

## LOUISA COUNTY TWO CENTURIES AGO — 1782

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The surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781 marked the end of fighting, but the Revolutionary War remained unsettled, officially, throughout 1782. Louisa residents continued to be involved with actions prompted by the war. The County Court of April 1782, for example, renewed public service claims. The court members included Thomas Johnson, Waddy Thomson, Charles Yancey, Henry Garrett, Richard Anderson, and Turner Anderson. Some of the claimants were Mrs. Susanna Arnet, Matthew Anderson, Bartolett Anderson, Michael Anderson, Wingfield Cosby, John Field, Senr. and John Moss, each of whom filed claims for beef supplied to troops. Matthew Anderson filed a claim for pasturing a horse. Claims were filed by John Winston, John Armstrong, George Adams and Wilson Adams for providing guns, and by John Parker for a musket. William Shelton filed for reimbursement for corn furnished to the troops.

Government surplus was a problem for the Revd. John Todd who owned a mill on the Southanna River known as Todd's Mill and later, as Payne's Mill. Mr. Todd wrote a letter dated 30th May '82 to Col. William Davies in Richmond. He said, ". . . There are a couple of waggon loads of public flower (sic) packed up since last fall in my mill, which I never could get the Commissary to order away with the others. It lies in my way, and is in danger of spoiling and perhaps wanted: I wish it ordered away for the use of the public."

Sixty-five freeholders in the county felt a problem existed because of the "gaming" youth in the county and found a solution in the military. These freeholders petitioned the General Assembly to pass a law "punishing every Gamester by obliging him on conviction to serve as a Soldier in the Continental line for one year or during the present war. . ." They went on to indicate they would not have petitioned the Assembly but for "the great excess of gaming among the youth who eagerly are pursuing this practice [which] will plunge them into corruption of morals and every kind of Dissipation, unless some wise and solutary Law be enacted to check that destructive practice." The petition, dated June 11th, was referred to the next session with the notation "(Reasonable) draw bill."

Another group of freeholders was concerned about the military preparedness of the county and state. In their petition to the General Assembly they expressed great satisfaction with the early war effort:

“That at the commencement of the War the State of Virginia exerted itself with spirit and virtue worthy of the Cause. . . , our Troops were rapidly raised and behaved in the field with undisputed and applauded courage, we cheerfully imported arms and ammunition proportioned to our necessities, at large expence; and thought nothing too much that promised to favour the publick interest. . . .”

The petitioners expressed concern about

“how widely we have deviated. . . it appears to us a very Capital and unaccountable neglect, that the militia of the state have not been kept well armed. . . the publick arms have been thrown into magazines and suffered to rust and become unfit for use, or exposed to be destroyed by the Enemy or any sudden invasions, or shifted from hand to hand till entirely lost, or detained for public use; the private arms have been pressed from the Owners and sent off to share the fate of the former; while the inhabitants at home have been left naked and exposed. . . .”

The petition continued at length to portray a deplorable state of military defenselessness and to extol the virtue of preparedness. The proposed remedy was to

“order such measures to be immediately adopted for arming the militia and for enforcing a regular and serious attention to the military exercise as may be thought best and for supplying, if possible, our deficiency of men in the Continental army. When this shall be done, there is nothing in our power that we will not Cheerfully Contribute, when Called upon to Carry your measures into Execution; and as in duty Bound shall every pray &c.”

In January 1782, Thomas Darricott set in motion action to compete with the Revd. John Todd for the grist mill business along the Southanna River. At the County Court held on Monday 14th January, Darricott set forth “that he hath mind to build a water mill across the south Fork of Pamunkey River and having land only one side thereof opposite to the Land of James Johnson pray that an acre of the said Johnson’s Land may be laid off for such use.”

Thomas Darricott is probably the Capt. Thomas Darrocott who was taxed for 600 acres of land in 1782. Two James Johnsons appear

in the tax records. One is designated as holding land on Contrary Creek; the other is differentiated by a "Q" after his name which probably indicates Quaker. It appears that the later Johnson was Darrocott's neighbor across the river.

The largest plantations in Louisa County in 1782, according to the tax records, were 6000 acres each. One of the tracts was held by Col. John Syme; the other, by Dudley Digges of Hanover County. Other large tracts were owned by John Mayo (3000 acres), William Morris (2522 acres), Christopher Smith (4152 acres), and Revd. John Todd (2300 acres). The smallest tract taxed in 1782 was four acres owned by William Wash, Jr. Wash owned several other tracts also. Other small pieces of property were owned by William Bradbourn (26 acres) and Micajah Harris (30 acres).

Marriage licenses were granted to twenty-nine couples in Louisa County in 1782. Five each were issued in February, June, and November. None was issued in July and August. Among the couples were Peter Crawford and Betsey Shelton, Stephen Terry and Mildred Bagby, David Bullock and Jane Terry, Capt. Richard White and Mary Meriwether, and William Douglas and Elizabeth Burras. The last couple were the noted Revd. William Douglas and his second wife who was 47 years his junior.

The year marked no major event in the County. The activities of its residents are of interest two hundred years later primarily because of the insight gained into the lives of our forebears.

References:

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