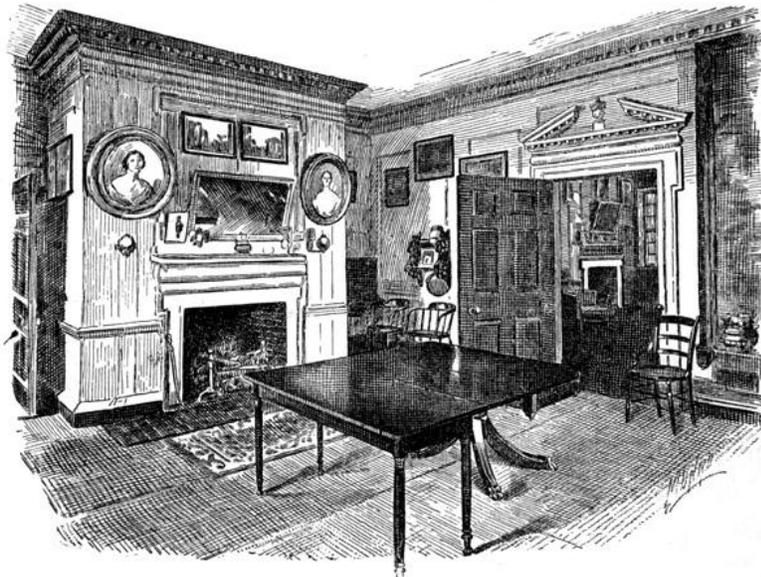


Sketch: John Markham in Virginia by Pamela Hutchison Garrett

Not long after his arrival in Chesterfield county Virginia, John Markham bought himself a sizeable piece of property – 770 acres for a price of 200 English pounds. The purchase was made in August of 1753, and recorded in November of 1754. The deed delineates a long history of prior ownership, but tells us only that the property is “bounded by Shampoker”.

A determined search on the internet provides few clues to the Shampoker. The Branch family had property adjoining John Markham in Chesterfield county Virginia, and several of their deeds also mention the Shampoke or Shampoco. I suspect that the Shampoke is the same as Pocosham Creek which, with effort, is locatable on some present day maps. The Pocosham Creek, and slightly larger Pocoshock Creek, both run through Chesterfield county and empty into the Falling River as it approaches the James River.



I have not pinpointed the exact location of John Markham’s property, but I believe it is centered in the vicinity of Hull Street Road and Chippenham Parkway in today’s southwest Richmond suburbs. Today this is about six miles south and west of the James River. Land deed research does intimidate me, but I have made an effort to study John Markham’s deeds, and those of his neighbors, William Byrd, Brett Randolph, Stephen Pankey,

Thomas Branch, and Matthew Branch. I have compared them to historic and present day maps, and I feel satisfied that I am in the correct vicinity. This location opens up an interesting possibility.

David Patteson was a friend to the Markham family. Born in 1746, he was of an age of John Markham’s sons, and his cousin Nelson Patteson married John Markham’s youngest daughter. About 1776, a few years after John Markham’s death, David Patteson purchased a nine hundred acre property from the Markham family. Evidence points to this being John Markham’s estate on the Shampoke (Pocosham Creek). David Patteson’s home, Laurel Meadow, is listed on the National Historic Register and there is speculation that the earliest section of the home was built in the 1750’s or 1760’s, prior to David Patteson’s ownership. Was it the original Markham home?

John Markham was past forty years of age when he arrived in Virginia. He may have been fast approaching fifty. He lived in his new home for almost twenty years. The youngest of his children were probably born there. Other than the details learned from his land transactions, and the business of a few neighbors he stood witness for, there is not much evidence of John Markham's day to day life in Chesterfield county Virginia. His property holdings suggest that he oversaw a sizable farming operation. Following John Markham's death, a newspaper advertisement announcing the sale of his property mentions the primary crop as wheat, and states, ". . . Plantation where on he formerly lived, in Chesterfield co, about four miles from Warwick, containing 800 acres with a large Apple and Peach orchard, a good dwelling house, and other convenient houses thereon." His estate inventory suggests he offered regular hospitality to his neighbors. But, what else filled his days?



Crossing the Ferry; Ranney, about 1846.

When John Markham wrote his Will in 1770, he twice mentioned "my lands house and Ferry opposite to Warwick in Henrico County". Warwick was a sizable port city on the James River, across the river, and a few miles south of the growing city of Richmond. During the period 1750 – 1780 it was a booming port town. It was destroyed during the American Revolution and was not rebuilt. But, during the time that John Markham was living in Virginia, it was the nearest "vibrant" city. How interesting that John Markham was operating a Ferry there! In colonial Virginia a license was required to operate a Ferry. We don't know the nature of the Ferry that Markham ran, but being located at an important port, it probably transported both goods and people. The James River was wide at Warwick, and we could guess that John Markham might have operated one, or several, flatboats that were poled across the river.

John Markham purchased his "Ferry" property from Andrew Redford in April of 1767, only a few years before his death. He paid one hundred pounds of current money of Virginia, for a

ten acres tract in Henrico county Virginia. John Markham's Will tells us that the "land house and Ferry" were "opposite to Warwick in Henrico County". This would be on the North side of the James River, a few miles below the city of Richmond. This matches well with the Redford – Markham deed recorded in Henrico County. The property description is given:

. . . ten acres be the same more or less situated and lying and being in Henrico county and Parish aforesaid on the North side of the James River commonly called or known by the name of Bay Point opposite to Warwick Warehouses and bounded as follows. Beginning at some marked . . . on the River starting on the line between the said Tho. Mosely and John Giles thence up the line to a . . . bottom called John Giles to Spring Bottom so down that bottom according to its meanders to the River thence down the River to the place begun. Knowing the aforesaid ten acres of . . . together with all houses, outhouses, orchards, gardens, fences and other appurtenances to the same. . .

[an aside] Up the James River, a few miles to the north of Warwick, was Rocky Ridge which became the town of Manchester. Following the Revolutionary War and the destruction of Warwick, the Markham family became more closely associated with Manchester.

The Randolph family had significant property holdings in Virginia, including Warwick plantation that adjoined John Markham. When Richard Randolph died in Virginia in 1749, his Will stated, "To son Brett, all my land at Warwick in Henrico . . ." This was immediately prior to the formation of Chesterfield county from Henrico county. Brett Randolph was a boy of seventeen when his father died. He did take possession of his inheritance, and probably lived back and forth between Virginia and England. At an unidentified point in time, John Markham became Steward (Agent) to Randolph's Warwick Plantation. I have wondered if this position with the Randolph family might have been the lure that brought John Markham to Virginia sometime between 1749 and 1752.

In 1757, "*Brett Randolph of Warwick in the county of Chesterfield (Virginia), appoints John Markham of same, his attorney.*" [Edward Pleasants Valentine Papers] Brett Randolph died the following year, 1758, in England. His young widow, Mary Scott Randolph, retained John Markham as her representative in Virginia.

1760; DB 4 pg 34; Mary Randolph of Dursley in county of Gloucester, Great Britain, widow, relict and devisee of one of the executors of Brett Randolph, dec'd of Colony of Virginia, but late of Dursley, dec'd Esquire and John Scott of Dursley, Peruke Maker and one of the other executors, whereas Brett Randolph by will dated 31 Aug last past, gave to Joseph Farrell of City of Bristol, merchant, James Murray of Prince George county Virginia, esquire and John Markham of Chesterfield county Virginia, gentleman, and said John Scott, various lands, slaves, etc, in trust, I appoint John Markham of Virginia, my attorney; 29 Feb 1760. Witnesses: Samuel Morgan, James Danford Jr; signed Mary Randolph and John Scott; recorded 1 Mar 1760.

[source] Chesterfield County Virginia Deeds 1756-1764; Weisiger, 1989.

In the documents above, John Markham is named as attorney. I believe his position with the Randolph family would be more accurately defined as steward or agent. In his "Historical Dictionary of the Old South", author William Richter explains:

A plantation steward was a white man who supervised several plantations in an area, the owner of which was an absentee . . . He was the planter's direct representative . . . The steward was a financial administrator, a man with management talent, highly educated, and from the same social class as the planter.

We don't know how "highly educated" John Markham was, but he was certainly literate and well qualified to attend public business. The Randolph – Markham relationship carried forward for years, passing from John Markham to his son, Bernard Markham.

The year 1762 marks the first record of John Markham as Gentleman Justice for Chesterfield county Virginia. He served for a number of years, as he is listed again in 1764 and 1766. He was probably age fifty-five to sixty when he took up this responsibility. In colonial Virginia the position of Justice was a "for life" appointment made by the Governor. Men could retire; the position sometimes passed down to a son or other relative. This was the case with the Markham family, as we find John's son Bernard Markham as Justice of the Peace for Chesterfield county Virginia in 1769. Very few men were formally trained for the position, but sometimes a year of apprenticeship was served before they officially took office. On court days, as expected, the Justices made decisions on a variety of legal disputes. They also finalized estate business and land conveyances. The Justices oversaw a great number of county issues, such as who could build mills and bridges, who needed to maintain roads, and who was licensed to operate a ferry or ordinary (tavern). The office of Justice of the Peace, or Gentleman Justice, was a position of honor in the county, but it was a service without compensation.

Do you want to know more?

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

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

Photo credits:

Colonial American Dining Room; Pratt, Mara L. American's Story for America's Children: The Early Colonies. Boston: D.C. Heath & Company, 1901. Available via U.S. History Images by Karen J. Hatzigeorgiou; <http://ushistoryimages.com/>.

Crossing the Ferry – Scene on the Peedee; William Tylee Ranney (1813 – 1857); about 1846; oil on canvas; presently at home in the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta Georgia.

Sketch: John Markham in Virginia; Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2014.