

THE STAFFORD COUNTY RESIDENCE OF JOHN GRIGSBY, 1685 - 1730.

An article on page 54 of the January newsletter told something of the Northern Neck of colonial Virginia and of the English immigrants who settled there. John Grigsby, the immigrant progenitor of the name in Virginia, was one who became a resident land owner in Stafford County from 1685. We can be sure of the date for several surviving deeds make reference to the "100 acres of land purchased by John Grigsby of Major James Ashton, September 26, 1685 whereon the said John Grigsby lived."

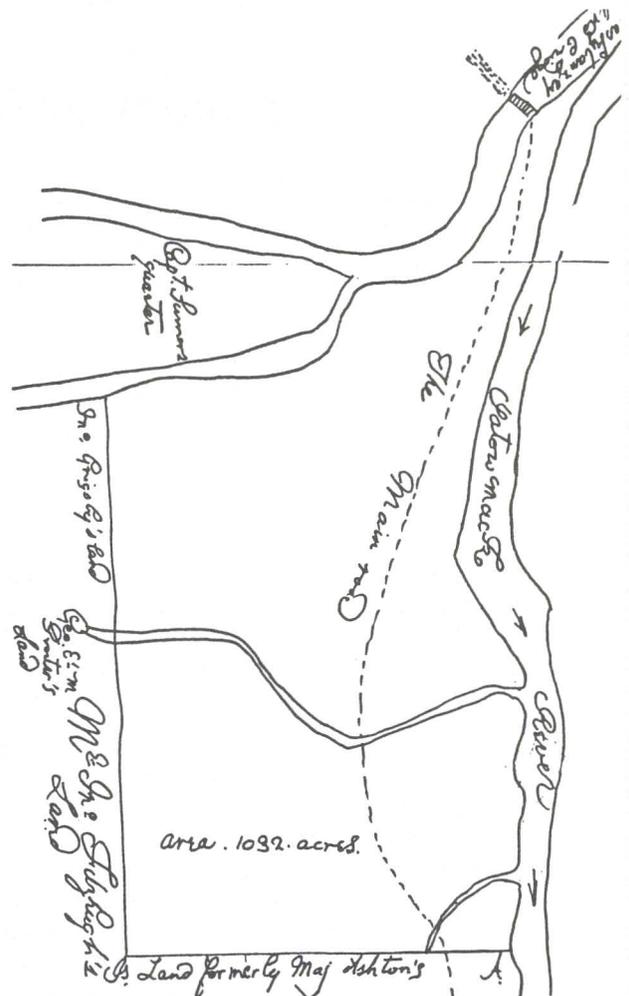
Stafford, called a mother of counties, formed from Westmoreland in 1664 whose southern boundary it shared, extended between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers to the Blue Ridge mountains. Most of the early settlements were along the Potomac in the southern area of the new county and it was here that the parish of Stafford and Chotank were established - known as the 'upper' and 'lower' parish - with a dividing line on Potomac Creek. By 1680, due in some measure to the influence of large land owners (Waugh in the 'upper' and 'Fitzhugh' in the lower), the parish names were changed to Overwharton and St. Paul - parish English names from whence these men had emigrated. In England, as in colonial Virginia a parish served as an administrative division of a county for local civil government, often represented by a church whose minister kept various written records concerning residents. Aquia church became the center for Overwharton and St. Paul's church the center for St. Paul's parish - wherein John Grigsby's land was located.

By 1699 John Grigsby had added to this 100 acres another tract of land purchased from Nicholas Battin (Battain or Battile) "Marrinor of the Kingdom of England" which, upon survey proved to contain 887 acres, a part of whose boundary was bordered by the Passapatanzy creek just below the Potomac creek. Apparently, some of this land lay within the Overwharton parish for an entry in the 1724 Overwharton parish register carries a list of Tobacco Tenders "from the south side of the Potomac creek to lower end of Overwharton parish" listing "John, Thomas and William Gregsby (sic) with 15,593 Tobacco Plants; James Gregsby with 8,225 plants; William Gregsby, Daily, Hum & Walker with 22,780 plants, and Charles & James Gregsby with John Macduel, 8,312 plants. (See Memorabilia I, p. 34-35) John Grigsby's will, 17 March, 1728/29 names sons John, Charles, James, William and Thomas as heirs together with a daughter.

There can be no doubt that John Grigsby's 100 acres of land "on which he did live" fell within St. Paul's parish, since it was in the St. Paul's Register that an entry was made of his death in 1730 followed by a notation "supposed to 107 years old". St. Paul's parish remained in Stafford county until 1776 when by a complex boundary alteration, King George county, originally formed in 1720 and extending along the Rappahannock river, was changed to include territory between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers. In 1776 the location of St. Paul's parish changed from Stafford to King George county.

The area map accompanying this article, showing the location of "John Grigsby's land", was dated 1718. It was reduced from a 8½" X 14" copy made from a more detailed original some years ago. In passing this along it was explained that at the time of copying another use was intended, and that it happened to show "John Grigsby's land" was accidental. Unfortunately, the donor could not recall the location of the original. However, the map clearly illustrates the relationship of the Grigsby land to the Passapatanzy creek and the Potomac river into which it flowed. It also records the position of landowners Fitzhugh, Ashton, Summers and others, as well as the Main Road and bridge across the Passapatanzy. With continued research and inquiry it may be possible to again locate the original area map from which this partial copy was made.

St. Paul's Parish church, still standing and listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings, was completed in 1768. Earlier wood buildings were located on one or two nearby sites. The first minister of reliable record was the Rev. David Stuart who took charge about 1722 and was succeeded by his son William in January 1748/49. These are the gentlemen who recorded the death of John Grigsby, 1730.



7/85