

**Edward Snickers,
Yeoman**

By Ingrid Jewell Jones

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Introduction

About sixty miles west of Washington, D. C., Virginia Route 7 crosses the Blue Ridge at an easy elevation of 1150 feet, and emerging from the oaks and tulip poplars that crown the summit, leads the traveler to his first glimpse of the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

This pass is called Snickers Gap.

When, in 1949, I bought an old house in the village of Bluemont on the east slope of the mountain, the name "Snickers" aroused my curiosity and impelled me to the county courthouses, first at Leesburg, then at Winchester, then farther afield, to search out who this man Edward Snickers might be.

Now, twenty-five years later, I am still hunting for clues to this personality who must have been exceptional even in that generation of outstanding men and women.

I have been helped greatly in my search, and acknowledge a debt of gratitude, to Jean Herron Smith, former Bluemont, whose historical quest paralleled my own; to Mrs. Joel D. Griffing of Berryville, who acquainted me with the byways of Clarke County, Virginia; to Mrs. James W. Wyche of New Iberia, Louisiana, who generously shared her own research of the Thruston family in her state; and to my husband, Sam M. Jones, who wouldn't let me quit.

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Mobile, Alabama.
Formerly Bluemont, Virginia.

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Chapter I

Edward Snickers Administers Estates

The gentlemen justices of fledgling Frederick County, Virginia, may have hesitated on the morning of June 7, 1749, before granting letters of administration for two estates to young Edward Snickers.

Marquis Calmes, John Lindsey, John Neal, John Hardin, Lewis Stephens, Isaac Hite, and Thomas Swearingen were on the bench that morning, all responsible men in the county.

The bonds totaled 700 pounds, and Edward Snickers was only a yeoman. It would be more than 20 years before he could claim the title "gentleman", the semi-official designation conferred by class-conscious Virginia in her public documents only on those men whose social and financial standing was unquestionably firm.

But Snickers' sureties were well known to the justices. John Ashby had been appointed constable¹ in 1744 and operated a tavern² near the Shenandoah River where his brother, Thomas, Jr., ran the ferry,³ convenient for the horse and foot travelers who used that easiest of the northern gaps through the Blue Ridge, known even then as Ashby's Bent. And John Sturman, the other surety, was a substantial farmer.

For administering the estate of Richard Robinson, the bond was 200 pounds.^{4&5} Edward "Sniggers" was identified as Robinson's next-of-kin. John Melton, Benoni Frazier, Patrick Casey and Darby Connerly or any three of them were appointed appraisers and ordered to make a return to the next court. There is no identifiable further mention of this estate in the county records.

But the records of the other estate, that of Henry Snickers, are more explicit. Letters of administration were granted Edward Snickers ". . . Catherine the widow of the said Henry having relinquished the same to him as by a writing under her hand and proved in court: he having according to law taken the oath of an administrator. . ." Sureties and appraisers were the same as for Robinson.

An inventory of Henry's estate was filed⁶ by Edward, Nov. 2, 1749. The records of Frederick County's first clerk of courts, James

Wood, are explicit: the estate included personal property valued at 49 pounds, 16 shillings, one penny.

The amount of the bond proved Henry also left a farm of substantial worth, 500 pounds being the bond required at that time from administrators of estates including a "Sherando plantation".⁷

The nature of Henry's conveyance is not clear. There is no record of a grant to Henry from the Fairfax Proprietary. There is no deed or Fairfax lease to Henry on record in Frederick County. If he had received his land by grant from Jost Hite, that fact would probably have been listed in the record of the case, Hite versus Fairfax, and it was not.⁸

If Henry's farm bordered the Shenandoah on either bank, it was a lease from one of the huge manors. After 1736, there was no land with river frontage available for small grants for several miles upstream or down in the neighborhood where the Snickers almost certainly lived.

Robert (King) Carter, during his two periods as agent for the Proprietary, starting in 1702 and ending with his death in 1732, had conveyed manorial status on all the river-bordering land on the west bank from near present Kabletown, W. Va., upstream nearly to present Riverton, Va. And on the east side of the river, he had created manorial land from present day Snickers Gap downstream to the Kabletown area.

Carter had accomplished this in two sweeping grants.⁹ One in 1730 was made in the name of his son-in-law, Mann Page I, and was called Pageland. It began at the confluence of the Shenandoah with that never-failing creek which enters the river on the west bank about one-fourth mile north of the present Route 7 crossing, the creek now called Wheat Spring Branch. On the east bank of the river, Pageland began directly across from the mouth of Wheat Spring Branch (which was a point close to the mountain gap). This manor continued downstream to the area of present Kabletown, and included much of the Long Marsh and Bull Skin Creek valleys. Originally supposed to contain 8007 acres, a 1765 resurvey required by Lord Fairfax proved that Pageland included 11,716. Mann Page died in early 1731, deeply in debt; and his son, Mann Page II, obtained from the Virginia House of Burgesses authority to dock the entail on Pageland and sell it to Ralph Wormeley of "Rosegill" in Middlesex County, Va.¹⁰ Wormeley owned Pageland by 1748, but its manorial status continued, that is, small farms may have been leased within its borders, but no land was sold.

Carter's other major grant, also dating from 1730, involved 50,212 acres of river front land, all on the west bank, extending from Wheat Spring Branch up stream almost to present day

Riverton, Va. The grant was made in the names of ten of Carter's male descendants, eight of whom survived to benefit from the court-ordered division of the tract in 1740. The one-eighth segment farthest downstream, adjoining Pageland, went by lot to grandson Benjamin Harrison V, later signer of the Declaration of Independence. Harrison sold his 6479-acre portion to George Mercer about 1760 and Mercer's creditors obtained its sale in small farms in 1774. But until that year land in this tract would have been available to small farmers only on a lease basis.

Thomas Lord Fairfax first came to Virginia from England in 1735 and was not pleased to discover how much of his Shenandoah River land had been patented by his agent, Carter. Fairfax determined to preserve remaining river frontage in the area by conveying it to himself. Accordingly he created the Manor of Leeds, including river frontage on the east bank together with large tracts farther east and south. This Manor eventually included 160,382 acres.¹¹ And small farms could be developed in it only on a lease basis as long as the Fairfax family owned it.

So Henry's farm—which the size of the administrator's bond proves he operated—was on land leased either from Pageland, from Benjamin Harrison or from Fairfax' Manor of Leeds, if it had river frontage or was located near the river.

The record of administration does not state the relationship of Henry to Edward. Presumably Edward was Henry's son. If Edward was Henry's son, and if he inherited the farm implied in the bond, his financial advantage in frontier Virginia was manifest.

The inventory of Henry's personal property suggests security, even comfort by the standards of the Virginia frontier of 1749. It includes 12 cattle, four horses, eight sheep and 12 pigs. There are furniture for two beds, though only one chest; iron pots with hooks for fireplace suspension; a warming pan, hackle box iron and heater; pewter worth six shillings, seven pence, half penny; a copper candle stick and "linnen" wheel; powdering tub, "Parcel of woole", one "half worn coat and old hatt", old frying pan and parcel of lumber.

One of the most valuable items listed is a "rifled gun, four pounds". An "old saddle and hausen" were valued at 12 shillings, six pence; carpenter tools, 18 shillings. Henry owned no slaves.

This modest inventory, supposing Edward inherited it, hardly presaged the affluence recorded in the will he wrote 41 years later, which devised a plantation with home, stock and slaves to each of his four children.

Henry's inventory offered just one clue to Edward's success:

a 10 shilling item, "parcel of old books".

In that rough-hewn community, where men of authority and substance not infrequently signed their names with an "X", Henry Snickers was literate.

The first reference in the Frederick county records to Henry Snickers is on June 7, 1745 when he lost a small claims suit to Lewis Stephens.¹² He had given Stephens (a gentleman justice of the court) a note for six pounds, one shilling, four pence, Pennsylvania money. The court figured this was worth four pounds 11 shillings "current money of Virginia" and returned a judgment in the lesser amount against Henry.

On Aug. 8, 1745, Henry won the suit brought against him by John Sweet for an undisclosed amount.¹³

The earliest reference in the county records to Edward Snickers was his appointment as administrator of Henry's estate in 1749. It is not clear where the family came from or in what year Edward was born. Presumably he was an adult in 1749, which would mean he could not have been born later than 1728.

* * * * *

In the 41 years between June 7, 1749, when Edward qualified as administrator of Henry's estate, and June 26, 1790, when Willis's "Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser", a weekly, announced the death "at Battletown, Mr. Edward Snickers", Frederick County had become an extension of Tidewater, Virginia whose tobacco lands were approaching exhaustion. Frederick had progressed from forest paths to toll roads, from ax and gun to grist mills and iron furnaces, from homespun to chintz, from family farming to slave—operated plantations.

Virginia herself had emerged from colonial status into membership in a new, independent federal union. The French and Indian War had been won for Great Britain in large measure with Virginia leaders and Virginia troops. "Dunmore's War" had quieted the Indians along the Ohio River temporarily, permitting settlement. And Great Britain had been given her walking papers, again with Virginia a leader of the victorious opposition.

It was 41 years of turmoil, readjustment and wild speculation to feed the land hunger of an exploding population. It was a time of legal compromise and moral shortcuts. It was a period when a man could make or lose a fortune—several fortunes—in a half dozen years.

It was four decades when men could sell land they did not yet own, and know they could put all right before the war-harrassed county authorities caught up with them. There were no less than

three opportunities in those 41 years when a man with his eye on the main chance could line his pocket by selling supplies to his government.

Edward Snickers was a man of his times. Even if he inherited Henry's estate, he started small. When he died he was one of the wealthy men of the state. Though no inventory of his estate is recorded, it is certain he was owner of nearly 4,000 acres in Frederick and Loudoun Counties and 62 slaves; a creditor of the last royal governor of Virginia; a trusted business acquaintance of George Washington; a generous donor to the Anglican Church before the Revolutionary War, and to the Protestant Episcopal Church afterward; a builder of roads; operator of a tavern, a blacksmith's shop and ferry; contract hauler of wheat and other crops to the port city of Alexandria; owner of a merchant mill, grist mill and saw mill.

During the Revolution he was a member of the Committee of Safety of his county and a principal procurer of supplies for Virginia troops, particularly those commanded by his friend General Daniel Morgan, and those stationed at Fort Pitt under his Frederick County neighbor, Capt. John Neville.

In 1777 his accounts became suspect and he was summarily dismissed as a commissary agent by the Council of State.¹⁴

But from this humiliation also he bounded back, to be re-instated on the vestry of Frederick Parish,¹⁵ to be requested by George Washington to act as his rental agent for land in Frederick County; ¹⁶ to post large bonds for neighbors who became public officials.¹⁷

And finally, about a week before he died, to write a will so meticulous in its fairness, so reflective of deep and impartial paternal devotion (bowing of course to the tradition that the son inherited the bulk of the estate) as to set a benign seal on a lifetime of implacable resolve.

Chapter II

Frederick County Life Style

1750-1800

Frederick County was legally cut off from Orange in 1738; but its local government did not become fully operational until late 1743.

It included at first all of present Frederick, Clarke, Warren and Shenandoah Counties, Virginia; all of Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan Counties, West Virginia; part of Page County, Virginia, and Hampshire County, West Virginia.

On Dec. 9, 1743, the county court, putting first things first, ordered Marquis Calmes and William McMachen to arrange for construction of a pillory, stocks and whipping post.¹

On the same day, the court authorized John Kersey to continue operating a ferry "across the Sherrando near the wagon road where he lives" (near the present Route 50 crossing) as he had been authorized to do earlier by the Orange County court.

The General Assembly of Virginia in 1748 enacted legislation of deep import to the eastern, or Shenandoah River side of Frederick County where Edward Snickers lived, the section which was to become Clarke County in 1836.

The 1748 statute authorized a ferry across the Shenandoah "at Williams Gap, from the land of the Right Honorable the Lord Fairfax where John Melton now lives, to the land of Ralph Wormley (sic) Esq. For man three and three-fourths pence; for horse the same".²

Williams Gap was an earlier name for this relatively easy pass of the Blue Ridge which after 1772 was usually called Snickers Gap, the present crossing of Virginia Route 7. Williams Gap had been named for a squatter whose cabin was already located there in 1731 when Robert (King) Carter patented 2941 acres on the east slope of that traffic-channeling defile in the name of his youngest son, George.³

The Assembly in the 1748 law had gone on to provide that ferry keepers should thereafter be free from public and county levies, and from all other public duties such as musters of militia,

serving as constables, and clearing highways. Ferry keepers would not be chargeable with any fee for giving bond.⁴

If the county court should find that it was in the public interest that an "ordinary" be kept at the ferry, they might license such ferry men to operate the hostelry without any charge for the license "except half the fee by law allowed to the governor".

That there was already a well-traveled road between Williams Gap and the Frederick county courthouse in 1748 is attested by a court order of Jan. 4. It initiated a survey for a new north and south road and cited the Williams Gap-Winchester road as a land mark.⁵

On March 8, 1748, Justices Lewis Neill, Meredith Helm, Isaac Perkins and John Hardin set the prices which taverns in the county could charge for food, drink and horse's provender:⁶

"Pursuant to law the following rates and prices are set and allowed by the court upon liquors that ordinary keepers in this county shall entertain and sell at, to-wit: Barbadoes rum, Jamaica rum, or French brandy per gallon 8 shil; Rye brandy or barley meal brandy per gal. 5 shil; peach brandy 6 shil; New England rum 2 and 6; rum punch, peach brandy punch or French brandy punch, the quart with three jills of white sugar 1 shilling; Ditto with brown sugar 9 pence; Ditto the pint with a jill and half of white sugar 6 pence; Ditto with brown sugar 4 1/2 pence; Rye brandy punch or barley malt brandy punch, the quart with three jills of white sugar eight pence; ditto with brown sugar 7 pence; ditto the pint with one jill and half white sugar 4 pence; ditto brown sugar 3 1/2 pence.

"Beer or ale per gallon 1 shilling; table beer per gallon 6 pence; Cyder per gallon one and six; Madera wine per qut. 2 and 6; Sangaree per qut. 1 shilling; Claret or any sort of red wine per qut. 2 shillings;

"A hott diet 9 pence; a cold diet 6 pence. Lodging with clean sheets 3 pence. Stableage with fodder, clover or Timothy hay per night (or 24 hours) 6 pence; ditto with wild hay 3 pence; pasturage for the night (or 24 hours) 3 pence; Indian corn or oats per gallon 6 pence."

This was a period of intensive road building. On Jan. 13, 1744 the justices sitting were Morgan Morgan, Marquis Calmes, Thomas Chester, David Vance, Meredith Helms, John White, Thomas Little, William Russell, John Quin, and Gabriel Jones. They ordered that Robert Ashby be overseer of the road from Howell's ford to "Ashby's Bent Gap" and that the tithables appointed previously by the court of Orange County be continued to work the road.

Tithables were negro men and women over 16 and white men over

16. White women were not counted, nor were free negro women, nor children whether black or white. Of course only men, black and white, worked on the roads.⁸

On Aug. 10, 1744, the court ordered a road to be built from "Scott's mill on the Sherrando to the court house".⁹

And on March 7, 1745, the court¹⁰ ordered a road laid out "from John Nealon's on Sharrando to William Vestal's, through John Grimes, Capt. (William) Stribling's, then to leave the pond on the left hand still down the river to Timothy Haney's, Darby Conley's, John Hammon's, Thomas Hammon's, Elizabeth Pearson's, Jonathan Walker's, across Bull Skin, Robert Hayes to Vestal's".

William Vestal lived below Vestal's Gap, near the present Shennadoah crossing of State Route 9, and some member of the Vestal family was already operating a ferry¹¹ there in 1736. Iron ore was discovered early and iron was produced for the first time west of the Blue Ridge in 1742 when William Mayberry agreed to erect an iron foundry on the property of William Vestal.¹²

That access to this manufactured iron was important to the new settlers of Frederick County is evidenced by the early construction of roads to it, to supplement the road which already crossed the Blue Ridge at Vestal's Gap.

A court order of May 8, 1750 may apply to a second road to Vestal's or to maintenance of the road laid out in 1745. It appointed Zacchariah Valentine overseer of the road from Long Branch to Vestal's Iron Works in the "room of Enoch Pearson, dec'd".¹³

The hamlet of Bloomery at the Route 9 river crossing still recalls these iron works, from one of whose processes it took its name.

On May 7, 1767, the court made two successive orders,¹⁴ one of which appointed John Crane overseer of the road from Snickers Ferry to Bullskin, and the other appointed Benjamin Rankin overseer of the road from Bull Skin to Bloomery.

There were other iron furnaces in Frederick County. On March 3, 1767, the court ordered Jacob Frey, Samuel Frey, Joseph Fawcett and John Fawcett or any three of them to "view the ground from the furnace erecting on the north branch of Pembroke to the forge erecting on Cedar Creek and report their opinion to the next court".¹⁵ The viewers recommended that the road be built.

Isaac Zane was operating a forge 12 miles from Winchester on Red Bud Run, according to a notice in the Virginia Gazette of Oct. 17, 1771. And in 1775 Zane advertised in the same newspaper¹⁶ for 5,000 cords of wood needed at his Marlboro Iron Works in Frederick County.

The July 28, 1790 issue of the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser carried this item: "In addition to the accounts already published, of the improvements in the navigation of the waters of the Potowmac, we are informed that there have been several boats up the South Branch last spring, which took down a large quantity of pig iron made at Mr. John Bilhop's furnace as well as a considerable quantity of wheat."

Frederick County took its civil obligations seriously that last half of the eighteenth century. On Oct. 2, 1765, the court "ordered that the sheriff do summon twenty-four of the most discreet freeholders of this county to appear here at the next court to serve as a grand jury of inquest for the body of this county".¹⁷ A few days later there is this entry:¹⁸ "John Rout, Frederick Lamb, William Robertson, Joseph King, James McKay, and John Stogdale being summoned on the jury and failing to appear. It is ordered that they be fined 400 pounds of tobacco"

On Nov. 16, 1765 it was¹⁹ "ordered that the sheriff collect six pence from every tithable person in this county, it being the levy assessed for the ensuing year". But upon the petitions of two men, "aged and infirm they are discharged from paying county levies".²⁰

Orphans were considered a public responsibility. In April, 1766, the court ordered "that the church wardens bind out John Dillon unto Joseph Thompson until he becomes of age and that he learn him to read, write and cypher as far as the rule of three and the trade of tanner".²¹

The court debated this case several days before ordering on Nov. 5, 1766 that²² "Edward McGuire pay Mary, his estranged wife, five pounds a year for the rest of her life".

The lot of indentured servants was not rosey. On March 6, 1767, the court ordered "that William Noble serve Luke Collins his master five years and four months for runaway time and expenses in taking him up".²³

It was a time of institutionalized cruelty by modern standards. And the Anglican church was a heavy-handed dictator of punishment for moral infractions.

Consider the plight of this indentured servant. On March 3, 1767, the Frederick gentlemen justices took this action;²⁴ "Jane Stewart having made oath that a base born child of which she was lately delivered was begotten by John Gower, and it appearing to the court that he is not able to support the same, ordered that he be released. Ordered that Jane Stewart serve her master Walter Davidson one year for having a base born child. Ordered that Sarah Curry and Jane Stewart be summoned to answer the complaint of the church wardens for having base born children".

On April 8 there is this entry:²⁵ "Upon the information of the church wardens against Jane Stewart for having a base born child, she being summoned and failing to appear to answer the same. It is considered by the court that the said Jane do forfeit and pay to the church wardens of Frederick Parish for the use of the poor of the said parish 50 shillings or 500 pounds of tobacco for the said offense and that she pay costs of this prosecution and may be taken and the said Jane failing to give any security for the same, ordered that the sheriff do take her to the publick whipping post and give her 25 lashes well laid on the bare back."

On conviction of robbery,²⁶ Samuel McKenny received 30 lashes Nov. 16, 1765.

On June 12, 1790, Solomon Watson was publicly hanged in Winchester for horse stealing, his "behavior at the place of execution (being) extremely penitent", according to the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser. On Sept. 11, 1790, Willis's Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser reported "John Ordoff, for stealing watches, found guilty and sentenced to be branded on the right hand with the letter 'W'."

Apparently some people thought there were worse fates than flogging. In 1766 two men on preferring to take punishment locally rather than stand trial in Williamsburg, received 30 lashes. A woman associated in the crime with them was ordered by the court to be taken "to the ducking stool and give her three good dips over the head and ears". The crime they committed was not identified.²⁷

Use of negro slaves was not extensive in Frederick County until Tidewater planters arrived there. Settlers who came up the Shenandoah Valley from Pennsylvania and Maryland had a tradition of family farming.

Henry Snickers' estate was large enough to warrant a 500 pound administrator's bond in 1749, yet it included no slaves.

When Bartholomew Anderson bought 450 acres in what is now eastern Clarke County from Thomas Morgan, a blacksmith, in 1749, he paid 120 pounds for the land—"for which he (Morgan) took a negro, Jack, for sixty some odd pounds, and was to take a wagon at 20 pounds, and the rest Anderson told Morgan he would pay the cash for".²⁸

But extensive use of negro slaves appeared in Frederick County only when the eight sons and grandsons of Robert (King) Carter began developing their inherited plantations in Carter's 50,212-acre "Shenandoah Tract" in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

They were all Tidewater men and they transplanted the manner of life to which they were accustomed.

Benjamin Harrison's 6479-acre share was bought by George

Mercer about 1760. And when Mercer's holdings were to be sold in 1774 to pay his debts, the advertisement in the Virginia Gazette, June 30, announced that 110 slaves would be included in the sale. Mercer had divided his land into six plantations.

The estate of Taliaferro Stribling, Sr., was administered in 1775. A sale of his personal property, May 15, included 30 negroes which brought a total of 1363 pounds. Edward Snickers bought a man for 90 pounds and a boy for 50 pounds.²⁹ Morgan Alexander, Snickers' son-in-law, bought a girl for 63 pounds. When Alexander died in 1783, an inventory of his estate showed five slaves, valued at from 20 to 75 pounds each.³⁰

Warner Washington, Sr., moving to Frederick from Gloucester County in 1769, also brought Tidewater methods. Helping his oldest son, Warner, Jr., establish a plantation (possibly Audley), Washington gave him 23 slaves in 1776 and six slaves³¹ in 1785.

A census of Frederick County in 1782 showed a total population of 19,681, of whom 4350 were negro slaves.³² Edward Snickers owned 51 (and 11 more in Berkeley County); Charles Mynn Thruston owned 80 in Frederick; the estate of Lord Fairfax, 51; Fairfax' nephew, Thomas Bryan Martin, 91.

The Carter heirs to the Shenandoah tract were large slave owners according to the 1782 census. Nathaniel Burwell had 45; and the Page family 82.

Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, another Carter grandson, divided his Shenandoah acres into six plantations. He attempted to free his slaves, starting in 1791, when they numbered about 500. Of course many of these were lodged on plantations Carter owned in other parts of the state. A Virginia law of 1782 permitted manumission only of female slaves between the ages of 18 and 45, and of male slaves between 21 and 45. Children and old people could be freed only if their former owners promised to support them.³³ Carter's sons John and George frustrated his humane purpose after his death in 1804.³⁴

General Daniel Morgan offered a reward of \$10 in the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser on May 28, 1791, for the return of a runaway slave, Nace. In the June 4 issue Morgan raised the reward offer to \$30. He was still advertising on June 25.

When Hannah Fairfax Washington, widow of Warner Washington, Sr., died in 1804, she left an estate, all in personal property and nearly all in slaves,³⁵ which warranted an executor's bond of \$20,000.

Edward Snicker's will devised 62 slaves to his four children in 1790. The 1810 census showed his son, William, owned 36 slaves.

Chapter III

Edward Snickers, Family Man

It is not clear who operated the Williams Gap ferry immediately after its authorization in 1748.

John Dalrymple, the young Scots officer who served in a Virginia regiment during the 1754 campaign, brought out in London in 1755 an updated version of the Fry and Jefferson map in time for it to be useful to General Braddock. On this map Dalrymple indited "Williams Ferry" at the foot of the gap.¹

By 1760, however, the ferry was being operated by Edward Snickers.

A British clergyman, Archdeacon Andrew Burnaby, recorded in his "Travels Through The Middle Settlements" that on June 4 of that year he arrived at the Shenandoah river crossing, from Winchester, and he called it "Snickers Ferry".

He added, "The next morning I repassed the Blue Ridge at Williams Gap".

So he tells us not only that Edward Snickers was operating the ferry in 1760, below the gap which later bore his name, but also that he was providing some sort of overnight accomodation, perhaps the facilities of a full-fledged ordinary.

The decade after Edward Snickers made his first recorded appearance in Frederick County by posting two administrator's bonds, was eventful for him personally and publicly. The books of County Clerk James Wood show Snickers paid a comparatively large tax: 359 pounds of tobacco for the year 1757; 150 pounds for 1760; and 140 pounds for 1761. These were larger levies than average among his neighbors.²

On May 17, 1751, Snickers³ received appointment from the county court to oversee construction of two roads. "Edward Sniggers is appointed overseer of the road from the River at Edge's ford to Francis Carney's in room of John Cassine". And "Edward Sniggers is appointed overseer of the road from the head of the Pond on Shanando river to Wormley's quarter in the room of Benoni Frasier and it is ordered that the tithables on the opposite side of

the river as far as the road extends be added to the former tithables appointed and that they keep the said road in repair according to law". This suggests two sections of road on opposite sides of the river, connected by a ferry.

Since the job of overseer appears to have been given usually to someone living near the proposed road, it is probable that the Snickers family lived, even in Henry's lifetime, near the future site of Snickers ferry, perhaps a mile upstream from the present crossing of Route 7. The exact location of the Snickers property can not be accurately determine since there is no public record of Henry's ever owning land in Frederick County, and since Edward's first recorded Frederick county deed⁴ dates from 1769.

Charles Varle's map, published in 1809, still shows Snickers ferry in this upstream location, serving the main road from Snickers Gap to Berryville, which then ran on the south side of the North Hill estate, accounting for that name.

About 1755 Edward married Elizabeth Taliaferro. They had four children who lived to grow up and marry: Sarah, born in 1756; Catherine in 1757; William in 1759; and Elizabeth⁵ in 1761.

Sarah in 1773 became the wife of Morgan Alexander, a recent arrival in Frederick from Gloucester County, Virginia. He was a son of David and Ann Morgan Alexander, and was born⁶ about 1746. His departure from Gloucester seems to have been impelled by the need to improve his fortune. He owed William and Mary College 25 pounds, eighteen shillings, seven pence for tuition.⁷ And he owed Gloucester County one pound two and four for taxes due in 1770, plus four shillings six pence owed to the sheriff of Gloucester for trying to serve the writ.⁸

If Morgan came to Frederick fortune hunting, he succeeded in his mission. He married the comfortably-connected Miss Sarah Snickers in 1773, and, by 1774, was operating the tavern for his father-in-law.⁹

Morgan rose to the rank of major in the Eighth Virginia regiment during the Revolution, but resigned¹⁰ in 1778. He was colonel of the Virginia militia in 1781 and 1782. He died in 1783, leaving Sarah a widow at 27 with one child, Elizabeth.

Edward Snickers administered Morgan's estate.¹¹ The personal property, sold at two auctions, (the five slaves were sold separately from the other property) brought a total of 329 pounds, six shillings. The young Alexanders¹² had a few luxuries—11 silver table spoons, one silver ladle, six silver tea spoons, a shagreen watch. But the principal items were nine horses, 15 sheep and 10 lambs.

Catherine Snickers married Robert Mackey, a doctor in Winchester. The date of their marriage is not recorded among the

Frederick County vital statistics. Apparently they were married before 1782 when the Rev. Alexander Balmain became the local minister, for he recorded in his journal the weddings of William and Elizabeth Snickers, as well as those of several kin of the next generation who married before Balmain's death in 1821. It was from this union that Virginia Governor Frederick William Mackey Holliday was descended.

Elizabeth Snickers in 1788 married Thomas Stribling, a younger son of Taliaferro Stribling, Sr., who named "my beloved friend Edward Snickers" an executor in his will.¹³ Young Stribling reportedly made a canoe trip down the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers in 1786, intending to establish a trading post with the Indians. He came home and married Elizabeth instead, became a Battletown merchant, and owned a great deal of land. He bought from William Snickers much of the land that impecunious young man had inherited from his father. Tom Stribling was a trustee of Berryville when the Assembly established it as a town in 1798, successor to Battletown.

William Snickers was the last of Edward's four children to marry, if indeed Frances Washington was his first wife. She was a daughter of Warner Washington, Jr., and his first wife, Mary Whiting, daughter of Francis and Frances Perrin Whiting.¹⁴ Warner Washington, Jr., was the son of his father's first wife, Elizabeth Macon of New Kent County.

When Dr. Balmain married William and Frances in 1793, he recorded in his journal that William paid him seven pounds, one shilling, a tremendous fee. Later in the journal, however, Balmain complained that William, who attended "Chapel Green", now Old Chapel, was delinquent in payment of his pledge to the parish, which was one pound, ten shillings a year. Finally this account was marked "Paid".

Elizabeth, Edward's wife, died before mid 1779, as her name does not appear on his deeds of sale after that time. They made their home at the tavern beside the ferry dock on the Shenandoah River certainly from 1760, when Archdeacon Burnaby found them there, until 1770, when Edward purchased "Clermont" from Thomas Wadlington,¹⁵ who, the deed says, was living on the farm at the time. This quaint, story-and-a-half house with sharply pointed dormer windows, which survives just east of Berryville on the south side of Route 7, was their family home until her death, and apparently continued to be his home until about 1783. In that year he bought "Springfield"¹⁶ on what is now Route 608 north of Route 7.

After Sarah Alexander was widowed in 1783, it appears likely that Edward and Sarah went to live at Springfield. Edward states

in his will that he was living there when he wrote it in 1790, and he left the farm to Sarah, who continued to live there until her death¹⁷ in 1824. The present Springfield house is a replacement of the Alexander house which burned.

Clermont was the home of William Snickers in 1790, according to the will.

Edward Snickers became a vestryman¹⁸ of Frederick parish in 1771. The Virginia Assembly in 1772 named him one of 10 "gentlemen" to keep in repair the "great roads" from Vestal's and Williams' gaps to the towns of Alexandria and Colchester, giving the 10 power to levy and collect taxes for three years to pay for the road work.¹⁹ They were authorized to levy 45 pounds annually against Fairfax County; 55 against Loudoun; 50 against Berkeley and 25 against Frederick. In 1768 Edward Snickers had been identified in a Loudoun County deed as "innholder"²⁰ and in a Frederick County deed as "yeoman".²¹ But by 1772 he was "gentleman".

His constant ability to come up with large sums of money is a puzzle, even granting his talent for land speculation. He was a source of needed cash to men far above him socially, among them George Mercer and Lord Dunmore. The earliest reference to him in the Frederick County deed books,²² in 1768, concerns his granting of power of attorney to "my trusty and loving friend Dorsey Pentecost" of Frederick County to collect debts due Snickers in the "provinces of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia".

After the new state government of Virginia terminated the functions of the parish vestries in 1780 as part of the break with England, there was a hiatus until 1785 when new vestries were established. Alexander Balmain, a Scotsman who came to Virginia to tutor children of wealthy families, and who had served as a chaplain during the war, settled in Frederick in 1782, according to his journal, and conducted services of the Anglican rite at first at Trap Hill a short distance north of Berryville. He listed Edward Snickers as a generous communicant, who gave the struggling little church three pounds.

* * * *

General Edward Braddock used Winchester as a staging area for his disastrous foray against Fort Duquesne in 1755. Most of Snickers' neighbors were soldiers, either in the county militia or in the regiments raised by the colony. Many had served under Washington in 1753 and 1754.

There is no apparent record that Edward Snickers ever entered military service, in this or later wars. His vocation, as ferry operator, made him immune to involuntary muster. Perhaps there were other reasons of which we have no record for this unusual

lack of participation. He was not a Quaker, nor did he hesitate to profit from military procurement. His name does not appear in any of the military orderly books. Nor was he ever listed as eligible for free land as a former soldier.

Occasional references to him late in life as "Capt." or "Colonel" were apparently purely honorary.

George Washington ran for one of the two Frederick County seats in the House of Burgesses in 1755 and lost. His name was not presented to the voters as a candidate until a day or two before the election, and he finished a poor third, behind Hugh West and Thomas Swearingen. Washington's friends believed his defeat was due to the lack of publicity his candidacy received. When he ran again in 1758, they made sure the voters knew Washington was available. This time he finished first. The other winner was Thomas Bryan Martin, nephew and chief assistant to Lord Fairfax.

Clerk of Courts James Wood, a Washington partisan, sat on the bench while qualified electors orally declared their preferences.²³ Washington, who was prevented by duties at Fort Cumberland from attending the election in Winchester, preserved the tally of votes cast.

Edward Snickers voted for Washington.²⁴

Lieut. Charles Smith, then in command at Fort Loudoun, Winchester, "publicized" Washington's candidacy in the most efficacious manner. He provided free drinks at the local taverns for all comers. Washington later paid a bill of 39 pounds, six shillings for 160 gallons of liquors and a dinner for special friends. Included in the itemized bill were rum, 28 gallons; rum punch, 50 gallons; wine, 34 gallons; beer, 46 gallons; cider royal, two gallons. Washington wrote Wood his thanks for Wood's help, adding he hoped those who voted against him had been entertained no less generously than those who supported him.²⁵

This election day must have been a bonanza for the tavern keepers. But even if Snickers were already operating a tavern in 1758, it is unlikely this political largess would have extended to an ordinary on the Shenandoah, 15 miles removed from the scene of election. Snickers was present in Winchester that July 24, 1758, and no doubt shared in the fun if not in the profit.

Washington accompanied General John Forbes to Fort Duquesne later that year, arriving at the forks of the Ohio on Nov. 24 to find the fort burned and the French departed.

Edward Snickers received payment from the Virginia Assembly; two pounds, five shillings, nine pence for supplies, not detailed, furnished to the Virginia troops.²⁶

Chapter IV

Snickers Acquires His Fortune

In 1760, the first year it is certain he was operating the Williams Gap ferry and a tavern adjacent on the west bank of the Shenandoah, Edward Snickers began the land speculation which was to be the basis of his fortune.

Sale prices were frequently included in the deeds. A sampling of Snickers' real estate transactions, where prices are certain, shows his skill as a speculator.

He started modestly enough: 150 acres in Loudoun County, on the south fork of "Kittocton" creek, for which he paid Mahlon Janney 30 pounds.¹ He sold this farm three years later to John Davis for 80 pounds.²

In 1770 he paid Abraham Anderson 90 pounds for 87 acres in Frederick County³ and sold it 15 years later to Thomas Shepherd⁴ for 200 pounds. In 1771 he bought a farm of undisclosed acreage from John Anderson for 150 pounds⁵ and sold it the following year to Shepherd for 200 pounds.⁶ In 1770, Snickers bought 2,050 acres on the south fork of Beaver Dam creek in Loudoun County from John Ballendine for 922⁷ pounds and sold 1045 acres of it to Benjamin Grayson⁸ in 1785 for 1500 pounds.

There were reverses. In 1777 Snickers bought 800 acres in Frederick⁹ County near White Post from Ignatius Perry for 1000 pounds and sold it in 1783 to General Richard Kidder Meade¹⁰ for 500 pounds. Meade built the first "Lucky Hit" on this tract. This was one of the few recorded instances of Snickers' failure to make a profit.

He bought six lots totaling 1966 acres from James Mercer for 2457 pounds and sold three of them to Mahlon Taylor for 2300 pounds, conveying to Taylor the three which lacked river frontage and keeping for himself the three which possessed it.¹¹

Snickers gave the first identity to the community now called Bluemont, in Loudoun County, on the east slope of the Blue Ridge below Snickers Gap. Since the price he paid for it is not recorded,

there is no way of knowing whether he profited by this eight-year tenure.

The 2941 acres which Robert (King) Carter had patented in the name of his son George in 1730, stretching from the Gap down the east slope into the valley, was sold in 1768 by George Carter's trustees to John Augustine Washington, younger brother of the General. In 1769, J. A. Washington sold to Edward Snickers 624 acres out of the heart of that grant. Snickers sold the 624 acres to Richard Wistar, a Philadelphia land speculator, in 1777 for 1620 pounds.¹²

The Wistars were absentee landlords. When Richard's son, Caspar, advertised the 624-acre "plantation" for sale Sept. 21, 1790 in the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser, he called the farm "Snickers Gap", and listed among its assets an apple orchard of 300 bearing trees. It is possible that these trees were planted during Snickers' ownership.

The village which grew up on the site of this farm was known as Snickers Gap until 1824 when the state assembly established it as a town and changed its name to Snickersville. This name was discarded in favor of Bluemont in 1900.

Edward Snickers twice obtained land grants in the Gap. One, encompassing 352 acres, obtained from Lord Fairfax in 1765, he sold to Francis Dade¹³ in 1768. The other, of 411 acres, he obtained from the state of Virginia in 1789 and still owned it when he died the following year. His son, William, inherited it.

When he died Snickers bequeathed nearly 4,000 acres to his four children. Yet he had obtained only four grants of land totaling 1,076 acres, of which he owned only 411 acres when he died. And he never received any land as a reward for military service, never, according to county records, having performed any.

Even if he did inherit a farm from Henry Snickers, which is conjectural, the conclusion is inescapable that he amassed the nearly 4,000 acres listed in his will almost entirely by purchase.

Compared to the very wealthy men of the state, whose large holdings were the result principally of Proprietary grants, military service or inheritance, Snickers estate was not large. But he got his the hard way.

George Washington in his will¹⁴ directed that 50,975 acres of land be sold, and this excluded Mt. Vernon and other Fairfax County holdings. It included 23,341 on the Great Kanawha; 2314 on the Little Kanawha; 2448 acres "16 miles lower down"; 4395 "opposite Big Bent"; 3051 in the Northwest Territory; and 5,000 in Kentucky, almost all of which resulted from Washington's military entitlement or his purchase of the military claims of

others. Washington was a skillful and legally meticulous land speculator. But his vast accumulation would not have been possible to a man who had no military service.

The really great accumulations of land in Virginia were accomplished by men who at one time or another represented the Northern Neck Proprietary as agents. There was nothing illicit about this; but these men had advantages not available to most purchasers.

Robert (King) Carter in his two periods as agent, starting in 1702 and ending with his death in 1732, built an estate of about 300,000 acres¹⁵ probably two-thirds of which originated in grants made in the names of his male descendants while he was agent. William Fitzhugh, agent for the Proprietary before Carter, devised 56,850 acres in his will much of which originated in similar grants.¹⁶

And several of Snickers' Frederick County neighbors were those grandsons of King Carter each of whom had had about 6,500 acres of Shenandoah Valley farm land laid in his lap out of King Carter's 50,212-acre Shenandoah tract. From one of these, Benjamin Harrison, George Mercer bought his land. Another, Robert Carter III of Nomini Hall, was the absentee landlord of six thriving plantations on his inherited acres.¹⁷ Page, Burwell, Carter and Nicholas families got their start in Frederick County from this grant.

The melancholy sequel to Snickers' careful acquisition was his son William's disposal of the property. Edward's will had left 411-acre Springfield to Sarah; the 306-acre farm he bought from Martin Ashby "on Pennington's or Buck Marsh" to Catherine; and the 303-acre "Lot 1" of George Mercer's tract to Elizabeth. Each daughter also received stock and slaves; and the affectionate father made sure each girl obtained property worth the same as her sisters'.

But all the rest of the estate went to William—and by 1836 when Clarke County was cut off from Frederick and its own records were established, there was no property left to record in the name of Snickers. In fairness to William, he would have been 77 years old in 1836, and apparently none of his sons lived to grow up. So the disappearance of the Snickers' name is understandable.

But his inheritance also had disappeared in great measure. He sold Clermont to Dawson McCormick¹⁸ in 1821 for \$31,020. And previously he had sold the most valuable part of his inheritance, George Mercer's Shenandoah River lots.

The acreage which William inherited along the river is not stated in Edward's will. But William sold it in two transactions

involving a total of 1150 acres. Since this is about 270 acres more than the combined acreage of Mercer Lots 18, 20 and 22, Edward obviously had acquired more land in this tract than the Mercer sale records would indicate. Possibly he had bought some land back from Mahlon Taylor. Possibly he acquired part of Lot 21.

On Nov. 10, 1803, William and Frances¹⁹ sold 401 acres of this tract to James and Elizabeth Alexander Ware for \$14,011. Elizabeth was the daughter of William's sister, Sarah Snickers Alexander. This farm was the heart of old Edward Snickers enterprise. It contained the ferry dock, the tavern, the blacksmith's shop and at least one mill. When James Ware's estate was administered in 1822 contemporaneously with that of his second wife, Harriet Taylor Ware,²⁰ the inventory revealed 127 barrels of flour to be hauled to Alexandria. And also included was: "cash for rent of tavern at the ferry due March 1, 1823, \$250".

The tavern finally passed from Snickers' heirs to the Castleman family Aug. 28, 1835, when James and Elizabeth Ware's children,²¹ Josiah William Ware and Sarah Elizabeth Taliaferro Ware (Mrs. Sigismund Stribling) sold it to James Castleman for \$1200. By the Civil War period, the Castlemans were operating the ferry near the present Route 7 crossing.

William Snickers sold 749 acres from his Mercer lots to his brother-in-law and sister, Thomas and Elizabeth Stribling,²² March 27, 1805 for \$15,000. By 1807 this land belonged to Eben Taylor.²³

William Snickers seems to have been a carefree, reckless soul, capable of winning warm friends, but incapable of hanging on to a dollar.

He was only 17 in 1776 when he first enlisted as a "cadet" in the Virginia militia.²⁴ He was unquestionably a fine horseman, as George Washington's Oct. 10, 1786 diary entry attests: ²⁵ "In company with Major Washington (who with his wife returned yesterday evening from Fredericksburg) and Mr. Lear went up to Alexandria to see the Jockey Club purse run for (which was won by Mr. Snickers) . . ."

When the state assembly voted in 1782 to honor General Daniel Morgan with the gift of a fine horse, Capt. William Snickers bought it and the state auditors were authorized to re-imburse him in the amount of 130 pounds.²⁶

William became a gentleman justice of Frederick County, an honor his shrewd father never attained. No will or estate inventory is recorded in Clarke or Frederick Counties for William. His daughter, Mary, married Moses Hunter, Jr., Nov. 27, 1812 and the Rev. Alexander Balmain received \$40 for his services.²⁷

Young Hunter was a grandson of General Adam Stephen of Revolutionary War fame, who founded Martinsburg, W. Va.

William's daughter Elizabeth married Charles Henry Brown of Berkeley County.

Edward Snickers' Clarke County estate was not wholly dissipated. His great grandson, Josiah William Ware, in the midnineteenth century, amassed another great estate in land based in large part on his inheritance from his grandmother, Sarah Snickers Alexander,²⁸ who died in 1824. Josiah is buried beside Grace Episcopal Church, Berryville.

Chapter V

George Mercer Sale

Edward Snickers bequeathed 4,000 acres owned by him to his four children in his will ¹ dated June 18, 1790. There was in addition an undisclosed acreage held under lease from the Fairfax estate on the east side of the Shenandoah in the Manor of Leeds.

The most valuable parcel was undoubtedly the 1150 acres received by his son William, bordering the west bank of the Shenandoah for about two and three-fourths miles, and containing the ferry stage, the tavern, a blacksmith's shop, a merchant mill, a saw mill and some houses.

These 1150 were part of 1966 acres which had been purchased by Edward Snickers as a sequel to the court-ordered sale of the financially-embarrassed Lt. Col. George Mercer in 1774.

The legal convolutions of that sale record the impact of the American Revolution on real estate speculation in frontier Virginia.

The family patriarch was John Mercer,² born in Dublin in 1704, a Trinity University-trained lawyer who migrated to Virginia and acquired an estate near Marlborough, in Stafford County.

John was the author of "An Abridgement of the Laws", published in Williamsburg in 1737, and well received by the local attorneys. John married twice and had eight children: George, James, John Fenton, John Francis, Robert, Anna (Mrs. Samuel Selden), Maria (Mrs. Richard Brooke), and Grace (Mrs. Muscoe Garnett).

George, John Fenton and James³ all fought under George Washington's command in the French and Indian War. John Fenton⁴ was killed April 18, 1755, in an Indian attack on Fort Edwards, now Capon Bridge, W. Va.

James⁵ became a Fredericksburg lawyer, a member of the Continental Congress, and a judge of the first Virginia Court of Appeals. James' son, Charles Fenton Mercer, laid out Aldie, Va., in 1810, in part on land he inherited from his father.

In 1759, John of Marlborough⁶ had a new son whom he named John Francis Mercer. And this John grew up to fight in the

Revolution, to be elected to Congress, and to become Governor of Maryland.

But back to Lt. Col. George.

He had been in the thick of the French and Indian war battles, including the Braddock fiasco of 1755. He became a Lt. Col. in the Virginia regiment commanded by Col. William Byrd, and assisted Washington in the building of Fort Loudoun in Winchester. He participated in the rout of the French from Fort Duquesne in November, 1758, and was left in command of that ruin by General John Forbes, over the ensuing winter, with 200 Virginia troops.⁷ In 1760 Mercer was elected one of the burgesses from Frederick County, the other being George Washington.

Some time close to 1760 George Mercer bought from Benjamin Harrison V, the future signer of the Declaration of Independence, a tract of 6479 acres bordering the Shenandoah River. This was Harrison's share of the 50,212-acre patent which had been recorded by Harrison's grandfather, Robert (King) Carter in 1730 in the names of 10 Carter male descendants. There is no apparent record of the sale from Harrison to Mercer in Frederick County. The 6479-acre tract was the farthest downstream of the eight segments into which the 50,212-acre grant was divided in 1740, two of the original beneficiaries having died. This Carter grant was on the west side of the river, stretching from the creek which flows into the Shenandoah about a quarter of a mile north of the present Route 7 crossing (now known as Wheat Spring Branch), upstream almost to present day Riverton. The Carter tract extended inland irregularly, varying in depth from two to three or more miles.

George Mercer went about developing his land with large purchases of slaves, livestock and equipment. In 1760, he took part in a scheme to develop the navigation of the Shenandoah River, as a possible means of moving farm crops to market cheaply.⁸ Wheat by that time was becoming an important crop. The scheme came to nothing; but it indicated Mercer was already owner of the land.

In 1763, the Ohio Company sent George Mercer to London as its agent to try to revitalize its claim to western land. Nothing came of that either. With somewhat better success he pressed the bounty claims of Washington's soldiers under the 1754 proclamation of Governor Dinwiddie. By 1765, Mercer was sufficiently in need of remunerative employment to accept the politically hazardous job of distributing stamps in Virginia under the hated Stamp Act. He was saved from mob violence in Williamsburg by Governor Francis Fauquier. He returned the stamps to a British

war ship, promised his fellow Virginians he would not again attempt to distribute them, and shortly thereafter returned to England where he lived the rest of his life. In 1767 he married a daughter⁹ of Christopher Nevell of Lincoln. His finances went from bad to worse.

On Sept. 3, 1771, he mortgaged the Shenandoah River property to Richard Gravatt of London for an undisclosed amount.¹⁰ In 1772 he obtained a second loan on the property from Mary Wroughton of Bath, England. Again the amount was not stated in the later Frederick County deeds.

In the meantime, George's brother James, acting as attorney for George, but not knowing of the second mortgage George had placed on the land, obtained another second mortgage on it from James Hunter and Charles Dick of Fredericksburg on Nov. 13, 1772.

As George Washington wrote¹¹ to James Mercer, July 19, 1773, "I have been told that both your father's and brother's affairs are a good deal involved in perplexity and distress Is there any land that you could give a mortgage on?" John of Marlborough had died in 1768, and James had offered slaves as collateral for a loan. Washington thought land a better risk.

George Mercer in London asked his friends George Washington, John Tayloe and George Mason to act as his "attorneys" to sell his land and pay his debts. The court appointed them Nov. 5, 1773. Mason declined to serve. In addition to the Shenandoah tract, Mercer owned land in Loudoun County. And as a French and Indian war veteran he had substantial claims to western lands, but these last were not involved in the sale.

George Washington conducted the auction in November, 1774. He recounts the occasion in his diary:¹²

"Nov. 24, 1774 - Set out for Frederick in order to sell Colo. Mercer's estate in that County. Dined at Morgan Alexander's Ordy. (The first intimation Edward Snickers had turned over operation of the tavern to his son-in-law. A note adds "By expenses at Snickers 4 S 6 d.")

"Nov. 24 - Went to sale which began at the middle Plantation at Willm Dawson's, the Head Overseers. Lodged there. (Almanack says "Land Sale at Snickers.")

"Nov. 25 - Sale continued at the same place where I again lodged."

"Nov. 26 - Sale again. Remained there."

"Nov. 27 - Still continued to sell at the same place, where I lodged."

"Nov. 28 - Dined at Mr. Booth's and returned to my Lodgings at Dawson's."

"Nov. 29 - Continued the Sale at Dawson's and finished at that Plantation."

"Nov. 30 - Concluded the whole sales at all the Plantations and went to and dined at Alexander's where I also lodged."

"Dec. 1 - At Alexander's till 12 o'clock taking bonds etca. Then set out for and lodged at Leesburg."

Washington reported that the sale of land in Frederick and Loudoun Counties produced "upwards of 14,000 pounds and was thought scarce sufficient to answer the mortgages upon it in England and Virginia."¹³

The only straightforward aspect of this matter was Washington's meticulous handling of it. Col. Tayloe apparently took no part in the hard work and died shortly thereafter, "insane", according to Washington. The land had been sold for the most part on terms of one year's credit, the purchasers giving Washington bonds evidencing their debts. The bonds were to be paid off in November, 1775; but in the meantime the Revolution burst upon the colonies, and Washington was caught up as commander-in-chief.

The Mercer brothers, however, needed no war to complicate their financial transactions.

As early as Sept. 13, 1767, James Mercer had taken a full column in the Virginia Gazette, published at Williamsburg, to announce his intention to sell 4875 acres of Shenandoah land on the following Dec. 1. He described it as part of 6500 acres in the same locality, adding it contained "more than a moderate proportion of low ground". James obviously thought he owned the land. His advertisement starts out: "After nine years experience, I am convinced that a Virginia estate interferes to (sic) much with my profession to admit of attendance enough, without doing injustice to those who depend on the latter; and without due attention to the first, its losses will very much abridge the profits of the last. . . ." Therefore he would sell his land and slaves. He said the land would be laid off in lots and half the purchase price would be due April 10, 1768; the other half March 10, 1769.

The advertisement continued, "Any persons inclinable to view the land may be shown it by Mr. Edward Snigers (sic) who lives adjoining".

This advertisement antedated all known mortgages on the property.

What correspondence crossed the Atlantic is not now known. But James did not hold the sale in 1767.

In the June 30, 1774 issue of the same newspaper appeared an advertisement signed by George Washington and John Tayloe as "attorneys" for George Mercer. It said that "pursuant to a decree of the honorable the general court and by a letter of attorney from

Col. George Mercer of Virginia now in London, will be sold at publick auction . . . 13,500 acres in Loudoun near West's ordinary" and 5,000 acres "on Shenando river in the county of Frederick, opposite to Snickers' ordinary, and being on the river about seven miles".

It says the property "will admit of two mills on land streams and others in the river. There are now on it six plantations well improved for cropping, 110 slaves, very large and choice stocks of horses (some of the dray breed) black cattle, hogs and sheep; which together with the crops of corn and wheat (expected to be upwards of 2,000 barrels and 5,000 bushels) will be sold on the premises, on the 24 of November next, or next fair day".

Those wanting to see the property should contact William Dawson "who resides on the Shenando tract". Twelve months credit would be extended to those whose purchases amounted to 25 pounds or more, if they gave bond.

The sale was held in accordance with this advertisement.

But Washington's troubles were far from over.

In preparation for the sale, the property had been surveyed by Francis Peyton, with George Jump, Morgan Alexander and Reuben Rankins witnesses.¹⁴ The nearly 6500 acres were divided by Peyton into 22 lots of approximately 300 acres each. George Washington bought two lots—those numbered 5 and 6—and Benjamin Berry, after whom Berryville was named when it was established about 25 years later, bought adjoining lots 13 and 15, totaling 560 acres, for 272 pounds.¹⁵ Thomas Berry bought lot 10 which lacked river frontage, but he offset that by buying a 20-acre island in the river. The deed says¹⁶ he paid 221 pounds "the most that was bid for the same", on Nov. 30, 1774.

Collin Campbell bought Lot 8, of 235 acres, for 127 pounds.¹⁷ And George Noble bought adjoining lots 11 and 14, a total of 650 acres for 493 pounds.¹⁸ Buck Marsh Run passed through Lot 11, and it appears likely that Noble was already established there as a tenant.¹⁹ There were six flourishing plantations on the 6500-acre tract, according to the advertisement in the Virginia Gazette. Probably Noble was operating one or more of these.

Fielding Lewis, George Washington's brother-in-law, bought Lot 2, of 321 acres for 322 pounds. This lot was on the west side of the main road south from Battletown, at the fork of the "chapel road", that is, near the present Old Chapel.²⁰

And James Mercer bought lots 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 22. Washington wrote him Dec. 26, 1774, "the whole of your purchases in Frederick amounted to 2385 pounds, 14 shillings, twopence".²¹ But that appears to have included the price of some slaves.

The above purchases were recorded soon after the sale, none later than the following April.

But not all the lots were sold immediately. And the records of other sales which may have occurred during the November, 1774, auction are delayed many years, partly due to the interruption of the war, and partly to the squabbling of George and James Mercer.

Washington, on April 5, 1775, wrote from Mount Vernon to Edward Montague, George Mercer's London attorney:²² ". . . it gives me much pain to find two gentln. brothers, who individually stand high in the esteem of their countrymen, imbibing unfavorable impressions, and to their joint friends, mu(tu)ally arraigning the conduct of each other, when I am satisfied that both think themselves right, and that neither hath made proper allowance for the situation of the other. . . ."

Lot 12, for instance, with long Shenandoah river frontage and 297 acres, was sold to William Benson, but there is no apparent record of the Mercer-to-Benson sale in the county records until an oblique mention of it in the transfer of the property by Benson²³ to Thomas Shepherd Jan. 31, 1792. The document recorded is Benson's bond in the amount of 3,000 pounds, guaranteeing that Benson could give clear title to the property on which Shepherd was about to build what became an outstanding merchant mill. The document indicates Benson was living on the property in 1792. The recording did not occur until 1801, when the document was proved in court.

Francis Willis, Jr., bought Lot 3, with long frontage on the main road south from Battletown. He paid 632 pounds for the 312 and three-fourths acres. The sale is reported to have occurred Nov. 24, 1774, but it was not recorded²⁴ until Feb. 6, 1793.

Lot 7 went to Raleigh Colston,²⁵ in November, 1786.

But the most illuminating commentary on the confusion of the Mercer sale lies in the experience of Edward Snickers who, however briefly, undoubtedly owned Lots 1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 22.

As to Lot 1, of 294 and one-half acres, lying along the west side of the road south from Battletown, adjoining that bought by Fielding Lewis, and across the road from that bought by Francis Willis, there is no apparent reference to Snickers' ownership in the county records until May 16, 1814, when Snickers had been 24 years dead.

On that date, Snickers' son-in-law and youngest daughter, Thomas and Elizabeth Stribling,²⁶ gave a new deed to John Milton, conveying Lot 1. This deed shows that Edward Snickers bought Lot 1, no date or price mentioned, and bequeathed it to Elizabeth in his will (which incidentally says the Striblings were living on it in 1790). The 1814 deed says Thomas and Elizabeth sold Lot 1 to Milton

Dec. 14, 1791. No reason is given for the late recording.

The Snickers' ownership of Lots 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 22 is more involved. The first official reference²⁷ states that Edward and Elizabeth Snickers on June 3, 1777, sold to Mahlon Taylor of Hunterdon County, New Jersey, for 2,300 pounds, 1,079 acres in Frederick County, "being three lotts formerly the estate of Col. George Mercer, sold by his trustees, Col. Geo. Washington and Col. John Tayloe, and conveyed to the said Edward Snickers by deeds bearing the date April 8, 1777, and recorded in the office at Williamsburgh". The lots transferred were 16, 17 and 19, none of which had river frontage.

In his 1790 will, Edward left the other three lots—18, 20 and 22—all of which had river frontage, to his son, William.

But it was not until Oct. 1, 1807, that the Superior Court of Frederick County set Edward Snickers' title to the six lots at rest. On that date, about 17 years after Snickers' death, the court decreed that on March 8, 1778, Snickers paid 2457 pounds, 10 shillings "paper money" to James Mercer of Fredericksburg, for six adjoining lots on the Shenandoah River, containing 1966 and one-fourth acres. The record says Snickers and James Mercer entered into a deed agreement for the lots of Feb. 1, 1786, but Snickers had had possession of the property from March 1778. It says James Mercer bought the property at the sale of George Mercer's estate in November, 1774, and that the sale from James Mercer to Edward Snickers was "not recorded heretofore through the interruptions of the American War".²⁸

But the decree still leaves unanswered how Snickers could sell three of the six lots to Mahlon Taylor in 1777 if he did not obtain title to them until 1778.

It would be unfair to Snickers, however, to suggest any sharp practise on his part. George Washington too had trouble getting title to the two lots he bought at the 1774 sale.

George Mercer died in London in April, 1784. Friction with his brother James over disposition of the proceeds of the sale apparently continued until George's death. All during the Revolution, with more important things to do, patient George Washington had tried first to settle Mercer's affairs, and then to rid himself of the legal responsibility for them. But it was not until Nov. 9, 1782 that the High Court of Chancery in Williamsburg transferred the bonds of delinquent purchasers from the custody of George Washington to that of John Francis Mercer, young step-brother of George and James. Washington's letters continued friendly to James to the end; but he soon lost patience with John Francis. A letter to the latter written²⁹ from Newburgh, N. Y., Jan. 30, 1783, indicates

Washington was still not rid of the bonds. On July 8, 1784, writing from Mount Vernon,³⁰ Washington tells John Francis he is transmitting accounts of the estates of John of Marlborough and of George Mercer "just as they stand upon my books".

And then he adds: "will you be so good as to ask your brother (James) in what manner I am to obtain deed for the two lotts I bought at Colo. Mercer's sale, and which are credited to his accot.?"

James Mercer apparently sent Washington a prompt explanation, for Washington³¹ on Aug. 1784 wrote James ". . . I thank you for the advice respecting the mode of conveying a title for the lands I purchased at your Brother's sale, and will pursue it. . . ."

It was not, however, until April 27, 1786, that Washington, then in Richmond, made the following entry in his diary: "Acknowledged in the Genl Court a deed to James Mercer, Esqr. for the lotts he and I bought at the sale of his deceased brother Colo. George Mercer, and received reconveyance from him of my part thereof".

That Snickers had lent George Mercer money and hoped for its repayment from the proceeds of the 1774 sale, is evidenced by Washington's letter³² to him written at Mount Vernon June 25, 1784:

"Dear Sir: Upon my return from Philada I found your favor of the 17th of May at this place. For your kind intention to make me a visit, I thank you, and shall always be glad to see you when it is convenient. With respect to the other matters mentioned in your letter, all **THAT** business is now in the hands of the Hoble. Mr. John Mercer, by a decree of the High Court of Chancery of this state. I have nothing, therefore, to do with the settlement of accounts, transferences of lands etc. It is possible, tho even of this I am not certain, that under the former power of attorney and decree of the court, it may be necessary for me to sign the deeds of such Lotts as were not conveyed at the time of sale; but before I do this it must be certified to me by Mr. Mercer, that the terms of sale are complied with, and that it is proper for me to do so. This, as I have long declined acting upon the affairs of Colo. Mercer and his mortgages, is necessary for my own justification.

"Whatever Mr. James Mercer may have promised respecting the payment of his Brother's Debt to you, I know not; but think there must have been a misconception with respect to my doing it; further than saying it was reasonable it shou'd be so and ought to be allowed. All I had to do in the matter, under the decree of the court, was to sell the estate, the amount of which was to be subject to a future decree. If 12,500 pounds was sufficient to discharge the several mortgages upon it, the overplus undoubtedly would be

subject to the payment of all just claims against Colo. Mercer, but how this matter really is, I know not. The moment I found I could no longer discharge the duties of the power under which I acted, I wrote to Col. Tayloe (the other attorney) to take the business wholly upon himself and I should no longer act, or consider myself responsible for the management of the trust. . . .”

So Snickers had to wait until 1786 to obtain clear title from James Mercer, even as Washington waited.

That Mahlon Taylor, who bought Lots 16, 17 and 19 from Snickers in 1777 and had to wait until Feb. 1, 1786 for Snickers to receive clear title to the land, did not blame Snickers, is proved by an advertisement Taylor inserted in the “Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser” on March 2, 1786:

“To be sold cheap. One thousand acres of unimproved land in Berkeley (sic) County, on the road leading from Snickers Gap to Winchester, and about three miles from the Shenandoah River. It will be sold together or divided as may best suit the purchaser. The superior quality of the land in that part of the country is so well known that it is needless to describe it, especially as it is presumed that any person disposed to purchase would choose to view the premises, which will be shown them by applying to Edward Snickers, who will make known the terms. An indisputable title will be made. Signed Mahlon Taylor, Feb. 20, 1786. P. S. Any persons inclining to purchase are desired to make application before the 15th day of the next month, as the said land will then be laid off in lots and rented if not sold by that time.”

That Snickers eventually profited by the Mercer deal is proved by the fact that he paid James Mercer 2457 pounds, 10 shillings for the six lots, and sold three of them—and three lacking river frontage at that—to Taylor for 2300 pounds, keeping the three with river frontage for himself. Snickers’ river frontage in these three lots ran from what is now known as Wheat Spring Branch, upstream to the mouth of what is now known as Dog Run, according to Peyton’s plat.

Chapter VI

Snickers as Washington Knew Him

George Washington first mentions Edward Snickers in his diary on Aug. 1, 1769: "Set out from Charles West's (ordinary near present Aldie) dined at Snickers and got to Mr. Wr. Washington's about 5 o'clock." Warner Washington, Sr., was George Washington's first cousin, who had moved to Frederick County from Gloucester County¹ and had built a home suitable for entertaining guests by August 1769. Fairfield, north of Berryville, was ultimately the Warner Washington seat, but it is not certain that this mansion was completed by August 1769.

Washington was taking his wife, Martha, and her daughter, Martha Parke Custis, to the "Warm Springs", now Berkeley Springs, W. Va., for a holiday to try to remedy the girl's failing health.

Of the return journey to Mt. Vernon, Washington made this diary entry on Sept. 11: "Continued my journey and reached Charles West's ordinary after baiting under the ridge at the blacksmith's shop." A ledger account for the same day identifies the blacksmith's as Snickers', the earliest proof that Snickers' activities beside the Shenandoah included this necessary service to horsemen in addition to operation of a ferry and a tavern.

In 1770, Washington visited the "Big Bend" country of the Ohio River, on the left bank, upstream from the mouth of the Kanawha. This was part of the 200,000 acres available for distribution under the 1754 proclamation of Governor Robert Dinwiddie, among French and Indian war veterans and artisans. Many of those had asked Washington to receive and certify their claims, and have surveys made for them.² With Dr. James Craik of Alexandria, his personal physician and friend, three servants and a pack horse, he started out to view this Big Bend country³ on Oct. 5.

On the return journey, Washington records for Nov. 29: "Set out early and reached my brother's (Samuel Washington at Harewood, a few miles west of present Charles Town, W. Va.) about 22-3 miles. Doctr Craik having business by Winchester, went that

way to meet at Snickers tomorrow by 10 o'clock. Friday 30th— According to appointment Doctr and I met, and after breakfasting at Snickers proceeded on to West's where we arrived at or about sunset."

Washington was building a mill near Mount Vernon at this time.

On Sept. 4, 1770, the diary reported, "received from Edwd Snickers the Mill stones he was to get for me which were thinner by two inches than what were bespoke." In spite of this cross comment, Washington paid Snickers 20 pounds for the mill stones when he stopped for breakfast on Nov. 30.

On March 12, 1771, "Left Mr. Washington's and crossed at Snickers' (where I eat an early dinner) reach'd Leesburg between 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon."

A May 27, 1772 entry shows he spent four shillings, six pence at Snickers' tavern; and on May 30: "Set out early. Viewed some land belonging to Jesse Ball. Stopped a little while among my tenants under the ridge. Dined at Snickers, and lodged at Mr. Warner Washington's." On March 9, 1774, "Dined at Snickers and lodged at Fairfield."

And in November, 1774, Washington conducted the sale of George Mercer's estate, making the tavern one of his headquarters. By that time Morgan Alexander was the host.

Until Alexander's management, Washington had apparently not slept at the tavern.

Except for the annoyance expressed over the thin mill stones, there is nothing in these bare diary entries to indicate how Washington regarded Snickers as a man.

The respect which Washington obviously accorded the tavern keeper appears, however, in his letters.

These indicate that Washington considered Snickers an honest, skillful practitioner, a man who knew how to get things done, especially things that required sophisticated handling. They show he trusted Snickers' judgment of other men.

The earliest is a letter to Snickers, written in Williamsburg,⁴ June 16, 1774, concerning the troubles of Lieut. William Hughes of a Virginia regiment, who had been in a Maryland jail for two years, whose military land rights Snickers wanted to buy, and whom Snickers was trying to free.

It reads: "Sir: Enclosed you will receive Mr. Hughes' warrant (in his own right) for 2,000 acres of land, the getting of which at this time he must look upon as a very great favor, as the governor has dispensed with two positive instructions to oblige him. He would not grant a warrant for the other claim under Johnston. Hughes was very negligent in not sending the former certificates

granted him: I wish you would get in that which was given him by Colo. Byrd, as it will have a bad look if it shou'd ever appear.

"I got a gentleman of my acquaintance, in Maryland, to mention his case to Governor Eden, who promised to have the matter inquired into and do what he could for his relief. Why it has not been done I cannot tell, but if my contributing twenty, or twenty-five pounds to his relief will procure liberty to him, you may set me down for that sum, and I will pay it at any time when the subscription is full. But how he is to get over the matter of giving Maryland security for his good behavior, I know not. You who are best acquainted with the circumstances of this case, can tell better than I. I am etc."

That Washington took seriously Snickers' appraisal of William Dawson, overseer of the George Mercer property before the 1774 sale, is evident in the letter Washington wrote⁵ to James Mercer, Dec. 12, 1774:

". . . I am very thoroughly convinced of Mr. Dawson's being a consummate rascal, and intended to have acquainted you with my suspicions, when I wrote to you, in order that you might be upon your guard at a settlement with him.

"Mr. Snickers told me, the day I parted with you (as we crossed the Mountain together) that it was three hundred pines Dawson sold Shepherd, and that to his knowledge he has also sold a dozen or more horses; one in particular to Benjamin Berry for twelve or fourteen pounds, which Berry immediately sold for twenty-six. These things may and do readily account for the deficiency we found in the article of horses and stock. And I think from Snickers account, good part of the crop of wheat has gone off in the same way. Only 713 1/2 bushels have been brought to my mill by the miller's books; and from your account of the remainder only 640 bushels are to come. Your account of the quantity of corn sold at the different plantations is right, except as to that at Carters and Buck Marsh. At those places Snicker had ninety four barrels and Noble twenty six; whereas you set down only an hundred, and all to Snickers. The surplus, be it more or less, after the wheat is brought away, should be sold; but who is to be entrusted with this, unless you can confide in your New Overseer, I know not."

(This letter implies that Snickers operated one or more of the six plantations developed on the George Mercer property before the sale.)

There is a more personal feeling in the letter to Snickers from Mt. Vernon, dated March 10, 1775. Snickers had hauled a great deal of the large wheat crop from George Mercer's plantations

to Washington's mill after the 1774 sale. A ledger entry of Washington's for Nov. 30 says: "By cash paid Mr. Edwd Snickers on acct of the waggonage of Colo. Mercer's wheat from the Shan 18 pounds."

This was only part of what Washington owed Snickers, however. The letter of March 10, 1775, states:⁶

"Dear Sir: I have received your letter of the 6th inst. inclosing receipts for the delivery of Colo. Mercer's wheat, as also an account of what is due you for hauling it to my mill, and threshing it out; by which you make a balance of forty-four pounds, seven shillings and nine pence due to you; which I dare say is right, and therefore acknowledge it to be so, as I keep the Millers rect.

"I had sold my corn for ready money, which was to have been taken away by the first of this month, and of course I ought to have been in cash, to have answered your and other demands but have not received a farthing of the money; for which reason I can send you by Mr. Fenton only twenty pounds; the remaining 24 pounds, seven shillings, 9 pence I will pay to your order, so soon as I receive the cash. If you do not send your wheat soon, it will be of little use to me. I am dear sir etc."

It is probable that Washington's first knowledge of Snickers was during the early years of the French and Indian war when the young Colonel was trying to round up wagons to carry supplies from Winchester to Wills Creek where Fort Cumberland was being constructed. The future general, Daniel Morgan, still a young civilian, served as a wagon man with Braddock's campaign in 1755.

Edward Snickers may have done likewise, or perhaps he helped scour the countryside for likely teams and wagons. It was the sort of enterprise he would have liked and would have found a way to profit from. Farmers were loath to rent or sell their horses. They charged 20 shillings to haul a barrel of salt beef from Winchester to Wills Creek.⁷ Braddock was shocked by the demands of the teamsters; he had hoped to hire 200 wagons and 2500 horses. But the Frederick County farmers demanded 10 shillings a day for a four-horse wagon and team, and two shillings for a pack horse.

It seems probable that Snickers had some connection with waggonage during the French and Indian War.

At any rate, he was Washington's first choice for Wagonmaster General during the Revolution.

A letter dated at Morris Town, N.J., Jan. 19, 1777 to Snickers⁸ says:

"Dear Sir: We are in want of a wagonmaster general to the

army. If you incline to accept of that office I will appoint you to it, in this case do not delay a moment's time in repairing to the Army, or to Genl. Mifflin, the Quartermaster General, from whom you will receive your orders; at any rate send word by return of the bearer (who comes express to you) whether you will or will not accept, as the exigency of the service will not admit of doubt or delay.

"You will have the pay of Colonel allowed you, that is, twenty-two pounds ten shillings per kalender month; dollars at six shillings. I am etc.

"P.S. you will be allowed a clerk for keeping your accts and doing the necessary writing."

Snickers turned down the proffered job because of ill health.⁹

But he helped the army buy horses and wagons, as this letter from Washington to Joseph Reed¹⁰ attests: "Morris Town, Feb. 23, 1777 . . . if you can give any assistance to Genl. Mifflin in an arrangement of waggons I shall be glad of it. One Snickers, a gentleman on or near Shenandoah in Frederick County, Virginia, has offered to buy a number. He is a person well acquainted in this business, and may be depended on."

And a letter of March 19, 1777, from Morris Town to Genl. Thomas Mifflin¹¹ adds ". . . I have a letter of the ninth from Mr. Snickers; he had not then read your orders for the purchase of teams, at which he was very uneasy, as the price of horses was rising daily"

But perhaps the greatest compliment to Snickers' business acumen was contained in Washington's request that he select suitable tenants for the farms into which Washington divided the two lots he bought at George Mercer's sale.

A letter from Mount Vernon, written June 25, 1784, concludes¹² ". . . I shall as soon as I can make it convenient divide the lotts I bought at Mr. Mercer's sale, into proper sized tenements, and let them for a term of years to those who will give the highest annual rent, when a day shall be fixed for that purpose. If any persons should be making inquiries from you respecting them, you shall be pleased to give them this information. I am, etc."

Shortly thereafter he visited the family of his late brother Sam at Harewood, and on Sept. 4, 1784, wrote Snickers from Berkeley:¹³ "Dear Sir—Several persons have been with me this day to rent the land I bought at the sale of Colo. George Mercer's estate; but I find it is essential that some one, or more of them, should engage for the whole rent; or that I should delay renting it until the land can be divided to the best advantage, so as that each lot may have water, and a proportionate quantity of good land. For these reasons

I mean to avail myself of the kind offer you made me yesterday, of letting the two lotts (I bought as above) to the best advantage on my behalf.

"Enclosed is a plan of the land wch may be some guide to you. I have told Williams who is a liver on one of the lotts, that I have no objection to his having a hundred acres or more, provided he will give as much as another, and the laying off does not hurt the other part. As to the rents, I suppose the same which Mr. Burwell has, must govern, to wit, ten pounds and the taxes for each one hundred acres, in other respects my printed leases, one of which I enclose you, are to be shown to the tenants, and must be **your** rule and **their** terms. I do not mean to give leases for lives; indeed I do not incline to exceed 10 years. But if it should be thought by the tenants, and this should be your opinion also, that ten years is too short to make the buildings and other improvements which are required by the printed copy I send you, I would lengthen them to 14 years.

"There is one thing I think it necessary to caution you upon; my object being to have my lands improved by an industrious class of respectable people, I would not lease any of them to persons who do not mean to reside thereon; or to those who have lands adjoining, because in either case I should expect to have my land worked (perhaps totally ruined) without those aids or improvements which are to be expected from residents, whose convenience and comfort wou'd call for many things, which never would be furnished negro quarters.

"After you have done the needful, and hear of my return home, I shall thank you for information respecting this business. I am etc."

Snickers proceeded to follow instructions, and he found some tenants. But Washington, for once either unreasonable or forgetful, did not appreciate Snickers' efforts. In a letter to Battaile Muse, ¹⁴ from Mount Vernon, July 28, 1785, Washington wrote: ". . . In September last whilst I was at my brothers in Berkeley, many persons applied for this land (bought from George Mercer in 1774); but for causes which then existed I came to no positive agreement with any; referring them to Mr. Snickers who was so kind as to promise he would fix matter for me (as I was in a hurry and could not go upon the land myself) on the terms which, if I recollect right, I gave him in a letter. Some time after, two men of the names of Winzer and Beaven, with the letter enclosed from Mr. Snickers, came here and were told that I would comply with whatever agreement was made with them by him. Among other things they said Mr. Snickers had promised them leases for fourteen years; this I observed could not, in my opinion, be the case,

because I had expressly named 10 years (the term for which Mr. Burwell let his lands adjoining) but notwithstanding if the case was so, and Mr. Snickers would declare it, the leases should be filled up accordingly. This I repeat, and as far as the matter respects Winzer, for it seems Beaven has changed his mind, the other conditions endorsed on the back of Mr. Snickers letter to me, are to be granted him; he paying all the taxes which may be laid on the land he holds”

Muse had bought a farm with a mill from James Wormeley,¹⁵ near Washington’s Bull Skin plantation, and became Washington’s local land agent about this time.

Chapter VII

Military Procurement Scandal

In 1777, Edward Snickers scaled the economic heights, then plunged into the depths of criminal charges of fraud.

The Council of State Government on Dec. 12 advised Virginia Governor Patrick Henry to ask the state's Attorney General, Edmund Jennings Randolph, to prosecute Snickers for fraud, based on alleged padded accounts of procurement for the military.

Whether the prosecution ever took place is not clear. But Snickers sold no more supplies or services to the state of Virginia or to the Continental Congress.

He had submitted bills and had received payment totalling at least 14,000 pounds, from the Virginia Committee of Safety, from the Council of State Government which succeeded the Committee as the state's executive agency in July, 1776, and from the Continental Congress.

The Committee of Safety, which functioned as the executive head in Virginia between the collapse of royal authority and the creation of the Council of State Government, had appointed Snickers Paymaster and Commissary for Virginia troops stationed at Fort Pitt, Wheeling and Great and Little Kanawha. This was a civilian title, and Snickers was placed under bond in an undisclosed but presumably substantial amount.

British troops had been pulled out of Fort Pitt in 1772, and the fort had been allowed to deteriorate. Virginia and Pennsylvania were quarreling over which owned the Pittsburgh triangle. Survey of the Mason and Dixon line, establishing the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania, had been completed in 1767, but did not extend beyond the western boundary of Maryland. This left ownership of the Pittsburgh area in doubt. There was danger of Indian attack, and the Quaker legislature of Pennsylvania was reluctant to vote funds to fight Indians. The Virginia-Pennsylvania boundary dispute was finally compromised in 1784 by projecting the Mason and Dixon line to a point five degrees west of the

Delaware River, and declaring a line north from that point the western boundary of Pennsylvania. This gave Pittsburgh to Pennsylvania, but that decision was far in the future.

On Aug. 7, 1775, the Virginia convention ordered Capt. John Neville to proceed from Winchester with a company of Virginia soldiers and invest Fort Pitt. The Virginians arrived there Sept. 11 and Neville continued in command at the fort until he was ordered to join Washington¹ in the east in November 1776.

Neville was an old acquaintance of Snickers. He had been born in what is now Fauquier County, but moved to Frederick County as a young man. He was sheriff² in 1763-64; was licensed to operate a tavern³ in 1765; was a vestryman of Frederick Parish at the same time Snickers served on the vestry.⁴ The farm Neville owned fell on the Berkeley side of the line when that county was cut off from Frederick in 1772, and Neville⁵ was one of the first panel of gentleman justices appointed by Governor Dunmore for the new county. He had qualified for western lands from earlier war service, and had visited Pittsburgh often before he was assigned there as military commander.

Snickers' appointment as Paymaster and Commissary for these Virginia troops on the Ohio frontier was logical. He did not however limit his procurement to their needs. He also supplied the men commanded by Daniel Morgan and other officers from the Winchester area.

The deputy commissary general assigned by the Continental Congress to provision troops stationed in Virginia was William Aylett.⁶ His appointment dated from April 27, 1776, and there is a suggestion in the sketchy records that he was bad news for Snickers.

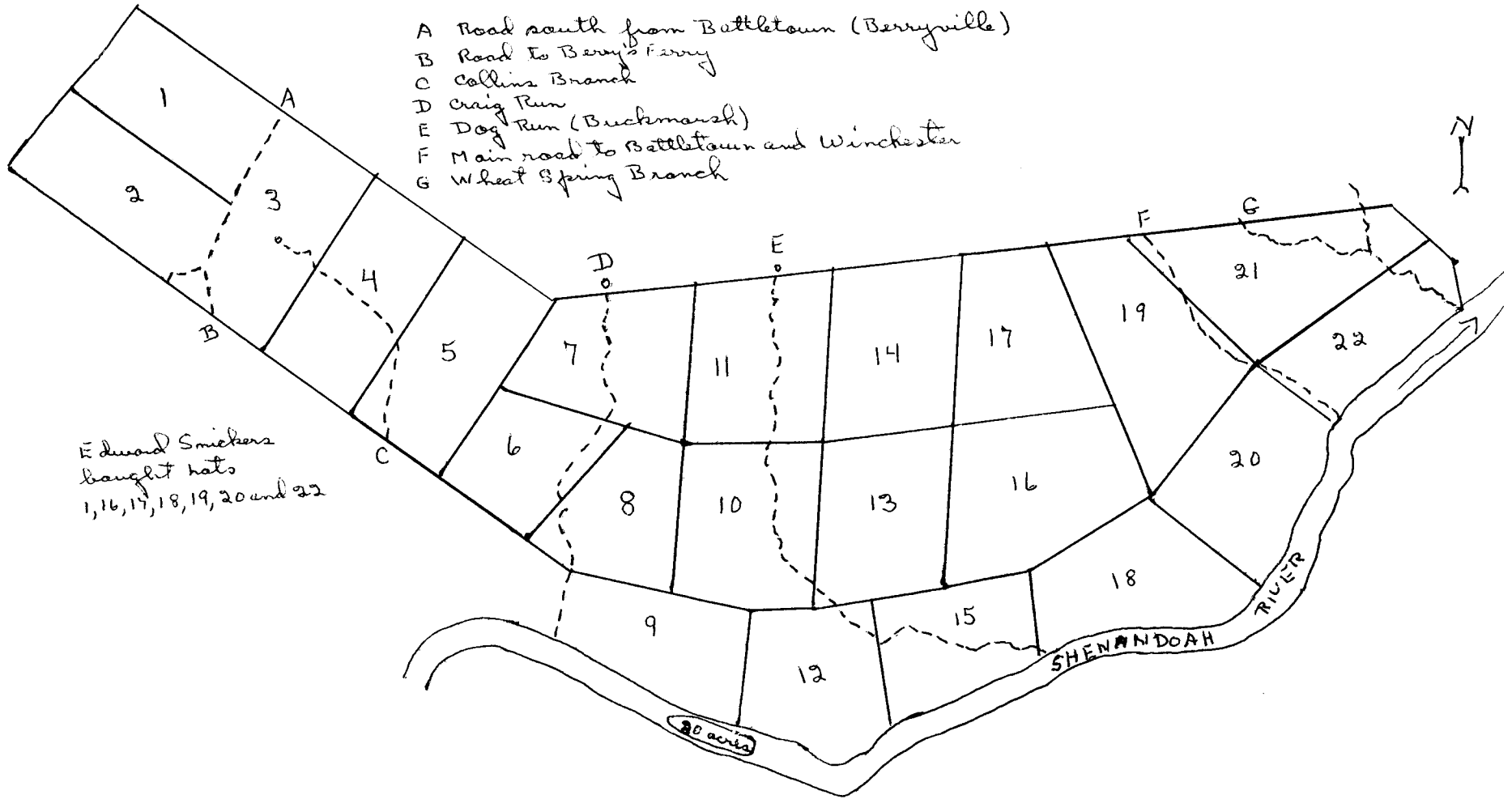
On the following Nov. 6, the Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, passed this resolution: "Resolved that Willie Jones, Esq., of Halifax, Robert Smith, Esq., of Edenton, and Alexander Telfer, Esq., of Halifax, or any two of them, be appointed to audit and settle the Continental accounts in Virginia."⁷

On Nov. 27, the Council of State ordered Snickers paid in full and his commissary's bond cancelled. Three weeks is too short a time, probably, for auditors to have investigated and reported to Congress, and for Congress to have passed the word back to the Council of State. But Snickers received only three payments thereafter, and two of them covered supplies to his friend Daniel Morgan.

On Nov. 1, Aylett had placed this advertisement in a Williamsburg newspaper: "I have received instructions from the Congress to contract for supplying the Continental troops with provisions for

PLAT OF GEORGE MERCER SALE

- A Road south from Battletown (Berryville)
- B Road to Berry's Ferry
- C Collins Branch
- D Craig Run
- E Dog Run (Buckmarsh)
- F Main road to Battletown and Winchester
- G Wheat Spring Branch



Edward Smickers
bought lots
1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 22

the ensuing year; the Second and Seventh regiments to commence the first day of December next, and the troops that are about to be raised as soon as they are collected. Those who are desirous to engage in this business are requested to meet me in the city of Williamsburg on Friday, the 21st instant, with their proposals.”⁸

Aylett wrote to Richard Henry Lee, in Congress in Philadelphia, asking permission to substitute a different schedule of provisioning for Virginia soldiers from the one which Congress had prescribed for all Continental troops. The answer was equivocal. Aylett, Nov. 26, 1776, wrote again to Lee,⁹ saying Virginia authorities agreed with him that the local plan of provisioning was better and that he was going ahead with it, subject to amendments by Congress. He had contracted with Joseph Hawkins, James Barbour, George Pickett, John Craig, Henry Field, William Robertson, Richard Hardy and James Grigsby. He said he had cautioned them “not to think of engaging but with firm resolution to comply punctually in every instance; and besides a bond taken of them, I have inserted a clause that may perpetually stare them in the face, that if they transgress in any instance, their bond, which is fifty thousand pounds, shall be forfeited.”

He outlined to Lee the pattern of provisioning the contracts called for.

“Two days a week to serve bacon, two days salt beef or pork at least onehalf the former, and three days with fresh beef or other fresh provisions.” Bacon, 14 ounces per ration; beef or pork, 1 1/4 pound per ration; mutton, 1 pound; flour 1 1/4 pound or 1 1/2 pound sifted meal. Butter to be provided the sick at 8 ounces per ration. Sugar, molasses, rice, coffee and some wine to be provided the sick, and to be issued in lieu of other rations, “so that the contractors be no losers by it, when ordered by the surgeon or commanding officer. Peas, beans and potatoes to be issued three times each week, instead, or in part of flour, so long as they can be had, at the rate of two and one-half bushels of peas or beans to one hundred pounds of flour. Vinegar, one gill per man per week. Salt one gill per man per week.”

Snickers did not provide military needs on any such scale as this. But he had collected more than 14,000 pounds. The value of this money can be estimated by the costs of other goods and services in 1777. A colonel in the Continental Army, for instance, received 22 pounds, 10 shillings a month.¹⁰ And in that year Snickers sold 1080 acres of fine Frederick County farm land for about two pounds two shillings per acre.¹¹

Snickers had acted in much of this procurement jointly with Charles Mynn Thruston, minister of Frederick parish from 1769

to 1777 when he resigned to join the military.

As early as February 19, 1776, the Committee of Safety had written a polite letter to Snickers saying "that he need not continue to purch'e Prov'ns except for Pit'sb'g, as we have ent'd into contracts for those Reg's—pleased he has laid out the 1,000 pounds for arms, and are willing he may engage for another 1,000 pounds for musquets." ¹²

But Snickers continued to buy lavishly. On June 27, 1776, the Committee ordered a letter to be written to "Messers" Snickers and Thruston, requesting them to desist from any further purchases of rifles or guns. ¹³

By Nov. 27, 1776, the Virginia Council of State Government attempted to pay Snickers in full and ordered cancelled the bond he had given its predecessor, the Committee of Safety. ¹⁴

After this there were only three approvals of bills submitted by Snickers: on Dec. 2, 1776, the Council of State Government ordered a warrant issued to Snickers for 80 pounds "being one year's service omitted in his general accounting as paymaster to the troops stationed at Fort Pitt, Wheeling, and Great and Little Kanawha. ¹⁵ On Feb. 4, 1777, a warrant was issued "to Col. Daniel Morgan for Edward Snickers for 500 pounds on account of purchase of arms, clothing, ¹⁶ etc."

And on Aug. 2, 1777, Snickers received 1872 and 23/72 dollars from the Continental Congress for supplies provided to Daniel Morgan. ¹⁷

On June 10, 1777, the Virginia Council of State Government lowered the boom.

Its journal states: ¹⁸ "The Board having received information that they have been imposed upon in an account with Edward Snickers the twenty-seventh of November last, being an account stated by the Rev. Charles Mynn Thruston against the Commonwealth, but in which the said Snickers is equally concerned with the said Thruston, it is ordered that the said account be conveyed to Isaac and Thomas Hite esquires, or either of them, to make inquirey into the supposed fraud or any other which may have been practised by the said Snickers against the public in his various Transactions, all of which the clerk is directed to send to the said Isaac and Thomas Hite; and James Nourse and James Keith, gentlemen, are appointed commissioners to take depositions in the County of Berkeley; Tavenor Beale and John Tipton in the County of Dunmore; John Smith, Edward McGuire, Joseph Holmes and John McDonald or any two of them in the County of Frederick; Josias Clapham and John Miner in the County of Loudoun; and Abraham Hite and Stephen Ruddell in Hampshire. The above named Isaac and Thomas

Hite are desired to give the said Charles Thruston or the said Edward Snickers reasonable notice of the time and place of taking depositions in the several counties aforesaid, and the several commissions aforesaid are to send without delay the depositions by them respectively taken inclosed to the clerk of the council."

And the record of the Council meeting for Dec. 12, 1777, says:¹⁹ "Sundry depositions taken by commissioners appointed by this board, relative to a supposed fraud in Edward Snickers and Charles M. Thruston against this commonwealth, having been examined and considered by the Attorney General, and he reporting that there appeared from the said depositions, to be most enormous frauds and palpable forgeries committed by the said Snickers against the public in his various transactions, the Board do advise the Governor to direct the Attorney to order a criminal prosecution against the said Snickers without delay." Signed by John Page, Dudley Digges, John Blair, B. Dandridge, N. Harrison and David Jameson.

Was the prosecution ever held?

There is no further mention of it in the journal of the Council of State. The records of the court which presumably would have conducted it were largely destroyed in the burning of Richmond in 1865. It is not clear whether Snickers was prosecuted.

It is possible these later events were related to public censure of Snickers in his home community:

- At a meeting of the Frederick parish vestry April 25, 1778, Benjamin Sedwick was added to the group in place of Edward Snickers who had resigned earlier.²⁰

- William Snickers, who had served as a "cadet" in a Virginia regiment at least as early as May, 1776, and who became a captain²¹ in Charles Mynn Thruston's Continental regiment in March, 1777, resigned Jan. 31, 1778.

- Morgan Alexander, Snickers' son-in-law, resigned May 16, 1778, as Major in the 8th Virginia regiment.²²

If indeed these three resignations were related to the accusation made against Snickers by the Council of State, then later developments may just as logically indicate Snickers' vindication.

- He rejoined the vestry²³ in 1779 and was a member when the Assembly dissolved the vestries in Virginia in 1780 as part of the break with England. The Frederick vestry, as an adjunct of the Church of England, held its last meeting May 4, 1780.

- Morgan Alexander became colonel of Virginia militia,²⁴ serving in 1781 and 1782, and possibly until his death in 1783.

- Here is what Samuel Kercheval has to say about William Snickers:²⁵

"In 1781, Cornwallis entered Virginia at the head of a large army, and in the month of June a party of Tories raised the British standard on Lost River"

Militia were requested from the counties adjoining Hampshire (this part now Hardy) and the response, says Kercheval, was gratifying.

"Four hundred rank and file were well mounted and equipped. Those from Frederick were volunteers.

"General Morgan who, after the defeat of Tarleton (at the Battle of Cowpens Jan. 11, 1781) and some other military services, had obtained a leave of absence from the army, and was now reposing on his farm, Saratoga, in Frederick, was solicited to take command, with which he readily complied. About the 18th or 20th of June the army marched from Winchester and in two days arrived in neighborhood of this Tory section of Hardy County

"The army thence crossed the south branch mountain. On or near the summit they saw a small cabin As the men approached the cabin, 10 or 12 fellows ran out and fled. An elderly man named Mace, and two of his sons, were among them. Old Mace, finding himself pretty closely pursued, surrendered. One of the pursuers was Captain William Snickers, an aide-de-camp of Morgan, who being mounted on a fine horse, was soon alongside him.

"One of Mace's sons looking back at this instant, and seeing Snickers aiming a blow with a drawn sword at his father, drew up his rifle and fired at him. The ball passed through the crest of his horse's neck; he fell, and threw the rider over his head. Snickers was at first thought by his friends to be killed; and in the excitement of the moment an Irishman, half drunk, who had been with Morgan some time as a waiter, and had seen much Tory blood shed in the Carolinas, ran up to Mace with a cocked pistol in his hand, and shot the poor man, who fell back and instantly expired. Capt. Snickers soon recovered from the bruises received in the fall, as did his horse also from the wound in his neck."

As for Edward Snickers, he was sufficiently well thought of in Frederick County by March 3, 1779, so that he was welcomed, with General Morgan, as a surety on the 50,000 pound bond required of Edmund Taylor by Governor Henry, when Taylor was appointed tax collector for the county.²⁶

And in October, 1786, the Virginia Assembly granted a new authorization for the ferry at Snickers Gap to Edward Snickers.²⁷

Daniel Morgan obviously never wavered in his warm friendship for Snickers, who named Morgan an executor of his will.

References to Snickers' military procurement payments continue

to dot the fiscal record of the state of Virginia for years.

In 1781, Col. William Davies was appointed to the Virginia War Office²⁸ as commissioner of accounts. One of his duties in subsequent years was to try to persuade the Congress to pay Revolutionary War bills incurred by the state.

On May 5, 1791, almost a year after Snickers' death, Davies wrote a letter to Governor Beverley Randolph from Philadelphia where he was representing Virginia before the general board set up by Congress.²⁹ Davies indicated the Thruston-Snickers accounts with the state of Virginia were still not accepted by the general board. He referred to "Thruston's and Snickers' account for large and valuable advances from the treasury."

But on Aug. 28, 1791, Davies wrote Randolph another letter telling of progress in settling Virginia's accounts.³⁰

He included this item: "The monies advanced to Aylett Snickers account are all admitted to December 1776, which I believe terminated his agency."

In light of Snickers' acceptance by his community during the last years of his life, including approval by George Washington who was surely conversant with the fraud charge yet asked Snickers to serve him as land agent in 1784, it appears that if Snickers were ever prosecuted he was vindicated.

Chapter VIII

The Thruston Connection

When the Council of State Government on Dec. 12, 1777, advised Governor Patrick Henry to prosecute Edward Snickers for alleged fraud, it pointedly did not include Charles Mynn Thruston in its accusations.

Snickers and Thruston had engaged jointly in the procurement, the records indicate; and Thruston's participation was sufficiently prominent to cause the Council to investigate him along with Snickers during the summer and fall of 1777. The account was still labeled "Thruston's and Snickers' account for large and valuable advances from the treasury" by Col. William Davies when he sought recompense from Congress for Virginia in 1791.

So why did the Council of State Government apparently exempt Thruston from threat of prosecution?

Perhaps the depositions taken in the summer of 1777 clearly absolved Thruston from complicity in fraud.

Perhaps Thruston's career as a minister and a soldier blunted criticism.

He was indeed a fighting parson.

He was born in Gloucester county, Va., in 1738, the son of John and Sarah Mynn Thruston;¹ attended William and Mary College;² and served in the Gloucester County militia.

He was a vestryman of Petsworth parish in Gloucester³ from 1761 to 1764 when, on Sept. 18, the vestry book shows this entry: "As the Revd Mr. James Murra Fountain who was the minister of this parish has left it to go to Wear (Ware) this parish is become vacant of a minister, this vestry therefore hath thought proper to recommend Mr. Chars Mns Thruston to his Lordship the Bishop of London to be ordained a minister of the church of England"

The vestry promised the job to Thruston if he reported for service within two months of his return. Thruston went to London, was ordained, and returned to Petsworth on schedule.

The vestry on Jan. 14, 1767 voted him a salary of 16,000 pounds

of tobacco.

And at the meeting on Dec. 12, 1768, these events occurred: Warner Washington, Sr., resigned as a Petsworth vestryman, being about to move to Frederick county and build Fairfield. And Thruston "agreed to resign this parish as minister the last day of this month," he having accepted the invitation of Frederick parish to become minister there.⁴

In 1760, he had married Mary Buckner, a daughter of Col. Samuel Buckner of Gloucester county, by whom he had sons John, Buckner and Charles. Mary died in 1765 and Thruston married Ann Alexander of Gloucester the next year. She was probably a sister of Morgan Alexander who married Sarah Snickers. By Ann, Thruston had nine more children: Sarah, Frederick, Mary, Frances, Elizabeth, Alfred, Eloise, Sidney Ann and Edmund Taylor Thruston.⁵

Charles and Ann Thruston built Mount Zion, a surviving stone house, now in Warren county, only a few miles from Front Royal.

The duties of minister in frontier Frederick county were rigorous. Bishop William Meade asserts that Thruston "bound" himself to preach at seven places in the county, "Shepherdstown being one of them." Among the others were Cunningham's near present Old Chapel, McKay's not far from present Front Royal, and Morgan's at Bunker Hill north of Winchester. Bishop Meade also lists a chapel at Winchester on land given by Lord Fairfax. Since Edward Snickers was elected a vestryman⁶ in 1771, the two men had had time to become well acquainted before the military purchasing began in 1775.

Thruston and Isaac Zane⁷ were the Frederick county delegates to the third Colonial Convention in Richmond July 17, 1775, at which Virginia's delegates to the Continental Congress were elected, and a Virginia Committee of Safety was set up.

The state Committee of Safety named Snickers and Thruston to the Frederick County Committee of Safety⁸ in June 1776. And in October Thruston was one of the trustees of the newly established town of Bath, now Berkeley Springs, W. Va.⁹

In December, 1776, Congress authorized creation of 16 additional Continental regiments.¹⁰ Thruston sought to enlist one of them in Frederick county and resigned as a minister of Frederick parish¹¹ in January, 1777.

He hoped for a colonelcy, and he had friends in high places who urged it.

But George Washington demurred, as this letter of Feb. 25, 1777, written at Morris Town, attests.¹² The letter was addressed to William Alexander, who called himself Lord Stirling though

his earldom had been turned down by the House of Lords. He was a major general in the Continental army, and a friend of Washington.

"My Lord," Washington wrote, "I was last night favored with your letter of the 25th Inst. I concur in your Lordship's proposition, so far as it goes for incorporating the three companies of Virginia Volunteers, and forming them into a battalion; but tho' I have a high opinion of the conduct, merit and bravery of Capt. Thruston, in whose behalf you have interested yourself, and would do him any favor, I cannot appoint him to the rank you mention. The reasons, upon reflection, I am persuaded will readily occur to you and to him. The greatest part of the officers and men composing our present army, are in the same predicament and on the same footing with these three companies, or differ very little. Many have been longer in service, and coming from different states, they would not bear the distinction, or suffer it to pass without Complaining, and objecting to me, a charge of partiality in favor of Virginians.

"I feel strongly the reasons upon which your Lordships application is founded; but yet I trust you and Capt. Thruston naturally considering the delicate situation in which I stand, and the expedience of my steering clear of every cause of disgust and jealousy will think with me, the measure unadvisable and improper. Upon the whole, I desire that the three companies may be united in one corps, under Mr. Thruston as Capt. Commandant" This was done, the three companies being commanded by Capts. William Morgan, George Scott and Thruston.

On March 8, 1777, at Amboy, Thruston lost an arm in combat and was not able thereafter to continue as an active soldier. His regiment was never fully completed and was ultimately consolidated with Nathaniel Gist's regiment. Thruston resigned from the Continental army¹³ on April 12, 1779.

But meanwhile, perhaps due to public sympathy resulting from his serious wound, Thruston's promotion came through.

On March 27, 1777, Washington wrote from Morris Town to Brig. Gen. George Weedon¹⁴ that Capt. John Thornton had been promoted to the rank of major in the regiment to be raised "by Col. Thruston of Virginia."

Washington continued, "Thornton is authorized to facilitate the recruiting of Thruston's regiment and will, I hope, exert himself to the utmost in getting it completed especially as Thruston's wound will render it impossible for him to take an active part for some time to come. . . ."

So Thruston was nursing a serious wound in that summer of 1777 during which the Council of State Government was advising

his presence at the taking of depositions concerning possible commission of fraud by himself and Edward Snickers in their military procurement.

Thruston was financially strained during the 1780's, and no wonder, what with all those children.

The Rev. William Alexander Balmain who began conducting services in Frederick County according to the Anglican Rite in 1782, and who became the official parish minister in 1785, recounts a little crossly in his journal that Thruston did not pay for churchly services Balmain performed.

The journal recites: "A list of persons who, though able to contribute to the support of a clergyman, do not subscribe, yet have had children baptized, some of them their wives churchd, and been to hear me preach.

"Col. Charles M. Thruston one child baptized in 1782 and a second in 1783 To the house of each of these gentlemen I rode on purpose to render the services mentioned." The others who were slow pay were Major Thomas Massey and Capt. William Ball.

Balmain himself was having hard sledding. He came to Virginia from Scotland before the Revolution and became tutor to the children of Richard Henry Lee.¹⁵ He served as chaplain for the First Virginia Brigade during the war; and afterwards was unable to collect the pension he believed was due him.¹⁶ His journal lists Thruston as one of the twelve men elected to the vestry of Frederick parish in 1785 when the Protestant Episcopal church was officially restored in Virginia after the 1780 break with the Church of England.

In 1787, Thruston and John S. Woodcock were the Frederick County members of the Virginia House of Delegates.¹⁷ On Oct. 22, according to the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser,¹⁸ a convention of freeholders met in Winchester and voted to instruct Thruston and Woodcock to support ratification of the United States Constitution. The Assembly, instead, according to the newspaper's Nov. 2 issue, voted to refer the question of ratification to a convention made up of two representatives from each county and one from each "corporation," to be elected at the March courts of the counties and boroughs and to convene in Richmond in May. Thruston hoped to become a delegate to the 1788 convention, but finished third behind Woodcock and Alex Smith.¹⁹

Thruston wrote a letter to the paper, published in the Nov. 23, 1787 issue, concerning the debate in Richmond. He said lobbyists, pro and con, filled the city.

But after all, "it appears to me the party in favor of the Constitution must prevail; the signature and approbation of our good

Washington will give it a preponderancy to weigh down all opposition. . . ." As indeed it did.

Thruston's attitude toward negro slavery was that of most eighteenth century Virginia planters. In the Oct. 22, 1791 issue of the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser there appeared this item: "To be sold at Mt. Zion where the subscriber now resides. On Friday the 4th day of Nov. Two likely negroes, 20 blooded horses, mares and colts, one valuable stud horse, whose colts for size and strength are equal to any in the state . . . (Signed) C. M. Thruston."

The census, "Virginia Heads of Families, 1782," reveals Thruston owned 80 slaves.

Alexander Balmain had doubts about the institution. On May 5, 1783, he entered in his journal: "Purchased of Robert Throckmorton of Berkley County in Virginia a negro boy Moses for fifty-five pounds Virginia currency in specie. This being the first human creature I ever was master of."

About 1809, Charles and Ann Thruston pulled up stakes and moved to Louisiana,²⁰ probably with a brief stop in Tennessee. Thruston died March 21, 1812.

Louisiana became a state in 1812. During its early history, the south-central section, bordering the Gulf of Mexico and extending inland perhaps 30 or 40 miles, was called the Attakapas district, a name the natives pronounce "Tuckapaw."²¹ Present day parishes (counties) of St. Mary, Iberia, St. Martin, Vermilion, Lafayette and probably a little more territory were in Attakapas district, whose public records are studded with the names of former residents of Frederick county, Virginia. Here are a few entries:

- In 1813 "Mrs. Thruston"²² paid a tax in the Bayou Teche section of Attakapas, and owned 38 slaves.

- Dr. Alfred Thruston married Elizabeth Hudson Dec. 13, 1818 in St. Mary parish. He died there in 1822. (The federal census of 1820 lists him as a householder there.)

- Mrs. Ann Thruston died in St. Mary parish in 1825. So did Edmund Taylor Thruston, Charles and Ann's youngest.

- Frances Thruston married²³ Frederick Conrad, Jr., son of a prosperous Frederick county farmer in Winchester, Va., April 21, 1793. They became progenitors of one branch of the Weeks family in Louisiana. David Weeks married Mary Conrad, daughter of Frances and Frederick, Dec. 31, 1818, in St. Mary parish. David and Mary built the beautiful mansion, "Shadows on the Teche" in New Iberia. It passed down the generations to the late Weeks Hall, and now belongs to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

- Sidney Ann Conrad, presumably a sister of Mary Conrad, married William T. Palfrey and died in St. Mary in 1844. Sidney Ann and William's daughter, Mary Palfrey, married William Weeks in St. Mary in 1846.

- Frances E. Conrad married Winthrop Harding in St. Mary in 1828. And John Peyton Conrad, said to have been "about 30 years, and a native of Winchester, Va.", died in St. Mary in 1849. Mary Lewis, wife of Charles Magill Conrad, died there in 1841.

- Some of Edward Snickers' descendants also found their way to St. Mary parish. William Snickers' daughter Mary married Moses Hunter, Jr., in Winchester Nov. 27, 1812.²⁴ Their daughter Nancy married Alfred Weeks in Louisiana.²⁵ And the Hunter's youngest son, John Brooke Hunter, died in St. Mary in 1853.²⁶

Others recorded in Attakapas who almost certainly had Frederick county, Va., roots, were Margaret "McKay" Baldwin,²⁷ who died there in 1835, having been married first to James Houston and then to John Hayes; and John O. Tidball, whom the local newspaper, the "Planter's Banner," called a lieutenant in the United States army, and whose marriage to Mary H. Davis in Philadelphia it recorded in 1853.

Sarah Thruston (1766- c.1833), the oldest of Charles and Ann Alexander Thruston's children, married²⁸ George Flowerdew Norton in Winchester, Va., Dec. 17, 1784. They moved to Marion county, Mississippi. But their descendants appear in St. Mary parish, La., in a Harrison family line. George Flowerdew Norton (1751-1828) was a Winchester merchant. He was a son of John Norton, the Yorktown, Va., representative of the London firm, "House of Flowerdewe and Norton." George had been sent back to England to be educated, and was made a partner in the trading firm in London. He returned to Virginia in 1782 and married Sarah two years later. Their son, Charles Mynn Norton, was born in Winchester in 1788.

Three of Charles and Ann Alexander Thruston's daughters remained in Winchester:

- Mary Thruston married³⁰ Charles Magill, Revolutionary war cavalry hero and Winchester attorney, May 24, 1792.

- Elizabeth Thruston³¹ married Henry Daingerfield in Winchester Aug. 9, 1793.

- Sidney Ann Thruston³² married Alfred Henry Powell in Winchester, Nov. 19, 1801. They had a son, Leven. Sidney Ann died in 1803, but her distinctive name was kept alive by relatives who named daughters for her.

Four of Charles Mynn Thruston's children settled near Louisville,

Ky. The three sons of Mary Buckner Thruston, and Ann Alexander Thruston's daughter Eloise, all moved there.

Eloise married Edmund Haynes Taylor³³ in Winchester Feb. 23, 1797. He was a son of Capt. Edmund Taylor of Revolutionary war distinction, and of Sarah Stubbs Taylor. Capt. Taylor and Col. Thruston were companions in arms. Probably that is why Thruston named his youngest son Edmund Taylor Thruston.

Mary Buckner's three sons were John (1761-1802); Buckner (1764-1845); and Charles Mynn (1765-1800)

John married his first cousin, Elizabeth Thruston Whiting, daughter of Col. Thomas Whiting of Gloucester county. He served with George Rogers Clark in the Northwest campaign, and settled near Louisville. His will,³⁴ of which Edmund Taylor was an executor, names his wife Elizabeth; daughters Elizabeth, Catherine, Fanny and Mary January, wife of Thomas January. It lists sons Thomas Whiting, Charles, Alfred, Louis, and a fifth whose name is almost illegible, but may be "Algernon."

Buckner Thruston married Janette January,³⁵ daughter of Peter January, in Kentucky in 1795. A William and Mary College graduate, he was elected to the United States Senate from Kentucky in 1805.³⁶ He resigned the Senate seat in 1809 to accept appointment from President Madison to the U. S. Circuit Court for the District of Columbia. He served on this bench until his death in 1845. He had at least two children: Charles Mynn and Gates Phillips Thruston.

Charles Mynn Thruston, Jr., married Frances Clark, daughter of John Clark of Louisville. Their son Charles married Mary Elizabeth Churchill. And Charles and Mary Elizabeth's daughter, Frances Thruston, married Andrew Jackson Ballard.³⁷ From this line are descended Thruston Ballard Morton, former U. S. Senator from Kentucky, and his brother, Rogers Clark Ballard Morton, former Congressman from Maryland, and Secretary of Interior in the cabinet of President Nixon.

Chapter IX

The Dunmore Debt

In 1774, John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore and the last royal lieutenant governor of Virginia, borrowed money from Edward Snickers to finance the acquisition and development of a Fairfax lease in Berkeley County "near the warm springs", the part now Morgan County, W. Va.

On June 8, 1775, Dunmore, his wife and children, his secretary Capt. Edward Foy, and some servants departed the Governor's palace in Williamsburg unceremoniously in the dead of night and took refuge on the Fowey, British man-of-war, in the York River.¹ After abortive attempts to arouse the Indians and the negro slaves against the now revolutionary Virginians, Dunmore made his way back to England in late 1776. He never paid his debt to Snickers.

The plantation covered by the lease contained something over 1100 acres, and was located at the confluence of the Potomac River and the Warm Spring Run, bounded on the north by the river and on the west by the run, a short distance north of present day Berkeley Springs, W. Va.²

Fairfax had originally leased the tract to Joseph Combs "of the parish and county of Frederick in the Colony of Virginia" on May 4, 1763. Combs agreed to pay twenty pounds a year rent, and to be responsible for payment of any taxes the colony might impose. He agreed to plant two hundred apple trees and the same number of peach trees, "thirty feet asunder and keep the same well trimmed and fenced".

The lease was to run for 21 years. However, if Combs would construct, maintain and operate a grist mill, the term of the lease would be extended to ninety-nine years.

Dunmore bought the lease from Combs May 5, 1774, paying 535 pounds for it and assuming its terms.³ That Combs had erected a grist mill is proved by the fact he sold Dunmore the remainder of a 99-year term.

Dunmore named his warm Springs plantation "Mount Charlotte", Charlotte being the given name of George III's queen and of Lady

Dunmore. The Warm Springs area was fast becoming fashionable. George Washington was one of the frequenters of the spa. That Dunmore was greatly attached to his plantation is revealed in a letter written June 10, 1774, by George Washington to George William Fairfax, then in England.⁴ Fairfax had asked Washington to sound out the governor about the possibility of Dunmore's buying Fairfax' estate, Belvoir.

"I have never heard the most distant insinuation of Lord D's wanting Belvoir", Washington wrote, "nor am I inclined to think he does as he talks much of a place he has purchased near the Warm Springs"

When Dunmore skipped out of Williamsburg and took refuge on the war ship, Snickers demanded repayment of his loan.

On Oct. 3, 1775, Dunmore sent this reply from the "Royal William", anchored off Norfolk.⁵

"Dear Sir: I received yours together with your account, which I make no doubt is just; I saw Mr. Ross some short time before I left Williamsburg; he was then on his way (as he told me) to Norfolk. I desired him to call on his return as my clerk was not then within. But I never saw him from that day to this; as to the Ballance of your act., I shall as soon as I receive some money which is due me and which they promise me very faithfully that I shall receive very soon, I shall by the very first opportunity remit it to you, but should you be much in want of it immediately, I dare say on your application to my good friend, Lord Fairfax, he will be kind enough to let you have it on my acct., and I shall replace it to him so soon as I receive it.

"As to my plantation at Mt. Charlotte, I must in the first place return to you many thanks for the attention you have already given it, and will be much obliged to you if you will still continue to take charge of it and give William McFarlane and Welsh all the assistance in your power, as (torn off) your best advice in everything belonging to it".

(In Italics) "I am sorry to hear you have been abused on my account, but I hope it will not happen to you again as I have been lately informed (words in Italics erased in original letter; end Italics) that orders have been given, not to give my people or effects the least molestation of any of my plantations so I would fain hope that they now begin to see me in the light I am conscious I ought to be seen in, I mean as a sincere well wisher to the Colony, and this I am sure will be the case when my whole conduct comes to be known. I beg you will offer my best respects to this and my good friend Col. Martin; and believe me to be your sincere friend and well wisher. Dunmore."

In 1779, the Virginia assembly passed a law authorizing forfeiture to the state, after proper hearing, of property of British subjects.⁶

On Oct. 29, 1779, such a hearing was held in Berkeley County in relation to Dunmore's Warm Springs plantation. The report of that hearing follows:⁷

"Berkeley Court. An inquisition for the commonwealth of Virginia indented taken at the house of Edward Owlett in the said county on Friday the 29th day of October in the fourth year of this commonwealth by the oaths of James Nourse, Thomas Rutherford, Abraham Shepherd, John White, Cato Moore, John Douglas, William Little, John Cowan, Benjamin Rankin, William Morgan, William Brady and John Morrow, good and lawful men of the said county, before John Cooke, Esq., sheriff of the said county, the same being within the territory commonly called the Northern Neck, by virtue of his office, who, upon their oaths, say that John, Earl of Dunmore, late of this commonwealth, now is and of a long time past hath been seized in his demesne, as of a fee, of and in a certain tract of land lying in the said county near the Warm Springs, and that he, the said John, Earl of Dunmore, is a British subject within the intent and meaning of an act of the Assembly, entitled an act concerning escheats and forfeitures from British subjects. Wherefore the said jurors further say that the said tract of land ought to be escheat and vest in the said commonwealth by virtue of the act of Assembly above mentioned. Certified under our hands and seals the day and year above mentioned." (Signed by the 12 and by John Cooke) "At a court held for Berkeley County the 16th day of November 1779, this inquisition was returned and ordered to be recorded." Signed, Will Drew, clerk of courts.

Dunmore's property at the Palace in Williamsburg and on some other estates had already been seized and sold at auction⁸ as early as 1776.

But Mount Charlotte was not forfeited to the state, even after the 1779 hearing.

In "Virginia Taxpayers, 1782-1787", Edward Snickers is listed as paying one poll tax in Berkeley County, and as owning 11 slaves there. There is no record of his owning land in Berkeley at this time, so this tax may refer to his operation of Mount Charlotte for Dunmore.

That the lease was still valid, and that Snickers was still operating the farm under it for Dunmore in 1790, is proved in Snickers' will. Among the bequests to his son, William, was:

". . . Also the profits arising on a tract of land held under lease from Lord Fairfax to Lord Dunmore lying near the Warm Springs in Berkeley County held by me in consideration of a sum of money

sent Lord Dunmore for the payment of the land and other purposes and is to be given up to the said Lord Dunmore on the payment thereof.”⁹

The survival of Dunmore’s interest in the property was due to the fact the conveyance was a lease, not a grant. Title to the land remained in the Fairfax Proprietary. And although the Assembly and the courts engaged in considerable backing and filling, the forfeiture laws were not ultimately enforced against Fairfax holdings which had been surveyed.¹⁰

This legislation and litigation (some not concluded until 1806) confirmed that when Lord Fairfax died in 1781, the status of the 5,282,000 acres in the Northern Neck Proprietary was as follows:

First, title to land which had been granted to others remained in the grantees, their heirs or assigns; quit rents were terminated, and the owners paid taxes to the state.

Second, title to lands which Lord Fairfax had reserved for himself remained in the Fairfax estate.¹¹ These reserved lands totaled 219,341 acres, including the 160,382-acre Manor of Leeds in Loudoun, Frederick and Fauquier Counties; the 54,596-acre South Branch Manor in Hampshire County; and small holdings totaling 4,363 acres scattered in several counties. Mount Charlotte was one of these small holdings.

Third, title to land which had been neither granted nor reserved by Lord Fairfax, reverted to the state of Virginia.

Edward Snickers died in 1790. In late 1793 a syndicate including John Marshall (later Chief Justice), his brother James, and their brother-in-law Raleigh Colston contracted to buy the residue of the Fairfax estate, title to which by that time was held by the Rev. Denny (Martin) Fairfax, nephew of the old Lord, in England. Denny had legally changed his name from Martin to Fairfax, a change demanded by the old Lord as a condition of Denny’s inheriting under the will.

The Marshall syndicate contracted to pay 14,000 pounds for all that remained of the Northern Neck proprietary lands, that is, those which had not been granted to new owners.¹² What the state of Virginia finally allowed the syndicate to buy was the land which Lord Fairfax had reserved for himself. The state demanded and received the lands which had been neither granted to others nor reserved by Lord Fairfax for himself. So the syndicate got 219,341 acres for its 14,000 pounds.¹³

The Marshall group had some difficulty negotiating a loan to pay Denny Fairfax, and it was not until Jan. 25, 1797, that James Marshall obtained a loan in the Netherlands in the amount of 7700 pounds to make the first payment to the Fairfax heir.¹⁴

Thereupon, Denny Fairfax conveyed to James Marshall (apparently with the approval of John Marshall and Colston) the lands which Lord Fairfax had reserved for himself, excepting the Manor of Leeds.¹⁵

This means that in 1797 James Marshall obtained title to Mount Charlotte. Apparently this altered the rights of William Snickers to operate the farm under the Dunmore lease. In 1799 William Snickers filed suit in the Augusta County court against Lord Dunmore, seeking repayment of Edward Snickers' loan.¹⁶ William's bill of complaint asserts that Lord Dunmore's debt to the estate of Edward Snickers was 666 pounds, eight shillings, eight pence, plus interest. It says John Murray, son of Lord Dunmore, was then in Virginia (in 1799), armed with a power of attorney from his father, and was seeking to sell some lands which Lord Dunmore owned in Hampshire and Berkeley counties. Young Murray had retained Charles Magill, Winchester attorney, and sought to give Magill authority to sell the lands.

William Snickers asked that young Murray and Attorney Magill be made defendants in the case, together with Lord Dunmore, and that they be prevented from selling any of the Lord's Virginia lands until the debt to the Snickers estate should be paid.

Dunmore, of course, did not own Mount Charlotte. Possibly William Snickers feared Dunmore might sell his lease. Perhaps James Marshall proposed to sell the land. The bill of complaint does not tell.

But young Murray went back to England, and later developments indicated Magill was not given authority to sell the Hampshire county lands. In the July term of court, 1804, the case was remanded to the federal court for trial, probably because Dunmore was an alien. Lord Dunmore died in 1809 and John Murray, his son, succeeded to the title.

William Snickers never collected this debt.

On Dec. 23, 1820, the U. S. Circuit court sitting in Richmond¹⁷ dismissed the case. John Marshall was presiding magistrate. The court order asserts that the case was dismissed as to the former governor and his son because by that time they were both dead. And the order continues, "The plaintiff not further prosecuting against the other defendant, Archibald (sic) Magill, the suit is dismissed as to him."

Earlier in 1820 some members of the Murray family employed a man¹⁸ named J. Stevens to try to recover lands in Hampshire and Berkeley counties in which the former governor had had an interest at the time of his departure from the colony.

Stevens wrote a letter to some member of the Murray family in

England May 5, 1820, reporting that he had conferred with Magill in Winchester. Magill had told him he could have sold Murray-owned land near Romney for \$8,000 had he had authority. Magill told Stevens he had kept up the taxes on that land. But squatters and Virginia state officials were intervening. Stevens urged the Murray family to give a power of attorney to Magill to sell the Romney land.

The letter continues: "There was a law suit with one Snickers about a farm on the Shenander river. This I find was removed to the supreme court in Richmond. . . . I went to where Snickers lived 34 miles from Winchester but the old man is dead and the farm sold. How this is must be subject of inquiry some other time."

The farm in question was on the Potomac, not the Shenandoah. And William Snickers was not yet dead in 1820 (he signed a deed in 1821). But probably the astute attorney had persuaded Stevens there was no hope of reviving the Dunmore lease of Mount Charlotte.

The court order dismissing the suit was entered the following December.

It is interesting that Magill had been keeping up the Taxes on Dunmore's other plantation—this one owned by Dunmore—near Romney, and based on a Fairfax grant.

In the April 23, 1791 issue of the Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser, Hampshire county listed properties which would be sold in June for non-payment of taxes. Included among the delinquents were Lord Dunmore, 400 acres; Lord Fairfax' heirs, 400 acres; and John James Maund, 1453 acres. Maund was the husband of Harriet, youngest daughter of Councillor Robert Carter of Nomini hall.

Carter had lent money to Dunmore in 1772 to buy a plantation. By October 1776, Dunmore's debt to Carter was 973 pounds for principal and 117 pounds for interest.¹⁹

Maund wrote his father-in-law that Mr. Cary in Alexandria was willing to act as Carter's agent in collection of the debt. Maund said Cary believed Dunmore would pay, and suggested Carter try to obtain a bond from Dunmore's London agent and if necessary to attach Dunmore's property in Dumbartonshire, Scotland.²⁰

Whether Carter ever collected is uncertain.

Chapter X

Will of Edward Snickers¹

In the name of God, Amen. I Edward Snickers of the County of Frederick in the state of Virginia, being sick weak of body but in perfect sense and memory, do therefore make this my last will and testament in manner and form following, viz.:

First, principally, I recommend my soul to the Almighty God my blessed Redeemer, my body to the earth, there to be decently buried according to the directions of my executors heretofore named.

All my debts lawfully contracted I desire that they should be honestly paid and then that worldly estate it hath pleased God to bless me with, I dispose of as follows:

ITEM: I give and bequeath unto my well beloved son **WILLIAM SNICKERS** the tract of land on which he now lives, known by the name of Clermont, containing 413 acres. Also sundry lots of land being included in one tract lying on the north side of Shanandoe river, containing (blank) acres on which is a merchant mill, saw mill, etc. Also a tract of land on the south side of Shanandoe river containing (blank) acres held under lease from the Rt. Hon. Thomas Lord Fairfax at an entry made in the proprietor's office for land adjoining the lease. Also the profits arising on a tract of land held under lease from Lord Fairfax to Lord Dunmore lying near the warm springs in Berkeley county held by me in consideration of a sum of money sent Lord Dunmore for the payment of the land and other purposes and is to be given up to the said Lord Dunmore on the payment thereof.

Also sundry negroes as follows: Jery the ferryman, Sall and her two children Peg and Harry, Tom the ferryman, Flora, Dick, Babe, Manuel, Tom the waggoner, Robin the blacksmith and his tools, Will, Samson, Simon, Juliet, Jack, Walker, Jack a house servant, Peter, Nat, Ned, Jerry son of Sarah, Sarah, Cupid and Moses.

Also a wagon and team, all the stock and other property belonging to me of whatever kind now on the plantations before named,

to him his heirs and assigns, reserving a proportion thereof to my well beloved daughter Catherine Mackie as hereafter will be named.

Also I give and bequeath to him (my son William) all debts that are due to me, either by bond, note or account, and request he will pay all lawful demands that appear against my estate.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my well beloved daughter, **SARAH ALEXANDER**, the tract of land on which I now live, containing 411 acres, known by the name of Springfield. Also sundry negroes as follows: Sy, Willey, Richmond, Sam, Joe, Peg, Titus, Betty, Samson; Titus son of Titus, Fortune, Jude and her two children Winny and Joe, together with all the stock, household and kitchen furniture and property of whatever denomination now on the plantation above named (except a flock of sheep to be divided as hereafter will be mentioned) to her and to her heirs and assigns.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my well beloved daughter **CATHERINE MACKIE** the tract of land whereon John Obanion now lives, which I purchased of Martin Ashby, containing 306 acres, which tract is encumbered with the dower of Frances Obanion. I therefore request of my son William to have an impartial valuation made thereof, and whatever it may fall short of the value of the tracts of land herein devised to my other two daughters **SARAH** and **ELIZABETH**, that he will make up the deficiency and also deliver to her stock and other property or the value thereof to be determined by disinterested men, equal the proportions given herein to my other daughters **SARAH** and **ELIZABETH**. Also sundry negroes as follows: Tim, Winny, George, Lucy, Doll, Jim, Charles, Nan and her six children, Jim, Charles, Matilda, Jo, Bill, to her and to her heirs and assigns.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my well beloved daughter **ELIZABETH STRIBLING** the tract of land whereon she now lives known by the name of Number 1, containing 303 acres, also sundry negroes as follows: Ag, Sam, Moll, Arthur, Patrick, Ag daughter of Ag, Jacob, Frances and her children, Jim of Prince William, Betty, Palla's Jesse and Jerry son of Palla, together with all the stock and other property now on the plantation to her and to her heirs and assigns.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my granddaughter **ELIZABETH ALEXANDER** one negro girl named Ag, daughter of Ag deceased, and one other named Salt, daughter of Pallas, to her and to her heirs or assigns.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my granddaughter **POLLY MACKIE** one negro girl named Kitty to her her heirs and assigns.

ITEM: I give and bequeath to my grandson **EDWARD MACKIE** a negro boy named Sam to him or to his heirs or assigns.

ITEM: I give and bequeath the sheep before mentioned to be on the land called Springfield to **SARAH ALEXANDER, CATHERINE MACKIE** and **ELIZABETH STRIBLING** to be equally divided to them, their heirs and assigns.

Lastly I nominate William Snickers, Sarah Alexander, Dr. Robert Mackie, Thomas Stribling and Genl. Daniel Morgan to execute this my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this 18th day of June, 1790.

Edward Snickers

* * * *

Witnesses of the will were Daniel Morgan, Matthew Wright and Sigismund Stribling.

Matthew Wright was apparently a close friend of the Snickers family. His name appears as witness on important deeds of the Snickers heirs. Thomas and Elizabeth Stribling named their fourth son Matthew Wright Stribling.² Wright was a church warden³ in 1793 and a justice⁴ of Frederick County in 1801.

Sigismund Stribling was the son of that Capt. William Stribling who died in 1748 leaving a "Sherando plantation". Sigismund was a minor, in fact probably a small child, when his father died. Thomas Stribling, William's father, was appointed administrator of William's estate during the minority of William's son, Sigismund.⁵ In the Revolutionary War Sigismund rose to the rank of Captain in the Eighth Virginia regiment⁶ and received a large amount of bounty land for this service. He died in 1816 at "Hopewell", the home of his late uncle, Taliaferro Stribling, Sr., which then belonged to Taliaferro's oldest son, Francis Stribling.⁷

Snickers' son-in-law spelled his name Mackey. But in this will it is spelled Mackie.

Appendix A Accompanying Chapter 7.

Payments to Edward Snickers by Virginia or the Continental Congress For Military Supplies.

1775 (No day or month) U. S. Archives, Ledger of the Commissioners of the War Department (Revolutionary War) Card 37390680—"Appears as shown below in an account of money paid by the honorable Continental Congress and ordered to be chargeable to the several rifle companies at the camp at Cambridge. Edward Snickers (Pennsylvania) Capt. Daniel Morgan. Goods delivered him by Edward Snickers 19 pounds, 4 shillings. (Pennsylvania currency a dollar equals 7 and 6.)

- - - - -
1775, Sept. 21—Cash paid to Edward Snickers for use of Edward McGuire for provisions to Capt. Neville's company. 56 pounds 7 shillings. (26 V 59)

- - - - -
1775, Dec. 20—Cash paid to Samuel Beal for Edward Snickers advanced by him for pay of Capt. Morgan Alexander's company. 183 pounds, three shillings, 10 pence. (26 V 293)

- - - - -
1775, Dec. 20—Edward Snickers was one of a group of Frederick County men who petitioned the Convention of the Colony for revision of payments made to them for materials and service performed in connection with "Dunmore's War" in 1774. (19 V 163)

- - - - -
1776, Feb 19—Letter written to Edward Snickers by the Committee of Safety of Virginia saying "that he need not continue to purch'e Prov'ns except for Pit'sb'g as we have ent'd into contracts for those Reg'ts—pleased he had laid out 2,000 pounds for arms, and are willing he may engage for another 2,000 pounds in musquets." (Journal Com. of Safety 2-419.)

- - - - -
1776, April 5—A warrant to Andrew Waggoner for use of Edw'd Snickers for 1250 pounds upon acct as paymaster and comm'y to the troops stat'd at Fort Pitt; also 250 pounds for ye purchase of arms. (8-C-154)

- - - - -
1776, April 8—A warrant to Lt. Waggoner for use of Edward Snickers for 1500 pounds for the pay of Capt. Arbuckle's company and on acct for the purchase of arms etc. (8-C-158)

- - - - -
1776, May 7—Warrant to Edward Snickers for use of John Stevens for seven pounds, six shillings, five pence; and one pound, 16 shillings for public expense in conveying Indian captives etc. (Journal Com of Safety 2-500)

- - - - -
1776, May 7—Cash paid Edward Snickers for Abigail Morgan, additional pay to her husband Capn Morgan, prisoner in Quebec. 75 pounds, eight shillings. (34-V-260)

1776, May 7—A warrant to Edward Snickers for 5028 pounds, seven shillings, 11 pence half-penny, the ballance of his account for arms and necessities furnished sundry companies. (8-C-171)

1776, May 8—A warrant to Edward Snickers for 43 pounds for wagon hire from ye 23rd No. to ye 28th Feb'y and for returning. And for use George Allen for 12 pounds the hire of his wagon and team from Nov. 23 to 18 Dec. for Capt. Alexander's company. (Journal Com. of Safety 2-504)

1776, May 9—Paid Edward Snickers for Peter Lucas wagon hire 7 pounds. (37-V-35)

1776, June 11—Warrant to Richard Covington for nine shillings for provisions furnished a guard with the arms sent to this city (Williamsburg) by Mr. Edward Snickers. (8-C-197)

1776, June 26—Warrant to Joseph Byrn for Edward Snickers for 400 pounds on account to purchase arms etc. for the public use. (8-C-224)

1776, June 27—Ordered that a letter of instructions be written to Messers Snickers and Thruston requiring them to desist from making any further purchases of rifles or guns. (Journal Council of State 1-48)

1776, Oct. 12—U. S. Archives card 391 253 42 Vol. 143, p. 36—Ledger of the Commissioners of the War Department (Revolutionary War) in an account with Col. High Stephenson. "By Edward Snicker 216 dollars."

1776, Nov. 23—To John Cox for 8 rifle guns supplied by Edward Snicker for use of Capt. Gabriel Long's company of Virginia riflemen. 146 60/90 dollars. (Journal of Continental Congress. American Archives V-III-1580)

1776, Nov. 27—Council of State ordered warrant for 3374 pounds, three shillings, three pence to "Col." Edward Snickers to payhim in full for all he had provided; also 47 pounds, six shillings for wagonage of powder to Bedford and Pittsburgh. Ordered the bond entered into with the Committee of Safety cancelled. (Journal of Council of State 1-258)

1776, Dec. 2—Council of State ordered warrant issued to Edward Snickers for 80 pounds being one year's service omitted in his general accounting as paymaster to the troops stationed at Fort Pitt, Wheeling, Little and Great Kanawha. (Journal Council of State 1-260)

1777, Feb. 4—Council ordered warrant to issue to Col. Daniel Morgan for the use of Mr. Edward Snickers for 500 pounds on account to purchase arms, clothing etc. for the army. (Journal Council of State 1-325)

1777, June 10—Council of State ordered depositions taken concerning Snickers' procurement. (Journal 1-428)

1777, Aug. 2—U. S. Archives, ledger of Commissioners of the War Department (Revolutionary War) Vol. 143-p 134—In an account with Daniel Morgan. "To sundries supplied for the use of his battalion by Edward Snickers and paid for by Col. William Finney, deputy quarter master general of Virginia. 1872 and 23/72 dollars."

1777, Dec. 12—Council of State advises Governor Henry to prosecute Snickers for fraud. (Journal 2-46)

Appendix B

Probable Locations of Snickers' Ferries and Taverns

Edward Snickers almost certainly operated ferries and the taverns which accompanied them in two locations, separated by at least one mile.

This is the inescapable conclusion to study of the documents bearing on the matter. Excavation of the tavern sites would make a rewarding archeology project for some nearby university.

The 1748 act of the House of Burgesses (6-H-18) authorized a ferry to traverse the Shenandoah river between the land of Lord Fairfax and that of Ralph Wormeley. By 1748, this could only have meant from the northernmost end of the Manor of Leeds on the east bank to the mouth of Wheat Spring Branch on the west bank.

Wheat Spring Branch is the beautiful, never-failing stream which flows into the Shenandoah from the west, about a quarter of a mile down stream from the Route 7 crossing of the river. In the 1730 land grants made by Robert (King) Carter as agent for the Fairfax Proprietary, the mouth of Wheat Spring Branch was the point of demarcation between the grant made to Mann Page (Pageland) and that made to 10 of Carter's male descendants (The Shenandoah Tract), Pageland being on the down stream side.

(Pageland also included land on the east side of the Shenandoah, downstream from the Manor of Leeds. But that does not concern this problem.)

The Manor of Leeds was, in 1748, the only land with Shenandoah river frontage that Lord Fairfax still owned in the neighborhood.

A large tract which Fairfax had reserved for himself, the Manor of Leeds extended downstream to a point below what is now Snickers Gap, that is, to a point almost exactly opposite the mouth of Wheat Spring Branch. Wormeley had bought Pageland from Mann Page Jr. sometime between 1744, when young Page sought authority from the House of Burgesses to dock the entail, and 1748.

Since it is probably accurate to deduce that the tavern was built close to the ferry terminus, to take advantage of the traffic, the first tavern Snickers kept was almost certainly located close to the mouth of Wheat Spring Branch, and on the north side of that stream. There is local legend to bear this out. That location also fits the circumstance that a main road from the gap to the west followed the creek valley for some distance. And that creek was the site of early grist mills.

When James Mercer advertised in the Virginia Gazette in 1767 a proposed sale (which never was consummated) of the George Mercer property (the 6479-acre segment farthest downstream of Carter's Shenandoah Tract) he suggested that those interested in buying should contact Edward Snickers "who lives adjoining."

The George Mercer land was actually sold in 1774, and Francis Peyton prepared a plat of the land for prospective purchasers to study (FDB 26-102). This plat appears to indicate that there had been no prior sale of land by Mercer on his side of Wheat Spring Branch.

Edward Snickers eventually bought lots 1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 22 of the George Mercer tract, giving him river frontage from Wheat Spring Branch to Dog Run. But he did not obtain title to this land until 1786, partly due to the intervention of the War, and partly to the haggling of James and George Mercer over proceeds of the sale.

In 1786, Snickers obtained from the state assembly a new authorization to operate a Shenandoah river ferry near Snickers Gap (12-H-404). It was described as running "from the land of Edward Snickers at Williams Gap on the one side to the lands of the said Snickers on the opposite shore. . . ." Snickers, as of 1786, actually owned land on the west bank. And he had a Fairfax lease to land on the east bank as his 1790 will made plain.

The Varle map of 1809 shows the Snickers ferry perhaps a mile upstream from the mouth of Wheat Spring Branch, and that map also indicates that the main road from Winchester through the Gap crossed the river at that point.

It appears certain, therefore, that Edward Snickers, once his title to the George Mercer land was clear, moved the ferry and the tavern upstream to the crossing of the main road, the better to serve the traffic concentrated there.

That main road from the Gap to Winchester ran south of the North Hill plantation, thus accounting for that place name.

William Snickers, who inherited that part of the George Mercer land his father still owned in 1790, sold it in two parcels, deeds to which further pinpoint the location of the ferry.

In 1803, William Snickers sold 401 acres of his river frontage farthest downstream, that is, adjoining Pageland, to James Ware (FDB 28-139). This sale included the ferry and the tavern.

In 1805 William Snickers sold the rest of his Shenandoah river frontage, a 749-acre tract, to his brother-in-law, Thomas Stribling. And Stribling appended to the deed of sale a statement that his purchase did not include the ferry. (SC5-120)

The Ware and Stribling properties were separated by what was then the main road from Snickers Gap to Winchester. The tavern was close to this road and close to the river on Ware's land.

Ware married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Alexander, daughter of Sarah Snickers Alexander. His second wife was Harriet Taylor. James and Harriet's estates were administered almost together in 1822 (FWB 11-200 and 203). The tavern is listed among the assets of Ware's estate.

His children by Elizabeth Alexander—Josiah William Ware and Sarah Ware Stribling (Mrs. Sigismund Stribling)—considered that their father's will discriminated against them in favor of Harriet's children. They brought suit and a court order gave them part of the Ware farm.

In 1835, Josiah and Sarah sold the tavern to James Castleman (FDB 65-31). The Castleman family operated the ferry for many years, but moved it again, this time close to the present Route 7 crossing of the river.

Over the years, Wheat Spring Branch has been called by several names. On the plat accompanying Robert Carter's 1730 grants, it was designated Spout Run. On early deeds it was known as Shepherd's Run; and its valley was called Anderson's Marsh. On Francis Peyton's 1774 plat prepared for the George Mercer sale, the southerly branch of the stream is called Spout Run, the north branch Sedwick's Spring branch.

NOTES

Symbols for Notes

BDB - Berkeley County Deed Book
 C - Calendar of State Papers
 FCOB - Frederick Court Order Book
 FDB - Frederick Deed Book
 FSC - Frederick Superior Court Book
 FWB - Frederick Will Book
 FH-LPW - Fairfax Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William 1 Vol. Berryville reprint
 H - Hening
 LDB - Loudoun Deed Book
 V - Virginia Magazine of History and Biography
 W - William and Mary Quarterly
 WW - Writings of Washington, Fitzpatrick edition.
 * * *

Chapter 1

1. FCOB 1 - 188
2. WW 1 - 6
3. FCOB 3-15
4. FWB 1-310 & 311
5. FCOB 3-91
6. FWB 1-343
7. FWB 1-241
8. Decree of General Court Oct. 15, 1771
9. Northern Neck grants, State Library.
10. 5-H-282
11. Groome 67 & 77
12. FCOB 1-393
13. FCOB 1-411
14. Journal of the Council of State 1-258
15. E. K. Meade 59

16. WW 27-466
17. FDB 18-120

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7. FCOB 1-15
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11. FH-LPW 511
12. Gardiner 6
13. FCOB 3-239
14. FCOB 13-382
15. FCOB 13-279
16. 11 W (1) 93
17. FCOB 13-11
18. FCOB 13-14
19. FCOB 13-48
20. FCOB 13-124
21. FCOB 13-51
22. FCOB 13-255
23. FCOB 13-317
24. FCOB 13-281
25. FCOB 13-347
26. FCOB 13-48
27. FCOB 13-123
28. Page 82 et seq, handwritten decree of General Court, Oct. 15, 1771, Hite versus Fairfax, Handley Library, Winchester, Va.
29. FWB 5-60
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14. Register of Abingdon parish, Gloucester CH, Va.
15. FDB 13-522
16. FDB 19-374
17. FWB 12-474
18. E. K. Meade
19. 8-H-549
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11. FDB 17-259 and FSC 5-567
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19. FDB 28-139
20. FWB 11-200 and 203
21. FDB 65-31
22. FSC 5-120

23. FSC 5-523
24. Journal of Council of State 1-139
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26. Journal of Council of State 8-141
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12. Fitzpatrick, Diaries of Washington 2-171
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3. Freeman 3-257
4. WW 3
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7. Freeman 2-7
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11. WW 7-303
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15. Same 1-260
16. Same 1-325
17. U. S. Archives, Ledger of Commissioners of War Dept. (Revolutionary War) Vol. 143, page 134
18. Journal of the Council of State 1-428
19. Same 2-46
20. E. K. Meade 59
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14. WW 7-321
15. Bishop William Meade
16. Balmain's Journal
17. Cartmell 512
18. Issue of Oct. 26
19. Cartmell 155
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21. Sanders, Records of St. Mary Parish, Attakapas district, La.
22. Sanders (all subsequent St. Mary records from this source)
23. Frederick County Marriage Records
24. Balmain's Journal
25. 11 V-217, 218
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28. Frederick County Marriage Records
29. Mason, "John Norton & Sons, Merchants of London and Virginia."
30. Eliza Davis
31. Same
32. Same
33. DAR Lineage Books Vol. 54 page 46
34. King
35. DAR Lineage Books Vol. 54 page 48
36. Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress
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2. FDB 8-393
3. Berkeley County Book 1 of Unrecorded Deeds, page 42.
4. WW 3-222
5. Chalkley 2-70
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10. The involved pattern of legislation and litigation by which the Fairfax Proprietary was ultimately dissolved is detailed in Groome, Chapter 10. Also Beveridge 2-207 et seq.
11. Groome 76, 77

12. Beveridge 2-211
13. Beveridge 2-208 and 209
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15. Groome 230 and 231
16. Augusta County, Va., NS 10
17. U. S. Circuit Court, Richmond, Va., microfilm reel 6. Order Book 11, 1820-24. Page 74-76. William Snickers vs Lord Dunmore.
18. 24 W (1) 85, 96, 97.
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New Iberia, La.

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EDWARD SNICKERS = ELIZABETH TALIAFERRO

Sarah Snickers
1756-1824

= m 1773

Morgan Alexander
1746-1783

— Elizabeth Alexander

= m 1796

James Ware
1771-1821

Josiah Wm Ware
1802-1883

Sarah Ware Stribling
(Mrs. Sigismund)
1797-1878

Catherine Snickers
1757-1833

Dr. Robert Mackey
of Winchester
d. 1814

Mary Mackey

Samuel Taylor

Elizabeth Mackey

Edward Joaquin Smith

Frederick Mackey

John Mackey

= Rebecca M. Quire

Sarah Mackey

Dr. Robert T. Baldwin

Catherine Mackey

= Dr. Archibald Baldwin

William Snickers
1759-1824(?)

= m 1793

Frances Washington
1775-?

Mary Snickers
d. 1794 m 1812

= Moses Hunter

Emily Snickers

Elizabeth Snickers

= Charles Henry Brown
of Berkeley County

William Snickers

Beverly Snickers

Edward Snickers

Frances = Alfred
Weeks
in Louisiana

John Brooks Hunter
d. he. 1853

Isaac

Elizabeth Snickers
1761-1819

= m 1788

Thomas Stribling
1761-1821

William Stribling
d. 1790

Robert Mackay Stribling
1793-1862

Caroline Clarkson m 1818

Edward Snickers Stribling

Matthew Wright Stribling 1796-1845

= m 1828

Elizabeth Hereford

FRANCES WASHINGTON SNICKERS

Augustine Warner
1610-1674

Mary = ?
↓

Augustine Warner
1642-1681

Mildred =
Reade
↓

Mildred Warner

John Washington
Immigrant 1657
Married 1658

Anne =
Pope
↓

Lawrence Washington
1659-1698

m. 1686

John Washington
b. 1691

Catherine Whiting
↓

Warner Washington
1715-1791

(1) Elizabeth Macon

Warner Washington
d. 1829

(1) Mary Whiting

Frances Washington
b. 1775

= m 1793
William Snickers
1759-1824(?)

Francis Whiting

= m 1747
in Gloucester County

Mrs. Frances Perrin

Augustine Washington
1694-1743

= m 1731

(2) Mary Ball

George Washington
1732-1799

Mildred
b. 1698

m (1) ? Lewis

(2) Roger Gregory

(3) Henry Willis

CHARLES MYNN THRUSTON

EDWARD THRUSTON = (2) SUSANNA PERRY
 B. BRISTOL, ENGLAND 1638 D. 1683
 D. SUFFOLK COUNTY, VA. 1717?

EDWARD THRUSTON ELIZABETH HOUSDEN
 B. ENGLAND D. NORFOLK
 D. NORFOLK, VA. 1762 M. 1706 after 1761

JOHN THRUSTON
 B. NORFOLK 1709
 D. GLOUCESTER COUNTY
 VA., 1763

M. 1737

CHARLES MYNN THRUSTON

b. Abington parish, Gloucester County, Va
 Nov 19, 1738

m. Mary Buckner 1760

m. Anne Alexander 1766

lived Frederick County, Va. 1769 - 1809, when moved to Louisiana
 Died Louisiana 1812

CHARLES MYNN = ?
 D. HERTFORDSHIRE,
 ENGLAND 1675

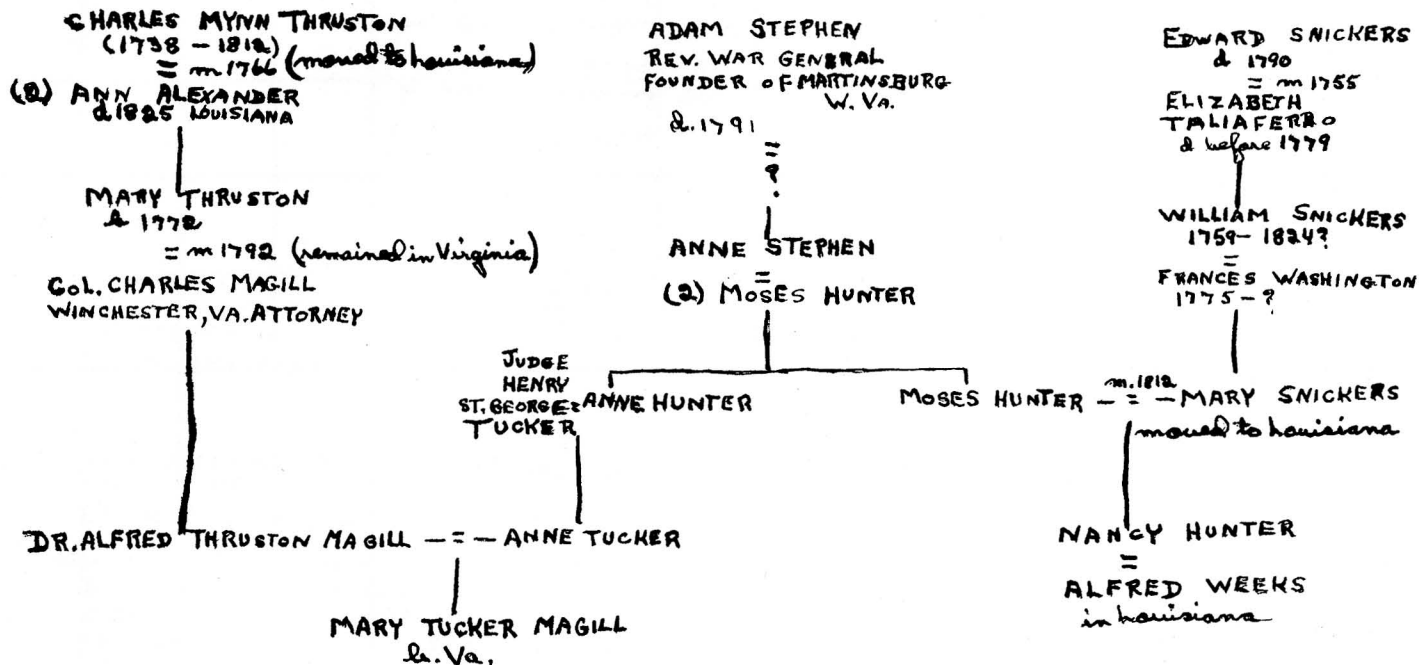
ROBERT MYNN = SARAH CARY
 married Gloucester County, Va.
 April 27, 1715

SARAH MYNN

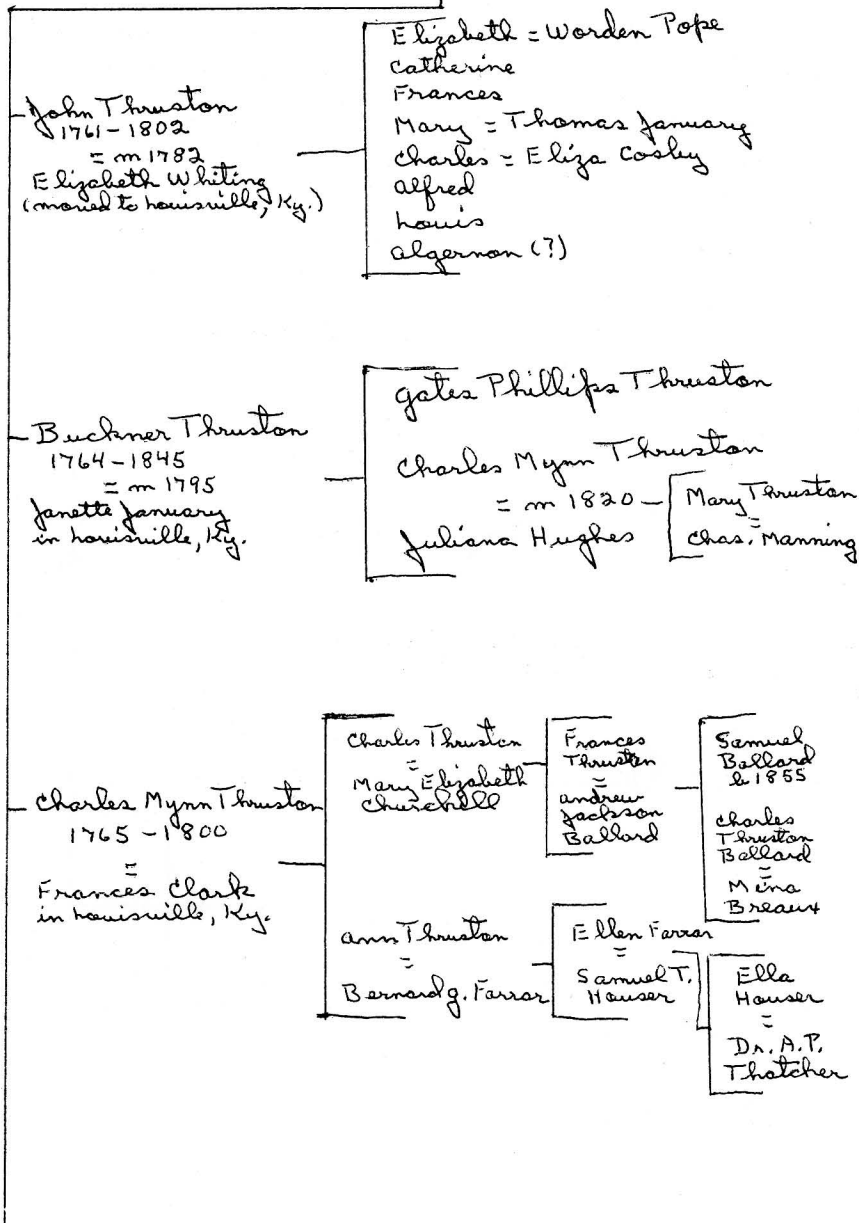
b. Abington parish, Gloucester County
 1716

(Widow of W^m Dalton
 & of Herbert Haynes)

THRUSTON — STEPHEN — SNICKERS



CHARLES MYNN THRUSTON - MARY BUCKNER
 1738-1812 M. 1760 D. 1765



CHARLES MYNIN THRUSTON = ANN ALEXANDER
1738-1812 M1766 D 1825

- Sarah 1766-1833 = George Flowerdew Norton. M1784 Moved to Marion County Mississippi
- Frederick 1770-? Died in Attakapas section of Louisiana
- Mary 1772-? = Col. Charles McGill, m. 1792 Remained in Winchester Virginia
- Frances 1774-1813 = Frederick Conrad, m 1793 Moved to St. Mary parish, Louisiana
- Elizabeth 1775-? = Henry Daingerfield, m 1793 Remained in Virginia
- Dr. Alfred 1780-1822 = Elizabeth Hudson in St. Mary parish Louisiana m 1818
- Eloise 1782-? = Edmund Haynes Taylor m 1797 Moved to Louisville, Ky.
- Sidney Ann 1783-1803 = Alfred Henry Powell m. 1801 Remained in Virginia
- Edmund Taylor 1785-1825 = Sarah Terrell (?) Died in St. Mary parish, Louisiana

THRUSTON — WYCHE

Charles Mynn Thruston = (2) Ann Alexander
 1738-1812 M 1766 d 1825

Sarah Thruston = George Flowerdew Norton
 1766-1833 M 1784 1751-1828
 Moved to Marion County, Miss.

Charles Mynn Norton = Mary Terrell
 b. 1788 Winchester, Va. b. 1792 Fayetteville, N.C.
 d. 1824 Adams County, Miss. m. 1812
 d. 1866 New Orleans

Sidney Ann Norton = Tilson Payne Harrison
 b. Natchez, Miss 1812 b. 1806 Mt. Sterling, Ky.
 m 1834 d. 1874 New Orleans
 d. 1895 Pass Christian, Miss. (buried Pass Christian)

Tilson Payne Harrison = Julia Macklin Malone
 b. 1840 New Orleans b. 1845 in Alabama
 m 1868 d. 1908 in New Iberia, La.
 d. 1915 New Iberia, La.

Lucy Malone Harrison = James Wright Wyche
 b. 1874 New Orleans b. 1859 New Iberia
 m 1900 d. 1937 New Iberia
 d. 1962 New Iberia

James Wright Wyche = Arleen Snyder
 b. 1906 New Iberia b. 1905 Swarthmore, Pa.
 Marine engineer and
 sugar planter

