

Quakers of Loudoun County

Alexander Spotswood was born in the Colony of Tangier, Morocco, about 1676 to Catharine (née Maxwell, c. 1638 - December 1709) and her second husband, Dr. Robert Spottiswoode (17 September 1637 - 1680), the Chirurgeon (Surgeon) to the Tangier Garrison. Through his father, Alexander was a grandson of Judge Robert Spottiswoode (1596–1646), a great-grandson of Archbishop John Spottiswoode (1565–1639), and a descendant of King Robert II of Scotland through the 2nd Earls of Crawford.[1] Alexander's older half-brother (by his mother's first marriage to George Elliott) was Roger Elliott (c. 1655 - 15 May 1714), who became one of the first Governors of Gibraltar. Following the death of Robert Spotswood, his mother married thirdly, Reverend Dr. George Mercer, the Garrison's Schoolmaster. In 1710, Alexander was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, under the nominal governorship of George Hamilton, 1st Earl of Orkney. He was the first to occupy the new Governor's Mansion, which many citizens thought overly extravagant (its 20th-century reconstruction is now one of the principal landmarks in Colonial Williamsburg). In 1711, he intervened in Cary's Rebellion in North Carolina, sending a contingent of Royal Marines from the Chesapeake to put down the rebellion. A Tobacco Act requiring the inspection of all tobacco intended for export or for use as legal tender was passed in 1713. The next year, he founded the First Germanna Colony, and regulated trade with Native Americans at another of his pet projects, Fort Christanna. In 1715, he purchased 3229 acres at Germanna.

Spotswood was a Quaker and resided in the midst of the Quaker settlement between the Catoctin range and the Short Hills in the northern part of the county, whose people were in habits and daily life somewhat isolated and up to Taylor's time at least, given to keeping largely to themselves, we may assume that his tradition applied more particularly to his locality. However, the present writer, some twenty years ago, while improving a farm then owned and occupied by him in the Catoctin hills, about four miles northeast of Leesburg, had occasion to clear woodland for roads and gardens, he found that none of the larger trees, many of them oaks, had rings indicating an age of over two hundred years. Taylor, and following him Head, places the responsibility of burning the forests upon the hunters (ranging over the ground before the first settlers) who are said to have fired the underbrush "the better to secure their quarries;" but it is unquestionable that the Indians had preceded them in the practice. It will be remembered that more than a hundred years before, Smith's Manahoacs could not inform him of conditions beyond the mountains "because the woods were not burnt;" obviously in contrast to conditions on the Piedmont side; and Beverly in his history, written in 1705, amply confirms the Indian usage.

Thomas Thurston and Josiah Cole. The first of the Colonies to hear Quaker preaching was Massachusetts in 1656, but Virginia was a close second; for in the following year Thomas Thurston and Josiah Cole of Bristol arrived in the Old Dominion and are said to have made a number of converts before they were promptly banished. The Quakers were as little welcome

in either Massachusetts or Virginia as in England itself and both Colonies passed stringent laws for their repression. Virginia ordained that any shipmaster found guilty of smuggling in Quakers was to be fined £100 and upon the third return of a Quaker after banishment, he was to be treated as a felon. But even before the passage of the English Toleration Act of 1689 the persecution had died down. By the end of the century they had so increased in number that they were a major element in Rhode Island, controlled New Jersey and Delaware and had, under William Penn in 1681, founded and were supreme in Pennsylvania. Penn declared for liberty of conscience in the Colony he termed his "experiment," with absolute religious freedom "for Papists, Protestants, Jews and Turks"—if not an absolutely unique, at least a sorely needed attitude in the seventeenth century religious life. Thence forward Pennsylvania was to be a great centre of Quakerism and from it mainly but also from Maryland, New York and other Colonies, as well as directly from Great Britain, were recruited the Quakers of Loudoun. Undoubtedly the familiar combination of economic pressure, the cheaper and more fertile lands of the new settlement and the pioneering spirit inherent in the British race explains the migration. It is interesting to note that by 1694 a Quaker had become Governor of South Carolina and that from 1725 to 1775 there was a constant flow of Friends from Pennsylvania, New York, New England and Great Britain to that State. As a main north-and-south highway, the famous Carolina Road, passed through the Loudoun to be, doubtless many came that way and we may believe that not a few of those emigrants joined their coreligionists who they found living in such comfort and prosperity in their fertile Virginia colony.

The Quakers of Loudoun had with characteristic shrewdness picked out for their settlement that part of the far-famed Loudoun Valley, between the Catocin Hills and the Blue Ridge, that lies in the central part of the present county—perhaps the best and most[50] fertile land the county boasts; and there the so-called "Quaker Settlement" continues to the present time. In common with their German neighbours to the north, they tended to form a more-or-less compact colony, segregated from the other pioneers. They were frugal, industrious, far better farmers than their Virginia neighbours; but between Germans and Quakers no love was lost and, though each was isolated from the Tidewater element, there was little or no intermingling. Nevertheless we find them occasionally making common cause against the slaveholding portion of the community and, in the next century in the War Between the States, both German and Quaker adhered to the Federal cause and were, at least for the time being, more than ever cut off from their then intensely Confederate neighbours. Time has softened and gradually worn down these old-time edges of difference and today, perhaps more than ever before, we find the descendants of these earlier opponents living in concord and mutual respect.

Charles Carroll, Irish Quaker. As early as 1725 there was, it is said, a group of Irish immigrants which had established itself on the Virginia bank of the Potomac, opposite the mouth of the Monocacy. This particular cluster had come from Maryland having, perhaps, been attracted to the large grant between the Monocacy and the Point of Rocks which, before 1700, had been acquired by the first Charles Carroll, founder of his family in Maryland who, when he acquired

the land on the Monocacy, was acting as Agent for Maryland's Proprietor, Lord Baltimore. Later his grandson, another Charles Carroll, inherited the grant, added greatly thereto, bestowed upon it the name of Carrollton Manor and in signing the Declaration of Independence as **Charles Carroll of Carrollton**, gave it and himself immortality. The Carrolls were Irish and Roman Catholics; perhaps they had encouraged these newcomers to go out to their great holdings on the Monocacy where life could be begun anew and there was less danger of interference with their religion than in the strongly Protestant east. However, whether encouraged or not, our particular covey of Irish seem eventually to have crossed to the Virginia shore and there planted themselves with small formality and no title. All was wilderness on both sides of the Potomac. The matter of a legal title was probably the least of our adventurers' troubles.

Source: Legends of Loudoun. An account of the history and homes of a border county of Virginia's Northern Neck by Harrison Williams.