

JOHN CARTER of Northern Neck

One day in the year 1654 the frontier home of Thomas Meade on the Rappahannock, in Lancaster County, was the focal point toward which the men of the Northern Neck were converging. Some came galloping on horseback between the big forest trees and others probably came by sloop.

The Assembly at Jamestown had recently ordered that an armed force be raised in the Northern Neck: "100 men from Lancaster, 40 from Northumberland and 30 from Westmoreland." After meeting at Meade's house the force under John Carter was to proceed to the Rappahannock Indian town and demand satisfaction for injuries done the white settlers in that region, but they were to commit no acts of hostility unless attacked.

Swords and firearms were glinting that day, and no doubt the flagon was passed many times. Among the men assembled, there was Captain Henry Fleet, the old Indian trader. He and David Wheatliff were to act as interpreters.

There seems to be no record of the outcome of this expedition. With the assistance of Captain Fleet, who was well known as "a powerful man in Indian affairs," it probably turned out well.

After this affair John Carter was known as "Colonel Carter of Lancaster County."

Colonel Carter had but recently settled in the Northern Neck. He had sailed one day from the Chesapeake into the Rappahannock and there before him lay virgin territory—tobacco soil and a ready-made highway where ships could sail to his dooryard and carry his tobacco straight to foreign markets.

He patented land and built his home on a neck cut out from the land by a creek and a river. He gave his home the Indian name of the river, Corotoman. The creek was called Carter's.

John Carter left England in 1649 when Cromwell seized the government. Little is known of his family in England. When he came to Virginia he settled first in Upper Norfolk and lived there five years. He probably came to Lancaster County because he saw more opportunity there.

John Carter prospered in the wilderness of the Northern Neck. He acquired many acres, considerable wealth and all the offices and honors that went with his position as a substantial landowner. He [Pg 69] was even appointed to his Majesty's Council in Jamestown, which was a high honor.

His dwelling at Corotoman was no doubt a good house for that time. Inventories show that it had glass windows, and the

basement was floored with paving stones which he had imported from England. The floors of the dependencies were probably of the same.

He wanted his children to have religious training. He built a church on his property so that his family could have a place to worship God.

Although women were scarce in this frontier country, Colonel Carter managed to find five wives within twenty years.

In 1669, Colonel Carter died at Corotoman and was laid to rest in the yard of his church.

Colonel John Carter of Lancaster County was the founder of the Carter family in Virginia. His son, Robert, was left to carry on the family traditions. He did so in a spectacular way.

Source: The Stronghold A Story of Historic Northern Neck of Virginia and Its People by Miriam Haynie