

Sketch: John Markham moves on to Virginia - Where is the Evidence? **by Pamela Hutchison Garrett**

Through many years of research I have held tenaciously to the idea that the John Markham who appears in the records of Orange county New York through the 1730's and 1740's, is the same John Markham who surfaces in the records of Chesterfield county Virginia just after 1750. I've gathered up a fair bit of evidence to support the idea, and coupling that with some sound speculation, I stand by the claim. But, I can't deny that questions remain. The questions related to John Markham's wife have been addressed in other sketches, so I won't return to that here. When I think about John Markham's move from New York to Virginia, the question that presents itself is "Why?"

It has always been of interest to me that John Markham seems to have come to America alone. He did not seem to come with any kind of group, and there is little evidence of other family members coming with him. There is a mysterious William Markham lurking around, who needs further exploration. From his first arrival, as a young man, John Markham mixed among his influential neighbors. Within a short time he bought a sizable piece of property, married an acceptable wife, and settled into his neighborhood. After fifteen plus years in Orange county New York, what happened to precipitate a move south to Virginia?

Once again he seems to have moved on alone. In 1750 there was no big migration of people from New York to Virginia. I have made an effort to study his neighbors, but there is no hint that others in his area made the move with him.

I have wondered if John Markham was dissatisfied with his life in New York, and thought he might find better prospects elsewhere. He successfully mortgaged or sold his Orange county New York property, and had money to purchase a similarly sized tract of land in Chesterfield county Virginia. He did not appear to be in financial difficulties.

Three recognizable historical characters may come together to suggest a possible motive for John Markham's move to Virginia – Cadwaller Colden, Daniel Horsmanden, and William Byrd. Colden was John Markham's neighbor and friend in Orange county New York. Daniel Horsmanden, in turn, was a close friend to Colden in New York, but was also cousin and friend to William Byrd of Westover in Virginia. William Byrd would become John Markham's near neighbor in Chesterfield county Virginia. Did these men conspire together to secure a position for John Markham in Virginia? When Richard Randolph died in 1749, he left considerable property in Chesterfield county Virginia, to his young son Brett Randolph. The boy was underage, and needed an overseer for his inheritance. John Markham established himself on property adjoining the Randolphs and became the agent of Brett Randolph's estate. Was this position the opportunity that brought John Markham to Virginia? Of course this scenario is totally speculative! But, it makes a good story for consideration.

Recently (November 2014) I made an exciting find related to the Markham, Colden, Randolph connections. On the 13th of March 1757, Vincent Mathews, brother of Catherine Mathews

Markham, wrote to his neighbor and friend, Cadwallader Colden. Colden, of course, had also been the neighbor and friend of John Markham while he lived in Orange county New York. At the close of the letter, Vincent Mathews mentions his brother-in-law Markham:

Mr Abeel has a Letter from Mr Markham by a Sarvant of Mr Randolph who is Cum to New York. he writs they are all well but that the Wen Groes out again on my Daughters face. the Sarvant Says Mr Randolph is Gon for England and has put his affears under Mr Markhams Care and allows him 60 pounds Sterling a Year. my Spouse Joynes me in a Harty Respects to Mrs Colden & the Young Ladys, from Kind Sr, your Most Obliged Humble Servant, Vin Mathews.

We don't know if John Markham's family traveled by land or water to reach Virginia.



By land, they would have started off down the Albany Post Road to New York City, and there connected with the King's Highway (also known as the Boston Post Road). By 1735, the King's Highway was a 1300 mile stretch taking travelers from Boston to Charleston South Carolina. It was divided into numerous short stretches between cities that often used more localized names for the road. From New York City the King's Highway moved to

Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, and on into Virginia. At the town of Fredericksburg Virginia it divided into several routes. The Markham's would have followed the Fall Line Road into the Richmond Virginia area. Travel along the King's Highway took several forms – including horseback, covered-wagon, and stagecoach. It would have been a challenging journey of roughly five hundred miles. If all went well, it probably meant one month of travel.

Rather than the land route, the Markham family might have traveled down the Hudson River by boat to New York City, then, sailed down the east coast to the entrance of the Chesapeake Bay. From the Bay they could travel up the James River to the town of Warwick, where they made their home. There were also several combinations of land and water travel they could have followed.

We may never find out exactly what enticed John Markham to move from his home in Orange county New York to the Virginia Colony – politics, economics, adventure, escape. It was probably about new, and possibly better, opportunities – a chance to try out tobacco farming, provide new experiences for his children, or gain stature in a different community, with a different job position. He probably made a good decision. His time in Virginia was bright!

Do you want to know more?

[Links to John Markham's Story \(A Table of Contents\)](#)

[Link to John Markham \(database\)](#)

Photo Credit:

A wagoner with his Conestoga wagon; National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center.

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