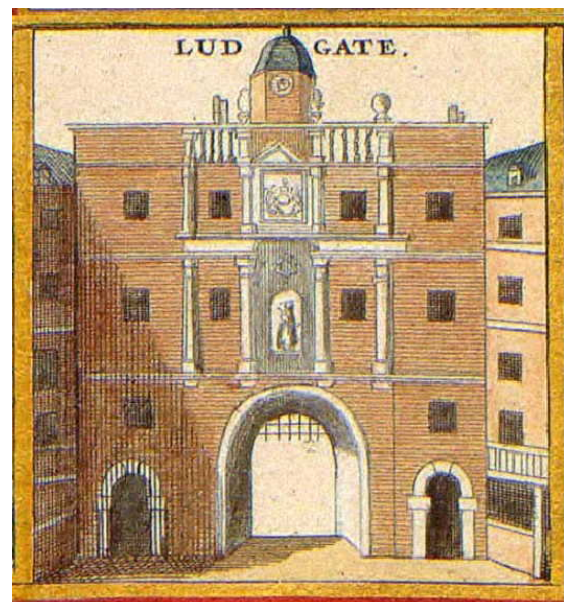
The Royal Descents of 500 Immigrants, by Gary Boyd Roberts. I

have not looked at the book recently, but I remember looking up Thomas Jefferson, to whom I knew I was related, and finding the connection to royalty. Through Christopher Branch, the Jeffersons are descended from Robert de Caen, 1st Earl of Gloucester and illegitimate son of Henry Beauclerc (King Henry I), who was son of William the Conqueror (King William I). Additionally, Christopher was the descendant

of several Surety Barons—signers of the 1215 Magna Carta, a document that helped establish the rights of English citizens to justice under the law. Those ancestral signers were William D'Albini, Roger Bigod, Hugh Bigod, Richard de Clare, Gilbert de Clare, John de Lacie, William Malet, Saire de Quincey, Robert de Roos, and Robert de Vere.

According to a review of *Branch of Abingdon*, the Branch family was prominent and prosperous in Abingdon from about 1500, if not earlier. Some in the family had served as burgesses or mayors, and Richard and William Branch were part of Abingdon's "Fraternity of the Holy Cross," which I have not researched. Christopher's father was Lionel Branch (1556-1605) (Dorman 366), who attended Magdalen College of Oxford University 1585-93 and received a B.A. degree. Oxford University alumni records, provided by Gresham Farrar on Findagrave, reveal that Richard, Thomas, and William Branch, probably Lionel's brothers, were also Oxford graduates. Their parents (Christopher's paternal grandparents) were William Branch (1524-1601) and Katherine Jennings (1524-1587), through whom the connection to royalty is made. Christopher's mother (Lionel's wife) was Valentia or Valentina Sparke (Dorman 366), some say the daughter of Ludgate Sparke and Margaret Greeke. (unverified) I will probably not spend much time researching those names because my goal is to trace ancestors back to the immigrant and not beyond that.

Christopher's parents, Lionel Branch and Valentia Sparke were married in 1596 at St. Martin's Church, Ludgate, London, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666 but rebuilt later. Christopher, their only child, was born in London, exact date unknown. Early researchers such as Torrence (over 100 years ago) used the birth year of 1602, but more recent researchers, specifically Dorman, use the birth year 1598. The year 1602 cannot be correct if Christopher's mother, Valentia, died and was buried in 1600, as stated on the Findagrave entry. I have not come across any information about Christopher's childhood. His father died in 1605, when Christopher was about seven; his mother, paternal grandparents, several uncles, and maternal grandfather had died earlier. I do not

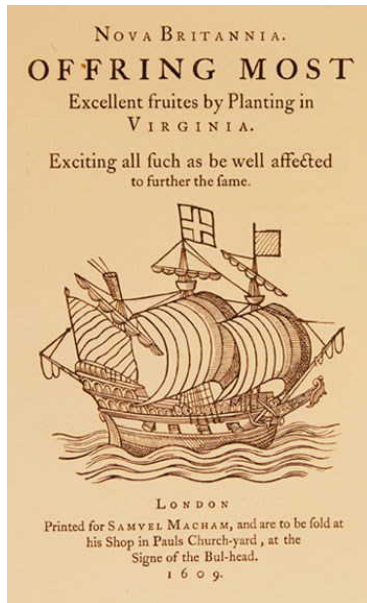


Near the Church of St. Martin, which was destroyed by fire in 1666.

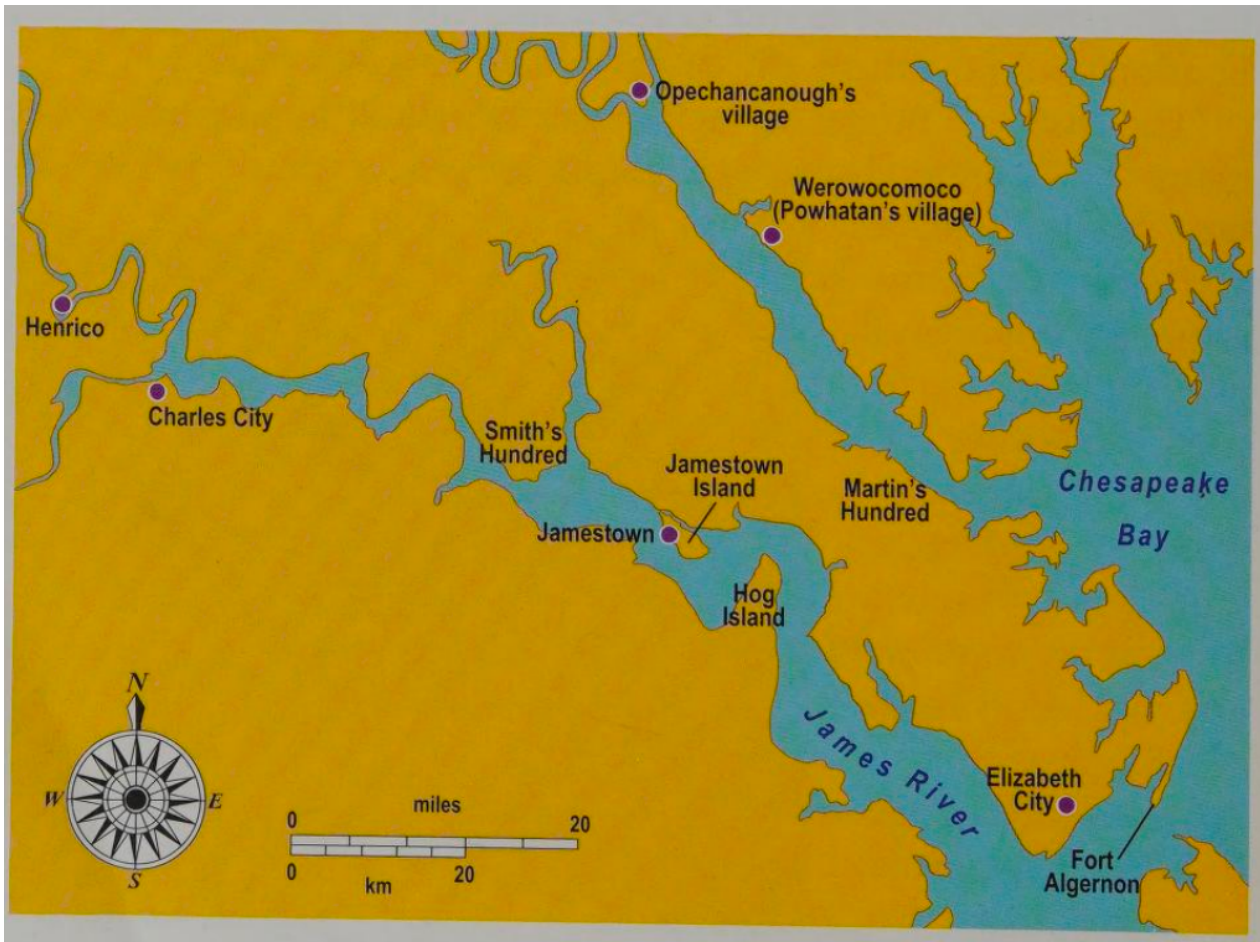
know when his maternal grandmother died or whether she or an uncle raised Christopher. Regardless, his childhood must have been somewhat lonely and sad. However, his paternal grandfather, William Branch, had willed him money, which Christopher was to receive at age 18.

JAMESTOWN AND HENRICO

While Christopher was growing up, he was most likely keenly aware of the



excitement surrounding the settlement of Virginia. One year after Christopher's father died, King James I of England issued a charter to the Virginia Company for a tract of land on the Atlantic coast. In December 1606, Captain Christopher Newport left London with three ships: Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery. When the 104 male settlers arrived in Virginia, they went up the James River about 40 miles and



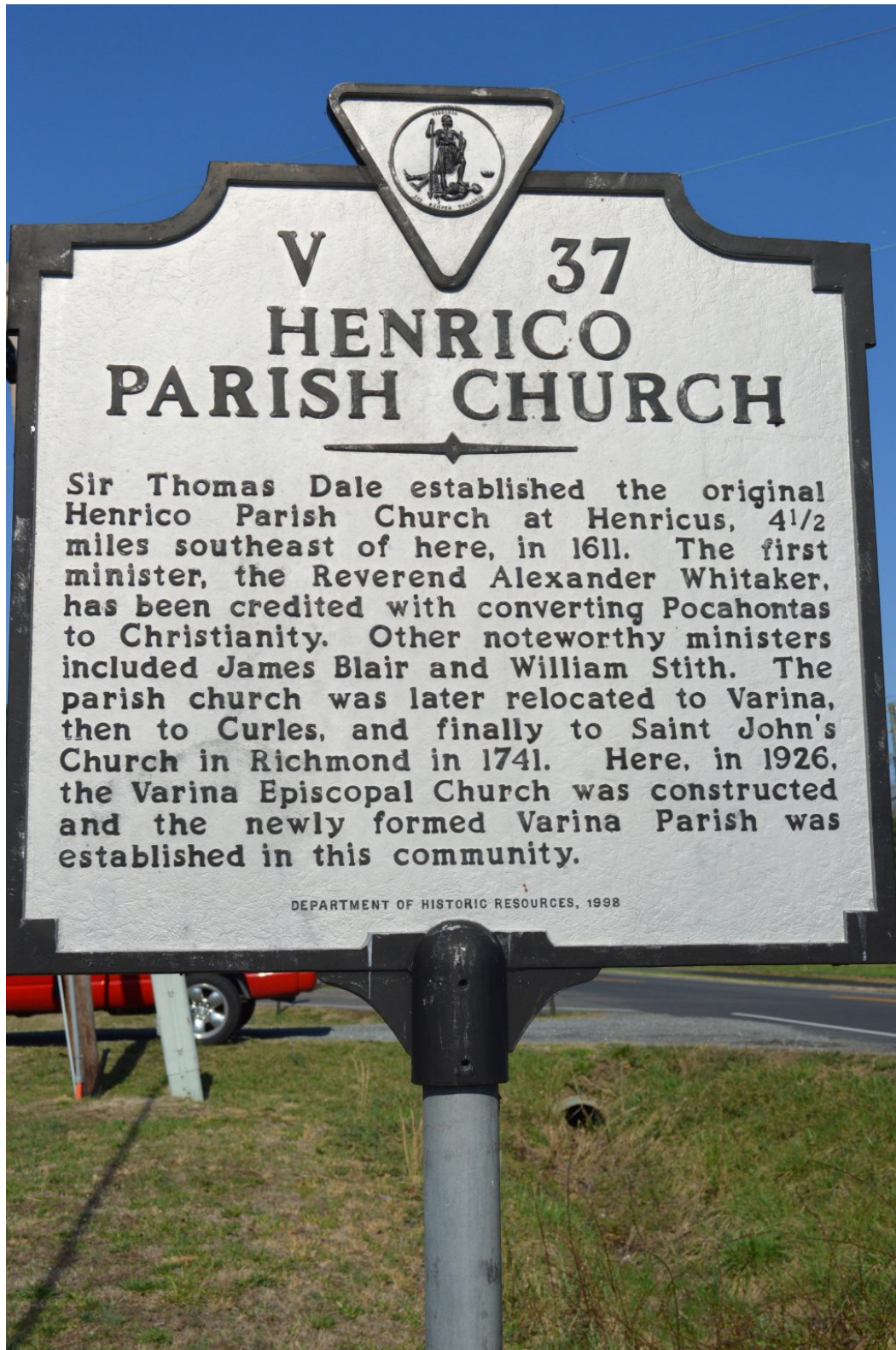
established the first permanent settlement in Virginia on a salt marsh, calling it “James Cittie”. The marshy ground contributed to a proliferation of insects: horseflies, chiggers, mosquitoes, gnats, and ticks. Despite the bugs, Indian attacks, unhealthy air, starvation, illness, and lack of fresh water killing most of the settlers, hundreds of new people arrived in the next few years.



In 1611, settler John Rolfe, a smoker, started experimenting with raising tobacco, which the Indians were already growing. Tobacco soon became Virginia’s major crop and it was usually used in lieu of money. (Timeline)

Also in 1611, acting governor Thomas Dale took about 350 men further up the James River to “the falls” to build a new town. He wrote to the Virginia Company: “I have surveyed a convenient strong, healthie and sweete seate to plant a new Towne in.” Settler Ralph Hamor described it as “high land invironed with the mayn River, som sixteene or twentie miles, from the head of the Fals, neere to an Indian towne called

Arrahattocke.” Robert Johnson said that the new town would be 80 miles up the James River from Jamestown on “higher ground, strong and defensible by nature, a good air, wholesome and clear, unlike the marshy seat at Jamestown, with fresh and plenty of water springs, much fair and open grounds freed from woods, and wood enough at hand.” For the next few years, Dale instituted strict rules for the men, which allowed them to get a lot done. They built a palisade with five watchtowers and three streets of well-framed houses, as well as a church, storehouses, and a hospital. They grew tobacco and



vegetables,

raised livestock, and dug wells. After building the church, Henrico Parish was formed. This new settlement was called Henricus, later Henrico. However, over the next few years, the town deteriorated quickly. ([Land 466-9](#))

In 1612, King James renewed the charter for the Virginia Company and allowed more self-governance. By 1616, John Rolfe recorded the English population in Virginia as 351 settlers at six different settlements. ([Timeline](#))



James River. Public domain.

The Virginia Company instituted a “headright” system, giving 50 acres to anyone who paid fare to get there, plus 50 additional acres for each person brought with him. This encouraged more settlement by “gentlemen” and laid the foundation for a plantation economy. ([Timeline](#))

When Governor George Yeardley arrived in 1619, he brought a charter to form a government in which white men with property would be able to choose representatives for a new assembly meeting in Jamestown. ([Timeline](#))



In July, the House of Burgesses met for the first time. They passed a law requiring tobacco to be sold for at least three shillings per pound; passed measures against idleness, gambling, and drunkenness; and made church attendance mandatory. In addition, these 22 burgesses, with Gov. Yeardley and his council, decided how much settlers should pay in taxes. (The First Legislative Assembly)

Less than a month later, the first Africans arrived in Jamestown on a ship with a Dutch captain who wanted to sell them. “[T]o the credit of the colonists . . . they were unwilling to purchase the slaves . . . But upon his threat to throw them overboard, as his vessel was short of provisions, the colonists bought them out of pity, and



unwittingly founded the system of enforced Negro labor, which in time cost Virginia a fearful price in blood and treasure.”
(Wallace)

Also in 1619, as a way to revive the deteriorating settlement in Henrico, it was proposed to build a Protestant college to educate the Indians’ and the planters’ children. Ten thousand acres would be set aside for the school near Arrowhatoock. It was to be called “Colledg Land” and 50 “good” people would be sent as tenants who would keep half the profits of their labor and give the other half toward starting the college. Plans were made to build a common guest house to serve as an inn to house

the 50 new settlers. (Land 469ff)

Now back to Christopher and Mary ...

NEW LIFE IN VIRGINIA

Explanatory Note: From John Dorman's 3-volume *Adventurers of Purse and Person*, 4th edition, Volume 1A, p. ix:

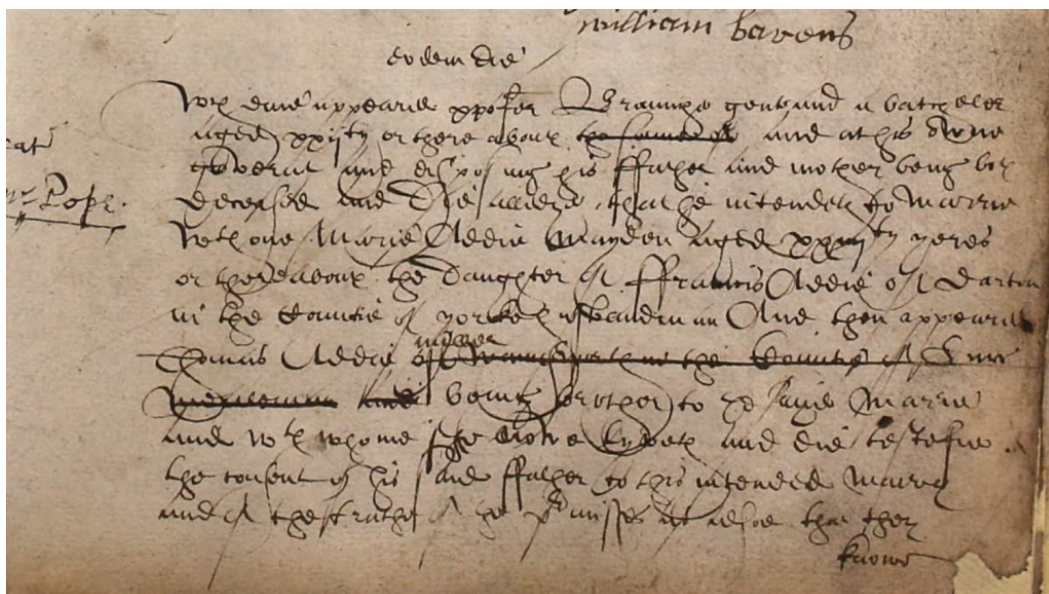
CALENDAR: The Julian calendar, according to which 25 March was reckoned as the first day of the New Year, was in use together with the Gregorian calendar until 1752 when it was abandoned and the 11 days difference between the two calendars was dropped out of the year. The occurrence of an event between 1 January, the first day of the New Year according to the Gregorian calendar and 25 March, the New Year's Day of the Julian calendar, is indicated by a diagonal: thus 16 February 1624/25, which shows that the event took place on 16 February 1624 by the Julian but 1625 by the Gregorian.

* * * * *

We know little about Christopher Branch as he approached adulthood except that he was left money by his paternal grandfather, which he received at age 18. A few years later, on September 2, 1619, he married Mary Addy (Addie) at St. Peter's, Westcheap, London, with a marriage license from the Bishop of London. The illustration below shows an event in Westcheap, but the church is not shown. The location of the church in Westcheap is shown on this amazing map.



Just as “Christmas” was sometimes written “Xmas,” the name “Christopher” was sometimes written “Xtopher.” The marriage record of Xtofer Braunch to Marie Addie can be found in *London and Surrey, England, Marriage Bonds and Allegations* at Ancestry.com.



The transcription reads:

secondo Septembris 1619

Which daie appeared Xtofer Braunche gentleman, and a batchelor aged xxii [22] or thereabouts and at his own government and disposing his father and mother both being deceased and did alleage that he intendeth to marrie with Marie Addie mayden, aged xxiii [23] or thereabouts the daughter of Francis Addie of Darton in the countie of Yorke husbandman and then appeared Thomas Addie miller, being brother to ye said Marrie and with whome she nowe lyveth and did testifie the consent of his said father to this intended Marry and the truthe of the promise as before that they know of no lawfull let or impediment by reason of pre contract or otherwise to hinder the same they both made faiethe and prayed licence for them to be married together in the pareshe Church of St. Peter Westcheap, London.



The record indicates that Christopher was a “gentleman” meaning he was of a high social status. Mary is referred to as a maiden, and her father is called a “husbandman” (a small landowner or farmer). Thomas Addie, Mary’s brother, is identified as a miller. Through this document, we know the approximate year of birth for both Christopher and Mary, the names of Mary’s father and brother plus their social status or occupation, and where Mary’s father was from. He was still living in 1619, but Mary’s mother, Mary Standing Addie, was deceased.

The marriage of Christopher and Mary took place only a few months after the announcement that 50 “good” people were needed to settle at “Colledg Land.” These people were sent to Virginia in August 1619 on the Bona Nova. They were “tradesmen such as smiths, bricklayers, potters, carpenters, and farmers, mostly single, with plenty of food and arms.” A few months later, in 1620, the Virginia Company announced that it would send six tenants to cultivate the minister’s 100 acres of land and to help build the guest house. ([Land](#))



Christopher and Mary were chosen to settle at College Land and left for Jamestown on the London Marchant [Merchant] in March 1620. (Dorman)

By the time they got to Virginia, the colony had been reorganized. The scattered settlements, plantations, and cities were organized politically into “four large corporations, with a capital city in each.” These were Elizabeth City, James City, Charles City, and Henrico. (Quisenberry 59) College Land was in Henrico, so that is where Christopher and Mary lived and worked for the next few years.

On March 22, 1622, the Powhatan Indians staged a massive attack on the colony, killing 347 colonists in various settlements 60 miles up and down the James River. (Torrence, Part 1, 125ff) Christopher and Mary survived, so it is assumed that they fled to a safer location. Jamestown was spared because of a warning from a Christianized Indian. Nevertheless, the Indians and the colonists were at war for many years afterward. (Timeline)

After the massacre, the tenants at College Land were moved to a safer and lower area along the James River near present day College Creek in Surrey County. The



company allowed tenants who wanted to work for themselves to pay rent of 20 bushels of corn, 60 pounds of good leaf tobacco, and one pound of silk yearly. They would also work six days a year on various public projects to build houses and to “plant gardens and orchards on the college land and not elsewhere.” By early 1624, there were 29 people living at College Land.

A year later, the number had dropped to 22, who were living in 10 houses. (Land 495) Hundreds of colonists had died during the winter of 1624-1625 due to hunger, disease, and Indian attacks. That winter was later remembered as the “starving time.” (Timeline)

Christopher was documented as living at College Land (present-day Henrico County) in 1623/24; son Thomas was born in April or May. In May of 1624, the Virginia Company lost its charter due to mismanagement, and Virginia became a royal colony. (Timeline) In the muster taken in 1624/5, Christopher, Mary, and 9-month-old son Thomas were listed. (Dorman 366). That same muster showed that Jamestowne had a “church, a guardhouse, three stores [storage



facilities], a merchant’s store, and 33 houses.” In addition, there were many boats, over 24,000 pounds of fish, corn, peas, and meal, as well as weapons, suits of armor, and hundreds of cattle, hogs, and goats. (Hatch)

After the “colony became a royal province, nothing more was done” for the college, but “the plantation of the college still had tenants and were represented in the House of Burgesses.” (Land) Christopher was a planter on his leased land at Arrowhatts when son William was born about 1626, and when son Christopher Jr. was born about 1628. (Dorman 367-8) I assume the children were baptized, but I don’t think those baptism records exist.

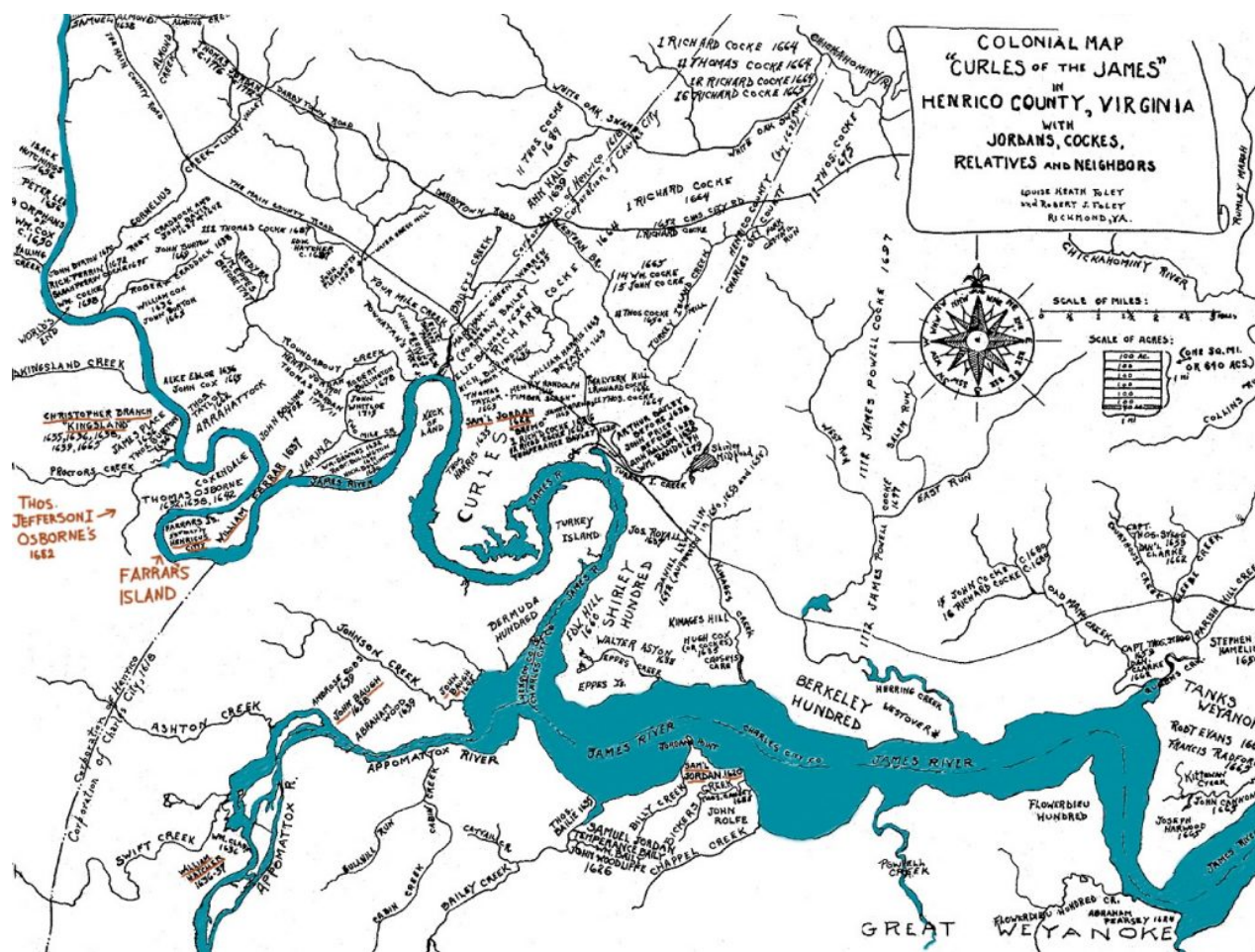
I am very curious about something that I don’t believe I have read anywhere else. On 27 September 1629, in Kilmersdon, Somerset, England, there was a christening for a child named Christopher Branch, whose father was also named Christopher. Had they returned to England for some reason? Since Mary died in 1630, perhaps they had gone to England due to health issues. Somerset was not really near Abingdon or London, so why would they go there? If this christening record is for a different family, then Christopher Jr. was probably christened in Virginia, followed by the death of his mother, Mary, also in Virginia, about 1630.

After Mary’s death, Christopher continued his work as a planter at



Arrowhattocks and adapted to being a single father with three small children. One can only imagine how hard that must have been for him. There is no record of a second marriage. In 1632, he returned to England briefly to bring a lawsuit for ownership of the Bull Inn in Abingdon, which had been owned by his uncle, Thomas Branch (1557-1603). This uncle had died when Christopher was quite young, so many years had gone by, and ownership of the Bull Inn had been claimed by someone else. Christopher lost this lawsuit. (Dorman 366)

In 1634, the four Virginia corporations were abolished and the colony was divided into eight counties: Elizabeth City County, Warrasquinoke County, Warwick County, James City County, Charles City County, Henrico County, York County, and Accomac County. (Quisenberry) In October of that year, "Christopher Branch, Planter, of Arrowhattocks in Henrico County" was granted a lease for 21 years on 100 acres lying east on the James River. This area of Henrico later became Chesterfield County. (Dorman 366) On December 8, 1635, Christopher patented 250 acres at Kingsland "over against Arrowhattocks, east upon the maine River . . . adjacent to the land of John Griffin, now in the tenure of said Branch . . . 50 acres for his own personal adventure and 200 acres for transportation of four persons." (Dorman 366) The map shows where Kingsland and Arrowhattocks were in relation to each other.



The property at “Kingsland” in what is now Chesterfield County was a “plantation long the property and residence of descendants of Christopher Branch.” (Abstracts 1) In September of 1636 he patented another 100 acres of land and was a successful



tobacco planter. (Branchiana 26-29) By February 1638/39, the plantation had 450 acres because “he had acquired an additional 100 acres through an exchange with James Place and the remaining acreage through additional headrights.” (Dorman 366)

In January 1639/40, the House of Burgesses decided that “there be yearly chosen



and appointed Men of experience and in dignity for the Careful Viewing of each Man's crop of Tobacco." By an act of this assembly, Christopher was named as a tobacco viewer from World's End to Henrico. He continued growing tobacco and was successful despite "sickly and desperate" conditions all over the colony. He was also elected burgess for Henrico County. (Branchiana 28-30)

Around 1645, Christopher's oldest son, Thomas, married Elizabeth Gough, daughter of Capt. Matthew Gough of Henrico, who was a burgess in 1642. (Cabell 2) However, the fourth edition of *Adventurers of Purse and Person* says Thomas married "Elizabeth (Gough?)" indicating doubt. Next, Christopher Jr. married, but Dorman says the wife's name is unknown. My records show that her name was Sarah Almond, but I don't know the original documentation for that. There was a settler named Samuel Almond living in the same area. Between 1651 and 1657, several grandchildren were born: Mary and possibly Sarah to son Christopher Jr. and Elizabeth to son Thomas. Around the same time, in 1656, the new grandfather, Christopher Sr., was named justice of Henrico County. (Dorman 367)

The year 1657 had several highlights for Christopher, including the births of two grandsons. William Jr. was born to son William and his wife, Jane Hatcher. Thomas Jr. was born to son Thomas and wife Elizabeth. Christopher, Jr. was appointed justice of the peace in Charles City County that same year and his first son, Christopher III, was born in 1658. (Dorman 367-8) The grandchildren kept on coming: 1659, John born to William; 1660, Martha born to Thomas; 1661, Matthew, born to Thomas; 1663, Samuel born to Christopher Jr. and 1666 James born to Thomas. Several more generations of Christopher Branch's descendants are given in Dorman's book.

Shortly after the birth of Christopher Jr.'s son Benjamin in 1665, both Christopher Jr. and his wife Sarah died, leaving five children as orphans. (Dorman 368) Their grandfather, Christopher Sr. raised them. Within five years Christopher Sr.'s second son, William, also died. His wife, Jane, remarried and was able to care for their

children. The rest of Christopher's life seems to have been devoted to raising Christopher Jr.'s orphaned children. His will was written on June 20, 1678, and these grandchildren, especially Benjamin, were provided for in the will, below. It was filed at Henrico Courthouse. Christopher's death occurred sometime before the date of probate, which was February 20, 1681/82.

CHRISTOPHER BRANCH'S WILL

CHRISTOPHER BRANCH'S WILL, dated June 20, 1678, was probated in Henrico County, February 20, 1681-2: In the name of God, Amen; the twentieth of June 1678, I, Christopher Branch of Kingsland in the county of Henrico, being in years & memory, praises be to god, doe make this my last will and testament as followeth: Item, I give my body unto the earth from whence it came and my soule unto my saviour Jesus Christ, who hath bought it with his most pretious Blood. Item, I give unto my sonne Thomas Branch my great Copper Caetell and a Book called Ursinis Catucis, and I doe confirme the two hundred and forth acres of land that I have given him by deed of gift formerly. Item, I give unto my grandson Christopher Branch all the land betweene the River and the long slash, begining at proctors Creeke mouth, and run upward on the river to the pine tree that parts my land and my sonn Thomas, and from proctor Creek at the lower end of the long slash on the inside of the slash runing upward to my sonne Thomases land, unto him and his heirs males forever; provided that he shall help to build for his Brother Samuel a house of 4 board lengths. To grandson Samuel Branch, land called "Jack's Bottom" at Proctors Creek, provided he help build his brother Benjamin a house of 4 boards lengths. To grandson Benjamin Branch, land between Jack's Bottom and Proctors Creek. It is my will that neither Samuella nor Benjamin goe of the plantacon, but (they are) to live with xthopher and to have housing and ground, and to Worke together till they be able to seate their owne land, unless they be willing to goe of themselves. It is my will that my part of Jobes labour soe long as he hath to serve shall goe to mainetaine Samuel, Benjamin, and Sarah, and (that) the halfe of the Negroes labr goe to mainetaine them. It is my will that the Cartway be not stopt up nor altered that now is to goe into the Woods for Timber or for fire Woode, but to have a Clear passage. It is my will that William and John Branch shall have liberty to fish or fowle in the Creekes or swamp. If Christop. shall refuse to help to build and clear for Samuella and Benjamine as I have set downe in this my will, then he shall pay six hundred pounds of tobaccoe to Each of them; and if Samuella shall refuse to help Benjamine to built and Clear, as I have set downe in this my will, then he shall pay to Benjamine six hundred pounds of tobaccoe. It: I give unto Thomas Jefferson one hogshead of tobaccoe of four hundred pounds Weight, whome I make with my grandsonne Christop. Branch my full and sole Exetrs of this my last will and testamt, and I desire them to see my will truly pformed. My debts and legacies being paid and buriall discharged, all the rest of my Estate I give unto my grandsonne Christop. Branch, and Samuella and Benjamine and Sarah and Mary Branch, the Wife of Tho: Jefferson, to be equally divided among them. Witnesse my hand and seale the day and year above written. (Signed) Christop. Branch Wit: Abell Gower, Richard Ward.

There is much more information about the Branch family in numerous publications. My descent is from Christopher Jr.'s daughter Mary, who married Thomas Jefferson, an immigrant who was to be grandfather of a president. The Jefferson genealogy will be the subject of another post.

PDF Christopher Branch Descendants [Descendants of Christopher Branch Sr.](#)

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 **VIRGINIA**