

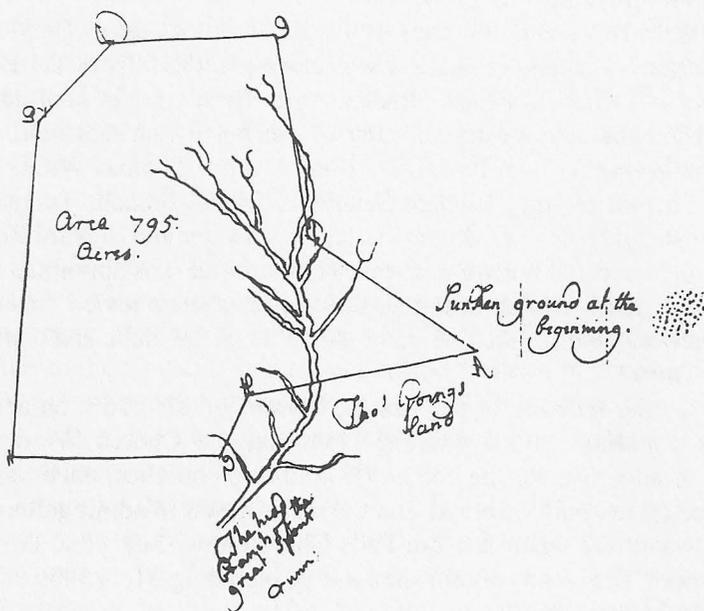
ARLINGTON'S HISTORIC GLEBE HOUSE

By

Dorothea E. Abbott

I met Anne H. Yates from Ridgecrest, California, when I served as a hostess at the Glebe House in 1990. Tours of the Glebe were available for members attending the National Genealogical Society's Conference in Arlington that year. My presentation mentioned the first Fairfax Parish Minister, Townshend Dade, who occupied the Glebe in 1776. After other members of the tour hastened on to the library for research, Anne told me that both her mother and father were descendants of Townshend Dade. She provided me with a copy of the family's genealogy, and it gave me the impetus to research Townshend Dade and the land that became the Glebe.

The first owner of the land was the Reverend Mr. James Brechin of St. Paul's Parish, Hanover County, Virginia. He received a Northern Neck land grant in Stafford County (later Arlington County) of 795 acres on December 20, 1716. The land was about two miles below the Falls of the Potomac adjacent to Thomas Goings property.¹



Survey by Mr. Thomas Hooper for James Brechin's 795 acres. 1716

According to Rev. Brechin's will of 1721, his two sons William and James would receive the land at the falls of the Potomac upon the death of their father. The Reverend Brechin died April 6, 1722.²

On April 30, 1739 James Brechin's son, a planter, "in consideration of the sum of 5 shillings lawful British money sold to Daniel Jennings, Sr., also a planter, all that massuage or tenement [a dwelling house with its adjacent buildings] of land containing 397½ acres, one-half of the 795 acres, situated in Truro Parish, now Prince William County." Then on the following day, May 1, 1739, a deed of release was made to Daniel Jennings by Brechin, and the deed recorded that Daniel Jennings paid an additional £25 sterling for the property.³

In 1746 Daniel Jennings purchased an additional 195 acres from Simon Pearson.⁴ At the time Jennings became the owner of the 195 acres it was in Fairfax County, which had been formed in 1742.

Substantial population growth and development in Fairfax County, especially the port town of Alexandria, necessitated the need for larger churches. The Church of England was the established church of Virginia, and subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London who certified its ministers. The elected "Vestry of the Church were required to subscribe to and be conformable to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, as by law established."⁵ Fairfax Parish of The Church of England was formed from a portion of Truro Parish in 1764.

There were two small churches in the parish at that time. They were the Falls Church, so named because it was closest to the falls of the Potomac, and a very old Chapel of Ease in Alexandria. Both were in poor condition. In July 1766 the first Vestry meeting of Fairfax Parish was held. Present were John West, William Payne, Jr., John Dalton, Thomas Wren, William Adams, Edward Duling, Richard Sandford, Daniel French, Thomas Shaw and Townshend Dade, Sr. Major Charles Broadwater and Edward Blackburn also had been elected but were absent. A committee was appointed to apply to Truro for their part due of the 50,000 lbs of tobacco levied "for building new churches," and for their share of the value of the glebe and communion plate of Truro.⁶

"At a regular meeting of the Vestry, November 27, 1766, on account of the poor condition of the existing churches, the Church Wardens were directed to advertise for the construction of two churches, each to be 2400 square feet, each built of brick, and the walls raised to admit galleries. One of these was to be where the old Falls Church now stands and the other at Alexandria." The Vestry established a levy including 31,125 lbs of tobacco "for Building Churches."⁷

The contractors met on January 1, 1767. James Wren, who lived in a house on Shreve Road in Falls Church which is still standing, submitted a

plan and proposal to build the Falls Church (the Wren family claim descent from Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723), the great English architect and teacher of geometry and astronomy). James Wren produced a plan for a 60 by 40 foot building which was accepted by the Vestry. Wren agreed to build the Falls Church for 599 pounds and 15 shillings. The building of the Falls Church was begun in 1767. The bricks were made of clay, dug, mixed, molded and burned nearby. The kiln was located approximately 300 yards west of the church on the old Fairfax Road; traces of the old clay pits were still visible in 1940. The church building was completed and after inspection was accepted by the Vestry in December, 1769.

James Parsons agreed to build the Alexandria church for 600 pounds currency. The new Christ Church was built on 1 acre of land belonging to the late John Alexander, which had been deeded to the church by his descendants. During construction, a petition was signed by members of the congregation advising the Vestry that they felt they would need a larger building and requesting that it be increased by 10 feet. The Vestry presented this change to the builder and he was agreeable. For reasons that are no longer clear, Mr. Parsons did not complete the church building. Although John Carlyle, Jr. agreed to finish the work by Christmas 1772, the church was not finished and accepted by the Vestry until February 29, 1773.⁸

During this period the Vestry was also seeking a rector to serve the parish. At a Vestry meeting on December 30, 1765 "the Rev. Townshend Dade, Jr. presented his credentials as a minister of the Church of England and offered his services as incumbent for this Parish and as such he is received."

Townshend Dade, desirous of becoming a minister of the Fairfax Parish and encouraged by George Washington, went to England to meet with the Bishop of London. He carried a letter dated May 23, 1765 written by William Robinson of King and Queen County, Virginia:

My Lord,

The Bearer of this Mr. Townshend Dade, born in Virginia waits on Your Lordship to be admitted into Holy Orders. There are many parishes vacant yet. Mr. Dade brings with him a Title to the Curacy. This reason is, the Vestries in general do not care to appoint a person to a vacant living before they try him, this is, have heard him preach, and according to his Voice and delivery he's received or rejected.

I made no doubt but Mr. Dade will be received into a parish as soon as he returns duly qualified from Your Lordship. His Testimonies are from Virginia and Maryland in both which Provinces he has lived within these three years last past, I have likewise received Letters from Gentlemen which bear testimony to his good life and Conversation. His intentions have been

published according to the rule laid down by the Archbishop's Instructions and I trust he will satisfy Your Lordship in every other point.¹⁰

A Virginia law of 1661/2 had provided that a glebe should be laid out in every parish, and a convenient house built upon it (a glebe is a portion of land assigned to a parish church clergyman). In 1695 the Virginia Assembly issued a report that the glebe lands, as a rule, were among the most fertile in the colony, that they contained as much ground as four or five hundred acres, that they were improved by the building of houses and fences, the planting of orchards, and laying off of pastures, and that a minister occupying a glebe was the equal of a gentleman with a fine plantation and twelve or fourteen servants (the ministers took exception to this report).¹¹

When the Rev. Dade was accepted as the minister of Christ Church in 1765, his annual salary was fixed at 17,280 pounds of tobacco, to which was added 2500 pounds because no home or glebe was provided. The Vestry took steps to correct this deficiency by ordering the church wardens to advertise for a glebe and to invite proposals from land owners. Nothing suitable was found until 1769 when the church agreed conditionally to pay £800 for 400 acres, the property of Townshend Dade, Sr. a member of the church and father of the rector. It was agreed that the rector would build and/or repair buildings and make a "glebe compleat," within five years. When the deal fell through the Vestry looked elsewhere for the land needed for a glebe.

The following entry can be found in the vestry book of Christ Church on 12 May 1770: "An offer being made by Daniel Jennings (the son of Daniel Jennings, Sr.) of his tract of land for a Glebe, it is agreed to hold a vestry at the plantation of the said Jennings on Thursday next, being the 17th instant, in order to view the said land."¹²

Accordingly on May 17 there met at the house of Jennings eight "Gentlemen Vestrymen," Townshend Dade, Junior (the rector), and James Wren. The result of the meeting is thus recorded in the Vestry Book:

It is agreed with Daniel Jennings to take the land whereon he lives, containing as is supposed to be four hundred and more acres. The said Daniel Jennings agrees that Mr. George West, the surveyor, is to lay off the different pattsents, at his expense, adjoining, to find the real quantity now in his possession, for which the Church Wardens and Vestry agree to pay him at the rate of fifteen shillings per acre. The said Daniel Jennings is to make sufficient deeds for the same, with a general warrantee, on or before the fifteenth day of September next ensuing, and to deliver up all the premises on the land on the fifteenth of December next, except the dwelling house

and kitchen, which he reserves for his use until the first day of May next ensuing. The Church Wardens and Vestry agree in consideration of the said premises to pay him, the said Daniel Jennings, one half of the amount of said land the first day of November, the other half or remainder on the first day of November which shall happen to be in the year 1771.¹³

After living at the Glebe for two years the rector complained to the Vestry that Jennings' buildings did not meet his needs. Accordingly, in 1773 a Vestry was held at the house of the Rev. Dade.¹⁴

"It was ordered that the Church Wardens advertise the letting of a Glebe House 42 by 28 . . . of brick walls to be 19 feet from the bottom of cellar." The plan was to be produced at the letting and at the same time the necessary farm buildings were to be let. Bids were received on May 24, 1773, and a contract was awarded to Benjamin Ray to construct the Glebe buildings for 653 pounds.¹⁵

A Vestry on November 6, 1773, laid the levy and included items of special interest:

"To James Wren for his plan of the Glebe House — 2 pounds 10 shillings."

"To William Parkerson for his plan of the Glebe House — 1 pound 10 shillings."¹⁶

It is doubtful that there exists elsewhere in Virginia such detailed specifications for glebe buildings as those found in the Christ Church Vestry Book:

A Dwelling house to be built of brick on the Glebe land 42' × 28'. The cellar to be four feet under ground and to include the Dining room and passage in it, and from the bottom of the cellar to the upper part of the first floor to be seven feet, and from the upper part of the second floor to be eleven feet, Two petition walls in the cellar under the gurdens, of brick, nine inches each, with proper doors into the cellar and through the petition, with good and sufficient locks and hinges to them, with the cellar cleared out.

The chimneys to be seven feet above the ridge. The frame of the lower floor to be sawed out of white oak or poplar, clear of sap. The upper framing to be sawed out of white oak or poplar, to be got very substantial and well framed. The bricks to be laid in mortar, two thirds lime and one sand, for the outside, the inside half and half. The floors to be laid with inch and a quarter pine plank. The upper floor to be grued and tounded, the stairs to run up in the passage with hand rail and banisters, and a door underneath to go down into the cellar, with a broad step ladder. All the doors on the lower floor to have six panels each, and frames to have double architraves

[the main beam resting on the top of a column or row of columns]. The doors on the upper floor to have four panels each, and the frames to be cased with a bare edge and beed, the room doors below to have brass locks, and them above to have Japanned locks with swivels, and hung with good and sufficient hinges. Nine large windows below, with eighteen lights in each, ten by eight, with inside shutters to them, four end windows, eight lights, each ten by eight. Six Dormer end windows, eight lights, each ten by eight, with good and sufficient frames, with locust sills to all six cellar windows, with locust frames and bars, and the frames of all the windows to be cased agreeable to the doors. Two portals, the one is the half the other, in the dining room, to have the upper door glass, the passage door the front side to have four lights of glass fixed in the frame above the door, the closets in the plan omitted.

The roof to be latted and shingled with the best Juniper Cyprus shingles, got eighteen inches, and shew six Good and sufficient steps made of locust to all the out doors, a plain Cornish [sic] under the eaves and a large board up the ends. Clear and wash boards to all the rooms and them in the hall and dining-room to be neat, the other plain. The whole building to be lathed, plastered, white washed, and painted with plain colors as the Minister shall direct, and everything to be done to make said Building compleat in a plain, neat and workman like manner and agreeable to plan annexed.

The Kitchen to be built on the Glebe land 20 by 16 feet in the clear, and eight feet pitch, with an inside chimney of brick, six feet in the clear, a pair of stairs to run up on the one side, and a closet on the other. The frame to be sawed out of white oak, the sides and ends to be weather boarded with clap boards clear of sap, the roof to be covered with featherage shingles to be got of red oak, and well sapped. The inside fitted with brick and the floor laid with brick or soil, and under pinned, and the loft laid with plank, one plank door and one window, eight lights, and a window in the loft with a shutter, proper shelves and dressers put up, the eaves boxed and barged, with corner boards to be painted, the sides and roofs to be tared, the whole to be well framed, and everything done to make the said Kitchen compleat in a plain workman like manner.¹⁷

In addition to the dwelling house and kitchen, a “darey” 12 feet square; a “meet house” of the same size, with a “pigeon roof”; a barn 32 by 20

feet, with a frame sawed out of white oak; a stable, 24 by 16 feet, of sawed logs; a corn house, 16 by 10 feet; a "house of office" or toilet, 8 by 6 feet; and a garden 100 feet square, enclosed by pales five feet high, "neatly headed" were to be provided. The whole was to be completed by November 1, 1775. In 1774 provision was made for a hen house 16 by 10 feet, with two "ballard" doors.¹⁸

The work was completed, the Vestry was satisfied having viewed the building at the Glebe and were of the opinion that Benjamin, William and James Ray performed everything in a workmanlike manner.¹⁹

The Reverend Townshend Dade became the first occupant of the new Glebe House in 1775. One can picture him mounting his horse early on Sunday morning with his sermon tucked in his saddle bags riding along the trail to either the Falls Church or Christ Church in Alexandria.²⁰

The parish was looked upon as the stabilizing force in the lives of the people. It held society together by protecting and enforcing the public virtue. The buildings on the Glebe were for the use of the minister, as was the Glebe land, over 500 acres in Fairfax Parish. The minister could, and often did, rent this land to tenants to supplement his annual income. The minister's comfortable lifestyle was a constant irritation to various dissenting religious groups.

In October 1776, the Assembly of the newly formed Commonwealth of Virginia not only freed dissenters from paying the parish levy but also suspended the use of levy money for minister's salaries. This dealt the vestries a mortal blow.

In March 1777 the Fairfax Parish Vestry paid the Reverend Townshend Dade 3600 pounds of tobacco for the period from October 1776 to January 1777. This was his last payment under the establishment.

This evidently had an effect upon Townshend Dade, for by August the Vestry was inquiring why he neglected his duties as minister for the parish. By November 1777, eight vestrymen visited Dade and asked him if he would resign the Glebe "as he fails to do his duty as a minister." Witnesses were asked to appear to testify against Dade in February 1778. In June of that year he resigned, and the Vestry took possession of the Glebe and collected the rents of the tenants on the Glebe land.²¹

Townshend Dade in Maryland

The Reverend Townshend Dade left Virginia under a black cloud following his forced resignation as the Fairfax Parish rector. He eventually "crossed the river" and went to Montgomery County, Maryland, leaving family, friends, and the pleasures of the country squire.

In 1784, at the age of 42, the Reverend Dade married Mary "Polly"

Simmons (1765-1837) of Piney Hill (present day Boyds MD). By marriage Dade acquired a tract of several hundred acres in the upper part of the county near the present town of Boyds. Townshend and Polly had five children, a son Robert and four daughters, all born in Montgomery County.²²

The Rev. Dade became a gentleman farmer. In 1792 he bought 244 acres from James Magruder for £630. This land was part of a property known as "Resurvey on Friends Advice."

Rev. Dade not only grew tobacco but was the Rector of Eden (now St. Peter's) Parish in Montgomery County. He attended the Convention of the Diocese of Maryland in 1791 and 1792. It is believed that he was transferred into the Diocese of Maryland prior to June 16, 1791.

The Convention Journal of 1795 contains a standing committee report stating that the Reverend Townshend Dade openly violated the canons and constitution of the church, and had become habitually addicted to drunkenness. He was summoned to stand before the committee's session. Dade did not appear; the case was directed to the Convention. The Convention, having looked into the facts and being fully satisfied of their truth, proceeded to a sentence of disavowal, and the Bishop expelled Dade from the ministry.

On March 20, 1801 Townshend Dade went on trial in the Montgomery County Courthouse for performing illegal marriages. The case resulted in a ruling that, because Dade received his orders in England, no authority in this country could deprive him of them. Dade was acquitted.

In April of that year a letter from the Reverend Bend proposed that the affair be carried into the General Court by a Civil Suit over one of those marriages upon which he had been criminally indicted, but not tried.

In June 1801 the Rev. Bend wrote to the Reverend William Duke pointing out that "17 Clergymen and 14 laymen in the Convention were determined to take steps to bring Dade's affair before the General Court. The mode of doing it you will see in our Journal, which I hope to send you when I write again.²³ (I have not yet discovered how the matter was resolved).

Dade added 1207 acres to his original purchase in 1806. He also built a stone spring and dairy barn in the same year, as well as tobacco barns and other buildings necessary to a growing plantation. Townshend Dade lived at Friends Advice until his death on February 6, 1822 at age 80. He was interred in Monacacy Cemetery.²⁴ Dade's wife Polly moved to Kentucky after her husband's death, and died there in 1837.²⁵

Epilogue

In 1951, the Chevy Chase Chapter, D.A.R. placed a bronze marker over the grave of Townshend Dade with the words "Revolutionary Patriot" and the two years 1776 and 1783. The ceremonies on this occasion were under



This is a picture of the Townshend Dade house as it appears today. It is located on Bucklodge Road in Boyds, Maryland.

the direction of Mrs. Frank P. Wilcox, Chapter Regent. Mrs. Wilcox was a great-great-granddaughter of the Reverend Townshend Dade.

Friends Advice has remained in Townshend Dade's family, passed on from generation to generation for the last two hundred years. For a while it was renamed "Walldene," but it now carries, once again, its original eighteenth-century name: Friends Advice.

Notes and References

*Dorothea E. Abbott is a historical researcher and regular contributor to *The Arlington Historical Magazine*.

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¹Fairfax County Library Microfilm NN 5 p. 44.

²Augusta B. Fothergill, *Wills of Westmoreland County, Va. 1654-1800* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1973). Various spellings of Brechin: Brechen, Breechin, Bricheen.

³Prince William County Deeds D 214, 216.

⁴Fairfax Microfilm NN F 270. Beth Mitchell, *Beginning at a White Oak* (McGregor and Werner, 1977) incorrectly shows Jennings' holding as 795 acres plus 195 acres. (p. 199).

⁵R. H. McKim, *Washington's Church (1866)*, in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, p. 13.

- ⁹J. H. Alves and Harold Spelman, *Near the Falls* (Annandale, VA: The Turnpike Press, Inc., 1969), pp. 10-12.
- ¹⁰Edward Lewis Goodwin, D.D., *The Colonial Church in Virginia* (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1927, chap 3, pp. 21-31.
- ¹¹Alves & Spelman, *Near the Falls*, pp. 12-16.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.
- ¹³William Stevens Perry, ed, *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1969), vol. 1.
- ¹⁴Charles O. Paullin, *Virginia's Glebe Near Washington*, in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, (Baltimore: 1944), vols. 42-43, pp. 217-225.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*
- ¹⁶*Ibid.* George West's survey found that the tract actually contained 516 acres. (Daniel Jennings deed to Townshend Dade, Sr. and James Wren, Church Wardens, Fairfax Parish, Fairfax County, VA, September 13, 1770. National Archives M 214, roll 27).
- ¹⁷Paullin, *Virginia's Glebe*, p. 222.
- ¹⁸Vestry book 1765-1843, p. 65.
- ¹⁹Alves & Spelman, *Near the Falls*, p. 17.
- ²⁰Paullin, *Virginia's Glebe*, pp. 222-224.
- ²¹*Ibid.*
- ²²Alves & Spelman, *Near the Falls*, p. 18.
- ²³Paullin, *Virginia's Glebe*, p. 224.
- ²⁴Donald Sweig, *Fairfax County, A History* (Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, 1978), p. 78.
- ²⁵Maryland Historical Trust / National Register of Historical Places. M: 18-15.
- ²⁶Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland.
- ²⁷Maryland Historical Trust.
- ²⁸Roger B. Farquhar, *Old Homes and History of Historic Montgomery County, Md.* (Silver Spring, MD: 1952-1962), p. 159.



Additions and Corrections

In the Arlington Chronology in the October 1990 issue of the *Magazine*, no mention was made of the fact that the first section of the Colonial Village apartments was completed in 1935. The second section was built in 1936 and the third in 1937.

The above was contributed by Charles F. Suter of Arlington. He and his wife moved into a new apartment in the second section in the fall of 1936.

Also in the October 1990 issue of the *Magazine*, p. 57, the reference to March 31, 1990 should read March 31, 1900.