

The Randolphs of Virginia



My aunt's 6th great-grandfather, William Randolph, is often referred to (along with his wife) as the Adam and Eve of Virginia. Though he arrived in the colony with an axe and no money, he accumulated wealth and land quickly, becoming one of the most influential figures of his time. He was a member of the house of burgesses; active in the work of civilizing the Indians; was a founder and trustee of William and Mary College; and built his lofty domed mansion on Turkey Island (near Richmond) using imported bricks carried over from England aboard his own ships.

And while he had a large brood of children who lived to adulthood, so vast were his holdings that he was able to bequeath to each of them substantial land grants. So much so that his children's names became associated with the territory they had been given. One of them, Isham Randolph of Dungeness, became a estimable ship's captain; served in the house of burgesses; was a planter of some renown; and was also known to be a man of great scientific culture, being honorably mentioned in the memoirs of Bartram the naturalist. He, like his father before him, built for himself a grand mansion on his land at Dungeness.

But perhaps it was Isham's daughter, Jane, who made the greatest contribution of all. She gave birth to one of the most influential figures in all of American history. Her son

was Thomas Jefferson, who like his grandfather and great-grandfather, made the construction of his mansion a lifelong project. He named it Monticello.

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