

From Ragland to Riches



Evan Ragland was 14 years old when he and his cousin, John Davis, decided to take a stroll along the dock of the port town of Watchet in Somerset, England. The year was 1670. Unfortunately, it was common practice at that time to seize unsuspecting souls, throw them into the cargo holds of ships and take them to foreign lands where they would be placed into servitude.

Such was the fate of Evan who became the first in his line to come to America (although against his will). He was ultimately sold to Stephen Pettus, successful owner of a plantation along the Chickahominy River in New Kent County, Virginia.

Apparently, Evan did come from a family with close ties to Welsh nobility and Tudor royalty (Raglan Castle remains a tourist attraction as one of the last true castles to be built in Wales). Evan's father was Sir Thomas Ragland and his mother was Lady Jane Morgan. As such, he would have been given a superior education prior to his abduction.

He must have impressed his Virginian "master" who took him into his home and appointed him as his secretary. Within five to seven years, Evan was able not only to purchase his freedom, but also fall in love and marry Susanna Pettus, daughter of the plantation owner. He eventually inherited the

500 acre plantation where he once worked as an indentured servant along with the acquired wealth of the Pettus family.

Evan was the 7th great grandfather of my sister-in-law. The Ragland Mansion in Petersburg, Virginia (pictured above) was built by Reuben Ragland, Evan's great-grandson, and still stands today, serving as a bed and breakfast.

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