

*The First Africans as Founders*, a Presentation by Charles Jameson, on March 27, 2021 to the Virginia Society of the Order of the Founders and Patriots of America, 2021 Spring Membership Meeting, Virtual

Good Morning, I am Charles Jameson, President of the Culpeper Minute Men Chapter VASSAR and board member of the Culpeper and Carver 4-County Museums. First of all, by researching the African Founders, I will say this is a tough subject and by no means am I an expert on the subject. My research has included Encyclopedia.com, Encyclopedia of Virginia, U S History.Org, Black Perspectives, The Conversation with Daina Ramey Berry, Professor of History and African Diaspora Studies at the Univ. of Texas in Austin, and then a special in the USA Today, “The arrival of 20 and odd enslaved Africans in 1619 has been called the beginning of U.S. Slavery, *It’s actually more complicated than that*, written by E.R. Shipp, winner of the 1996 Pulitzer prize for commentary.

I feel we must first speak of the date of 1619. Little is known of those newly arrived Africans. Their arrival was duly noted by the colony’s secretary, John Rolfe, famous as the widower of the Native American Woman called Pocahontas. At that time the slave trade between Africa and the English colonies had not been established, and it is unlikely that the 20 or so newcomers became slaves on their arrival. They were perhaps considered indentured servants, who worked under contract for a certain period of time before they were granted their freedom.

The social status of the first Africans in Jamestown was confusing and perhaps deliberately ambiguous. The 1620 census showed 17 African women and 15 African men in Jamestown. Records from 1623 and 1624 list the black inhabitants as servants. In these same records, however, while white indentured servants were listed along with the year in which they were to attain their freedom, no such year accompanies the names of black servants. Many scholars agree that this Dutch ship stole its valuable human cargo from the San Juan Bautista, a Portuguese merchant slaver. We know of Anthony, Isabella, Angelo, Francis and Peter, and little else. We know of Anthony and Isabella due to them being indentured servants to Captain William Tucker, who had them married and Baptized along with their son William, who is the first documented African born in Virginia. Their freedom was obtained around 1635.

This first group that came survived and created a solid and growing community of people of African descent, with some of them intermingling with English and the

Native peoples. Another note is that if these Africans were from Luanda, which was the newly formed established capital of the Portuguese Colony of Angola, then it is likely that they had been trading with the Europeans for years, that they spoke a language in common with these Europeans and that they were Christians. It is possible that these characteristics enabled them to escape a life of slavery, which was to become the fate of the more ethnically and linguistically diverse group of Africans that arrived in North America in later years. From the Encyclopedia Virginia, relations between blacks and whites in Virginia were very flexible at first. Blacks and whites often lived near one another, worked together, and socialized together. Blacks had access to the justice system and appeared to be treated equally by the courts. Some blacks even owned slaves and indentured servants themselves. At the same time many enslaved Africans and African Americans were allowed to earn money, keep livestock and raise crops themselves, and they sometimes took advantage of these economic privileges to purchase their freedom. Baptism was traditionally a route to freedom. Elizabeth Key was given hers in 1656 by the General Assembly in part because she “is able to give a very good account of her faith.” Anthony Johnson was not an African American, but this did not stop him from doing well with Northampton Judges. Possibly a native of Angola Johnson bought his freedom and, with his wife and children, owned land and at least one slave. Johnson was able to succeed in Virginia because he owned land and livestock. In other words, the same economic tools that allowed slaves to purchase their freedom allowed Free Blacks to sustain their freedom.

Historians T.H. Breen and Stephen Innes have suggested that free blacks attempted to transform themselves into Black Englishmen, which was true not only in economic aspirations, but in their social assumptions. These free Africans and African Americans were expected to live as members of the community, which meant owning land, voting, paying taxes. It also meant keeping their lives separate from the enslaved. In December of 1662 the General Assembly declared that all children born in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother. In other words, the children of slave women would be slaves. The law while penalizing relations between the races, nevertheless made room for the children of a white mother and a black father to seek freedom.

We come to a book by my friend’s father T.O. Madden Jr., “We were always free.” In 1949, T.O. while in his late 40’s, went searching in the attic of his home, which in earlier years was the famous Madden’s Tavern. He came upon a hidebound trunk originally belonging to his great great-grandfather Willis Madden. In it he found the obvious, bills, tax records, until he dug deeper where there to his surprise he found papers dating back to the 18th century. Papers of Indenture,

deeds of land, Sarah Madden's laundry and seamstress record books, letters, and traveling passes. Sarah Madden was the daughter born to Mary Madden in 1758. They know nothing of Mary's early life but by family lore Mary was a White Irish girl who had borne a child to a black man. Nothing is known of the father. Sarah is claimed to be the first free person of color in the Madden family. Sarah finished her 31-year indenture in 1790 from the James Madison estate. In the 1840's Sarah's son Willis was noted as one of the wealthiest Mulattoes in the area. Willis was the first in the family to marry. Marrying Hannah Clark, free daughter of Revolutionary war free African American Patriot William Clark. William Clark served 3½ years in the Revolutionary War, the last 1½ years as a soldier servant to Colonel John Jameson. We will have a Patriot memorial service for William Clark hopefully August 21, 2021 at the Madden Family Cemetery off Madden's Tavern Road in Culpeper. In addition, the leather trunk held an exciting, full set of business records for the days when Madden's Tavern flourished as a center of activity in Orange County. The Maddens were very fortunate to find this part of their history. There were many Africans and African Americans who fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War, fighting only to be free. Also, there were many Africans and African Americans who were already free and believed in the rhetoric of All Men were created Equal and were fighting for Independence from Britain.

Early in the seventeenth century Virginia freedom was seen, even by powerful white planters, as a legitimate goal for enslaved blacks. The two most common paths to freedom were manumission and self-purchase. Toward the end of the 17th century, the supply of white indentured servants available to cultivate Virginia's tobacco crop declined and likely, as a consequence of this, the number of slaves imported directly from Africa increased. At that time it was believed that the free blacks in Virginia either no longer wanted to or could no longer maintain distance between themselves and enslaved blacks. By virtue of their skin color, they were considered a suspect class and lived in what the scholar George M. Fredrickson called "quasi freedom." Whatever the status of these first Africans to arrive at Jamestown, it is clear that by 1640 at least one African had been declared a slave. This African was ordered by the court to serve his said master or his assigns for the time of his natural life here or elsewhere.

I will now speak on the Smithsonian Magazine's statement that 1619 is not the best place to begin a meaningful inquiry into the history of African peoples in America because they were here before that time. The magazine stated that as early as May 1616 Blacks from the West Indies were already in Bermuda providing expert knowledge about the cultivation of Tobacco. There is also suggestive evidence

that scores of Africans plundered from the Spanish were aboard a fleet under the command of Sir Francis Drake when he arrived at Roanoke Island in 1586. In 1526, enslaved Africans were part of a Spanish expedition to establish an outpost on the North American coast in present day South Carolina. Those Africans launched a rebellion in November of that year and effectively destroyed the Spanish ability to sustain the settlement, which they abandoned a year later. In the first half of the 17th century Africans in Virginia occupied a somewhat ambiguous state. County Court records of the mid-seventeenth century contain clear evidence that some free black men exercised the rights and privileges of citizens while most lived in a kind of legal no man's land, not slaves yet by no means full citizens. They built lives of pride and achievement though surrounded by slavery and racial oppression.

Now a little about my family history and my heritage. By DNA and books on my Father's side, the Y gene of the family that follows the Jameson's or European side of my family, I can trace them to America in the 1600's. On my mother's side of the family, I am part of the L Cluster of haplogroups, which has been concretely characterized as representing the original human mitochondrial lineage, haplogroup L3e that is found in Africa. This haplogroup dates to approximately 50,000 years ago, and is detected in sub-equatorial Africa. By DNA I am 72% European (Scots-Irish) and 28% African. I know of the Jamesons, but the history of the Fords, Tutts, Jacksons, Cooks, and Covingtons I know little past the 1800's but family lore. I have a cousin whose book shares the story of the Bowen, Jameson and Jackson connection, it also references a relative as the First African American Postmaster. "The Truth Is The Light If It's Told In The Dark." I have been a little busy, but after this research, I plan on delving back into my unknown connections and how the family land was acquired. My home place in Culpeper was probably Jameson property in years past, but was owned by my mother's grandfather, Mulatto Charles Ford, in the late 1800's, about whom I know little and would like to learn more. My mother's father, Clarence Clifton Tutt, owned many parcels of real estate around Culpeper and is another I wish I knew more about. I was given my name Charles Clifton Jameson to commemorate both.

This research has awakened me to see if I can break that roadblock that I had found and I am now finding more links to follow. I now will be on the hunt to see how this property was acquired. I know that Charles Ford's wife, Ainsley Jackson, was from the European Bowen family, and that Harriet, their slave bore 9 children, some being Jacksons and some Bowen. Through my research I have seen strong evidence that mulattoes or those of mixed race seemed to mingle together. This even makes a harder job of researching African American genealogy. The African

Founders is a very tough subject, but one thing we do know for sure is they were here and are included as founders also. Thank you.



Charles Jameson, President, Culpeper Minutemen Chapter, Virginia Society, SAR