

Jacob Burruss, Jr.

Jacob Burruss, Jr., was born in King William County, Virginia in that portion that became Caroline County, Virginia in 1727. There are conflicting dates for his birth, but what appears prevalent is October 14, 1714. (1) He was one of nine children, born to Jacob Burruss, Sr. and his wife Mary.

Jacob Jr. grew up on an unpretentious plantation, on property located close to present day Cedar Fork Road (601) and Route 1 in Caroline County, Virginia. It is speculated he and his siblings were educated according to acceptable practices for the times. The girls were likely taught to read and write, and the boys educated in a manner necessary, so they would be able to carry out family and community business. Farming, even with the help of slave labor, was hard work. Certainly Jacob, Jr. grew up sharing in the day-to-day chores necessary to keep the family plantation successful.

When Jacob Burruss, Sr. died in 1755 he left Jacob Jr. a young mare, a cow and yearling, and two ewes. (4) Jacob's brothers Thomas and Charles received 272 acres and the home place plantation, respectively, in their father's Will. It seems acceptable that the other male children received properties of equal value prior to their father's will bequests. For reasons lost to time, it was Jacob, Jr. who lived on the plantation bequeathed to his brother Charles.

According to a journal kept by Jacob Jr.'s grandson, Henry Burruss, Jacob first married Martha Harris. (2) Martha was likely the daughter of William Harris and Elizabeth Burnett. The exact date of their marriage has been lost, but it likely occurred between 1740 and 1744. In 1745, Martha gave birth to their son, John Burruss. John would become one of the first Baptist preachers in Caroline County. On February 18, 1746/47 their second son William was born. (3)

Where Jacob and Martha first made their home, isn't known. Likely it was on property adjoining his parents, and given to Jacob, Jr. at the time of his marriage, as was often the custom. Property owners in Caroline County were responsible for the upkeep and building of roads along their property. In 1759, Jacob was appointed overseer of the roads.(5) Jacob, like his father before him, was a well-respected member of the community. This is evidenced by the fact that Jacob Jr.'s name appears in the order books, as one who was called on to assist in the appraising of several estates, witness legal documents, and to value property improvements. (6)

Jacob built a grist mill on his plantation. As a miller, Jacob would have been well known by his neighbors. Millers provided a much needed service, without charge. As his neighbors came to his Polecat Creek mill, the talk would have kept Jacob familiar with the goings-on in the County. In July 1775, three years before his death, the aging Jacob Burruss, deeded 230 acres, for love and affection, along with the grist mill, to his son John. We must assume Jacob Burruss, Sr., was unable to run the mill alone, Oddly enough, Jacob Burruss outlived his son John Burruss, Jr., by a few months.

The death of Jacob's first wife, Martha Harris, is not known. Jacob, Jr. married the second time, sometime before June 1763, when he and his second wife Susanna, were involved in an

unsuccessful lawsuit against William Howard. (7) It isn't known if there were children born to this union. Jacob was married a third time, to Diana, whose name appeared in tax records as late as 1797. In 1778 Diana renounced in court, all bequests made by Jacob Burruss in his Will, seeking only her one third share in her husband's estate. Diana was consistently credited on Tax Records as possessing 100 acres in Caroline County.

The community surrounding the Burruss plantation consisted primarily of members of the Established Church. The practice of most other religions was not authorized. Exactly when the first Baptist ministers came to Caroline County isn't known, but Jacob's son, John Burruss, was one of the first known Baptists ministers to openly preach the faith in Caroline County. In 1768 Jacob Burruss was arrested for allowing his son to hold unauthorized divine service and worship of the Baptist faith in his home. Neighbors and friends that attended this service and were fined by the court, five shillings or fifty pound of tobacco. They included Henry Terrell, Robert Chandler, Robert Woolfolk, Thomas Bark, James Gatewood, Thomas Terrell, Martha Nodden, Christopher Terrell, and Rachel Terrell. The Terrell family were Quakers but there is no evidence that the Golansville Meeting House reprimanded them for their attendance at these Baptist services. With the exception of Rachel Terrell, who married Jacob's son, John Burruss, it appears most of the Terrells remained Quakers.

For several years the records show that Jacob Burruss, Jr. was brought to court for failing to open an unused road to his grist mill, and failing to keep his mill dam in good repair. There was evidence submitted that showed these charges invalid. The court forced Jacob to settle all of his accounts at one time, which aroused his creditors. It appears these things were done in an attempt to break up the assemblage at the Baptist meetings held in Jacob's home.(9) Jacob's son, John the preacher, died in April of 1778 and Jacob died shortly after.

Jacob's Will was proved in the 1778 November Court by Benjamin Tompkins and his neighbor, John Hampton of Hamptonville. (10) Jacob's Will did not survive and his surviving son, William inherited his estate.

1. Burruss Family Letters, James Burruss, Riverside, Conn.
2. *ibid.*
3. Will of Jacob Burruss-Louisa County Chancery Suit, Davis vs. Burruss, 1767
4. Caroline County Order Book - 1759 page 9
5. Caroline County Order Book 1759-page 87 - 1760 page 113, 1765 page 331
6. George Harrison Sanford King Papers, 1930-1985
7. CCOB, 1763 page 423.
8. CCOB 1778 page 134
9. Colonial Caroline, T. E. Campbell, Richmond: Dietz Press, 1954