

VIII

Nicholas Gentry I

pgs. 84 & 85

Echoes of the Past

A book for the Descendents of

John Alexander Gentry and Minnie Bell Woods

Compiled by Helen Watson Edwards - 1992

“There is a tradition in the Gentry family that the first Gentry’s to settle in America were probably two young men, brothers, who came from England as British soldiers and settled in Virginia in about 1677. In support of this tradition, we find that the first Gentry’s to settle in America were Nicholas Gentry and Samuel Gentry, who entered land in New Kent County, Virginia in 1684. A further fact tends to confirm this tradition; that the British soldiers sent over to Virginia by Charles II, with the commissioners to Virginia at the time of the Bacon Rebellion in January, 1677, were not paid off and discharged until the fall of 1683, and many of them remained and settled in Virginia.

“Mr. Charles W. Gentry of Harrodsburg, Kentucky, now deceased, said that he often heard his father, Richard Gentry, a Revolutionary soldier, boast of his English blood, and at the same time speak of his first American ancestor and his brother as ‘Two old British Red Coats’.”¹

Some of the “earliest authentic records that have been found of the Gentry’s in America are St. Peter’s Parish of New Kent County, Virginia, and in the old land books of Virginia which contain the records of the early land grants.”²

“A search has not been made in England to trace the ancestors of the American Gentry’s; a very cursory examination seems to indicate that the name of Gentry is a local one in England and occurs mainly in Essex and Sussex Counties as far back as the middle of the 16th century.”³

The Vestry of the Parish before the Revolutionary War acted in the capacity of our County Courts. They, in addition to handling spiritual affairs, supervised land boundary disputes, saw to the poor, and the roads, etc.

St Peter’s Parish Vestery book has Nicholas’ Gentry’s name mentioned on a number of occasions.

1689 Nick Gentry was one called to “remark ye bounds of each man’s land”. (Review land boundaries.)

1701 Nicholas Gentry was paid for having helped with clothes and funeral charges for Mable Wood.

1709 Nicholas Gentry appointed Overseer in keeping road in order.

1709 Complaint lodged by Nicholas

There are entries about local business for the years 1723, 1734, 1735, 1739, 1743, 1755, 1759, 1763, and 1767.

St. Peter’s Register listed three children born to Nicholas. They were Nicholas II, Elizabeth, and Mable. He probably had other children, but there is no record. These records often had large gaps in the absence of a minister.

Old land books of Virginia speak of Nicholas owning land in 1684 near Totopotomoy’s Creek.

In 1736 a Nicholas registered a land grant of 400 acres in Hanover County, Virginia on Dirty Swamp.

It is a guess, but Nicholas I probably died about 1739 in Hanover or New Kent County, Virginia. Thus far there seems to be no record as to the name of his wife.

Text of the Baptismal Record St. Peter's Parish, New Kent Co, Virginia

The register of St. Peter's Parish of New Kent County, Virginia, shows the record of the baptism of the following children of Nicholas I:

Elizabeth, daugh't to Nich's Gentry bapt. ye 29 day of August, 1687.

Nicholas sone of Nicholas Gentry bapt. the
the 30 May, 1697.

Mable daught'r of Nich's Gentry, baptiz the
13 Dec'r, 1702.

1 Gentry, Richard. The Gentry Family in America, pg. 15

2 Ibid. pg. 15.

3Ibid. pg. 14-15.

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