

Establishing the Patriotic Service to the United States of America
During the Revolutionary War Period
of Thomas Graves, Senior, and His son John Graves
of Culpeper County, Virginia

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Thomas Graves, Senior, and his son, John Graves, did in fact, provide Patriotic service and unfailing loyalty to the American cause during the Revolutionary War, thus helping to establish American independence. Their Patriotic service to the United States of America can be established by their participation within the military Culpeper Classes of Culpeper County, Virginia. The following documentation will show that both lineal ancestors were participants in the Military Classes and, as such, were Patriotic citizens sworn to the American Revolutionary War cause.

George Washington recommended to the Continental Congress that each County of each Colony provide a Draft Law establishing "Classes" of the Militia within its geographical boundaries to provide men for the Continental Army. Each Colonial Legislature thus established, by law, their respective draft system commonly referred to as Classes.¹ It is believed that The Culpeper Classes were made up of the already established Militia, and from this source the Culpeper Classes were apparently established. Two statements would substantiate this. The first statement, "The several counties and corporations of this commonwealth...shall furnish within fifty days after their militia shall have been laid off into divisions...the following numbers of men [to satisfy the state's quota of men]..."² The second statement being, "...[the commanders shall] proceed to lay off and divide the militia,...into as many divisions as the number of men required by this act shall make necessary."³

The General Assembly of Virginia passed a requirement during the October 1780 session entitled "An act for recruiting this state's quota of troops to serve in the Continental Army" in order to assist the Revolutionary War effort. The State had a quota of "three thousand able-bodied men shall be forthwith raised for the said purpose...The several counties shall furnish within fifty days after their militia shall have been laid off into divisions...the following number of men...the county of Culpeper **one hundred and six.**" The act further required that the "county lieutenant or commanding officer of each county or corporation within this commonwealth,...shall immediately after receipt of this act, summon the field officers of his county or corporation...and divide the Militia, including all the commissioned and noncommissioned officers under the age of fifty years, into as many divisions as the number of men required by this act...taking care to number each division...if any division shall then fail to deliver a recruit as aforesaid...The said commanding officer, together with the field officers and captains, shall immediately proceed to draft an able bodied man, by fair and impartial lot, out of each division to serve within the continental army...who may nevertheless be permitted to procure a substitute to serve for the said term of eighteen months."⁴

As noted within the above second paragraph, the men named on the "Lists...probably [most likely] had all been militia men, as training was required at this time."⁵ The entire "list" consists of 28 pages, with 106 various classes or groups of men consisting of between 13-14 men within each class or group. One man from each class was selected and in some cases a substitute's name is provided. Thus these lists provided the required 106 men to fulfill their quota requirement for Culpeper County, Virginia.

¹ Tennie Selby Burk, The Culpeper County, Virginia January 1781 Revolutionary War Classes, Culpeper Regional Library, introduction.

² William Waller Hening, The Statutes at Large being A Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Legislature in the year 1619 (Richmond: Printed for the Editor, by George Cochran 1822) Volume X page 327.

³ William Waller Hening, Volume X pages 330-331.

⁴ William Waller Hening, Volume X pages 326-333.

⁵ Culpeper Classes Militia Men Selected by County to serve with Lafayette and the Continental Army, Culpeper Public Library
Culpeper, Virginia introduction of manual #R975.53Cu

Thomas Graves and John Graves of Culpeper County are listed in four of the classes of Culpeper County, either singularly or together. John is individually listed in classes 62 and 77. Thomas is individually listed in class 101, and both are listed in class 81.⁶

Class No. 81 lists the following 13 men^{7,8}

John Neal
Jonathan Coward
Thomas Graves, Sr.
Charles Neal
John Graves
Joseph Eddins
John Simpson

John Leatherer
Thomas Banks
Gideon Underwood
Elijah Underwood
Downing Smith
Robert Bradley
(Thomas Graves, Sr., a Draft)

Since transportation within 18th century Virginia was by foot, horseback, or a combination of horse and buggy/wagon, individuals developed close associations with their neighbors. Most business and official transactions were by necessity conducted locally and grouped within those specific areas where individuals tended to live their entire lives. This is evident with marriages, being witnesses to wills and deeds, attending and purchasing various items from local estate sales, and acting as executors and administrators of estates. More often than not, names within a document or in a list represent the area of the County in which those individuals lived. As a result, one can use this locating mechanism to differentiate between other *same-named individuals* when dealing with tax records, census records, and the Culpeper County Classes.

Author John Blankenbaker, in his book entitled The Culpeper Classes-A List of The Classes in Culpeper County for January 1781...for Recruiting this State's Quota of Troops to serve in the Continental Army states on pages 1-2 that "Thirty-nine of the classes contained 13 men and sixty-five of the classes contained 14 men [Class 102 list is missing and Class 104 is fragmented]. Based on knowledge of several known locations given, the men in any given class are assumed to be from one neighborhood".⁹ Thus, by understanding that the men within any given Culpeper Class were from the same neighborhood, one is able to distinguish between similarly named men. In other words, similarly named 'Graves' in the other Classes, were from other parts of Culpeper County and not from the present-day Graves Mill area of Madison County, which is the area inhabited by the members of Class #81.

Thomas Graves, Sr., and his son John, my lineal ancestors, lived and died within the western portion of Culpeper County, an area today which is the western portion of Madison County. Both of their wills were probated within Madison County. Specifically, they lived within the area of present-day Graves Mill (German Ridge, Jones Mountain, Garth run area) which is bisected by the Rapidan River, formerly called the Stanton River. It was originally named the Stanton River from its headwaters within the Blue Ridge Mountains down to its intersection with the Conway River. From this intersection on, it was referred to as the Rappadan [present-day Rapidan] River. Occasionally the names are interchanged; however the name refers to the same body of water. It can be seen, therefore, that the Stanton/Rapidan River and the Conway River watersheds are closely associated with each other and are geographically represented within a specific part of then-Culpeper County. That area is today the western portion of Madison County, precisely the Graves Mill-Wolftown-Hood area of Madison County.

⁶ John Blankenbaker, The Culpeper Classes, A List of The Classes in Culpeper County for January 1781 for Recruiting this State's Quota of Troops to Serve in the Continental Army, Copyright 1999, Index page 41.

⁷ Culpeper Classes A List of The Classes in Culpeper County for January 1781, Class #81, Library of Virginia Richmond, Virginia-Microfilm Reel #7 System Number 001231080.

⁸ John Blankenbaker, page 27.

⁹ John Blankenbaker, page 1-2.

This paper will show that ten of the remaining eleven individuals within Class #81 also have direct ties to this same geographical area. Thus, twelve men of the Culpeper Class #81 are grouped geographically within the Rapidan/Stanton and Garth Run/Conway River watersheds. The lineal ancestry of Thomas and John Graves have already been established by other documentation. Their patriotic service in support of the Continental Army is strongly supported by the knowledge that the Hood/Graves Mill area of western Madison County is the specific area (Culpeper Class #81) where my ancestor John was born, where they both lived, and where both raised their families, and died. Furthermore, both are differentiated from the other Thomas and John Graves listed in the three other Culpeper Classes because the other Culpeper Classes represented other geographical areas within then-Culpeper County.

Three types of documentation are provided herein to geographically locate my two lineal ancestors and the remaining men within Culpeper Class #81. This documentation will illustrate that all of the men within Class #81, except Robert Bradley, were drawn from within the Stanton/Rapidan River and/or the Conway River area of the County, the exact area where my lineal ancestors lived and died.

The first type of documents used are Deeds and Wills in Culpeper and Madison Counties, showing the men owning property, being witnesses to each other's deeds, and having attended local estate sales. All are located along the Stanton/Rapidan Rivers, to include the Conway River area.

The second type of source is Tax Lists, specifically, the book entitled, The Personal Property Tax Lists for The Year 1787 for Culpeper County, Virginia, by Netti Schreiner-Yantis and Florene Love. This publication states that the "1787 tax list is a unique one."¹⁰ A law was passed by the Virginia Assembly on October 11, 1786 "which mandated that the tax commissioner should, on the tenth day of March annually, begin and continue proceeding without delay through their respective district, and call on every person subject to taxation or having property in his or her possession for a written list thereof...make four alphabetical general lists therefrom, shewing in columns according to the form hereto also annexed, the date when each list was received, the persons chargeable..."¹¹ There was one tax list providing the names of the taxable/chargeable individuals within the County, and a second list showing the dates on which the commissioner visited the individual taxpayer. Because of these two lists, "this second list makes it possible to identify who the neighbors were since it appears evident that the commissioner visited those living in the same vicinity on the same day."¹² This statement, along with the belief that the Culpeper Classes were arranged by geographical locations and the men were grouped together based upon being within the same neighborhoods, one can conclude that the Thomas Graves and John Graves of Culpeper Class #81, are my lineal ancestors, and that they lived within the western portions of then Culpeper County along the Stanton/Rapidan River watershed-present day Graves Mill, Madison County, Virginia.

The final source is the book entitled, The Underwood Family from Madison County, Virginia by Ben H. Coke. In this book, Mr. Coke identifies the early descendants of his ancestor, Nathan Underwood, who died within Madison County in 1802.¹³ Mr. Coke platted old deeds onto topographical maps so as to "locate the land he [Nathan Underwood] owned; to identify some of his neighbors..."¹⁴ In doing this, Mr. Coke established a map of the western portion of Madison County which had been the western portion of earlier Culpeper County. Specifically, this area incorporated the Garth Run -- Stanton/Rapidan River -- Conway River area which is the exact area where my lineal ancestors, Thomas and John Graves, had established themselves. Thus, it is possible to use Coke's map to determine the locations of the men listed within Culpeper Class #81 and to further establish that all of the men within Class #81 were within this specific geographical area of then-Culpeper County. With this graphic information, it is possible to transpose the property locations discovered onto a larger Culpeper County map [before its division to create Madison and Rappahannock Counties] (the map is included with this paper). Thus, one can visually

¹⁰ Netti Schreiner-Yantis and Florene Love, The Personal Property Tax Lists For The Year 1787 For Culpeper County, Virginia (Genealogical Books in Print Springfield, Virginia 1987) Preface section.

¹¹ Schreiner-Yantis and Love, Preface.

¹² Schreiner-Yantis and Love, Preface.

¹³ Ben H. Coke, The Underwood Family from Madison County, Virginia, (McDowell Publications 1986) foreward iii.

¹⁴ Coke iii.

determine that the limited geographic area of then-Culpeper County-that the Militia Culpeper Class #81 represented is the western section of present-day Madison County inhabited by Thomas and John Graves.

Each man within Culpeper Class #81 is documented and reference is made to each specific one appearing within various deeds as either the grantee, grantor, as a witness to the signing of these deeds, or attending the estate sales of their neighbors. Twelve of these properties are within the Stanton/Rapidan River, Garth Run, Conway River watershed areas (to include German Ridge and Jones Mountain areas), thus the western portion of the County. The date on which they were visited by the tax commissioner is also documented. Because of the same and/or few days' variance on the visit dates between the men listed, the logical conclusion, given the speed of travel at the time, is that they are within the same geographical area of the County. Combining these facts, one can conclude that Thomas and John Graves in Class #81 are my lineal ancestors from Graves Mill and are differentiated from the other men named Thomas Graves and John Graves listed within the other three Culpeper Classes, which represented other geographical locations within Culpeper County and/or Madison County.

The men within Class #81 along with the related documentation are as follows:

Thomas Graves, Sr. (my lineal ancestor): Culpeper County Deed Book "C" pages 654, 655, 656, and 657. It is dated February 6, 1762. Thomas Graves is the grantee and William Stowers is the grantor. The property is located in the "Parish of Bromfield.....lying...on the south side of the Stanton River." The Tax Commissioner Goodrich Lightfoot (Tax List "C") visited him on April 5, 1787.¹⁵ Note that this is the same day that the Tax Commissioner also visited his sons John Graves and Thomas Graves, Jr., along with his neighbors Joseph Eddins (see below), and William Stowers.

John Graves (my lineal ancestor, son of the above Thomas Graves): Culpeper County Deed Book "N" pages 310, 311, 312, and 313. The land transaction is dated July 1, 1786. Mark Stowers, the grantor, is selling a portion of land to Thomas Graves the grantee. The land appears to be an extension of Thomas Graves estate "on the side of a branch and in the Plantation.....being a corner of the old patent and by the Road that leads from the Rapidan River to the Robinson River....and a gum on the West Side of the River and corner to the whereon the said Graves lives...." John Graves, son of Thomas Graves, is listed as a witness (teste) to the transaction as is John's brother, Thomas Graves, Jr. See Thomas Graves above, for the Tax Commissioner information.

John Neal: Culpeper County Deed Book "H" pages 317-318 dated February 19, 1776 provides a deed in which Charles Neal [Senior] is the grantor and shows his son, John Neal, as the grantee. The property is located within the "fork of Stanton River and a branch of Conway River." He was visited by the Tax Commissioner, Daniel Brown (Tax List "A") on April 19, 1787.¹⁶

John Simpson: A witness to the deed above, in which Charles Neal is the grantor and his son, Charles Neal is the grantee.¹⁷ John Simpson was visited by the Tax Commissioner, Goodrich Lightfoot (Tax List "C") dated March 28, 1787.¹⁸

Charles Neal: Culpeper County Deed Book "H" pages 313-314 dated March 6, 1776 indicates a deed in which the grantor is Charles Neal, Sr., and the grantee is Charles Neal, Jr. The property is located "on the Stanton River" [this is within the vicinity of his brother's (John Neal, above) deeded portion]. Charles Neal does not appear on the 1787 Tax List.

¹⁵ Schreiner-Yantis and Love, Pages 721 and 740.

¹⁶ Schreiner-Yantis and Love, Pages 692, 699, and 732.

¹⁷ Culpeper County Court Deed Book "H"-page 318.

¹⁸ Schreiner-Yantis and Love, pages 717, 726, and 739.

Jonathan Coward: Culpeper County Deed Book “D” pages 433-435 dated April 20, 1764. The grantor is James Kirtley and wife, Jemima. The grantee is Jonathan Coward. The property is “lying on the Stanton River in the afore Parish [Bromfield]”. Jonathan Cowherd (Coward) appears on the Tax List “C”, visited by Goodrich Lightfoot on April 3, 1787.¹⁹

Joseph Eddins: Culpeper County Deed Book “D” pages 325, 326, and 327 dated May 2, 1760. This deed has Joseph Eddins as the grantor, and Thomas Graves as the grantee. The property sold is “being in the Parish of Bromfield.....on the Stanton River.” Joseph Eddins appears on Tax List “C”, visited by Goodrich Lightfoot on April 4 and 5, of 1787.²⁰ Note that April 5, 1787 is the same day the tax commissioner visited my lineal ancestors, Thomas Graves and John Graves and John’s brother Thomas Graves, Jr. It should also be noted that the son of Joseph Eddins, Joel Eddins, married Lydia Graves, the daughter of Thomas Graves (first named individual above), on December 22, 1795.²¹ This indicates that the Graves and Eddins families were neighbors.

John Leatherer: Culpeper County Deed Book “H” pages 708 and 709 are dated July 20, 1778. The grantor is William Henry, and the grantee is John Leatherer. The property is located “in the fork of the Conway and Rapidan Rivers. The Tax Commissioner (Tax List “C”) visited John Leatherer on April 4, 1787.²²

Thomas Banks: Culpeper County Deed Book “H”, pages 190, 191, 192, and 193 shows Adam Banks as the grantee and Thomas Johnston as the grantor. It is dated May 20, 1776. Thomas Banks, the brother of Adam Banks, is a witness to the transfer of this property. The deed encompasses several plots of land totaling 1076 acres. All of the land is apparently joined to include a portion of the property located at a “Branch of the Stanton River.” There is no notation from the Tax Commissioner for Thomas Banks in 1787; however, his brother, Adam Banks, the grantee, is among Tax List “C” and was visited by the Commissioner Goodrich Lightfoot on April 5, 1787. The same day the Commissioner visited Thomas Graves, John Graves, Thomas Graves, Jr., and William Stowers.²³

Gideon Underwood: Madison County Will Book I, pages 268 and 269, are dated January 22, 1801. These documents pertain to the estate sale of the late Thomas Kirtley [Stanton River and Garth Run intersection]. Gideon Underwood is one of the individuals who purchased items from this estate sale. Note also that John Graves, the lineal ancestor of the applicant; also purchased items from this sale as did Downing Smith (see section below on Downing Smith). Gideon Underwood was visited by Tax Commissioner Goodrich Lightfoot (Tax List “C”) on March 28, 1787.²⁴ Additionally, within the Madison County Deed Book #1, pages 130 and 131, dated September 25, 1794, Gideon Underwood is a witness to the transfer of property where Simon Rice is the grantor, and George Harrison is the grantee. The property is “adjoining the German Ridge”. German Ridge is located just a short distance southeast of the residue owned by Thomas Graves and actually borders the lands of John Graves, both lineal ancestors of the applicant, and runs parallel to the Stanton/Rapidan River. Also note that Gideon and Elijah (the next listed individual), are brothers.

¹⁹ Schreiner-Yantis and Love, Pages 719 and 740.

²⁰ Schreiner-Yantis and Love, Pages 720 and 740.

²¹ Madison County Court Records, Marriage Bond between Lydia Graves and Joel Eddins, dated December 22, 1795.

²² Schreiner-Yantis and Love Pages 723 and 740.

²³ Schreiner-Yantis and Love Pages 718 and 740.

²⁴ Schreiner-Yantis and Love Pages 727 and 739.

Elijah Underwood: On pages 133 and 134 of the Madison County Deed Book 3, dated January 26, 1802, Elijah Underwood is a witness to the sale of land. The grantor is John Hite, and Charles Hume, Jr., is the grantee. The land is “on the bank of the Rapidan River.” The Tax Commissioner Goodrich Lightfoot (Tax List “C”) visited Elijah Underwood on April 6, 1787, just one day after he visited the lineal ancestors of the applicant, Thomas and John Graves.²⁵

Downing Smith: Within Madison County Deed Book 2, page 338 and 339, dated April 22, 1799, is found Benjamin Smith, the grantor, and Downing Smith, the grantee. The land purchased by Downing Smith is located “on the south side of the German Ridge.....corner to William Smith and John Graves,” lineal ancestor of the applicant. Within the Culpeper County Deed Book “I” on pages 83-85, dated October 19, 1778, is found Downing Smith as a witness to a deed. The grantor is Benjamin Smith, and the grantee is Adam Banks. The land is “lying on the Waters of the Rappidan River...on the top of German Ridge.” As stated previously, German Ridge is located only a short distance southeast of the residue owned by Thomas Graves; and as seen here, it borders the lands of John Graves, the lineal ancestors of the applicant. On April 5, 1787, Tax Commissioner Goodrich Lightfoot (Tax List “C”) visited Downing Smith. This day also coincides with his visit to Joseph Eddins, William Stowers, and Adam Banks. On that date he also visited the ancestors of the applicant, namely, Thomas Graves, and his sons John Graves and Thomas Graves, Jr.²⁶

Robert Bradley: Within Culpeper County Deed Book “K,” pages 210 thru 212, dated October 17, 1779, is found a Robert Bradley as a witness to the purchase of land from Robert Johnson, grantor, to Benjamin Johnson (grantee). The property is located on “the North side of the Rapidann River.....and corner to James Barbour.” There is no notation of a visit by any Tax Commissioner for Robert Bradley in the year 1787. Possibly he had moved from Culpeper County or was deceased. Additionally, very little documentation exists regarding Robert Bradley. He is not listed within either the Culpeper or Madison County deed books as having owned property within those geographical areas. It is possible that he may have been a tenant farmer, going from farm to farm, and had no land and/or taxable property of his own. Although the land contained within this paragraph is along “the Rapidann River” this specific location is believed to be within the southeastern portion of then-Culpeper County, which now is the southeastern section of Madison County, possibly the Uno area. If this is correct, then this area is outside the small geographical area depicted on the enclosed map of Culpeper County, illustrating the location of the remaining men within Culpeper Class #81. Mr. Bradley most likely tenant farmed [thus he owed no property and taxes would not be included within the Tax Lists] within the present Graves Mill area of Madison County during the 1781 time period in which the Culpeper Classes were formed.

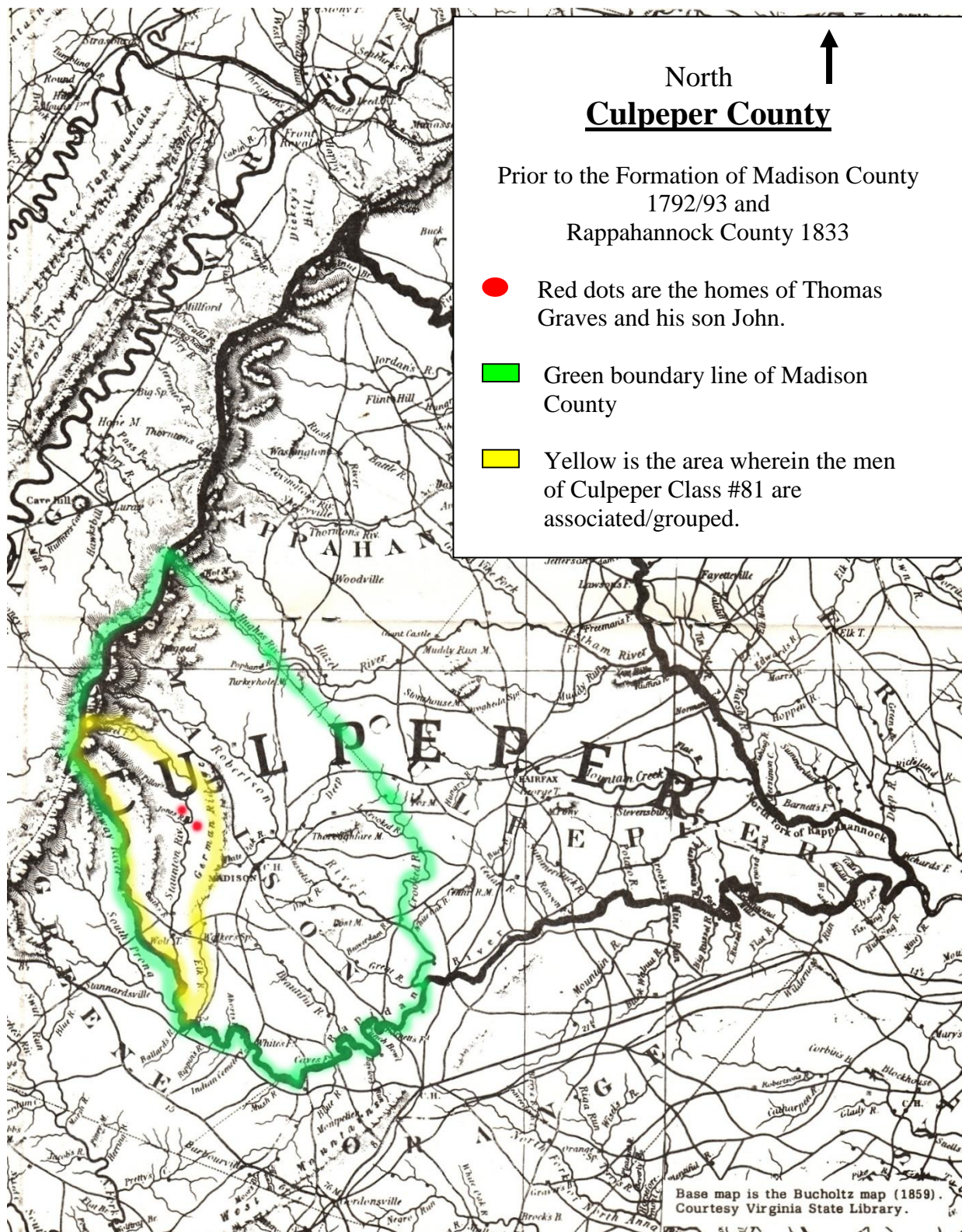
It should be noted that Thomas Graves, Sr., is listed as the “Draft” for Culpeper Class #81. It is possible that, because of his age (in 1781, Thomas Graves was 48 years old, having been born in 1733), his service was limited based upon his advanced age and/or availability. Additionally, cursory searches of a number of Revolutionary War Records indicate that at least five men from the Culpeper Class #81, or men with the same names, participated in the Revolutionary War. Since each class was required to provide one individual, it appears that Class #81 had far exceeded its mandated amount of one man per Class supplied to the Continental Army, obviating the need for someone of Thomas’s age to serve on active duty. The five other men from Class #81, or men with the same names, that had active service within the Revolutionary War were Thomas Banks, Charles Neal, John Neal, John Simpson and Gideon Underwood.

²⁵ Schreiner-Yantis and Love Pages 727 and 740.

²⁶ Schreiner-Yantis and Love Pages 726 and 740.

A review of pertinent deeds, wills, and estate sale records of Culpeper and Madison Counties; the 1787 personal property tax lists for Culpeper County; and information from The Underwood Family from Madison County, Virginia, showed that all but one of the men listed in Class #81 of the Culpeper County Military Classes, comprising the local Militia, were of the Stanton/Rapidan River and/or the Conway River area of Culpeper, now Madison, County.

The conclusion reached through this research is that Thomas Graves Sr. and his son John Graves who resided in present-day Madison County (Graves Mill), are the men listed in Class #81, and as such were sympathetic to the cause of the United States of America and provided Patriotic service to the American War of Independence.



Note: the above map was taken from Schreiner-Yantis, Netti, and Florene Love. The Personal Property Tax Lists For The Year 1787 For Culpeper County, Virginia. Springfield, Virginia: 1987

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