

**Peter Jett
1633-1688**

Father Peter

The best place to begin at the beginning is at the beginning. For a study of Jett tales in America, we need to begin with Peter Jett. Some family sources refer to him as "Peter Jett-the Immigrant." Peter appears to be the ancestor of many of the Jetts in the Colonies. Most sources believe that he was born in 1633 in London, England.

There is good reason to believe that the Jett family was associated with the Triplett family in England. Peter's wife was Mary Felt Triplett (1634-1676), who was a sister of Francis Triplett who came to America. Apparently the Triplett family and the Jett Family came to Virginia about the same time which was sometime prior to 1665. Most sources believe that the children of Peter and Mary are William, Francis, Peter, Mary, Martha and John. We believe there is a record of William being born on May 5, 1653 in Oxfordshire, England. Most records show that only John Jett was born in America with the other children being born in England.

We do not know the exact date that Peter and his family came to Virginia. We believe that it may have been in 1663. Certainly their arrival was prior to February 1665. We can conclude this because of a will dated February 14, 1665 by Thomas Johnson leaving a calf to Peter Jett's oldest daughter.

We do not know the exact ship that Peter and his family took nor the port from which they left and the port where they landed. Many ships left from South Hampton in England. There were a number of ports in Virginia where they might have landed including ports at Leedstown, Port Royal and Tappahannock on the Rapahannock River.

The voyage over was generally a long trip taking somewhere between 7 to 10 weeks.

To put matters in perspective, Jamestown, Virginia was settled in 1607 and the Mayflower Pilgrims had landed at Plymouth, MA in 1620. Also in 1653 New Amsterdam was incorporated by the Dutch with 800 residents. In 1664, the Dutch turned New Amsterdam over to the British who renamed the city New York. In 1665, there were about 75,000 English Colonists in the New World.

The Headright System

Virginia needed to encourage people to emigrate to it due to the fact that it was largely undeveloped, had difficult living conditions, disease and frequent Indian attacks. One of the ways that the Virginia Company encouraged development was by employing a headright system by which an emigrant could receive the right to 50 acres of property for each person who he had paid the transportation costs to come to Virginia. One obtained the headrights by going to the county court and proving you had paid the costs. You were next granted a certificate proving that you had paid the costs and that certificate was then approved by the Secretary of the Colony. A survey was performed and the Secretary then prepared a copy of a deed and once approved by the Governor it was then sent to the person making the claim of the property.

Due to the fact that paperwork was sloppy and there was pervasive corruption by officials, there were many abuses. Sometimes a captain of a ship might claim all of his passengers and the passengers often made claims. Corrupt officials and other well placed people on occasion would make claims each time they left and returned to the Colony. In short, the system was frequently abused.

Apparently the Jetts and the Triplets also engaged in this abuse with the Peter Jett making claims for some of the Triplett family and the Triplett family making claim for some of the Jetts. So much for the integrity of our forefathers. However, since the Headrights often named the people who came over, it can be a decent source for getting a feel for who made the voyage over to the Colonies. On the same day, January 21, 1666 both Peter Jett and Francis Triplett got patents for land. Included in Peter's grant of 600 acres were Francis and Alice Triplett. Likewise, in the grant of 1050 acres to Francis Triplett on the same day were Peter Jett, Will (William?) Jett, Peter Jr. (Jett?), Mary Jett, and Martha Jett. We also know that in September 1666, Peter bought another 200 acres of land.

The land granted to Peter Jett and Francis Triplett was in the North part of Virginia in Rappahannock County not too far from Leedstown. The land granted to Peter was about five miles from the North shore of the Rappahannock River.



The Northern Neck

The land was located in what is called "The Northern Neck." A peninsula was called a "Neck" in Virginia. The Northern Neck includes the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, King George and Westmoreland. These properties came out of a massive grant given by English King Charles II of the land between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers consisting of about 5 million acres. The grant was made while Charles II was in exile in France but became much more real when King Charles II was restored to the English throne in 1660. In particular the Jett property was in Westmoreland County which was part of the Northern Neck and which was the home of such famous people in American History as George Washington, James Monroe, Francis Lightfoot Lee and Richard Henry Lee. Washington's birth place was about 12 miles from Leedstown, which at the time of the Jett settlement

was known as Rappahannock. In 1678 it became known as Bray's Warf or Bray's Church and in 1742 Leeds and later it was renamed Leedstown.

The main industry in the Rappahannock Area was tobacco farming which was labor intensive and which horribly encouraged the expansion of the use of indentured servitude and slave labor. Tobacco was also a medium of exchange or currency and land and other items were sold for tobacco. In addition, taxes which were ever present including Colonial taxes to support Virginia government and armies were payable in tobacco. Tobacco quickly exhausted the soil and therefore required large tracts of land. Local ports for the tobacco included Leedstown and Tappahannock also known at various times as Hobb's Hole and New Plymouth. By 1680, Virginia required warehouses to be installed at Port Towns.

Indian Raids-1675-1676

The relationship between the English Colonists and the Indians deteriorated. Most Colonies had tribes with which they considered to be allies and others which were not. In addition, the Colonists did not have a good understanding of the many tribes, their relationships or their languages. The multiplicity of tribes and the relationships and alliances were not always clear. Further, the Colonists did not always treat the Indians with integrity and honesty. To me, it appears that the Indians came to conclude that no colonist could be trusted and the colonists seemed incapable of discriminating between "good" Indians and "bad" Indians.

The distrust eventually led to what is known as "King Philip's War." This war goes under a group of different names including First Indian War, Metacom's War, Metacomet's War, Pometacomet's Rebellion and Metacom's Rebellion. This war primarily occurred in the New England area. It began when Metacom, a Wampanoag chief, attacked the Plymouth Colony in 1675 for the hanging of three Wampanoags for the murder of another Wampanoag. The war quickly expanded to Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Maine with atrocities being committed by all involved. The end result was that at least twelve of the area's towns were destroyed, the economies of the Plymouth and Rhode Island were ruined, half of New England's towns had been attacked by Indians and one tenth of the men available for military service were killed.

Not surprisingly there was not much trust between Virginia Colonists and Indians during this period. Indeed, in 1675 events began to develop in the Northern Neck. The Doeg Indians believed that they had been cheated by plantation owner Thomas Matthews whose plantation was in the County of Northumberland just south of Westmoreland County where the Jetts lived. According to Matthews one of his men, Robert Hen, had been attacked with a tomahawk and in return had killed one Indian assailant. Before dying the attacked man had said "Doegs, Doegs." Apparently some militia were sent out to pursue the Indians under a Colonel Mason who ended up killing about fourteen Susquehannock Indians by mistake thus inflaming the situation.



Early Picture of
A Susquehannock Indian

At the same time, Maryland had sent out their militia under Major Thomas Truman against the Susquehannock Indians due to incidents in Maryland. Maryland asked for assistance and Colonel John Washington, the great grandfather of George Washington, assisted with his men despite being ordered not to take any action by Virginia's Governor. Major Thomas had already taken as captive five of their chiefs who had been sent out as envoys from the tribes. Apparently as the Indians were proceeding to identify some of their dead who were dressed in the clothes belonging to the Colonists, they were clubbed to death by some of the Maryland troops. Major Truman was later impeached for this cruelty but exonerated. Susquehannock Indians later escaped from the fort where they were camped and incited other tribes to attack the whites.

All of these activities resulted in repeated Indian attacks of the Northern Neck Region of Virginia. At least sixty people were killed during these attacks along with many injuries. There was about a twenty mile area where every home was burned down. Settlers gathered at the larger homes to defend themselves and only went out in groups. Others fled to other parts of Virginia. The majority who were killed and injured were settlers who were often attacked at home by larger bands of Indians.



Map Showing Location of
Susquehannock Tribes and
Westmoreland County and Rappahannock River

The Jetts and the Triplettts were in the area attacked. Although some can be identified as surviving due to legal documents, we do not know for sure who in the Jett and Triplett families died or were injured due to the Indian attacks. We do know that Peter, Peter Jr. and William survived. We also know that Francis Triplett survived.

Bacon's Rebellion (1676-1677)

The response to the Indian Invasions in Virginia were almost as bad as the invasions themselves. The Governor of Virginia, William Berkeley, took the position that Virginia should defend itself by building a number of defensive fortifications. Further, Berkeley, took the position that Virginia should not be hasty and enflame Indian Tribes which were at peace with Virginia. Virginian's who wanted to take a much stronger position against the Indians and take a more offensive, rather than defensive position, rallied around a young charismatic nobleman, Nathaniel Bacon. Eventually Virginia, and its legislature, The House of Burgess, became more and more divided with the supporters of Bacon claiming Berkeley was rewarding his supporters and friends with contracts for building the fortifications and with the fortifications being conveniently located near the properties of the Berkeley supporters.

Bacon's supporters raised their own militia and Berkeley raised an army to stand against Bacon.. Some have viewed Bacon's actions to be a preliminary reaction of the colonists to English authority and gentry. However, the majority of scholars today believe that Berkeley and Bacon were simply two individuals who were jockeying for power in early Virginia. Bacon instead of protecting the Virginians

against marauding Indians ended up using his followers to possess Jamestown. In addition the followers of Bacon also attacked and burnt down the properties of Col. John Washington, who supported Berkeley and others. For his part, Berkeley raised an army to fight against Bacon and his followers. Ultimately, the young Bacon died in 1676 from typhus and the "rebellion" against Berkeley collapsed. Berkeley ended up trying and hanging some of the leaders of the rebellion.

Meanwhile the Indian Wars had run their course and ships arrived bringing additional royal troops. An investigation was later carried out and Governor Berkeley later died in London before he had the opportunity to make his defense before the King.

Virginia remained a difficult place to live. It was a society where disease continued to be a grave threat. Politically, there was corruption and disunity. There continued to be a very real threat of Indian attacks. Meanwhile, one of the main crops continued to be tobacco which required a substantial amount of land and required intensive labor resulting in the continued growth of the terrible institution of slavery. The Jetts and Triplets would continue to be in the Northern Neck area and would participate both in the Revolutionary War on side of the Colonies and in the War of Succession ("Civil War") where they generally fought on the side of the Confederacy.