

Bio: Bernard Markham **by Pamela Hutchison Garrett**

A gentleman is one who puts more into the world than he takes out. –George Bernard Shaw

It is a difficult task to “breath life” into one’s ancestors when we choose to retell their stories. Most of the time, we are fortunate to discover a few dates and documents related to their time on earth. Such is the case with my 5x-greatgrandfather, Bernard Markham. But, somehow those few documents, connected to my grandfather, have given me a picture that fits squarely with my vision of a “Southern Gentleman”. The idea of a southern gentleman projects a multitude of possibilities. When I think of my grandfather, I want to settle in on George Bernard Shaw’s reference to “one who puts more into the world than he takes out.” I feel confident that Bernard Markham was that kind of man.

Bernard Markham was probably born just before or after 1740 in Orange county New York. His parents, John Markham and Catherine Mathews, owned a sizable farm near the small community of Little Britain. His exact position among his siblings is not known, but it seems likely that he was the second son. Specifics of his childhood are not known, but the course of his life suggests that he was raised with a modest degree of privilege. This probably meant that he lived comfortably as a child, and had some opportunity for education and recreation.

When Bernard Markham was between the ages of ten and fourteen, his parents moved their large family from New York to Chesterfield county Virginia. They were again comfortably settled on a large farm property, and his father became agent to the Randolph family estate that adjoined his property. John Markham did well, and achieved some prominence among his neighbors. Besides his position with the Randolph family, he was also appointed to the task of “Gentleman Justice” in the county court system. Bernard Markham was the one among John Markham’s six sons who followed in the father’s footsteps. He took over the positions of Agent and Justice when John Markham died in 1770.

According to the Church Register of Rev William Douglass, Barnard Markham and Mary Harris were married at Maniken town on the 14th of May 1767. Manakintown, the old Huguenot enclave, was near to the Harris family home.

Mary Harris Markham was the daughter of William Harris and Martha Osborne. Her mother died when she was very young, and her father was secondly married to Elizabeth Ward (widow of Bernard Gaines). Mary had several half-siblings. Most of what I know about Mary Harris Markham’s grandparents comes from the research of others, and needs further work. There are conflicts in the research. Her paternal grandparents are believed to be Thomas Harris and Mary Jefferson of Henrico county Virginia, and her maternal grandparents might be Thomas Osborne and Elizabeth Hendricks. Mary Harris Markham’s family was connected to the Osborne’s for whom the James River port town of Osbornes was named.

At the time that Bernard Markham married, his mother was probably dead. His older brother, William Markham, was already married, and had moved west to Bedford county Virginia. His sister Catherine Markham was married to Francis Smith around this same time. His brothers, Vincent Markham and John Markham, were probably in their early twenties, but not yet married. Three years later, in 1770, Bernard Markham's father died. At that time, Bernard's brother George Markham was just reaching adulthood, and Bernard's three younger siblings, Judith Markham, Rebecca Markham, and Archibald Markham, came under Bernard's care. They would be the first of many orphan family members that Bernard Markham and Mary Harris would take under their roof. When his brother William Markham's children were left orphaned in 1781-82, Bernard Markham took in several of these nieces and nephews.

According to the Family Bible of Bernard Markham and Mary Harris, they were the parents of ten children, five of whom died in childhood.

The first born was **Martha Markham**, on the 28th day of February 1768. She was named for her maternal grandmother, Martha Osborne Harris. She married Efford Bently, and gave birth to one son, Bernard Bently. She died in 1791, at the age of twenty-three. The Bible indicates that she was buried at "Wintington". This location has not been identified.

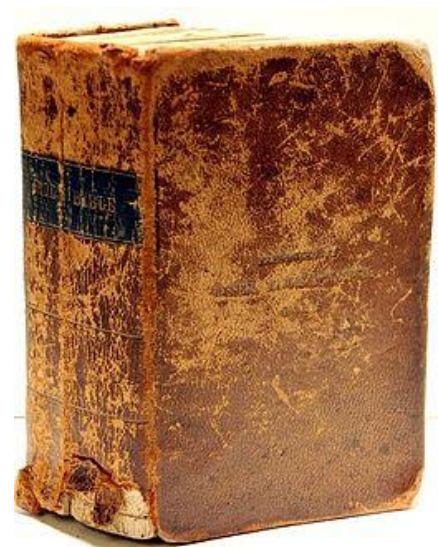
Next was **John Markham**, who was born on the 20th of January 1770, and named for his paternal grandfather. He married Lucy Champe Fleming and settled in nearby Goochland county Virginia, living to about age fifty. He was the father of eleven identified children.

Catherine Markham, namesake of her grandmother, was born on the 30th of December 1771. She died at the age of five years, and was buried at the home of her grandfather, William Harris, near Manikin Town.

Bernard Markham was born on the 2nd of October 1774, and was named for his father. He died shortly before his third birthday, in August of 1777. The Bible tells us he was, "buried in the orchard where I (Col Bernard Markham) now live, at the Ware."

The next born was **Mary Markham**, on the 31st day of December 1776. She was named for her mother, and was married to Linneus Bolling of Buckingham county Virginia. She was the mother of five identified children, and she died at the age of forty-seven.

Elizabeth Markham was born on the 25th of May 1779, probably named for her mother's half-sister. And, **William Harris Markham** was born on the 2nd of February 1781, named for his



paternal grandfather. Both of these children died in March of 1790, at the ages of eleven and eight. It is likely that they died in a smallpox epidemic.

George Markham was born on the 6th of February 1783, and was probably named for his father's brother. He was twice married, first to Elizabeth Evans, and following her death, to Frances Taylor Garland. He was the father of thirteen identified children. He died a few months short of his seventieth birthday.

Sarah Markham was born in February 1785. It is not certain for whom she was named, but it may have been for Mary Harris Markham's half-sister Sally. Little Sarah Markham only lived to sixteen months.

The last child born to Bernard Markham and Mary Harris was **Judith Virginia Markham**. She was born on the 9th of July 1787, when her mother was about age forty-two. She was named for her father's sister. She married Norborne Cooke, eventually moved to Kentucky, and was the mother of nine identified children. She lived a long life, dying a few weeks following her eighty-fourth birthday. She cared for her mother during the last years of her life. George Markham and Judith Virginia Markham Cooke were the only children of Mary Harris Markham, who were still living at the end of her life.

The Chesterfield county Virginia Court Records demonstrate that Bernard Markham was an active man in the community during the early years of his marriage. He sold property, built a grist mill, served as Justice, signed public documents, and managed the plantation affairs on the nearby Randolph property.

A document dated in July of 1777, shows that he sometimes acted as a merchant. The source of his "goods" is not known:

To be sold at Richmond on Monday the 4th of August it being court day, a large assortment of superfine broadclothes, among which are deep and light blues, London Brown, Scarlet, Green, Buff and a variety of mist colours, with suitable trimmings, several pieces of Nankeens, Pepper and two Hogsheads of good West India Rum... any gentleman inclinable to purchase of private sale, may know the terms by applying to the subscriber at Rocky Ridge - Bernard Markham; 25 July 1777.

[source] Abstracts from the Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg Virginia); copied and abstracted by Pam Garrett at the Family History Library, May 1998.

During the Revolutionary War years the Markham brothers all gave service with the Patriots. Bernard Markham was active in forming militia companies in Chesterfield county Virginia. The early years of the war did not see much action in Virginia, but militia units were busy with guard and defense needs. Bernard Markham performed many organizational duties, and by 1780 he was identified as Commander of the Regiments for Chesterfield county Virginia. The Markham brothers provided a continuous flow of supplies for the war effort (Virginia Publick Claims by Abercrombie, 1992).

Following the war, Bernard Markham represented Chesterfield county in the Virginia House of Delegates, from 1784 – 1786. These were the years he would have served alongside James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. Among many Bills considered during this period, Bernard Markham's name is found in the voting records for Bills related to War Claims, sale of public land, and movement of foreign vessels in Virginia ports. He was also appointed to the Committee of Religion:

And a committee was appointed, of Messrs. Norvell, Johnson, Carter Henry Harrison, Henry, Madison, William Watkins, Garland Anderson, Strother, Wilson Cary Nicholas, Ruffin, Markham, Sherwin, Ward, Wray and Clarke; and they are to meet and adjourn from day to day, and to take under their consideration all matters and things relating to religion and morality, and all such as shall be from time to time referred to them, and report their proceedings, with their opinions thereupon, to the House ; and the said committee are to have power to send for persons, papers and records, for their information.
[source] Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia; 1781 – 1786.

In 1787, Bernard Markham resigned his commission as “Lt Col of the Militia of Chesterfield county”. In the same year he received Bounty Land as compensation for his service – 13,122 acres on the “waters of Eagle Creek, in Fayette county Virginia”. This county became associated with Kentucky in 1792. This bounty land probably played a role in drawing later generations of the Markham family to Kentucky.

Besides his obligations to the Randolph family, and his service in several county offices, Bernard Markham found time to take on the role of executor to the estates of several prominent Chesterfield county men, including – his father John Markham, whose estate settlement went on for many years, also – Thomas Carey (1784), Blackman Ward (1789), and Stephen Pankey (1795). In 1780 Bernard Markham is shown as County Coroner, and in 1786 he is serving as Sherriff of Chesterfield county Virginia.

I have not identified the exact location of Bernard and Mary Markham's first home, but it may have been in the vicinity of the old Markham homeplace in Chesterfield county Virginia, about six miles west of the port town of Warwick.

When Bernard and Mary Markham's little son died in 1777 the family Bible said he was, “buried in the orchard where I (Col Bernard Markham) now live, at the Ware.” Again, it is not certain where this home might be. It may refer to the area around Ware Bottom Church, which was on the south side of the James River, a few miles below the town of Warwick. Ware Bottom Church was on, or near, the Osborne plantation site, also referred to as Coxendale. The names of Coxendale, Osbornes, and Ware Bottom were sometimes used interchangeably. The primary families at Osbornes were closely related to Mary Harris Markham through her mother Martha Osborne Harris. The community of Osbornes (Osburns), located on the James River, was an important inspection, storage, and shipping center for tobacco well into the nineteenth century.



from John Henry's 1770 Map of Virginia

There is a second theory related to the location of “the Ware”, possibly referring to a warehouse. North of the town of Warwick, there had long been a warehouse, called Rocky Ridge. It was across the James River from Shockoes, the port area for Richmond, and it was immediately adjacent to William Byrd’s Falls Plantation. A document attests to the fact that Bernard Markham had connections to the Rocky Ridge Warehouse. In 1769, the Virginia General Assembly voted to establish the town of Manchester at this location, and Rocky Ridge became synonymous with the town of Manchester. From Weisiger’s “Old Manchester” we learn:

[William] Byrd, who was in financial difficulties, sold lottery tickets to the lots in Manchester, even before the granting of town status by the assembly. The Virginia Gazette of Williamsburg carried an advertisement for the lottery, beginning 23 July 1767, which read – A scheme for disposing of, by way of lottery, the Land and Tenements under mentioned, being the entire towns of Rocky Ridge and Shockoe, lying at the Falls of James River, and the land thereto adjoining.

Bernard Markham bought tickets and came away from the lottery with several lots. Sometime later, Bernard Markham would establish his family home at, or near, the town of Manchester. Weisiger's "Old Manchester" suggests that Bernard Markham may have successively built two homes in the area. It is not clear whether the lottery lots were part of the property where Bernard Markham built these homes. In his Will, Bernard Markham requests that his town lots at Manchester be sold. A recently written article at the Forest Hill neighborhood website, indicates that, as the result of the Byrd lottery, "some 1,730 acres between Reedy Creek and Powhite Creek came to be owned by Bernard Markham."



Bernard Markham Home, Richmond Virginia

In September of 1789, when Bernard Markham was around the age of fifty, he purchased three hundred eighty acres "begg. at the mouth of Reedy Creek, adjoining the land of John Mayo in Chesterfield County; thence up James River . . ." This may have been the piece of land that provided the site for his lovely home, built in view of the James River, near the growing town of Manchester. The home is still standing today in the Forest Hill neighborhood of Richmond Virginia. The town of Manchester was eventually encased by Virginia's capital city.

During February and into the spring of 1794, documents and journals frequently mention a smallpox epidemic at Richmond Virginia. At this same time, Bernard Markham as Magistrate of Chesterfield county, was called upon to "superintend the performance of a quarantine" for the county. Smallpox was a virulent disease that took many to their death. It may well have been the attacker that left two of Bernard Markham's children dead in March of 1790. Inoculation against smallpox had been modestly practiced in America since the 1720's, but it met with great resistance. In most Virginia communities, quarantine was a more acceptable approach. Quarantine kept infected families in their homes, under guard, and sometimes cared for at public expense. It also prevented "outsiders" from entering the community.

At a meeting of the Justices of Chesterfield co at Nicholas Giles Tavern in the Town of Manchester on Monday 24th day of February 1794, summoned for the purpose of preventing the small pox being brought into and spreading in the said county. Present: Bernard Markham, Edward Mosely, Granville Smith, Thomas Bailey, John Hill.

It appearing that Small Pox is at this time prevailing in the City of Richmond, and there are sufficient reasons to fear that the infection may be communicated to the Inhabitants of the said co, the members present are of the opinion that the Lt Col Commandant be requested to order forth so many of the militia

of the said county as may be sufficient to post guards at the foot of Mayo's bridge, Coult's ferry, opposite Rocketts and such other places as may be thought necessary to prevent all intercourse between the City of Richmond, and the said county as far as the security of the Inhabitants aforesaid, and the peace and good order of society may require, and that the same be continued as long as real danger is apprehended.

[source] Calendar of Virginia State Papers, 7C42

When Bernard Markham died in July of 1802 he was probably between ages sixty and sixty-five. He left behind his wife Mary, and four children, John, Mary, George, and Judith Virginia. Five or six of his grandchildren had been born. Mary Harris Markham lived on in her widowhood for another twenty-two years, and saw another seventeen or eighteen grandchildren make their entry. She died at the home of her daughter, Judith Virginia Markham Cooke, in Henry county Kentucky.

Bernard Markham's estate was executed by his wife, son George, and others. At the beginning of his Will he states, " I desire my family may live together as they now do and be supported as usual until my son George is twenty two years old . . . " He leaves for his wife "five hundred acres of land we now live on . . . ", and all other things that she would need to keep the plantation operating. He then makes various provisions for his children, and his motherless grandson, Bernard Bentley. He requests that his lands in Kentucky and town lots in Manchester (Virginia) be sold.



Bernard Markham's inventory, taken in December of 1802, by William Edwards, Francis Smith and Obediah Smith, was fairly typical of other Virginia inventories of the period. It included cattle, oxen, sheep, and hogs, along with several horses and mules. There were a variety of farming implements, and thirty slaves, many of whom manned those tools. The household items suggest a well-supplied home, with furniture, desks, bookcases, table, and lots of chairs. Twenty-five silver spoons, and a Parcel of books worth twenty-eight dollars, attest to a comfortable life. The overall value on the inventory was \$3383, the thirty slaves making up almost \$2000 of that sum.

When Mary Harris Markham died in Henry county Kentucky, 1824, she did not leave a Will. Prior to her death she had made provision in the courts for passing on her slaves to children and grandchildren. An appraisal of her estate was made in July 1825, and it showed four slaves, valued just under \$1000, and one "fore wheal carriage" and harness.

It is thought, but not confirmed, that Bernard Markham was buried in a family cemetery near his home at Manchester, Virginia. No clues survive as to Mary Harris Markham's final resting place. It is possible that the family brought her body back to Virginia to be buried with her husband, but she may have been laid to rest near the Cooke family home in Henry county Kentucky.

Bernard Markham's passing was recorded in the Virginia Argus (Richmond, Virginia), in July 1802. It's words represent the ideal of a man who "put more into the world than he took out" :

Died on Tuesday 13th inst, at his seat near Manchester in Chesterfield County, universally regretted, Col Bernard Markham. By this melancholy event his family has sustained an irreparable loss; the community a respectable and useful member of society; and the county and neighborhood, an active, upright and intelligent magistrate. He was an affectionate husband, a tender parent, and a sincere friend. The regret occasioned by his death sufficiently demonstrates the esteem in which he was held. His merits, when living, need not the feeble aid of panegyric; his relatives, friends and acquaintances will ever venerate his memory.

A closing aside: You might have noticed at the beginning of this sketch that the subject, Bernard Markham, shares a name with the popular nineteenth century author, George Bernard Shaw. This is no coincidence! The two men are actually cousins – fifth cousins, four times removed. Bernard Markham's aunt, Mary Markham, married Robert Shaw in about 1735 in county Kilkenny Ireland. George Bernard Shaw was their great-great grandson. The Bernard name was used as a Christian name in the Markham and Shaw families for many generations. It was the maiden name of Bernard Markham's great-grandmother, Margaret Bernard Markham.

Do you want to know more?

[Sketch: Chesterfield County Virginia during the Revolution](#)

[Sketch: Is Barnett Markham a misspelling of Bernard Markham?](#)

[Sketch: Bernard Markham – A Place to Call Home](#)

Further Reading:

Chesterfield, An Old Virginia County; Francis Earle Lutz, 1954.

Old Manchester and its Environs, 1769 – 1910; Benjamin B Weisiger III, 1993.

Historic Forest Hill Neighborhood (website); <http://historicforesthillneighborhood.com/>

Photo Credit:

John Henry's 1770 Map of Virginia: A New and Accurate Map of Virginia Wherein most of the Counties are laid down . . .; Biblioteca Digital Hispanica; <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/>

Bernard Markham Home, Richmond Virginia – Located in Historic Forest Hill Neighborhood; photographed by Cal Traylor, 1993, with permission of the home owner.

Bio: Bernard Markham; Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2014.