

Chapter 1

THE IMMIGRANTS: GUY SMITH AND RALPH BOWKER OF ENGLAND AND VIRGINIA

Guy Smith's first step on the journey to the New World occurred several years before he boarded the ship to Virginia. That step was his departure as an eight year old lad from the place of his birth, Ely, Cambridgeshire, England. Cambridgeshire is located in eastern England, slightly northeast of London. The northern part of Cambridgeshire, where the town of Ely lies, is fen-country; a flat salt marsh land rising from the cold waters of the North Sea. Born in the last part of the seventeenth century, Guy probably spent his early childhood in the town of his birth.

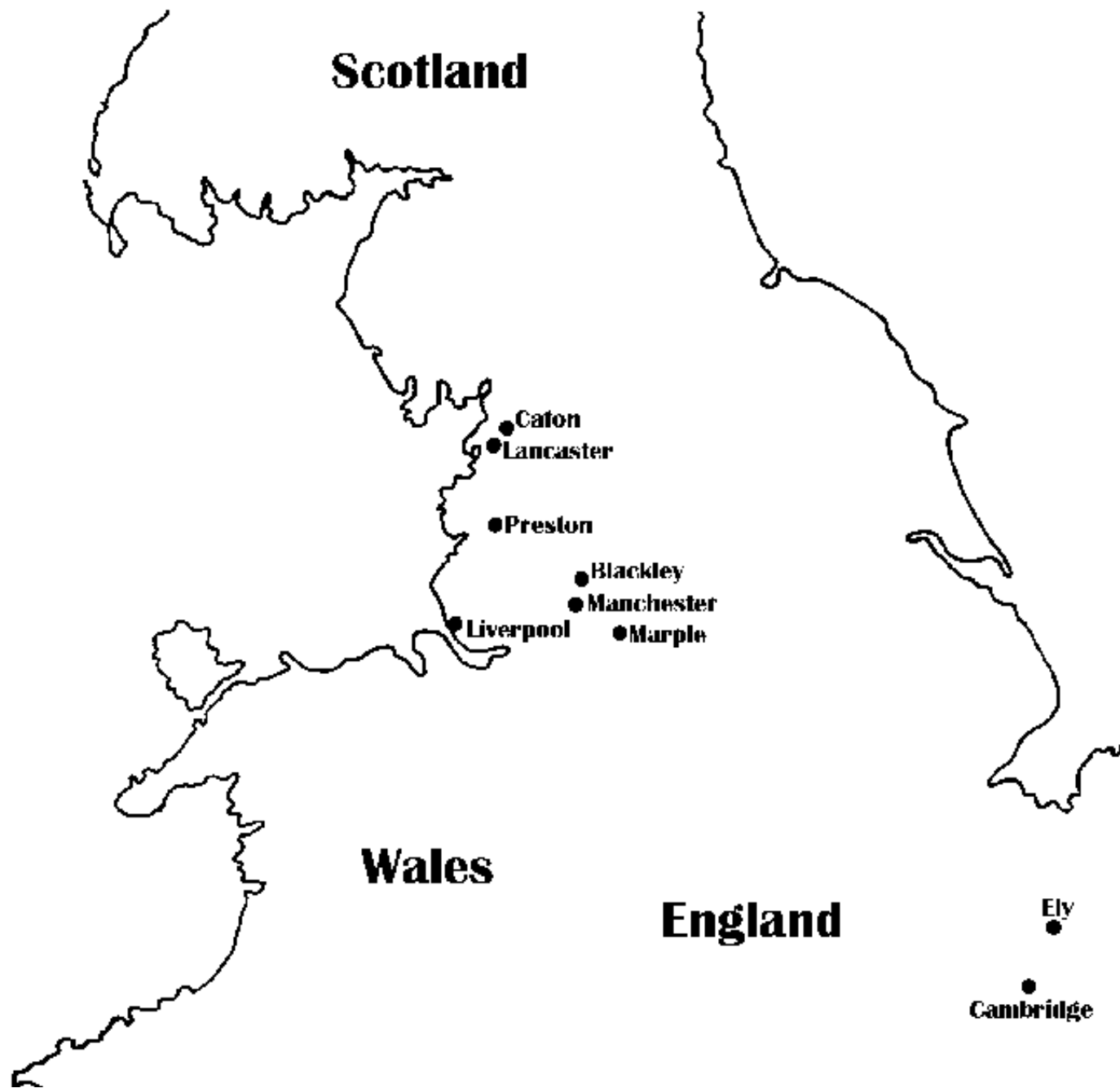
While still a young boy, in 1683 Guy Smith departed Ely to become a student at Cambridge University. While the northern part of Cambridgeshire is flat, the land rises going southward. Midway in the county is the shiny ribbon of the River Cam. There on the banks of the River Cam rise the halls of Cambridge University. For the next several years, Guy would study in the ancient halls of Cambridge University. Young boys like Guy enrolled in a preparatory school, which prepared them for later studies on the university level. Eventually Guy would enroll in Corpus Christi College.[\[1\]](#)

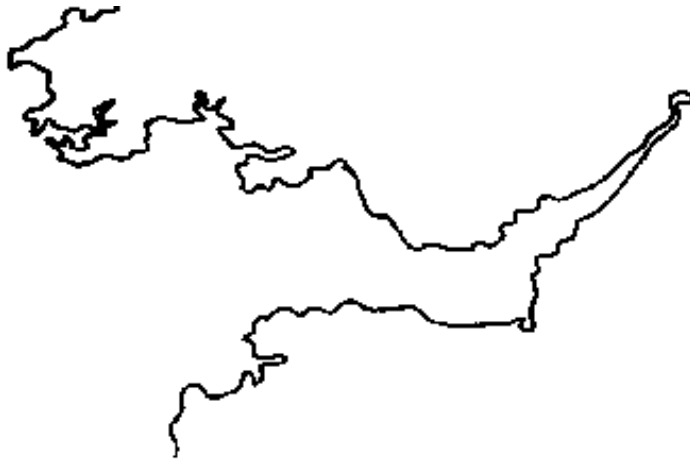
The history of Cambridge University is the history of England. The university consists of several different colleges founded at different times and for various reasons. One of only two universities for most of England's history, Cambridge University was the center of the English Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. The Cambridge Protestants were responsible for many church reforms and produced the famous *Book of Common Prayer* that remained in use for some three hundred years.[\[2\]](#) Cambridge University was long a center for training ministers and lawyers. At first Cambridge had prepared young men for the Catholic Church, but after the Reformation, the university produced Anglican ministers for the Church of England. By the late seventeenth century, young men of station also came for training in government civil service work.

Guy Smith's records at Cambridge show that Guy was a sizar, a student who receives an allowance toward his college expenses in return for acting as a servant to other students. Duties for a sizar could include, for example, waiting on students' tables. From this fact, it appears that Guy did not come from a family of sufficient means to pay for all of his education at Cambridge.

The year after Guy Smith entered Cambridge, a young man of nineteen, James Bowker, journeyed eastward to enroll in St. John's College at Cambridge University. James was not the first of his family at Cambridge. Ralph Bowker, James' younger brother, entered St. John's in 1678 at the youthful age of seven. The two brothers were the sons of James Bowker, referred to in records as both "Rev. James Bowker" and "James, clerk of Marple, Cheshire."

The brothers, James and Ralph, were born in Lancashire,[\[3\]](#)





located on the west coast of England northeast of Wales, with fertile plains extending down to the Irish Sea. The east part of Lancashire rises to meet the Pennines, a mountain chain that roughly extends from Scotland halfway down the middle of England and is sometimes called the “backbone of England”. The influence of nearby Scotland in Lancashire can be heard in the faint Scottish burr in the local residents’ speech.

James was born in Blakely (or Blackley), Lancashire, while his brother, Ralph, was born in Caton, Lancashire. Enrolling in college, they served as sizars at St. John’s as Guy Smith did at Corpus Christi College. Their allowances from serving as sizars would be a great help to supplement the support from their father’s clergyman salary.

Opportunities had drawn the three youths to Cambridge University. In the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation and in the dawn of the Age of Reason, education was newly attractive. While institutions like Cambridge and Oxford had long educated aspiring ministers, now the gentry was sending its sons to be educated. Those like Guy Smith and the Bowker brothers, who aspired to be ministers, realized that advancement in the Church of England now required an education. The three young men did not, however, appear to have achieved their bachelor degrees, which may have been from a lack of personal funds. That they all were sizars strongly indicates that the young students were poor.

The three may have lacked the money to complete their degrees, but they were ordained Anglican ministers. The young men seem to have decided that their best opportunities as ministers lay across the Atlantic Ocean in the royal colony of Virginia. As one author stated:

“It must be remembered that the clergy were a part of the upper strata of the colonial clergy in Virginia. True, until the early eighteenth century, the Anglican clergy in England were considered

unworthy to marry into the families of the English nobility, or even those of the gentry. But the situation was otherwise in Virginia. The Anglican parsons moved easily among the social elite of the colony and they participated in the latter's sports and other diversions." [4]

The young Bowker brothers' decision to immigrate to Virginia would have been easier to make by the fact that they had a sister in Virginia. The sister, Barbara, was married to John Lyddall, son of Captain George Lyddall, who commanded a fort on the Mattaponi River in Virginia. George Lyddall, son of Sir Thomas Lyddall, had patented land in New Kent in 1654, and thus the Lyddalls could be considered one of the earliest families in Virginia.[5] Guy Smith might also have had relatives

who preceded him into Virginia. There are records of Smith families in the area where Guy Smith settled, but the common surname of Smith and later destruction of records has made definite identification difficult. Yet, there are enough surviving records to maintain a suspicion that there were Smith relatives in Virginia.

Once decided upon immigrating to Virginia, the three probably informed the Bishop of England of their individual "willingness to become a missionary to the colony. The (applicant) produced his letters of orders and testimonials as to character, together with an order on the treasurer for the sum of twenty pounds, to defray the expenses of the Voyage. On his arrival in the colony he applied to the governor, or to the parishioners of some (vacant) parish and sometimes to both." [6]

Queen Anne had established a "fund, the so-called Queen Anne's Bounty...that authorized gifts to clergy willing to travel to the colonies." [7] This fund may have helped the three young men on their way to Virginia.

Ministers had been coming to the Virginia colony from the days of the old Virginia Company, before Virginia became a Royal colony. Like the rest of the settlers in the early days, ministers experienced a very high death rate, but the Virginia Company had screened applicants and sent the best of the volunteers. The Virginia Company "created parishes in each of its settlements, set aside glebe lands to provide income, and directed that glebe [8] houses and churches be built." [9] During that period, the company claimed the right to appoint the ministers of the churches.

During the ensuing years, the vestries of the churches in England and in the colonies were changing and

acquiring new duties and powers. By 1643 Virginia vestries had the right to select their rectors. Once selected by a church vestry and presented to the colonial governor, the governor could only remove a minister. To get around this, vestries would hire a minister only for a year at a time and not present the minister to the governor, thus maintaining control of their churches. In practice most vestries renewed the one-year contracts with their ministers on a regular basis.^[10] Another new development was the appointment of a commissary or representative of the Bishop of London to the colony of Virginia. The bishop appointed James Blair, who was very successful in providing leadership for the Anglican Church in Virginia.

It is plausible that James Bowker preceded his brother, Ralph, and Guy Smith to Virginia. In 1690 a “Mr. Booker preached once in the Lower Church of Christ Church Parish, Middlesex

County...during a vacancy.”^[11] By 1700 the three young ministers were established in Virginia churches. On the neck between the Rappahannock and York rivers and across the river from Williamsburg were Gloucester County, King and Queen County and Mathews County. In Gloucester County, Guy Smith was the rector of the Abingdon Parish, while in neighboring King and Queen County, Ralph Bowker was the rector at St. Stephen’s Parish. The elder of the Bowker brothers, James, was rector at Kingston Parish in Mathews County (1690–1703) which is just east of Gloucester County. Later James Bowker was also rector at St. Peter’s Parish in New Kent County from 1698 until his death in 1703.

It would be a mistake to think that all Virginia clergy were of the highest caliber. The colony in its early days was a rough frontier and this was reflected in the ministers as well as in the settlers. Like most of colonial society then, there was a great deal of drinking. Alcohol abuse was a serious problem throughout America until the late nineteenth century.

In the upper class society of colonial Virginia, there was a great deal of drinking, card playing, horseracing and dancing. This was common and expected. It is rather interesting that lower classes were barred from placing bets, perhaps with the good intention of preventing impoverishment, but with the effect of class stratification. Since the clergy were of the upper class in colonial Virginia, they acted accordingly and partook of the same recreations.

Still, the colonial clergy had definite duties, which included the usual ministering, serving as parish clerk and tending the parish school. It was the function of the churches to take care of the poor and provide training for an occupation. The glebe schools were basically the public schools of the time. Children of the local gentry, however, did not receive their education from the glebe schools, but were tutored privately by the parish priest.

Another duty was dealing with the parish glebe. By law “every vestry was to provide a glebe of two hundred or more acres...and this glebe be put into the possession of the incumbent minister whether he had been inducted into the rectorship or was employed by the vestry on a yearly tenure.” ^[12] Through the production of the

lands, the parish glebes were supposed to provide funds for the parishes. Some glebes, however, consisted of poor land and were, therefore, useless as a source of funds for parish expenses. The rectors were paid in tobacco the “cash” of the colony, for performing the parish duties. Like poor glebe lands, however, sometimes the rectors were paid in worthless tobacco and sometimes not paid at all.

James Bowker in 1697 won a judgment “against William Underwood, one of the Church wardens of Sittingbourne Parish, in Richmond County for the sum of 3699 lbs. of tobacco, being the balance of his maintenance in the year 1696.” [\[13\]](#) In 1703 Ralph Bowker, as executor of the estate of his

brother, James Bowker, had to sue the estate of Captain Arthur Spicer for “Seven thousand Eight hundred pounds of tobbo” [\[14\]](#) due to his brother for his services as a parish rector.[\[15\]](#)

Records during the colonial period are sparse, but those that remain show that Guy Smith seems to have taken part in the colony’s affairs. March 31, 1703, Guy joined James Clack in a petition to the General Assembly, asking for laws preventing slaves from being worked on Sundays.[\[16\]](#) A few days later on April 2, 1703, after being elected one of the Governors of William and Mary College, Guy took the oaths of office and subscribed the test necessary for the position.

The establishment of William and Mary College was the proposal of Commissioner James Blair, who planned to educate young colonial males for the ministry as well as educating native Indians. In the end the plan to educate the Indians did not bear out, but the school was successful in educating young Virginian men in colonial years.

All during the early 1700s, Guy Smith and Ralph Bowker were acquiring personal wealth as were many fellow members of the colonial elite. By 1704 Guy was taxed on 30 acres of land,[\[17\]](#) but when the land laws were revised in 1705 he had the opportunity to acquire more. With the revision of the land laws in 1705, an immigrant into Virginia was entitled to 50 acres of land, plus 50 acres more for his wife and 50 acres for each child in the family. The emigrant could sell this importation right patent to another, and it appears that in return for passage money some emigrants turned over their importation rights.[\[18\]](#) In just one year (1711) Guy Smith had five importation rights. The importation rights shown for Guy mean that he transported five new colonists into Virginia. These five were Anne Margen (or Morgan), Joshua Orrid, Elizabeth, John and Abraham Clowder. With these five importation rights and five shillings, Guy received 250 acres of land in King and Queen County.[\[19\]](#)



Adapted from a map prepared by Rev. A. Leb. Ribble, 1933 for *The Register of Abingdon Parish, Gloucester County, Virginia, 1677-1780.*

In 1711 Guy also had two Treasury rights. This type of patent dealt with vacant lands. A person who wanted to take up land had to pay five shillings for every 50 acres of land with a limit of 500 acres unless he “owned five or more tithable servants or slaves.” [20] With either the importation rights patent or the treasury patent it was necessary to pay a “fee rent of one shilling for every fifty acres...and that the premises be seated and planted within three years of the date of the grant. This fee rent...was the so-called quit rent.” [21] “Seated and planted” meant that the land had to have a building of a wooden house, which frequently was a log cabin, of 12 feet square and the clearing and tending of one acre of land. If the settler did not do this, the land could be considered vacant, and after three years another could take up the land in the original settler’s place. For five more shillings Guy received 320 acres in the same area as his 250 acres acquired under the importation rights patent. This gave Guy a total of 570 acres. By 1719 Guy had enough personal wealth to own seven slaves.[22]

Ralph Bowker also seems to have achieved professional and personal success. On March 27, 1704, Ralph Bowker’s church in King and Queen county, St. Stephen’s, reported, “Mr. Ralph Booker (sic) our present Minister, who hath long officiated to the Generall Satisfaction of the Pish.” [23]

St. Stephen’s vestry wrote this statement in response to a solicitation by Virginia’s Governor Francis Nicholson. The previous year, in 1703, “at the request of Commissary Blair, Sir Edward Northey, Attorney-General of England, had rendered a formal opinion in which he stated vestries of the several parishes in Virginia had the right to select the ministers whom they desired to serve as rectors of the parishes.” [24] Northey’s opinion, however, stated that the ministers had to be presented to the governor for induction into the rectorship. If that was not done, then the governor had the right to appoint a minister for the parish.

Governor Nicholson instructed that the opinion issued be sent to all the parishes to be discussed by the vestries, who were to report back to him as to the enforcement of the opinion. Logically, the vestries preferred not to present their ministers to the governor.

This is not to say that Ralph Bowker was without critics. In a letter from Benjamin Harrison in Virginia to Philip Ludwell in London in 1703, Harrison wrote, “Coll’ (Colonel) Leigh fell from his horse lately and cracked his Scull and is dead. Tis said he was Drunk at Parson Bookers of the Sabbath

Unbroken

day, and going home happed'd to that Accident.”[25] It appears that the image of Ralph Bowker was that he was a “gay and wealthy gentleman.”[26]

Certainly Ralph Bowker was accumulating wealth. In 1718 Ralph petitioned for and received a grant of 2,300 acres in King and Queen County that had lapsed.[27] One year later in 1719, Ralph petitioned for 4,000 acres lying in both King and Queen County and Essex County.[28] In the same year Ralph acquired eight importation rights for importing George Inson, William Wilks, Joane Harrell, Mary Jackson, James Joyeux, Thomas Wasley, Thomas Martin and John Kauffman as new settlers. For these importation rights Ralph received 400 acres in King William County. Also in 1719 Ralph imported John Stone, Sharshall (sic) Grasty, John Skaife, Thomas Russell, William Lucas, Thomas Duerson, John Benson and John Lewis as new settlers and gained another 400 acres also in King William County for his efforts.

The next year in 1719 Guy Smith and Ralph Bowker were members of a convention of the clergy that assembled at William and Mary College. The meeting was called as a result of the attempt of Commissioner James Blair to oust Governor Francis Nicholson. Blair had traveled to England to campaign against Nicholson and to gain support for his attempt to remove the governor of the colony. Most of the clergy, including Guy Smith and Ralph Bowker, supported the governor, and during the convention of the clergy said so. The clergymen’s support was for naught and the ouster of Governor Nicholson was successful. Back in England an English satirist was prompted by the events to write a negative portrayal of the Virginia clergymen who supported Nicholson. Two of the “descriptions” were of Ralph Bowker and Guy Smith. While these are surely biased descriptions of these two men, nevertheless, it is interesting to have these tiniest of glimpses of them. The first is about Ralph Bowker.

Corah comes next, that sturdy Swain,
 A bawling Pulpit hector,
 A Preacher of Hugh Peters’ vein
 That Sacred writ can twist & strain,
 To flatter his Protector.
 A sot abandoned to his Paunch,
 Prophane without temptation,
 Who, flames of jealousy to quench,

Creeps in a Corner with his wench,

And makes retaliation.” [\[29\]](#)

A footnote identifies “Corah” as Ralph Bower and “his Protector” as Nicholson. “When he (Bowker) goes abroad a drinking” the author observed in an aside “ ‘he makes his wife sit with him, amongst the men, tho’ perhaps there are several women at the same house of her acquaintance’ .”

The next “description” concerns Guy Smith:

“Fainthearted Smith like Aesop’s bat,

Both Birds & Beasts reject him

With his blue vest & Cock’d up hat,

He signed & threatened God knows what

But now pleads non est factum.” [\[30\]](#)

The names of the wives of Ralph Bowker and Guy Smith and when the marriages took place are unknown. A well thought of woman of colonial Virginia was “invisible,” hidden in the shadow of her husband or other male family members. This is not to say that a wife did not exert influence, sometimes powerfully, but she did so in covert ways. The effect of this attitude means that there are few records of women from colonial Virginia. Probably Guy Smith did not marry until after he settled in Abingdon Parish in Gloucester County, Virginia, since it was there that his children were born. This marriage most likely took place around 1699 as the first child was born in 1701. Guy and his wife [\[31\]](#) had at least nine children according to the register of the Abingdon Parish church:

1. John Smith (1701)

2. Guy Smith (1704)
3. Baby boy Smith (1706)
4. Mary Smith (1708)
5. Joanna Smith (28 May 1710)
6. Ann Smith (27 Sept 1713)
7. Susannah Smith (10 July 1715)
8. Constantine Smith (16 Sept 1717)
9. Lawrence Smith (16 Sept 1719)

A chart of Ralph Bowker's children prepared by George H.S. King of Virginia lists five children. There is a strong possibility, Mr. King noted, that Ralph's wife was a member of the King and Queen County Bird family.

1. Byrd Bowker
2. Achilles Bowker
3. Catherine Bowker
4. Ann Bowker
5. Paramenas Bowker

Guy Smith died in about 1720 at approximately 45 years of age. The next year Governor Alexander Spotswood wrote to the Bishop of London and reported Guy's death.[\[32\]](#)

Four years later, Thomas Hughes, who succeeded Guy as rector of Abingdon Parish, reported the average number of communicants to be 60 to 70 with 300 families being members and that attendance was good. There was a free school endowed with 500 acres, three slaves, cattle and household goods. He occupied the glebe house (rectory) which was cared for by the vestry.[\[33\]](#) Since this was a short time after Guy died, it is presumably a good indication of what the parish was like in the last years of his service there.

In 1724 the minister at St. Stephens in King and Queen County reported to the Bishop of London that he had been rector of the parish for two years. It thus appears that Ralph Bowker continued as rector of St. Stephens at least until 1722 when the new minister would have taken over the post. Over a quarter of a century after the death of Guy Smith, Ralph Bowker died in King and Queen County. Ralph lived a long and successful life until his death about 1748 at about age 77. The Smith and Bowker families had a similar history from England to Virginia. Now their history was destined to continue through two of their children when Ann Bowker a daughter of Ralph Bowker, and John Smith, the eldest son of the Rev. Guy Smith, were married August 7, 1723[\[34\]](#).

^[1] Weis, Frederick Lewis. *The Colonial Clergy of Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina*, Boston, Massachusetts, n.p., 1955, p. 47.

^[2] Prichard, Robert W. *History of the Episcopal Church*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991, p. 4.

^[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

[4] Dabney, Virginius. *Virginia, the New Dominion*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971, p. 88.

[5] Harris, Malcolm H., *Old New Kent County, Some Account of the Planters, Plantations and Places in New Kent County*, volume 1. West Point, VA, 1977, p. 172–173; Records of Charles Johnson, 918 Golden Arrow Street, Great Falls, VA 22066.

[6] Hawks, Francis L. *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States of America*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1836, 1:87.

[7] Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church*., p. 27.

[8] Glebe lands were lands set aside for the parish to operate in order to obtain funds by which to operate the parish; glebe houses are the houses in which the rectors and their families lived.

[9] Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church*, p. 7.

[10] *Ibid.* p. 10.

[11] Christ Church Parish Vestry Book, p. 68; Brydon, George MacLean, *The Colonial Clergy of Virginia*, p. 11.

[12] Brydon, George Maclaren. *Virginia's Mother Church, and the Political Conditions Under Which It Grew*, Richmond, VA: Virginia Historical Society, 1957, p. 385.

[13] Virginia Historical Magazine, v. 39, p. 169; Brydon, George MacLaren. *The Colonial Clergy of Virginia; Addendum to Goodwin's List of Colonial Clergy of the Established Church*, p. 10.

[14] Virginia Colonial Abstracts, v. 14, King & Queen County records concerning 18th century people, 5th collection, p. 19.

[15] “At the end of the seventeenth century, legislation had been passed fixing the parsons' annual salary at 16,000 pounds of tobacco.” Dabney, *Virginia, the New Dominion*, p. 110.

[16] Bryon, George MacLaren, *Addendum to Goodwin's list of Colonial Clergy of the Established Church*, Richmond, VA, 1933, p. 73. (Exec. Journals Council of Colonial Virginia, II, 308).

[17] *Records of Colonial Gloucester County, Virginia*. v. 1. Compiled by Polly Cary Mason, p. 87.

[18] Kegley, F. B. *Kegley's Virginia Frontier, the Beginning of the Southwest; the Roanoke of Colonial Days, 1740–1783*. Roanoke, VA: The Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938, p. 54.

[19] *Cavaliers and Pioneers*. Patent Book No. 10, p. 123. “Guy Smith, Clerk of the Co. of ——(Gloucester?);

320 acs. (N.L.) K. & Q. Co; 19 Dec. 1711, p. 47. 184 acs. in the old Store Neck below Mr. Fortson's old store, where Mr. William Leigh, son of Col. William Leigh, hath a Quarter on the W. side of Great Harquake Cr., in St. Stephen's Par; the other tract in Stratton Major Par, bet. the Gr. Harquake & the Little (Harquake) Cr. on the N. side of Mattapony Riv; on Mr. Story's Mill Road, to up side of the Bridge.

[20] Kegley, F. B. *Kegley's Virginia Frontier*, p. 54.

[21] Ibid.

[22] *The Register of Abingdon Parish, Gloucester County, Virginia, 1677–1780*. Compiled by Robert W. Robins. Arlington, VA: Hanford House, 1981, p. 224.

[23] Ibid. p. 526.

[24] Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, p. 517.

[25] Virginia Colonial Abstracts, v. 8, King & Queen County, p. 30.

[26] Chart drawn by George H.S. King, Bowker folder, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

[27] Virginia Colonial Abstracts, v. 14, King and Queen County records concerning 18th century people. 5th collection, p. 15.

[28] Bryon, *Addendum to Goodwin's List of Colonial Clergy of the Established Church*, p. 11; Executive Journals Council of Colonial Virginia, III, 504 on May 2, 1719; see also III, 598.

[29] Rouse Jr., Parke, *James Blair of Virginia*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 19, p. 65.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[31] Based on English naming patterns in the Smith and other families, it is possible that the wife of Rev. Guy Smith was named Elizabeth. While this couple did not name any daughter Elizabeth, several of their children had daughters named Elizabeth.

[32] Brydon, *Virginia's Mother church*, p. 72.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 363

[34] Source of exact marriage date is Jim Robertson, descendant of Bird Smith, Jr. in 1998*id.*, p. 363