

The Arlington Connection - 2001

BY WARREN CLARDY

Prologue

This is the story of how the name "Arlington" came from antiquity to world-class recognition, how it spread from England via a single location in America so that now a majority of states have a zip-coded city, and big cities have streets, called Arlington. Three more trips across the ocean and nearly a decade of work have finally resolved the issues left hanging in the original "The Arlington Connection" (*Arlington Historical Society Magazine*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1989). The plot, involving historical controversy, makes some unexpected discoveries in the course of setting the record straight. The dilemma became how to correct the old name myth without starting another with Buckingham Palace. Some of this has been disclosed orally at various AHS (VA) meetings and our Speakers Program. Now it is timely with this Bicentennial to document highlights of the definitive history of the Arlington name.

First, a brief word to qualify for your attention and tell about methods used to collect, analyze, and produce this article. The expanding nature and duration of the collection phase only seemed to create more mountains of notes covering: 1920s when parents took me to dedication of original Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and trips down the Chesapeake Bay including pre-restoration Jamestown and Williamsburg; participation in Arlington Celebrations in '39, '57, and '76; then when I started AHS Life Membership and participation in activities such as publicity, program, president and then tenure in the Speakers Bureau and charter member of Jamestown Settlers; finally, expansion and explosion as trips to England started. Many thanks to librarians from the hidden gate at Mt. Vernon to the British Museum and Westminster Library in London. Visits to eleven Elderhostel colleges ranged all over the United Kingdom, each with its own specialized material plus a 50 volume set of the complete British County Histories compiled as a memorial to Queen Victoria.

The daunting task of evaluation and organization was only possible after linking a laptop to a big computer. Each bit of pertinent data was coded as appropriate with When, Where, or Who and then sorted into multiple timelines, and then streamlined to one simple narrative outline. Simple, because of a bold experiment in bringing the smooth flow of oral history to the printed version without footnotes, and using geographical connections by water as a way of channeling the logical flow of narrative. Significant references are incorporated directly in the text. Other data can be taken as granted, or rejected as you see fit

— tedious footnotes would never have been read or, at my age, written. However, as with all good historical articles, corrections or comments are welcome. Thus prepared let us begin.

Our county has many unique advantages, particularly in raising children, where your son can receive a generous Christmas bonus from a red-vested Chief Justice for a long-walk morning paper or your daughter can exchange notes with a classmate about improved super training for her father before he becomes the first American astronaut to see the full extent of how water is a universal connector. NASA space photos show the Chesapeake Bay watershed stretching all the way north to Ithaca NY. The Indian Chief Powhatan was head of thirty-two tribes organized in a chiefdom, or loosely, empire, extending from the Potomac to the James Rivers, and centering on a giant ancient crater created millions of years ago. Fact and fable mingle with a John Smith, who in 1608 was the first Englishman to sail past the future Potomac-Arlington site, and Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas, whose life travels (1595-1617) range from tributaries of Chesapeake Bay across the Atlantic Ocean, up the Thames to London, England. Adapted from material by Nancy Egloff, Research Historian, Jamestown Settlement, these journeys can serve as both a foreword and orientation for our story of the Arlington name.

A large monument marks her claimed birthplace at the tribal reservation on the Pamunkey River some thirty miles away from Jamestown and meeting with John Smith. Some time after "saving" his life she was at the village of the Potowmacks when a Captain Argall, searching for supplies far up the Potomac River, lured her on board as a hostage for release of some captive settlers. Canny Powhatan, whose "smarts" Pocahontas must have inherited, delayed for a while and then saw that she would have to be treated well and waited. Pocahontas became a ward of a Rev. Whitaker on the James River, where she was educated and dressed like the settlers, and met and married a tobacco planter, John Rolfe, at a wedding attended by her family. Virginia Governor Dale saw the merit of this union and persuaded the couple to go along on a recruiting trip across the ocean to England, where she was received as royalty by Queen Anne and James I and saw her "forever countryman" John Smith again. Rolfe, who had been appointed Secretary of the Colony, was anxious to return but unfortunately, Pocahontas got sick from stay in crowded city and died. The first issue of our magazine, in 1956, tells how Arlington people have visited her grave at St. George's Church, Gravesend, just down the Thames River from London. Despite the Hollywood twisted version, Pocahontas was a remarkable woman who did much to foster interracial understanding, so much so that even today many Virginians are proud to be among her descendants. George Washington Parke Custis, builder of Potomac-Arlington, wrote his best-

known play, "Pocahantas," to honor her memory. It was performed first in 1830, and more recently at an Arlington Historical Society annual banquet.

Quest

We pick up this part of our story on the south shore of the Potomac River opposite the Capitol of the United States. At another 200th anniversary in 1976, C.B. Rose, in her definitive, *Arlington County, Virginia: A History* (Baltimore: Arlington Historical Society, 1976) describes the problem in her "Introduction: Why 'Arlington'?" We know that our county name came from the Potomac Custis estate which was named after the original 17th century homestead in Northampton County on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay. The question is, how did that name come across the ocean to Virginia?

Rose says, "According to tradition, the Custis who settled in Northampton County named his estate for Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, who had been his patron. This connection rests upon the mid-19th Century account of Bishop Meade who tells of a John Custis...a favorite of Lord Arlington in the time of Charles II, after whom he called his estate Arlington on the Eastern Shore, which he received by his first wife." Since there was a Lord Arlington who was Secretary of State and Colonial Minister, this has been quoted as the authority even in our current publications. However, because there was no evidence of how this patronage occurred, Rose raises questions of timing and the need to search further for alternative explanations. Unfortunately, she died shortly after and her questions have become my "Quest." With the information now available since my last effort, perhaps timeline technology can bring this to a conclusion.

First, before tracing the Custis roots, an acknowledgment to the scholarship of James B. Lynch Jr. (Ph.D. Harvard), whose effort to untangle and assemble his own Custis roots made major discoveries and provided a most valuable comprehensive resource. I got the first of two volumes of the "Custis Chronicles" from Picton Press, Rockport, ME, just before leaving for our third trip to England and found it could eliminate my previous tedious citations to a multitude of primary references.

Our story resumes with an Edmund Custis married to the daughter of John Smithier of Arlington, Bibury, in the county (shire) of Gloucester, England, northwest of London in the famed Cotswolds about 30 miles west of Oxford. When Smithier's will was proved in 1626, Edmund's son Henry and some siblings found economic advantage in moving to the United Provinces, where John Custis II was born, a Dutch native in the seaport town of Rotterdam, where he became a successful trader. When Argoll Yardley, son of a former Virginia governor, came to sell a cargo of tobacco sometime before 1649, he met and married

Anne Custis and brought her and her brother John Custis II back to the Eastern Shore. The first wife, Elizabeth, of John Custis II died in 1652 after birth of his only surviving child, John Custis III. In 1656 he married a three-time widow, Alicia Burdette Traveller Walker, which led him to obtain some 500 acres around Old Plantation Creek, where the Arlington graveyard is now located. Custis also obtained another 300 adjacent acres to complete a big plantation.

In Virginia he had success in both land and tobacco; however, with onset of the First Anglo-Dutch War in 1652, he began to suffer from English law (Navigation Act) prohibiting trade by foreigners. What irony - his father had left England for economic opportunity in Holland, the same reason he had come to Virginia only to face discrimination. Governor William Berkeley, who had a leadership role for over thirty years in recruiting the elite of Virginia, had also kept them mindful of the benefits of the Dutch trade. The second biggest source of "high elite" in Virginia was Gloucester, England. Since Custis had never been there it was vital that he make Governor Berkeley aware of his roots in Arlington, only 20 miles away in Gloucester from the Governor's ancestral home, Berkeley Castle. When a relief measure passed by the Assembly in 1657 became effective, permitting persons of English descent to be naturalized after four years residence, Custis had named his plantation *Arlington*. In 1658, "Upon the petition of Jno Custis *shewing his English descent* [emphasis added], though of foreign birth..." the Assembly granted a Commission of Naturalization. If we could ever find such a thing as a return address for his petition it would double-clinch when this naming occurred.

Now to the other side of the argument. While I have seen some of the primary material, here again we are fortunate to have an author who has done a most comprehensive effort in assembly of the life story of "Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington." Much credit to Violet Barbour (Ph.D. Cornell), Instructor in History at Vassar, who in 1914, with guidance from two professors and a fellowship from Cornell University and another from Wellesley College, wrote her prize winning book published by the American Historical Association.

Bennet was born in 1618 in Suffolk, northeast of London, then raised at Harlington, Middlesex, on today's M-4, west of London near Heathrow Airport. As a second son, he was educated for the church and appeared destined to be parson of Harlington. However, after a Master of Arts at Oxford in 1642, he remained there when it became headquarters for Charles I before he was executed during the Civil War. In 1644 he left England for 17 years, doing various missions for the royal family in Europe until 1657, when he was knighted by the exiled Charles II, then sent as his agent to Spain. It was after the Restoration before he finally returned in 1661. At first his only job was as Master of the Bed Chamber, then the King gave him the Privy Purse, then in a play of palace

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politics he became a second Secretary of State and finally the chief official.

Although Lord Clarendon had arranged for him to become a member of the House of Commons, Bennet wanted the higher recognition of the House of Lords. Assured of approval, he hesitated long over the choice of several names. “Lord Bennet” would not do because of association with his grandfather, Sir John Bennet, who had been impeached, fined, and sentenced to a term in the Fleet for a major violation of trust. He finally settled on “Cheney,” a previous lord in a remote family line, but the College of Heralds heard objections, so he agreed to use his native village, “Harlington.”

A cockney error of a dropped “H” has been suggested, but what happened next had to be seen to be understood. A major portion of English archives, from the Norman Conquest on, are stored at the Public Records Office (PRO) in London. Granted permission to find the actual patent for the title, they then provided me a bromide of an ultraviolet scan for a mere eight pounds. The language is stilted and the handwriting like a prescription, but in part it says “Our Will...to Grant the Dignity of a Baron of this our Realm...Truly & Well beloved Counsellor.... Title of Henry Baron of Harlington...in Mdex...March 6, 1664/65.” An interline scribble through top of the big H might have been mistaken for a block A. In the margin where it was indexed, it looked like “Cheney” had been scratched out and the word “Arlington” written below. Bennet apparently accepted the accident as an improvement and became Lord Arlington.

Thus we find Custis with a plantation called Arlington in Virginia some seven years before Henry Bennet even knew he was to have an Arlington connection in England. Now comes the strange coincidence that Custis and Bennet both named their new dwellings “Arlington House” about the same time almost a decade later.

Although Commissioner Burdette had built a big house on the Eastern Shore long before he died in 1643, the dwelling that John now shared with Alicia was growing obsolete. Given the uncertainties of the early days it was not

practical to invest in permanent foundations; houses were constructed on posts sunk in the ground with a limited lifetime. With growing wealth Custis started around 1670 to add an even bigger brick house which he named "Arlington House," after the plantation. It was there that Custis was made a Major General in 1676 when Governor Berkeley sought temporary shelter for the government after being driven out of Jamestown during Bacon's Rebellion. Except as noted below, not much happened after that with respect to names (After almost 70 years with the same license number, VA1692, I am sensitized to number coincidences). Custis II finally resigned all his political appointments in 1692, four years before his death and burial at Arlington House. As the era of the beginning of Arlington on the Eastern Shore came to a close we see another era beginning, "In 1692...11 brave men were selected to serve on the Potomac Rangers," the small mobile Maryland-Virginia band that enabled the first effective settlement of the present Potomac Arlington area. As detailed in Dr. Lynch's Chronicles, it would be another 140 years, in 1832, before the last Custis finally got rid of the original plantation. Also, almost 300 years later, in 1980s, a developer built three model houses named "Arlington," "Custis," and "Berkeley" adjacent to the Custis gravesite.

There is one interesting sidelight that illustrates a water connection. On the same roll of film as my pictures of the Pocahontas monument and across from the Pamunkey River reservation there is a sign on a US Navy facility, "ROTHR White House Transmitter," which has nothing to do with Washington DC. The superintendent showed me where with the help of weed killer he keeps the foundations of what was the Custis property called White House. There, Martha Dandridge Custis, widow of the great-grandson of John Custis II, and George Washington had their honeymoon cottage, and the wife of Robert E. Lee took refuge from Arlington House during the Civil War, thence as an invalid by barge up the James to Lexington to join her husband.

There is a saying that the three most important things in real estate are location, location, and location. The story of the English location we are interested in now began with a pair of silk stockings given to Queen Elizabeth I near the start of her reign. After that she would wear no other kind, so that by the time her successor, James I, came to rule, the silk trade was a major business requiring long trips on the Silk Road to the Orient. Henry VIII had caused some of the marsh land west of the Old City to be drained and James I resolved to make a fortune now by having it planted with 10,000 mulberry trees for the culture of silkworms. After years, when the trees finally came to bear black berries, it was found there would be no royal silk monopoly; silkworms only eat the leaves of the white variety. A part of the forest became a garden resort where society could promenade, converse, and enjoy delicious berry tarts.

About 1633, George Goring, a brilliant young courtier, became Keeper of the Mulberry Gardens and built a small country house surrounded by acres of trees which merged into the former Royal Deer Park, adjacent to St. James Palace grounds. Gradually this place was fixed up until Lord Arlington obtained it before he was married in 1666. From this point on he began to spend money and it became a treasure house of beautiful things until even such a noteworthy as Pepys commented on the quality. Here he and Lady Arlington welcomed to Goring House anyone who by any title could claim the notice of polite society.

His wealth came from his ability to understand and get along well with Charles II; in return, he was rewarded with income from various government posts. Also, part was due to an alliance with, and then marriage of his only daughter to, the son of a palace beauty, Lady Castlemaine. Daughter Isabella was betrothed at age four and married at age twelve in 1672, when her father was advanced to Earl of Arlington. However the emoluments of this rank and some of the king's grants to Bennet were life only, going at death to Isabella's husband, the king's son, Lord Grafton. The peerage title of Arlington became extinct when merged with that of the Second Duke of Grafton.

Now, as Lord Arlington grew wealthy and his house improved, reaction to his success began to set in. In 1673 he and Lord Culpeper were rewarded by Charles II for services rendered with a land grant that created great hostility in the colonies. They were given the whole territory of Virginia for thirty-one years which, while it did not prejudice previous grants, enabled them to claim quit rents and other privileges. To quote legal authority William Hening, "The negotiations of the commissioners from Virginia, with the British government, for the repeal of the improvident grant of Charles II...will evince at how early a period those seeds of dissension were sown which finally produced a separation of the colonies from the mother country." Later Lord Arlington sold out to Culpeper, who subsequently resigned this grant. In January 1674 Bennet was impeached in Parliament for political reasons, but it did not carry, by 166-127, and in early September he resigned as Secretary of State and was made Lord Chamberlain which he retained until his death in 1685.

On September 21, 1674, his house burned down. In the words of Eveyln, "I went to see the great losse that Lord Arlington had sustained by fire at Goring House, this night consum'd to ye ground, with exceeding losse of hangings, plate, rare pictures and cabinets; hardly anything was sav'd of the best and most princely furniture that any subject had in England. My lord and lady were both absent at Bath." A replacement house was built at once, only this time it was named "Arlington House."

Before we get on to the spread of the Arlington name, first to a conclusion of the quest, which has become a mix of how, who, and when the name came to

Virginia. The problem centers on an 1857 book by William Meade, who said that a friend on the Eastern Shore told him that Custis got his place from his first wife, and named it after Lord Arlington, in England, who was his patron. The National Genealogical Society has a practical test for solving this kind of problem called Preponderance of Evidence, derived from legal procedures for determining descent of property. In brief, it consists of giving plus or minus weights to the elements in evidence and letting the sum decide.

The Virginia property originally named Arlington was obtained by Custis II just after marriage to his second wife in 1656. He had much more reason than later to name it after Arlington, Gloucester, England. Bennet was not even in England at the time and had no connection with the word Arlington until years later at the accident which dropped the H from his naming place Harlington. There is no evidence of patronage, and in fact it was Custis II who sheltered the government and offered to lend them the considerable sum of a thousand pounds sterling at the time of Bacon's Rebellion. Why was Meade considered such an authority? We find he was a nephew of Mrs. G.W.P. Custis of Potomac-Arlington, who convinced him to study for the ministry, from which he became Episcopal Bishop of Virginia in pre-Civil War days. But this close relationship should not outweigh the facts found about the actual event some 200 years before. Lacking this early information, and further confused by the coincidence of house names in the 1670s, he telescoped the event to the time Bennet became Earl (1672), and in good faith thought he was right when he included it in "Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia." The Custis roots have proof positive over the Bennet all negative. C.B. Rose's questions are answered: despite the paradox of sameness, Arlington in Virginia was not named after Lord Arlington in England.

Now back to England for more on the Arlington name. On our second trip to England at the London Museum, ensconced in a stone niche under glass, my eye was caught by a 1682 Morden & Lea map of the area around St. James Palace. There among images of deer and trees was a drawing of a building with the label "Arlington House" underneath. What was so exciting: this was at a location made famous by another building. As they told me at Buckingham Palace, "We knew, we thought you knew too." What happened is this.

At the same time as his daughter's marriage, Lord Arlington had acquired a 99 year lease from the king, enlarging his property to include almost all of the former Mulberry Gardens, which did much to improve the site when the new Arlington House was built two years later. The property remained in the family for another thirty years, until 1702, when it was bought by John Sheffield, a former suitor of Princess Anne. After living at Arlington House for a year he became Duke of Buckingham, and took a most bold step that led to the ultimate conversion

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of a private mansion to The Royal Palace at the best "location." We know that by removing part of the forest he obtained a magnificent view of St. James Park, but the map shows the house facing southeast, the same as St. James Palace. My theory is that he found it easier to tear the house down and start over on the same site with a new house rotated ninety degrees north to command the prospect from the apex of the park. This he named Buckingham House. Queen Anne at St. James, on the north leg of the triangle, was a bit annoyed because now it seemed as if the park were no longer exclusive. When King George III came to the throne, before the American Revolution, he bought Buckingham House for his queen, but then after much fixing, the whole family moved over and continued improvements. However, it was not until 1837, with Queen Victoria, that it became Buckingham Palace and the changes with more wings and even a new stone coating continued until about 1913, when it became like today. As John Adair says in his beautiful but most accessible book, *The Royal Palaces of Britain* "...completed the story of how a country house amid a garden of mulberry trees became the principal palace of the monarch in London."

Parts of Buckingham House still remain in the structure. But for the need to rotate, who knows whether Arlington House could have stayed with fixing - *but it did not*. There is also a similarity, but with a difference, with the Changing of the Guard at the Arlington Amphitheater in Virginia. Both share a ceremony, or certain fixed forms of behavior intended to gather a crowd outside to join in honors for the place — that at the Palace is more elaborate with mounted soldiers and a band, whereas that at the Tomb of the Unknowns is impressive in its silent respect. It is tempting to dwell on this connection with the whole concept of British royalty, but also keep in mind how it occurred and remember it in proper perspective with other Arlington Connections. For example, there is no justification for a business named Arlington to claim association with Buckingham Palace which has its own protocol for handling "By Royal Appointment to the Queen." There are also other connections, such as, when I asked a barmaid at

the ancient pub, "The George," in London, what she associated with the word "Arlington," her answer was world class, "On TV in 1963, the solemn beat of a drum as world leaders marched across Memorial Bridge to Arlington." Another visitor told me how the night view from Highgate Cemetery across the majestic spread of London along the Thames was similar to that from Arlington Cemetery.

Now from this past let us go forward to the spread of the Arlington name from the source in Virginia to a majority of the states in the US. This is new research but so far a half dozen places have been found named in various ways from the Virginia source. Some samples include: Arlington, Massachusetts, a major city started in 1637 as a mill adjacent to Boston, which tired of being West Cambridge and in 1867 changed in honor of Arlington Cemetery; Arlington, Texas, half way between Dallas and Ft. Worth, with national sports and industry connections, renamed in 1884 in honor of R.E. Lee's Virginia home; and Arlington, Vermont, proud of Norman Rockwell. Another connection, Arlington, Illinois, with its Windy City, Chicago, becomes a breeze in comparison with energy-efficient Arlington, Wyoming with a population of 20, where 100 windmills generate enough power for a city of 20,000. A problem, which will remain unidentified, is the city which says it is named after the Arlington Cemetery which is named after Henry Bennet, Lord Arlington, in England. Heaven forbid they follow the Pocahantas twist and add, "...who built Buckingham Palace." Two things are needed: *first* a central place to receive and publish background information from these places, perhaps helped by the Internet; and *second*, a positive effort for some "historical hygiene" to assist in rooting out wrong information and aid the spread of corrections. Maybe more emphasis on our shared connections over the long term and less on the namesake game.

Now, in brief, the story of our Arlington name using the water connection to channel the flow of time. The word Arlington seems to come from the OE *aeorling*: arling- belonging to farming (the Cotswolds got rich from wool trade). Now, another coincidence, the name source is connected with the source of the River Coln bubbling past most photographed Arlington Row and Arlington Mill, so clear that we see the trout at the aquafarm and the swans swimming past their namesake hotel. No wonder the famed Victorian artist William Morris called the area the most beautiful village in England. The Victoria Histories document the area and mill to centuries before the Norman Conquest. After the Coln joins the Thames, we flow past a cluster of castles and palaces stretching across London from Windsor past Buckingham and Big Ben, to Greenwich and then Pocahantas' grave and out across the ocean to Chesapeake Bay. On the right we have Custis II Arlington and to the left, Jamestown and Pamunkey/ York Rivers then up the bay to the Potomac River and past George Washington's

Mt. Vernon to an area created 200 years ago, in 1801, now with many Arlington names. From there the name takes off for connections all over.

In 1959, Arlington Cemetery decided to end constant pressure by using a first-come basis to fill up a triangle adjacent to the amphitheater. By pure chance, my parents, who first introduced me to Arlington, were buried at the edge opposite the Tombs of the Unknown Soldier. Now, my Arlington Connection is forever.

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Warren Clardy, a past president of the *Arlington Historical Society* and retired management engineer, writes about himself, "Born two blocks from the White House in 1913, joined wife Elisabeth 60 years ago to raise four children in Arlington, VA, and moved in 1996 to New Hampshire where we live on 'Pill Hill' overlooking the gold-top capitol and Merrimack River on one side and Concord Hospital 100 acre campus on the other. A most healthy environment, all my cardiologists are neighbors and just across the pond my youngest daughter and husband are Family Physicians. The Internet still keeps me in touch with Arlington, England, and everywhere....Now with the end of this history adventure I can go back to my permanent job of making science simple for grandchildren, et seq., now supported by an Emeritus award of the latest in 'Science' every week for life."
