

Talk to the VA Society, Order of Founders & Patriots of America, Grace Episcopal Church, York Co., Yorktown, VA.

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By Cranston William, Jr.

Thank you Mike for that kind introduction.

You could say that I like history and genealogy. My Father's Salzburger ancestors settled in Ebenezer, GA near Savannah in 1734. My Mother's ancestors date back through the Martiau, Reade and Warner families. I am married to Marilyn with old family roots in Virginia who is here today along with our daughter, Sally WARNER, named from Warner Hall family. We have a son, Cranston READE, named after Col. George Reade.

It is an honor and a privilege to have been asked again to talk to you in this historic area. Last year some of us were at Warner Hall where the Warners made their home in Gloucester County. Warner Hall was originally built and owned by the Warner family and it came into the Lewis Family through inheritance by heirs of the Warner Family, named Martiau and Reade.

The first Warner, Councillor Augustine, Sr. came to Virginia in 1662 with the title "Gentleman". When he died in 1674, he left one son, Speaker Augustine, Jr. and a daughter, Sarah, the ancestor of Robert E. Lee. Before 1671 Augustine, Jr. married Mildred Reade, daughter of Col. George and Elizabeth (Martiau) Reade of Yorktown. Mildred was the g-grandmother of George Washington, the first President of the United States. That's enough about the Warners.

It is difficult to believe all the history which took place in the area where we are today. The sturdy walls of this church have been standing since 1697 despite the ravages of war during the two sieges of Yorktown in 1781 and 1862 and the "great fire" of 1814. It is a National Shrine at the Cradle of our Republic. The bell of the Church was cast in London in 1725, broken during the fire of 1814 and recast in Philadelphia in 1882. The original Hammered Communion Silver, made in London in 1649, is still in use at Grace Church. The first confirmation service in Virginia was held in this church in 1791.

Resting in the shadow of this historic church are men who shaped the future of our colony, commonwealth and country and especially their descendants. Located here are General/Gov. Thomas Nelson, Jr., Nicolas Martiau and Col. George Reade.

Colonel George Reade was born in 1608 in (Link-en-holt) Linkenholt, Hampshire, England, and was the youngest of his siblings. George's Father was Sir Robert Reade and his Mother was Mildred (Wind-e-bank) Windebank [a 3rd wife]. George had four brothers and a sister. His ancestors go back to the Kings of England from 879 to 1016.

Having received nine shillings by the terms of his mother's will, George Reade came to Virginia from England in 1637 as a member Sir John Harvey's party. Harvey was returning to Virginia to assume the office of governor of the colony. Reade was one of about 100 colonists, who immigrated to the colonies from England and Wales before the end of the 17th century. They were known "-here we go again-"that had legitimate descent from a (Plan-ta-ge-net) Plantagenet King like thousands of others who had also descending relationships from Kings but were unaware of their history.

George Reade's immediate relatives occupied prominent positions in the English government of the day. In addition to the services of his grandfather, we may note those of his uncle and older brother who at the time of Reade's emigration to Virginia, was Robert Reade who was secretary to their uncle Sir Frances (Wind-e-bank) Windebank, Colonial Secretary of State in London.

George Reade appears to have been attached to Harvey's service in a secretarial capacity. His letters to his brother show that he resided at the Governor's mansion for some time after his arrival in Virginia. The same letters show that he received the kindest treatment from the Secretary of State of the colony, Richard Kemp. It is plain that Harvey and Kemp were very anxious to please and honor this young man with relatives so

prominently placed in the office of the Colonial Secretary in London. This was particularly true as Gov. Harvey's own standing in Virginia was so dubiously established.

Within the three or four years immediately following George Reade's arrival in Virginia, opposition to Harvey's government again made it imperative for Governor Harvey to sail for England; and this second time he was not to return to Virginia, as he formerly had. Kemp also made at least one trip to London during this period, and was absent there at the time of Harvey's departure. During Kemp's absence at various times between 1637 and 1641 Reade acted as Secretary of the Virginia colony; and, as such, he is believed to have been acting Governor during Harvey's absence also. The supposed dates of this acting governorship are 1638 and 1639, though there is no actual record of Reade's filling the office; Harvey ceased to be Governor in November 1639. Sir Francis Wyatt was appointed in his place, and it is entirely possible that Reade acted as governor during the period of unsettledness. There is no doubt of his acting as Secretary. The proceedings of a General Court held at James City on February 4, 1640 are signed by "George Reade, Present Secretary"; and on August 27, 1640 a letter from the King to the Governor and Council commands them to "admit George Reade to the place of Secretary in the absence of Richard Kemp who has lately arrived in England; with power to enjoy all fees and perquisites belonging to the office". Kemp remained in England for a period of two years and returned to Virginia in 1642 with the new Governor, Sir William Berkeley, then resumed his old post as Secretary of State.

In 1641 George Reade was married to Elizabeth Martiau, who was born in 1625 in Elizabeth County, VA and was oldest daughter of Capt. Nicolas Martiau [Father of Yorktown] and his wife, Jane Warner. The Reades settled first in a plantation home in Williamsburg; but in later years they lived largely in York and Gloucester Counties. George Reade acquired considerable land in other parts of Virginia. His earliest grant in 1649 on record was for 2,000 acres at (Pi-a-ka-tank) "Pyankatank"; but our only record of this grant comes from an order of the General Assembly in 1667, when it was decreed that "after the voluntary departure of the (Kis-ki-ack) Chiskiack Indians from a parcel of land of 2,000 acres formerly granted by patent to Colo. George Read at (Pi-a-ka-tank) Pyankatank. Later grants to him include one of 600 acres in Lancaster County 1651, one for 500 acres in Northumberland County in 1653, and another for 2,000 acres in Westmoreland County in 1657. These last three grants also fix for us the dates of George Reade's progressive promotion in the Virginia militia; for in them he is respectively referred to as Captain, Major and then Colonel in 1657.

As was so generally the case in early Virginia, this increase in rank in the colonial militia was also an index to the increasing political importance of the individual; for George Reade did not long remain out of politics after his retirement in 1642 as the Secretary of the Colony. He was a Burgess for James City County in the General Assembly which met in 1649; and he represented York County in the General Assembly during 1655-1656. The latter Assembly met in three sessions between March 1654 and December 1, 1656; and at the first session "Leift. Collo. Reade" was one of those appointed to the Committee for Private Causes. It was customary for the General Assembly to repeal and reenact the Acts of previous Assemblies from time to time; and at the third session of this same Assembly, begun late 1656, "Coli. Geo. Reade" was one of four members appointed to a Committee "for Review of the Acts" of previous Assemblies. These two references also show promotions.

Col. George Reade was then appointed a member of the Council of Virginia, thus receiving that promotion which came only to the most prominent Virginians of the colonial period. This appointment was usually made only after the new Councillor had gained considerable experience in the House of Burgesses, and in practice was limited to the more wealthy and influential citizens of the colony. George Reade's name appears in the list of the "Governor and Council of Virginia" submitted to the Grand Assembly of 1657 and he was one of the twelve Councilors who joined with the Governor in the order dissolving the Assembly on the first of the following month in 1658. An Act of the Assembly names "Coli. George Reade" as one of the Councilors appointed by the Governor and approved by the Burgesses. From this Act it might appear that the appointment of Councilors was not subject to approval in London during the Cromwellian era, as such appointment was at all other colonial periods. Appointments were for life, though in rare cases a Councillor was removed for cause.

Having attained the highest political office to which a Virginian of prominence could aspire -- for the governorship was always filled by an appointee from England.-- Col. George Reade was to hold the office of

Councillor for 18 years before his death in 1674. He was a member of the House of Burgesses and the Colonial Council until his death.

During the latter part of their lives he and his wife resided in Yorktown probably on land which had been inherited by his wife, Elizabeth, from her Father, Nicolas Martiau. No records of their life in Yorktown at this period are available, but we can be sure that they filled a very important place in the political and social life of Yorktown and the vicinity as well as that of the Virginia colony in general.

It was at Yorktown that Col. George Reade died leaving his widow and seven children, two daughters and five sons yet his will listed five (5) unnamed children. His will, no longer in existence, is in a York County 18th century land transaction and was filed November 21, 1671. He died at the age of 66 in 1674 in Gloucester County, Virginia.

Elizabeth (Martiau) Reade survived her husband by 12 years, dying in 1686. Her will was approved in York County Court on January 24, 1686

In 1691 son Benjamin sold 50 acres of inherited land for the site of present Yorktown, formerly known as Yorke.

Col. George Reade and his wife Elizabeth were the ancestral grandparents of many notables including:
President George Washington, Gen./Gov. Thomas Nelson, Jr., Col. Armistead Watlington [Rev. War hero in NC], Meriwether Lewis of Lewis & Clark Expedition, the Warners of VA and Queen Elizabeth II.

While excavating on Buckner Street near Main Street in Yorktown near the original Martiau and Reade home in 1931, two large stones were unearthed and were about to be destroyed. When it was noticed that they bore lettered inscriptions; upon further examination they were found to be the tombstones of Col. George Reade and Elizabeth (Martiau) Reade. The names upon the tombstones were quite apparent and could be clearly made out, though some of the dates were indistinct. Experts were hired to recut the stones. A descendant, Letitia Pate Evans, had the tablets restored and moved to this church yard of Grace Episcopal Church.

The tombstone of Col. George Reade reads as follows:
HERE LYETH INTERED COLLEGE GEORGE READ ESQR. WHO WAS BORN YE 25TH DAY OCTOBER
IN YE YEARE OF OUR LORD 1608 AND DECEASED OCTOBER 1674 HE BEING IN THE 66TH YR. OF
HIS AGE.

In cutting the stone of Elizabeth (Martiau) Reade it was found that the fourth and fifth lines were entirely undecipherable. It is believed that in attempting to restore these stone mistakes were made in the dates placed thereon.

HERE LYETH INTERED ELIZABETH MARTIAU DECEASED WIFE OF GEORGE READ ESQR' WHO
WAS BORN IN YE YEARE OF OUR LORD 1625 AND DECEASED YE YEARE 1686 SHE BEING IN YE
61ST YEARE OF HER AGE

The genealogical book "Adventurers of Purse and Person 1607 - 1624/5 and Their Families" published by the Order of First Families of Virginia, indicates in a footnote the discrepancy between the dates inscribed on Col. Reade's Grace Church tablets and the filing of the wills for George Reade and his wife Elizabeth. Dates are as follows: "His and his wife's gravestones were discovered during street excavations in Yorktown in 1931. The inscriptions on both were recut with errors. George Reade's stone now states he died Oct. 1674, 'he being in the 66th yr of his age.' Since the date should be 1671 (per his will), either the age shown, or his year of birth, is in error as well. His baptism is not recorded in the parish register of in (Link-en-holt) Linkenholt, Hampshire, where all of his brothers and sisters are recorded. Either 1605 or 1608 is possible, considering the baptismal known dates of his siblings.

The gravestone of Elizabeth (Martiau) Reade now states she was born in 1625 and died in 1696, "being in ye 71 st yeare of her age." Since the year of death should be 1686 (per her will), again the age or year of birth is in error. Since Nicolas Martiau claimed his son Nicolas and daughter Elizabeth as headrights, but not the

children of his 2nd wife, it would appear Elizabeth was born prior to his arrival in Virginia in 1620 rather than his family's visit to England and the second arrival in the colony. Hence, Elizabeth's birth occurred in 1615 rather than 1625."

In conclusion, Grace Church Cemetery is an unusual and historic place that has many connections to our country's founding as well as connection to the American Revolution. I could go on for a long time with more Warner, Lewis, Reade and Martiau history as well as information about their relationship to our nation's evolution as we have known.

Thank you for having my family and me here today at Grace Church Cemetery to talk with you about Col. George Reade.