

The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, Virginia

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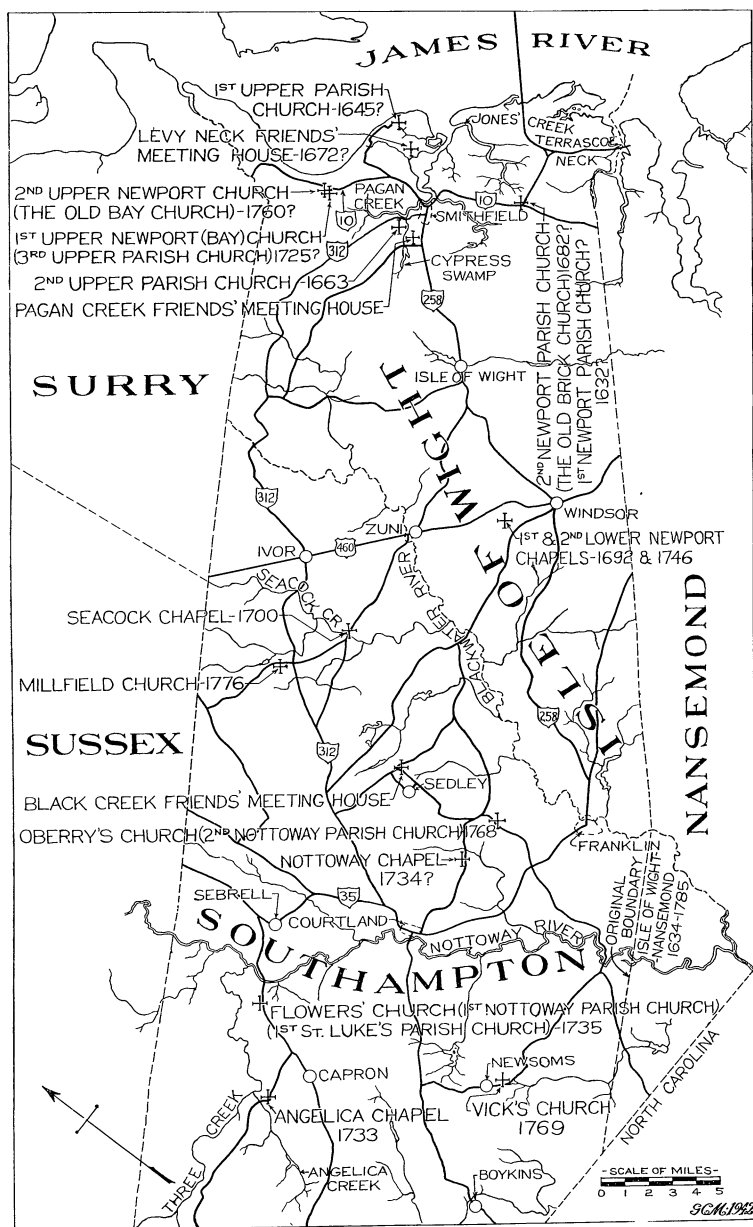
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1. Map Showing Historic Sites in Isle of Wight County, Based on Early Deeds and Land Patents.

## THE COLONIAL CHURCHES OF ISLE OF WIGHT AND SOUTHAMPTON COUNTIES, VIRGINIA

By GEORGE CARRINGTON MASON,  
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Only one of the colonial churches of Isle of Wight County has survived until the present day, and the churches of its daughter county of Southampton have completely disappeared, many of them so long ago that even their sites are generally unknown. A great part of the colonial records of Isle of Wight has been preserved, including an eighteenth century vestry book for the coterminous parish, and the Southampton records are complete from the date of the county's creation.

The present counties of Isle of Wight and Southampton once formed part of the corporation of James City, the first of the four great boroughs which, together with the Eastern Shore, composed the Virginia colony in 1618.<sup>1</sup> Upon the division of the colony into shires in 1634, this territory was set up as Warrosquyoake County,<sup>2</sup> which was bounded by the original shires of James City, on the west, and Elizabeth City, on the east, and extended southwestward from the James River to the North Carolina line.

The new county's Indian name of Warrosquyoake was derived from that of the tribe originally found occupying this section. Since this name was difficult both to spell and pronounce, at least twenty-five variations of it appearing in colonial records, it was soon replaced by the English title, Isle of Wight, which came into use by 1637<sup>3</sup> or earlier. The county's new name was adopted in recognition of the first important settlement in this region, established by Captain Christopher Lawne at Lawne's Creek in 1619, and known as Isle of Wight plantation as early as 1620.<sup>4</sup>

After some early adjustments of Isle of Wight's boundaries with the neighboring counties of Surry and Nansemond, the first reduction in the county's area occurred in 1733, when its territory southwest of the Meherrin River was ceded to Brunswick County<sup>5</sup>, the same land later becoming part of Greenville County at its formation in 1781.<sup>6</sup> The remainder of the original shire of Isle of Wight was divided at the Blackwater River in 1749, and the portion west of this stream was organized as Southampton County<sup>7</sup>. The new county attained its present limits in 1786, when all

<sup>1</sup> Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company of London*, III, 100.

<sup>2</sup> Hening, *Statutes at Large*, I, 224.

<sup>3</sup> Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, I, 69 (Patent of John Upton).

<sup>4</sup> *William and Mary Quarterly* (1), VII, 205.

<sup>5</sup> Hening, *Statutes at Large*, IV, 355.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 363.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Virginia Counties*, 206.

of the southwestern tip of Nansemond County, lying west of the Blackwater River, was added to Southampton<sup>8</sup>.

The first parish organization in what later became Isle of Wight County is recorded in 1629 as already existing at Warrosquyoake, which appears to have become a general term for the entire settlement along the present county's James River waterfront. Upon the division of the colony into eight shires in 1634, this original plantation parish became coterminous with the county and remained so for several years. In 1643, both county and parish were subdivided, lengthwise, into two parishes, first known simply as the Upper Parish and the Lower Parish<sup>9</sup>, and later as Warrosquyoake and Newport Parishes.

With the extension of settlement to Isle of Wight's upper border at the North Carolina-Virginia boundary line, the county's two parishes became recognized as inconveniently long. This led to their division at the Blackwater River in 1734, their lower parts being combined as Newport Parish, while their upper parts were united to form the parish of Nottoway<sup>10</sup>. Fifteen years later, Nottoway Parish was cut off from Isle of Wight as Southampton County, and in 1762, its territory south of the Nottoway River was erected as St. Luke's Parish<sup>11</sup>.

After the disastrous Indian massacre of 1622, the Isle of Wight plantation was temporarily abandoned, and although the Indians were driven out by Sir George Yeardley in the following year, only 31 people were living at the original settlements of Warrosquyoake and Basse's Choice in 1625<sup>12</sup>. Once the Indian menace had been broken, recovery of the Isle of Wight settlement was swift, and in the 1634 census, 522 persons were reported in the county.<sup>13</sup>

The early importance of Warrosquyoake is shown by an order of assembly issued in March, 1623, and renewed in February, 1631/2, making it one of only four places, outside of Jamestown itself, where courts were to be held for the colony<sup>14</sup>. The minutes of the General Court of the colony show that, in 1629, Warrosquyoake was the only settlement which delivered to the government complete records of monthly court proceedings, parish levies and disbursements, and christenings, marriages and deaths, revealing a high degree of civil and ecclesiastical organization at that early date<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Hening, *Statutes at Large*, XII, 69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 268.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 444.

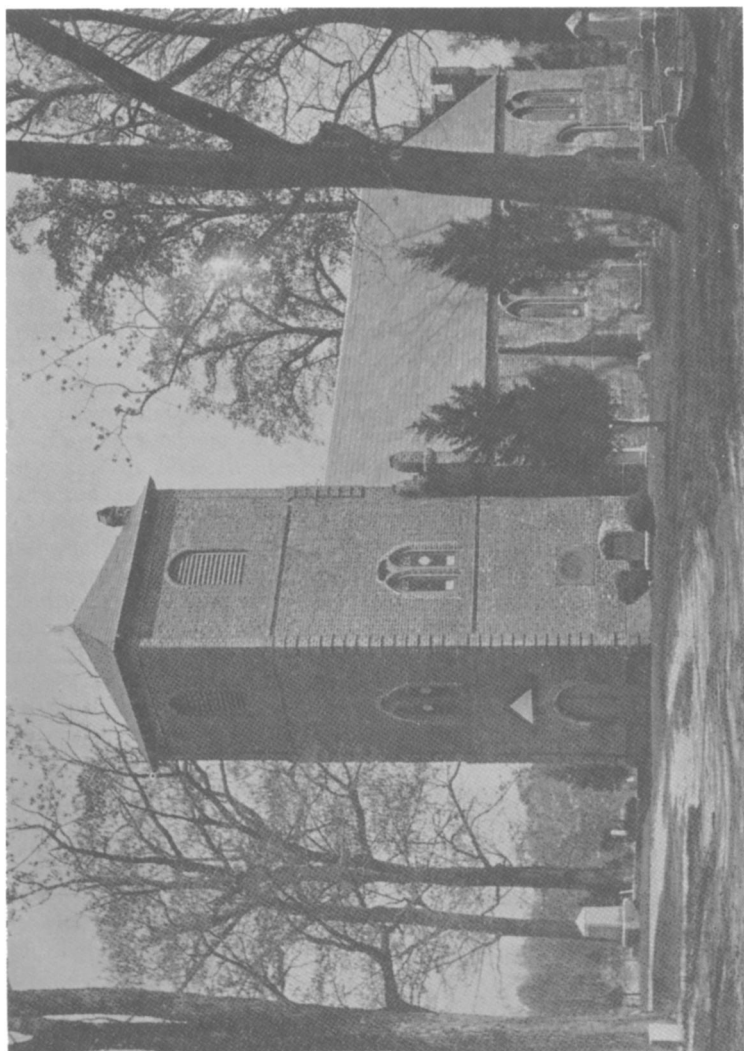
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 618.

<sup>12</sup> *William and Mary Quarterly* (1), VII, 217.

<sup>13</sup> *Virginia Historical Magazine*, VIII, 302.

<sup>14</sup> Hening, *Statutes at Large*, I, 168.

<sup>15</sup> McIlwaine, *Minutes of Council and General Court*, 200.



2. *Old Brick Church, Isle of Wight County.*

The fact that this report for the plantation parish of Warrosquyoake was submitted to the court by its "mynisters and Churchwardens", strongly suggests that a church, even if only temporary in character, was in service at that time, since the appointment of churchwardens, by the very nature of their duties, presupposes the existence of a church building. Since no other record of this hypothetical church has been found, it cannot be brought within the scope of this article.

With such a complete organization in existence at Warrosquyoake in 1629, there is nothing inherently improbable in the building of a permanent church there to carry out the provisions of an Act of February, 1631/2, "that in all such places where any churches are wanting, or decayed, the inhabitants are tyed to contribute towards the building of a church . . . the commissioners together with the mynisters churchwardens and chiefe of the parish to appoynt both the most convenient place . . . and also to hire . . . any workeman and order such necessities as are requisite. This they are to effect [before Christmas] or else the sayd commissioners are to forfeit 50l in money".<sup>16</sup>

The only colonial house of worship still standing in Isle of Wight is the present Old Brick Church, a noble Gothic structure, with buttressed walls and a massive tower. This ancient building stands just northwest of the intersection of the James River Bridge road with U. S. Route 10, at Benn's Church Post Office, named for the modern Methodist Church on the opposite side of the bridge highway. Its present appearance is shown in Plate 2.

It has long been traditional in the county that the Old Brick Church was built in 1632, and if so, it is not only the oldest Protestant church in the United States but also the earliest building of English origin still extant in America. Unfortunately for the acceptance of this tradition, its credibility has been seriously questioned by competent authorities, and in the absence of records definitely establishing its truth or falsity, both sides of the controversy must be fairly presented.

This tradition is firmly based on a record reliably asserted to have been found in the first Newport Parish vestry book, to the effect that the Old Brick Church was built in 1632. This ancient volume long since crumbled into dust, as a result of its burial, with other county records, for protection from British raiders during the Revolutionary War<sup>17</sup>. The former existence of such a record is well substantiated, but it is still possible that it may have referred to the building of an earlier church on the same site, just as a vestry record often quoted as an order for the shingling of the

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<sup>16</sup> Henning, *Statutes at Large*, I, 160.

<sup>17</sup> *Virginia Historical Collections*, XI, 156.

Old Brick Church, in 1737, actually refers to the repair of the Bay Church in the same parish.

Further evidence that the Old Brick Church was built in 1632 is found in the recorded existence of three dated bricks taken from its walls<sup>18</sup>. Such dated bricks, as well as similarly dated timbers, are of great significance, if genuine, and in the case of buildings whose period is known, are uniformly consistent with other evidence of their date of construction. Only one of these bricks has been preserved and is now set into the chancel woodwork of the restored church, but unfortunately, the shape of the figure "3" is vague enough for it to be read as an "8" by skeptics of the old Church's antiquity.

Since at least one of these bricks is said to have been partly covered with mortar when found, it must have been laid up in the wall's interior, and it is possible that all of them were thus embedded, for none of them seems to have been noted until the old church's restoration. This would explain their previous invisibility, which would otherwise seem strange indeed, since one of these bricks is said to have come from above the main doorway<sup>19</sup>. If embedded in the wall, these bricks must have been dated before being used, indicating that, if the church actually dates from 1632, it was begun in that year and finished perhaps four or five years later, like the brick church at Jamestown.

In view of the reduced population of the Warrosquyoake settlement, through sickness and Indian massacre, in the decade prior to 1632, this is much more plausible than that the church was completed in 1632. It is also more consistent with the fact that in colonial vestry books, the most prominent record of a new church was usually the order for its construction, the later acceptance of the finished church by the vestry, if recorded at all, receiving only the scantiest mention.

The records already quoted prove the existence at Warrosquyoake of a parish organization and population adequate for the construction of a permanent church there in 1632, but the erection of so large and elaborate a building as the Old Brick Church at so early a period is considered incredible by many students. On the basis of our knowledge of the crudity of most Virginia churches built in the first quarter century of settlement, the production of so substantial a structure in 1632 would appear most improbable, were it not that a closely similar, if slightly smaller, church is believed to have been built at Jamestown, less than a decade later.

The improbability is still further reduced by Mr. H. C. Forman's recent discovery, as published in the April issue of this

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<sup>18</sup> *Virginia Historical Collections*, XI, 157.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from H. D. Hosier, Suffolk, on file at Isle of Wight Court-house.

magazine, that the Governor's Castle, a massive brick structure twice as large as the Old Brick Church, was erected at St. Mary's, Maryland, in 1639, at a much earlier state of settlement than is represented by the date 1632 in Virginia<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, compared to other surviving colonial church structures, the Old Brick Church was of moderate size, and aside from the elaboration inherent in its Gothic design, it is essentially a plain and simple building.

The most serious objection to the tradition of the Old Brick Church's antiquity is that its acceptance involves the complete rejection of an associated tradition, of equal strength and long standing, that this church was built by Colonel Joseph Bridger. Since the Colonel Joseph Bridger, whose grave is marked by a tombstone in the chancel of the old church, was born in 1628 and was therefore a child when it traditionally was built, the builder is usually identified as his father, said to have been Captain Joseph Bridger.<sup>21</sup> This substitution cannot be accepted as a valid one, for Colonel Bridger's father was named Samuel, and he is not known to have come to Virginia at all, nor has any evidence been found that the Bridger family was in Isle of Wight prior to 1657<sup>22</sup>.

Both Colonel Bridger and his wife, Hester Pitt, were related to the Driver family in Gloucestershire, England, before coming to Virginia. There is a strong tradition in the Driver family of Isle of Wight County that some of its members were brought to Virginia by Colonel Bridger to build the Old Brick Church. This tradition appears to be supported by the presence in the old church's brick work of the initials "C. D." and "T. D.", believed to be those of Charles and Thomas Driver. These initials are deeply cut into the right-hand front quoins of the church tower near the top of its southwest corner, and are whitened with cement, in accordance with colonial practice. The location is quite inaccessible from the ground and these inscriptions are clearly original with the church, of which the tower is undoubtedly an integral part and not a later addition.

This Driver tradition increases the difficulty of accepting 1632 as the date of the church's erection, since Thomas and Charles Driver are shown by the county records to have reached manhood in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and, like the Bridgers, the Driver family cannot be proved to have been in Isle of Wight before 1657<sup>23</sup>.

Among the few county records referring to a church in the Lower Parish of Isle of Wight is a deed which appears to indicate

<sup>20</sup> *William and Mary Quarterly* (2), XXII, 136.

<sup>21</sup> Meade, *Old Churches and Families of Virginia*, I, 305.

<sup>22</sup> Boddie, *17th Century Isle of Wight*, 423.

<sup>23</sup> Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, I, 365 (Patent of Giles Driver).



that a church was in service at this site as early as 1638, tending to confirm the traditional building of a church for the parish in 1632, although it does not prove that this church was the present building. In this deed, dated 9th January, 1667, John Vallentine, Jr., confirms to Mr. John Marshall a tract of land originally sold to Marshall by Vallentine's father, in a deed of 13th January, 1638, and described as "100 acres, lying Southerly on the Creek & Northerly into the woods . . . & soe running downewards to the head of the Creek that leadeth to the then Church", with some additional area bounded on "the deep Swamp."<sup>24</sup>

The final detail of this description seems to identify this as the site sold on 6th September, 1683, by Michael Fulgham of the Lower Parish of Isle of Wight to its churchwardens and vestrymen and described as "one Acre of Land . . . scituate in the Lower parish whereon the Churchhouse now stands by the Deep Swamp".<sup>25</sup> Since the Old Brick Church is located at the head of Jones Creek, which is swampy for most of its upper length and passes the churchyard through a ravine 20 feet deep, now dammed to form a pond, there is no apparent reason to doubt that these descriptions refer to its site. This seems to be confirmed by a deed of 1799, in which Brewer Godwin conveys to his son Brewer, Jr. 150 acres of land "between the main road that leads from the said Brewer Godwin to the Brick Church, and a swamp called the deep swamp."<sup>26a</sup>

From the record quoted above, it appears that the Old Brick Church's site was not deeded to the parish until 50 years after its traditional date of erection. This does not directly disprove the old church's reputed antiquity, since the same Lower Parish vestry did not secure any deed to the site of their first chapel until 54 years after its probable construction date, while the site of the New Poquoson Church of 1636, in York County, was not deeded to the parish until 1688, after 52 years had elapsed. Indirectly, it has greater significance, for in both the cases just quoted, the making of a deed was prompted by the completion of a new church on the old site, and this is accordingly apt to have been true in this case also.

Since the Bridger-Driver traditions and the recorded deeding of the site all point to a later date than the traditional one, it seems probable that the Old Brick Church was completed by Charles and Thomas Driver, as master workmen, under the direction of Colonel Joseph Bridger, about 1682, and that it succeeded an earlier brick church built on the same site, about 1632, as re-

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<sup>24</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1662-1715*, I, 121.

<sup>25</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1661-1719*, II, 569.

<sup>26a</sup> *Isle of Wight County Deeds*, XVIII, 365.

corded in the lost first vestry book of the parish. The probability that a Gothic colonial church would be constructed in 1682, so long after the construction at Jamestown of the only previously known example of such a church, has been greatly enhanced by the recent discovery that the second Bruton Church of 1683 was also of Gothic design.<sup>26b</sup>

The excellent set of plans of the Old Brick Church, prepared for the National Park Service's survey of historic American buildings, reveals that the old church measures about 60'-6" by 24'-3", inside the upper walls, which are laid in rough Flemish bond, without glazed headers, and are 26" thick, resting on 36" foundations. The tower is about 20'-0" square, outside, with walls nearly 30" thick. It seems evident from early pictures of the church that the base of the tower was treated as a porch and left open, the only doors at the west entrance being fitted in the doorway leading from tower to church. It is also apparent from these pictures that the primitive triangular pediment above the west tower doorway was an original detail of the building, and enclosed a panel of white cement, since replaced by a marble tablet commemorating the old church's restoration.

The only recorded detail of the original interior arrangement is found in a vestry order of 8th November, 1746, "that the corner Pew of the Chancel in the Brick Church be allotted for the Wife's of the Justices and Vestrymen of the said Parish, and the Pew that they formerly set in be allotted for the Young Women". A photograph of the ruined interior of the church, taken before the fall of its roof and used to illustrate a publication of 1890, shows that the original west gallery was supported by a massive beam, placed just east of the last window at that end of the church, and that this gallery extended the full width of the church<sup>27</sup>. The only original furnishings in the church are believed to be the wine-glass pulpit and its sounding-board, both of which were found in an old barn at Macclesfield and restored in 1894.

After at least a century and a half of service as the parish church of the Lower or Newport Parish, the Old Brick Church was renamed "St. Luke's Church" in 1828, by the Reverend W. G. H. Jones, a young deacon who had been holding missionary services in the old building for three years, following the general period of religious inactivity after the Revolution and the War of 1812<sup>28</sup>. This new name occurs only in the reports made to the diocesan convention by Deacon Jones, who was merely following the prevailing fashion of giving saints' names to the old colonial

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<sup>26b</sup> *William and Mary Quarterly* (2), XIX, 175.

<sup>27</sup> Reprinted in *Newport News Daily Press*, Feb. 11, 1940.

<sup>28</sup> Hawks, *Convention Journals*, 220.

churches. Since the title thus given to the church was never validated either by action of the vestry or by use in the consecration of the church (as in some other similar cases) it has no historical basis and cannot properly be applied to this ancient structure.

The nineteenth-century vestry book of the parish, opening in 1836, refers to this church as "the Old Brick Church" or "the Old Isle of Wight Church", and the name "St. Luke's Church" does not occur at all in this book, until revived at the restoration of the old building nearly sixty years later. Under the circumstances, the name "St. Luke's Church", attached to the venerable Newport Parish Church during the last four years of its long term of active service, deserves no more recognition than the name "St. David's Church", similarly applied to historic Bruton Church in the same period and still to be seen on one of its older prayer books.

Upon the construction of Christ Church at Smithfield, five miles to the north, in 1832, the Old Brick Church was abandoned and left to decay, although the vestry ordered that effectual measures be taken to secure the structure against intruders. Since Bishop Meade, writing in 1857, records that the deserted building's interior was already completely gutted, it is evident that the measures taken were not effectual. After half a century of utter neglect, the old parish church's roof fell in, one stormy night in 1886, and carried down with it a large part of the east gable.

Restoration of the historic building was at once undertaken by the Reverend David Barr, then Rector of Christ Church, who continued to raise money for the project for several years after his resignation of the parish in 1889. The work was sufficiently advanced to permit monthly services to be held in 1890, but was not completed until four years later. Further improvement of the building was carried out some 15 years ago.

An interesting feature of the restoration of the Old Brick Church was the replacement of the bricks destroyed through the roof's collapse, by about two thousand bricks from the ruins of the last colonial church at Jamestown. In order to incorporate in the restored building as much as possible of its original material, the new chancel railing was made out of wood from the framework of the fallen roof. Many gifts were received during the restoration, the most notable being the superb stained glass window in the chancel, presented by Queen Victoria of England.<sup>29</sup>

The old building has never resumed its original status as the parish church of Newport, but occasional services are still held there. It is now maintained by voluntary contributions, under the care of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Anti-

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<sup>29</sup> Wallington, *Historic Churches of America*, 98.

quities, and its ancient churchyard, filled with large old trees and fine boxwood, furnishes a setting of appropriate beauty and distinction.

At the division of the county into two parishes in 1643, the boundary between them was set at Pagan Creek, then called Pagan Point Creek, after the marshy point just north of the inner mouth of this creek, which emptied into Warrosquyoake Bay, often called the Lower Bay, to distinguish it from the present Burwell's Bay, further up the shore of James River. As long as settlement extended only a few miles inland from the river, this boundary was sufficient, but later on, it was extended up the creek to the present wharf at Smithfield, then along the existing Courthouse Road to Blackwater Bridge, and on to the upper limits of the original county, by a straight line parallel to the boundary dividing it from the adjoining county of Surry<sup>80</sup>.

It seems certain that a church was built for the Upper Parish of Isle of Wight, soon after its formation in 1643, but no record of its construction has been found. This first Upper Parish Church appears to have been the one mentioned in the will of Robert Pitt, dated 6th June, 1672, and proved a year and a half later. In this will, Robert Pitt bequeaths, as a gift from his deceased wife, Martha Pitt, "one pcell of land . . . that Joyneth uppon the north side of the land w<sup>ch</sup> was M<sup>r</sup> John Swards for the length, And the breadth towards the church . . . uppon which land my Executor is to build one howse . . . which said land & howseinge is to be for the releiffe of Poore Women".<sup>81</sup>

A further reference to the same church's site is found in a deed of 11th January, 1675, in which James Day of London conveys to William Webb of Isle of Wight "100 acres for life, bounded on the south side of swamp, Northerly towards head of the valley near the Old Church Yard—then a line for the river side".<sup>82</sup> The land involved in this deed was a part of James Day's plantation at Day's Point, just north of the mouth of Pagan Creek, and the church site evidently was near the James River shore. The reference to this church's site as "the Old Church Yard" clearly implies that the church itself was no longer in service, but the earlier record suggests that the old building, although abandoned, was still standing.

In conjunction with the boundaries given in this deed, the description quoted from Robert Pitt's will of 1672 definitely locates this church site as lying just east of the head of Seward's Creek (now Williams' Creek) and about a quarter mile inland

<sup>80</sup> Purdie, *History of Isle of Wight*, MS. filed at Isl  of Wight Courthouse.

<sup>81</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1661-1719*, II, 128.

<sup>82</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1662-1715*, I, 350.

from the south shore of Burwell's Bay, as shown on Plate 3. This is evident from the fact that "the land which was John Seward's" can be identified from early land patents as the neck on the north side of Pagan Creek, lying between Goose Hill Creek (now Tormentor Creek) and Seward's Creek and running up to their heads.<sup>33</sup>

This tract is mentioned as "the Levie Neck" in an act appointing tobacco-viewers for Pagan Creek in January, 1639/40, and has been known as the Levy Neck ever since.<sup>34</sup> The name suggests that this was the place where the county commissioners met to lay the annual levy for the upper part of the county, in the earliest period of the County's existence.

The Levy Neck was sold by Seward in 1672 to William Bressie, a Quaker<sup>35</sup>, who in 1679 made a deed of gift conveying to "the serv<sup>ts</sup> of God frequently called Quakers, one house built by the said people in the place called the Levy Neck Ould feilds near the Creek side to worshp & serve the liveing God in spiritt & truth, with ground sufficient for a Graveyard . . . bounded by four Corner Trees to be planted, with a free egress and regress for the sd people through any of the sd Bressie's land in any path that now leads to the House"<sup>36</sup>. William Bressie's will, dated 22nd January, 1699/1700, and proved a year later, leaves much tobacco "towards the maintaining and upholding of the meeting House of the people of God called Quakers . . . being at Levy Necke" and for the care of their poor<sup>37</sup>.

Although the Quakers held meetings at the house of William Yarrett at Levy Neck as early as 1663,<sup>38</sup> these meetings were not sanctioned by the county authorities, who imprisoned those responsible for them, hence the building of the meeting-house probably did not antedate Bressie's acquisition of its site in 1672. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the Quaker faith was not fully established in this region until after the visit of its founder, George Fox, in that year.

Because the "old fields" mentioned in such early deeds were the first clearings made by the colonists, they were usually located close to the river landings and not back in the woods, hence this meeting-house "near the Creek side" probably stood on the high shore of Pagan Creek at the south end of the neck, but its actual site has not been located. Like other early meeting-houses in this section, whose specifications are given in Quaker records, it was

<sup>33</sup> Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, I, 439.

<sup>34</sup> *William and Mary Quarterly* (2), V, 24.

<sup>35</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1662-1715*, I, 277.

<sup>36</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1662-1715*, I, 423.

<sup>37</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1661-1719*, II, 432.

<sup>38</sup> Boddie, *17th Century Isle of Wight*, 116.

doubtless a small frame building of the simplest type, set on wooden blocks, so that no trace of a foundation could be expected to show at its site.

It is apparent that the church mentioned in the records already quoted could not have been the Levy Neck Meeting-house, built in 1672 or later, because a site previously in use for only two or three years would not have been described as "the Old Church Yard", and Quaker houses of worship were never called churches in colonial records. It is further evident that the church site in question was not on the Levy Neck, at all, but lay a mile and a half from the probable location of the meeting-house.

The replacement of this first Upper Parish Church, either because it was inconveniently located or of a crude and temporary type of construction, appears to have been contemplated as early as 1655. This is revealed by a bequest made by George Hardy, owner of the ancient mill at the head of Lawne's Creek, whose will, dated and proved in the spring of that year, leaves "One Thousand pounds of Tob<sup>o</sup> towards the Building of the Church in this parish in case it be built with Brick."<sup>39</sup>

It appears that this second Upper Parish Church was not "built with Brick", so as to secure the benefit of Mr. Hardy's bequest, since a deposition of 9th August, 1664, shows that it was a frame building erected in the previous year. The same record further reveals that at least one colonial church builder was not above taking advantage of the church warden who had hired him, by keeping some of the extra material for his own use.

In this deposition, the builder's servant, Daniel Miles, testifies "That the last Sumer in the year 1663 this depon<sup>t</sup> liveing att the house of John Askew, he the sd Askew was imployed to build the Church by Cap<sup>t</sup> Henry Pitt and after it was built, this dep<sup>t</sup> was requested by John Askew, with the said Askew's Cart and Oxen, to fetch some Slabbs and Tobaccoe Sticks, as the said Askew said, and rounding into a thickett near the Church, he did there see a Pcell of boards covered with Bowes (boughs), Askew saying that they were Boards that he had saved out of the Cap<sup>ts</sup> Timber . . . further saying that he had the most right to them . . . and after the Cart was loaded to the full he ledd the Oxen . . . to the Woods near his own fence & their unloaded the said boards."<sup>40</sup>

The fact that the second Upper Parish Church was completed by its builder within less than a year not only confirms its being of frame construction, as suggested by mention of timber and boards as its materials, but also indicates that it was a small

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<sup>39</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1662-1715*, I, 576.

<sup>40</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds*, I, 14.

building of the simplest type, hence no foundation remains could be expected to be evident at its site.

The additional fact that this church was constructed on the land of its builder is brought out in a deed of 1st February, 1666, which also defines its location. In this deed, John Askew conveys to John Watson 50 acres of land "Commonly called the Church feild & being in the Isle of Wight County and bounded between the two Main Branches of Pagan Creek & Joyning upon the Land once Philip Dewells on the North West Side . . . & running (along) the bottom of a Swamp on the East North East Side Adjoining the Land of the said Askew".<sup>41</sup> The significance of this reference lies in the fact that in colonial records the term "Church feild" is regularly used to denote the site of a church.

A conveyance of 1665 for the land "once Philip Dewell's", adjoining this early church site, shows that Dewell's property lay on the west side of Pagan Creek,<sup>42</sup> opposite a tract of 750 acres, patented by John Sparkes in 1635, "at the head of Pagan point Creek, butting Northerly upon land of M<sup>r</sup> Jones, Southerly upon the white marsh, West upon the river (i. e., Pagan Creek) & Easterly into the woods a mile". The "M<sup>r</sup> Jones" mentioned in Sparkes' patent was Anthony Jones, who, in the same year, patented 500 acres, just north of Sparkes' grant and on the same side of the creek, extending upward to the Cross Creek (about a mile below the present Wrenn's Mill).<sup>43</sup> Since Jones' land also ran a mile into the woods, the combined area of the two grants is sufficient to extend two miles along the creek, placing Sparkes' lower boundary just north of the present town of Smithfield, on the opposite side of the creek, and "the white marsh", given as this boundary, is clearly the marshy neck across from the town.

For the final location of the church site, there only remains to be identified the second of "the two Main Branches of Pagan Creek", between which "the Church feild" lay, the first branch being the creek itself. A deed of 1663 from John Bond to Thomas Harris, for the "Corne Mill at the head of Pagan Creek",<sup>44</sup> identifies this second main branch as the present Mount Holly Creek, on which this mill is known to have stood, since it reveals that this creek was once regarded as a part of Pagan Creek and not merely as one of its tributaries. This mill is proved to have been the one later known as Chapman's Mill, which stood at the dam forming the present Smithfield Waterworks reservoir (originally a colonial millpond called the Cypress Swamp), at the head of

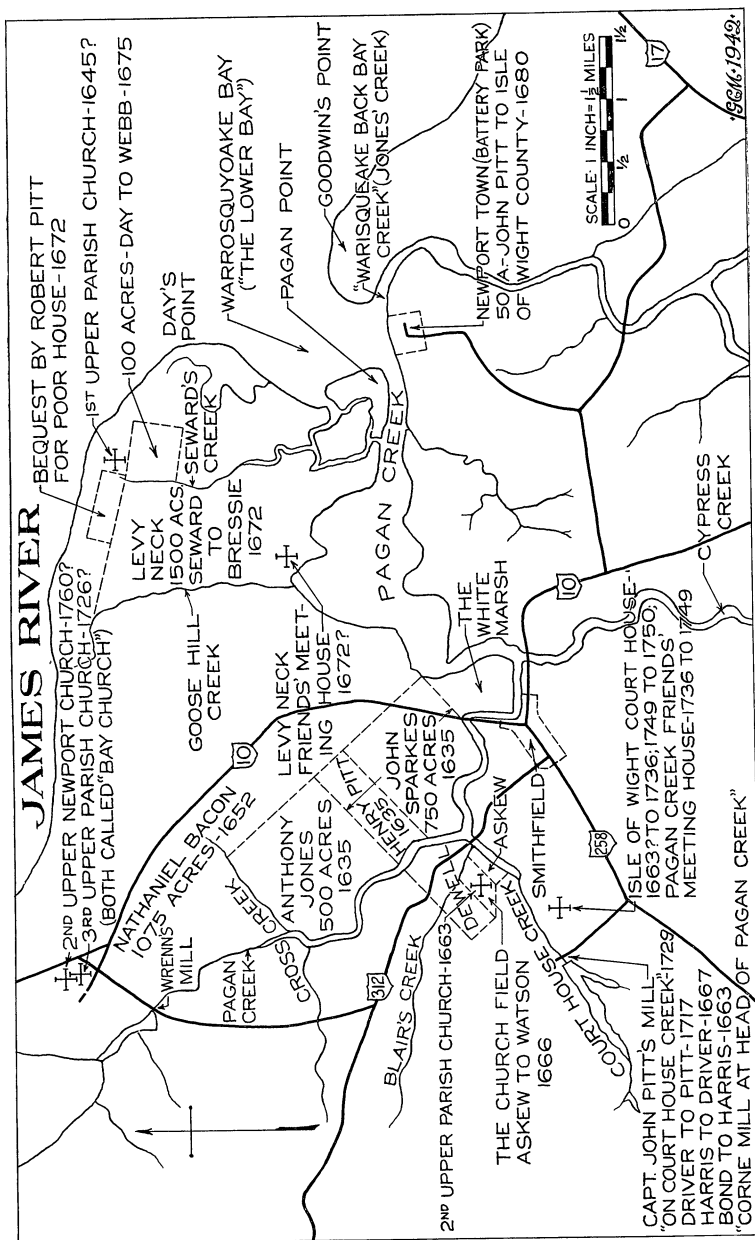
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<sup>41</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, Guardian's Accounts*, A, 75.

<sup>42</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds*, 1662-1715, I, 66.

<sup>43</sup> Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, I, 27.

<sup>44</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds*, 1662-1715, I, 13.



3. Detailed Map of Northern Isle of Wight County.



Mount Holly Creek, by a chain of title deeds to the mill property. These deeds include the one already quoted, from Bond to Harris, a deed of 1667 from Harris to Giles Driver<sup>45</sup> and another of 1717, from Driver to John Pitt,<sup>46</sup> all for this same mill, which is devised in John Pitt's will, dated 1729, as his "mill on Court House Creek."<sup>47</sup>

Since an early court-house for Isle of Wight county is believed to have stood on the south bank of the present Mount Holly Creek, a mile west of Smithfield, this completes the evidence establishing "the Church feild's" location. The swamp bordering it on the east northeast must then have been the present Blair's Creek, placing the church site half a mile north of that of the court-house, in the narrow neck between Blair's and Mount Holly Creeks, as shown on Plate 3.

This early court-house stood on what has always been called the Glebe Farm, and the proximity of the church's site, as deduced above, both to the parish land and the county courts, corroborates our conclusions, since church, court and glebe usually were closely associated in early colonial times. In view of this fact, there is little reason to doubt that this court-house was constructed at about the same time as the church. Since the latter was built only four years after separate courts for the two parishes had been abolished in 1659, it is not unreasonable to conclude that this court-house was the first one erected for the original county of Isle of Wight.

When settlement of the county had been extended to the upper regions of its original territory, the location of this court-house became inconvenient and, upon complaint by the outlying settlers, the General Assembly of 1736 ordered a new courthouse to be built on the north side of the present Blackwater Bridge, 4½ miles south of Zuni, and the former court-house to be discontinued.<sup>48</sup>

In this same year, the abandoned court building near Pagan Creek was purchased by Henry Wiggs, a carpenter, and given by him to the Quakers for use as a meeting-house.<sup>49</sup> Wiggs was one of the original members of the Levy Neck Meeting, already mentioned, but he lived near the old court-house, and the new congregation formed through his efforts became known as the Pagan Creek Meeting. Occasional earlier mentions of a meeting of this name, in the Quaker records, are believed to refer to the Levy Neck Meeting, which was also on Pagan Creek.

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<sup>45</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1662-1715*, I, 116.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 114.

<sup>47</sup> *Isle of Wight County Records*.

<sup>48</sup> McIlwaine, *Executive Journals of Council, 1721-39*, IV, 167, 332.

<sup>49</sup> *Isle of Wight County Deeds, 1736-41*, V, 13.

When the original Isle of Wight County was divided at the Blackwater River to form Southampton County in 1749, the new court-house of 1736 was left standing on the frontier of the older county's reduced area. This location was so inconvenient that a writ was obtained from Governor Gooch, dated 11th May, 1749, adjourning the Isle of Wight County court "to the place called the Quakers Meeting House, formerly the old Court House", and the county records were ordered transferred to this building.<sup>50</sup> It is not recorded how the Quakers were dispossessed of their meeting-house, to which a legal title had been given them, but their ouster appears to have ended the active existence of this meeting, even though the old court building was no longer used by the county after the new court-house at Smithfield was completed in 1752.

Another colonial Quaker congregation in Isle of Wight was the Terrascoe Neck Meeting, whose meeting-house stood at the eastern end of the county in the neck of land between Brewer's Creek and Ragged Island Creek. This was the Terrascoe Neck, which, together with the Ragged Islands, was transferred from Nansemond to Isle of Wight county in 1657 "for the greater conveniency" of the inhabitants.<sup>51</sup> Reference to the road leading to this Quaker house of worship, as "the Meeting house path", is found in a deed of 1717, for land in the Lower Parish, near Brewer's Creek.<sup>52</sup>

A reference in a will of 1687 to "the cart path that goeth from . . . Collonell Bacon's plantation up towards the Church" suggests that the second Upper Church of 1663 was still in service at that date. This reference is definitely associated with this church by the fact that the will was made by Thomas Pitt, son and heir of Captain Henry Pitt, and that the land bounded by this early road was part of John Sparkes' grant of 1635, opposite the church, and abutted on Colonel Nathaniel Bacon's original grant of 1652.<sup>53</sup> A probable reference to this same road, the forerunner of the present U. S. Route 10, is found in the will of Nicholas Hill, dated and proved in 1675, which mentions "the cart path that goes from the Mill belonging to M<sup>r</sup> George Hardy, towards the Church."<sup>54</sup>

No record of the replacement of this second church has been found, but the only vestry book still in existence for the Upper Parish, opening in 1723, contains frequent references to construction work on a parish church building which is later identified as the Bay Church. This traditionally occupied a site three and a

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<sup>50</sup> *Isle of Wight County Orders, 1746-52*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Hening, *Statutes at Large*, I, 423.

<sup>52</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1715-24*, III, 106.

<sup>53</sup> *Isle of Wight County Wills, Deeds, 1661-1719*, II, 283.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 133.

half miles north of the church of 1663, and three quarters of a mile from Burwell's Bay, near the intersection of the present U. S. Route 10 with the cross road leading to Wrenn's Mill.

The fact that the contractor for this work, Mr. Peter Woodward, was put under bond for its completion by a specified date, as was usual when a colonial church was built or enlarged, the large amount levied and paid "To M<sup>r</sup> Wooddard for the Church", and the liberal allowance of time for performance of the contract, all suggest that these entries record the final payment for a new parish church or for a major addition to an older one. Since the vestry book tells of an addition to this church in 1732, this disposes of the probability that enlargement of an old building was involved and it seems possible that the third Upper Parish Church was accepted by the vestry soon after the last of March, 1725, as specified.

On the other hand, we have a report by the Reverend Alexander Forbes, rector of the Upper Parish, to the Bishop of London, in 1724, which makes no mention of the building of a new parish church,<sup>55</sup> although an accompanying letter from the rector mentions that a chapel had been under construction by the parish for several years past, but still lay unfinished.<sup>56</sup> It nevertheless seems possible that the financial stringency revealed by this letter had already caused an unfinished parish church to be placed in service, prior to the date of this report. The supposition that this parish church of 1724 was not finally completed until a year later is upheld by a vestry order of 7th July, 1725, ordering two additional windows to be cut in its walls, since an exactly similar change was made in the unfinished chapel of the parish at its final completion.

The same financial stringency had perhaps caused the building of a church too small for the parish's needs, which may account for its enlargement by an addition ordered 15th October, 1731, and accepted a year later, at a cost of 10,000 lbs. of tobacco. Since no mention is made of a wing, it is likely that this was an addition to the church at the chancel end, and an accompanying levy of 2000 lbs. of tobacco "for Planck for the Church" strongly suggests that the third Upper Parish Church was a frame building. Like the church itself, the chancel addition was evidently pressed into service before completion, since the contractor for both the church and addition, Peter Woodward, was paid 7000 lbs. of tobacco in 1737 to install a chancel doorway and a platform for the communion table, besides providing a cornice and new shingles for the entire roof.

<sup>55</sup> Perry, *Historical Collections, Colonial Church in Virginia*, 327.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

Upon the dissolution of the Upper Parish in 1734, through the union of its lower portion with Newport Parish and of its upper portion with the new parish of Nottoway, its old vestry book was continued as the vestry record for Newport Parish, which had now become coterminous with the reduced Isle of Wight County. At the beginning of the new record, the former Upper and Newport Parish Churches were distinguished as "the Church" and "the Brick Church"; then as "the Upper Church" and "the Church"; and after 1747, as "the Bay Church" and "the Brick Church". These churches became the Upper and Lower Churches of Newport Parish, and both were repaired and their churchyards railed in, between 1744 and 1747.

Although there are irregular entries dated as late as 1770, in the back of the vestry book, the regular record closes in 1754, without any mention of the replacement of the Bay Church, but it is believed to have been succeeded by a large brick church, built on an adjoining site and known by the same name. According to Bishop Meade, this last Bay Church, the second Upper Church of Newport Parish, was built about the middle of the eighteenth century, but the lack of any record of its erection, before the close of the regular vestry book in 1754, indicates that it could not have been completed much before 1760.

The Bishop further relates that it was built on the lands of Colonel Burwell, but that "About the year 1810, the estate came into other hands; the church was pulled down and a kitchen built of the bricks; the sides and backs of the pews were used to make stalls for a stable and divisions in a barn, which was last struck by lightning and burned down. The bell of the church was exchanged in Richmond for a brandy-still."<sup>57</sup>

Remains of both Bay Churches are evident at the site, which is now covered with large trees and dense undergrowth. The back-filled trenches left by the removal of the later church's foundation, although obscured by the presence of a modern graveyard, indicate that it was a large and massive building, perhaps 80 by 40 feet, over all. The earlier church lay in the southern part of the grove, nearer to the cross road, and its remains, although not well-defined, suggest that it was a wooden building of moderate size.

The report made to the Bishop of London in 1724 by the Reverend Thomas Bayley, rector of Newport parish,<sup>58</sup> states that this parish then had in service a chapel-of-ease in the upper part of the parish and 19 miles distant from the mother church. This chapel is believed to have been built as a result of the benefaction of a pious philanthropist, Captain Hugh Campbell, who, in 1692,

<sup>57</sup> Meade, *Old Churches and Families of Virginia*, I, 301.

<sup>58</sup> Perry, *Historical Collections, Colonial Church in Virginia*, 274.

gave 200 acres of land to support a reader to conduct services for "the Inhabitants att Blackwather in Isle of Wight County", who, "Liveing att great Distances from any Churches or Chapels very Seldome have opportunity to bee att the publick worship of God",<sup>59</sup> The site of this chapel lies 2½ miles northwest of the present town of Windsor and a quarter mile south of the intersection of the highway with the Norfolk and Western Railway.

This chapel became the first Lower Chapel of the enlarged Newport Parish in 1734. Ten years later, the vestry ordered to be built near the old chapel a new frame chapel, 50 by 24 feet in size, set on blocks of heart cypress, with sills of 10" by 12" lightwood pine and framing of sawed oak. Its specification called for the interior, for "the height of the Peugh's (pews) to be . . . Windscoated with Plank, the remaind' of the Inside to be lathd & Plastered with a Compass Sealing, a Galeary with bannesters . . . in one End of Eight foot height and 12 foot floor the Weadth of the Ch(urch), also three windows of Each Side and one in the End of Six foot Height and Three foot Wedth . . . with Pannel'd Dore and Cornish'd Eaves and Every Other Particular that's Usefull Necessary or Fashionable for such Ch. or Chapel to have done." The older chapel was then sold at public auction.

Since the new chapel stood on the land of John and Nathan Pierce, it is mentioned in the county records as "Pearce's Chapel".<sup>60</sup> By the vestry's orders, a deed to the site was obtained from the Pierces at the time of the second chapel's completion in 1746,<sup>61</sup> but the sale of part of their lands to Thomas Jones made it desirable for him to give a new deed to the chapel site on the 12th January, 1748/9.<sup>62</sup>

The second Lower Chapel fell into disuse after the Revolution and was finally taken over by the Christian Church of the South, after occasional use by their missionary preachers.<sup>63</sup> It was burned in 1827, "no doubt by the hands of an incendiary", as reported to the Episcopal Church Convention of that year by the Reverend W. G. H. Jones, a young minister then doing missionary work in the parish, to which he claimed it still belonged.<sup>64</sup> The burning of this colonial church building is also reported by Bishop Meade, who refers to it as the Isle of Wight Chapel.<sup>65</sup> The old chapel was replaced on the same site in 1828 by a new Christian church which received the name of Antioch. This church

<sup>59</sup> *Lower Norfolk Antiquary*, I, 65.

<sup>60</sup> *Isle of Wight County Orders, 1746-52*, 13.

<sup>61</sup> *Isle of Wight County Deeds, 1744-47*, VII, 387.

<sup>62</sup> *Isle of Wight County Deeds, 1747-52*, VIII, 195.

<sup>63</sup> Morrison, *History of Isle of Wight*, 64.

<sup>64</sup> Hawks, *Convention Journals*, 201.

<sup>65</sup> Meade, *Old Churches and Families of Virginia*, I, 301.

has been rebuilt several times since that date and is still in use by the same denomination.

The letter accompanying the report of 1724, by the rector of the Upper Parish, states that "Our Chapel hath lain unfinished for some years bygone consisting as yet only of walls and Roof". This chapel was finally completed by the 4th of July, 1726, when the vestry book records that two more windows were cut in its walls, the barge boards added at the gable ends and the structure well tarred all over. Final payment to the contractor for the building was made on the 27th December in the same year. The site of this chapel has not been located.

When the Upper Parish was dissolved in 1734, this chapel became the first Upper Chapel of Newport Parish. It was lengthened 16 feet at the chancel end in 1742 and furnished with a new communion table, the whole building being re-shingled, set up on new blocks and provided with new benches and steps. In spite of all this outlay, the old chapel soon had to be replaced, and on 24th November, 1748, it was "Order'd that a New Chapel be built near the old Chapel—Fifty foot Long and Twenty four foot wide to be sett on good sound Cypress Blocks . . . to be done by the cheapest undertakers for either Brick or Wood". It is not recorded which material was used for the new building and its further history is lost.

The Act of 1734, creating Nottoway Parish, out of the upper sections of the consolidated Upper and Newport Parishes, states that each of these parishes then had "one church and two chapels, which are very inconvenient, both to the ministers and people".<sup>66</sup> Since the parish of Newport, as enlarged by this Act, acquired only one chapel from each of its component parishes, it follows that the other two chapels mentioned in the Act were cut off with Nottoway Parish.

The chapel thus lost to Newport Parish is clearly the one for which, as stated in the Act, this parish had levied "ten thousand pounds of tobacco for building a new chapel in that part of the parish which will now fall into the parish of Nottoway." This new chapel being built for Newport Parish in 1734 is believed to have been the Nottoway Chapel, named for its location near Nottoway Swamp, rather than for its long service as a chapel of Nottoway Parish. It is noteworthy that this was one of at least four colonial chapels bearing this name, the others being situated in Nansemond, Sussex and Amelia Counties.

This chapel was probably a small frame building, similar in size and type of construction to the chapels specified in the Newport Parish vestry book. After many years of abandonment, fol-

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<sup>66</sup> Hening, *Statutes at Large*, IV, 444.

lowing the Revolution, the old building was taken over by the Methodists, who still occupy the site. Since the rear wing of the present T-shaped church, said to be its oldest portion, does not conform in size or proportions to the chapels described in the vestry records, it seems probable that the colonial chapel of 1734 was long since replaced by a later church building. The Nottoway Chapel stands on the north side of State Route 611, three eighths of a mile west of Nottoway Swamp and three and one half miles east of Courtland.

In the report of 1724, already quoted, it is stated by the rector of the Upper Parish that "In our Church, Divine Service is performed twice in three weeks and at one chapel distant XXIII Miles once in 3 weeks. In remote parts of the parish once in four weeks". The Upper Parish vestry book identifies these "remote parts" in an order of 31st October, 1724, "that Jo<sup>e</sup> perry Read to the people of over Nottoway River att Will<sup>m</sup> Blakes and petersons on the Sabath Day".

The vestry book records the first proposal for a chapel-of-ease at one of the reading places mentioned above, in an order dated 19th July, 1731, "That upon the petition of the outward Inhabitants of this parrish for A Chappell that Notis be Given to Any person that will undertake this Building to Repair to a Vestry held the twenty-fifth day of August next to Agree for the performance thereof." At the meeting thus announced, the vestry and inhabitants agreed that "the outward Chappel" should be built at William Blake's plantation, to be "40 ffoot in Length 24 in Breadth and 10 ffoot pitched, to be weatherboarded w<sup>th</sup> good feather Edged planke, Gable ends the same Covered w<sup>th</sup> shingles upon Laths—Ceiled with plank w<sup>th</sup> Communion Table and pews and a Gallary with ffive windows pitch 5 ffoot . . . with 2 doors." Final payment was made to the builder of the chapel, Major John Simmons, on 25th October, 1733, and it was then "Ordered that the Reader in the outer parts Read at the Chappell every Sabath Day", indicating its acceptance by the vestry.

This Outward Chapel of 1733 is believed to have been the building mentioned in the earliest Southampton County records as the Angelica Chapel, from its location on Angelica Creek, near its junction with Three Creek.<sup>67</sup> Since the Angelica Chapel lay beyond Nottoway River, it fell into the new parish of St. Luke's, which was cut off from Nottoway Parish in 1762.

Passing out of service after the Revolution, the old building disappeared long ago, and the site was placed under cultivation, after the Civil War, by a farmer whose field cornered at the old churchyard. The probability that it was the first chapel built west

<sup>67</sup> *Southampton County Orders, 1749-54*, I, 427.

of the Nottoway River, in what is now Southampton County, is supported by the fact that it gave its name to the Chapel Road, an early highway leading across this county past the chapel's site and now known as the Emporia Road.

This pioneer chapel, having been constructed by Major John Simmons, appears to have been the building mentioned as Simmons' Church by Bishop Meade, who states that there were seven churches in the two colonial parishes of Southampton, including one built through the efforts of the Reverend Henry John Burges, rector of both parishes during the Revolution. The Bishop names only five of these churches as Lecock, Jones', Oberry's, Simmons' and Millfield.<sup>68</sup> The two not named appear to have been Vick's Church and the Nottoway Chapel, both in use by the Methodists at the time the Bishop wrote his book. Existing records show that the first name listed by the Bishop is erroneous and should properly be Seacock. Jones' Church has not been identified as a Southampton church, but may have been the Isle of Wight Chapel, built on Thomas Jones' land in 1746. Its place on the list of Southampton churches can be filled by Flowers' Church, of whose existence the Bishop makes no mention.

The Upper Parish chapel, described in the report of 1724 as lying 23 miles from the parish church, is identified as Seacock Chapel by a processioning order for that year, recorded in the old vestry book. The bounds given in this vestry order, for the lands processioned, "from the Chapel up Seacock to the ridge and so from Blackwater to the main road", suggests that this chapel stood on Seacock Swamp, midway between Blackwater River and the ancient highway, still in service through the old village of Berlin and the modern town of Ivor. County court orders of 1755-58, in connection with the construction of a "bridge over Seacock at the old chapple",<sup>69</sup> definitely locate this chapel at one of the crossings over the creek, and an order of 1804 describes this bridge as the "Middle Seacock Bridge" and places "the church" at its east end.<sup>70</sup> Since the same order mentions the bridge as consisting of several spans and a causeway, reference to the county map identifies the road which passes over it as State Route 614, leading from Berlin to the present Zuni. The probable site of the chapel has long been in use as a sand pit, but a few old bricks are still visible there.

The territory beyond the Blackwater River was not thrown open to white settlement until the close of the seventeenth century,<sup>71</sup> so that Seacock Chapel could not have been erected prior

<sup>68</sup> Meade, *Old Churches and Families of Virginia*, I, 308.

<sup>69</sup> *Southampton County Orders, 1754-59*, II, 129.

<sup>70</sup> *Southampton County Orders, 1803-05*, X, 239.

<sup>71</sup> McIlwaine, *Executive Journals of Council*, I, 457.



to 1700, but many references to it as "the old Chapel," in the earliest Southampton County records, suggest that it was built soon after that date. Since it apparently was not included as one of the two Upper Parish chapels, in the Act of 1734, it may have been abandoned for a time, following the completion of the Outward Chapel in the preceding year, but the 1804 order, already quoted, proves that a church was still standing near this bridge at that time.

Upon the formation of Nottoway Parish in 1734, its vestry ordered the immediate construction of a parish church, whose location evidently seemed convenient to them but not to the rest of the parish. This is apparent from a "Petition of Diverse Inhabitants" of this parish, made to the colonial Council on the 1st May, 1735, "complaining of the inconvenient Scituation of the new Church, now building in the said Parish". Although the complaint appears to have been fully justified by the fact that the site chosen by the vestry was far from central in the parish, the petition was rejected and the church was completed as planned.<sup>72</sup>

This new church's name is given in a Southampton County record of 8th November, 1750, when the grand jury presented the "Overseer of the Highway from Littletown Landing to Flowers's Church",<sup>73</sup> a title probably derived from the family name of its builder or of the owner of its site. A year later, the presentment of "the Overseer of the Road from Little Town to the Church"<sup>74</sup> identifies this building as the parish church, since the only other houses of worship hitherto mentioned in the records had been described as chapels, and the simple title of "the Church" was usually reserved for the parish church.

Since Littletown Landing was the Nottoway River wharf near the old Bailey plantation of that name, adjacent to the present village of Littletown, in the neighboring county of Sussex, the road in question must have been the later Jerusalem Plank Road, now State Route 35, running down the neck between Assamoosick Swamp and the Nottoway River. This church is believed to have been the one whose almost-forgotten site lies in the woods, about a mile southwest of Cary's Bridge over the Nottoway River, and on the north side of the road to Capron, which branches off from the Plank Road near the present village of Sebrell. This old church, last known as Oak Grove Church, was definitely an Episcopal church and therefore almost certainly of colonial origin, since it disappeared so long ago that its site is generally unknown, although it lies only a quarter mile west of the present Applewhite Methodist Church.

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<sup>72</sup> McIlwaine, *Executive Journals of Council*, IV, 349.

<sup>73</sup> *Southampton County Orders, 1749-54*, I, 96.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 181.

As it lay west of the Nottoway River, Flowers' Church must have been cut off with St. Luke's Parish in 1762 and probably became its parish church, for the only other colonial churches known to have served the new parish are both recorded as chapels. Following the loss of their parish church, the Nottoway Parish vestry undertook its replacement by the construction of a new brick church for the upper part of the reduced parish, in the fork of the Nottoway and Blackwater Rivers. Since the site chosen for this church lay only two miles east of the Nottoway Chapel, it seems possible that the new building was also intended to supersede the old chapel on Nottoway Swamp, but no evidence has been found to confirm this.

The purchase of land for the erection of the new church is recorded in a deed of 13th December, 1764, from Joshua Joyner to the vestry of Nottoway Parish, for "two acres . . . for the use of the Inhabitants of the said parish of Nottoway to erect a Church or Chapple thereon . . . and for a yeard adjoining thereto."<sup>75</sup> The new church built on this site appears to have been the one generally known as Oberry's Church, and presumably derived this name from its builder, in accordance with local custom. Being a brick building, it may not have been completed until 1768.

It is traditional that the land across the road from Oberry's Church was the parish glebe, which strengthens the probability of the new building's erection as the parish church of Nottoway, replacing the former parish church lost at the formation of St. Luke's Parish. This glebe appears to have been the one purchased by the parish from Daniel Fisher, a month earlier than the acquisition of the church site, and described as "the former plantation of Thomas Gray on a branch of Coshunkoran Swamp," and previously sold by Gray to Fisher in 1761.<sup>76</sup>

Following its abandonment after the Revolution, the old church building was gradually torn down to furnish building material for the neighborhood, and its site is now occupied by a colored Baptist Church of the same name.

From the lack of any reference to Millfield Church in county records of the colonial period, it appears that this was the church built during the Revolution through the efforts of the Reverend Henry John Burges, as mentioned by Bishop Meade. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Millfield Church stood within sight of Mr. Burges' home, also called Millfield from its location below Kello's Mill, at the head of the Lightwood Swamp.

Subsequent to its abandonment by Nottoway Parish some years after the Revolution, Millfield Church was taken over by

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<sup>75</sup> *Southampton County Deeds, 1760-67*, III, 322.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 100, 299.

the Baptists in 1836, and was still standing in 1854, according to Bishop Meade. Soon after this date it was replaced by a new frame church on the opposite side of the existing road, and this in turn was replaced in 1902 by the present Millfield Baptist Church. The colonial church is said to have been a brick building and its site lies in the woods across the road from the present church.

Beside Flowers' Church and the Angelica Chapel, the only other church of St. Luke's Parish of which a record has been found was Vick's Old Church, which stood for many years on the north side of the county road, about one and a quarter miles east of Newsoms and only five miles north of the North Carolina line. This church appears to have been built as a chapel-of-ease for St. Luke's Parish, about 1768, since several court orders were issued in the following year, calling for new roads to be cleared so as to provide more convenient access to the new building. As the site lay near the head of the stream still known as the Cypress Swamp, the chapel is mentioned in one of these orders as "the Cypress Swamp chappel",<sup>77</sup> but as it also lay on Simon Vick's land, it became better known as Vick's Church.<sup>78</sup>

It was taken over by the Methodists, following a period of disuse after the Revolutionary War, and was finally abandoned over half a century ago, when its congregation moved into a new building more conveniently situated at Newsoms. The old chapel was a frame building with brick underpinning, and was last used as a peanut barn, before finally going to decay. The site lies on top of a small hill and is still marked by a grove of large old oak trees.

The only colonial Quaker house of worship in Southampton County appears to have been that of the Black Creek Meeting. This meeting-house, a small frame building erected at an unknown date, stood about a mile northeast of the present village of Sedley, on the south side of State Route 611 and just east of its intersection with the road from Jericho School. About 1870, a new frame meeting house was erected on the site of the original building, which was moved a quarter mile to the west along the south side of the highway, and continued in use as a school house until about 1886, when it was torn down. The second Black Creek Meeting-house of 1870 was replaced about 1907 by the present meeting-house at Sedley.

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<sup>77</sup> *Southampton County Orders, 1768-72*, V, 177, 190.

<sup>78</sup> *Southampton County Orders, 1803-05*, X, 120.