

“OLD” PETER CORNWELL

(ca. 1634-ca. 1697)

Peter Cornwell was born ca. 1634 and died ca. 1697 around the age of 63.

This Peter Cornwell was described in *American Families*, page 2633, as "the Founder of this family in America, emigrated from Cornwall, England, in 1652, and settled in Lancaster County Virginia." He is described as the immigrant ancestor of John Jacob Cornwell, governor of West Virginia from 1917-21, who was a descendant of Jacob Cornwell, listed as a child of Peter Cornwell (ca. 1695-1776) in this younger Peter's biography.

"Old Peter's" wife's name was Mary, according to deed records. She may have been the daughter or sister of Humphrey Booth who gave Peter Cornhill, Jr. a cow and calf as a gift about 1664, a rather substantial gift at the time. "Know all men by these presents that I Humphrey Booth do hereby give unto Peter Cornhill, Jr. one red? cow & cow calf with their increase, the cow being marked on right ear with a crop & underkeel & the left ear a crop (or cross) slit cleft. SS Humphrey Booth wit: Robert Bletson, Will Hodgson" (*Old Rappahannock County Records, 1656-1664*, p. 379) ("Junior" was a term used in early Virginia for someone younger of the same name in the same location, but not necessarily a son of that individual. This is an indication that there may have been two Peter Cornhills living in the same locality in Virginia at the same time.) It is not proven how the following documented Peters relate to later Cornwell generations.

On Oct 26, 1658, a Peter Cornwell appears in the *Deed Index, Book D*, pages 1-3. "William Wilton & John Speed ack. all interest in 400 ac. unto Peter Cornhill & Michael Barron their heirs, etc. (& from dower of Frances Wilton (or Welton) aforesd, now wife of William Wilton. SS Wm W his mk Wilton John E his mk Speed Frances S her mk Wilton. Witnessed by John Walson Hodgson (his mk)" (*Old Rappahannock County Records, 1656-1664*, p. 322)

On Aug 6, 1662, Capt. Jno. Underhill was granted 250 acres in Yorke County, formerly Charles River County, for the transfer of five persons, including Peter Cornhill (plus four others named). (*Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents, Grants 1623-1666*, page 401) "Beg. on w. side of Felgots Creek at the mouth of the branch dividing this from the Gleabe land of Hampton Parish, N. by W." This entry establishes that Peter Cornhill may have immigrated close to this date.

Jan 4-5, 1663. I Frances Wilton, wf of William Welton apt. Mr. Alex. Flemming attny to ack. my right & title due me of Patent of land sold by my husband John Speed Containing 400 ac. SS 4 Jan 1663 the land being sold to Peter Cornhill and Michael Barron. Wit: Valentine Allen mk H, John Watson Deed rec. 5 Jan 1663. (*Old Rappahannock County Records, 1656-1664*, p. 323)

Mar 24, 1664. Wm. Berkley, Knt. & others with consent of council, etc. give and gr. to James Cogbill 206 ac in Rappa. Co. on so side River, Mr. Lucas' Cr. fmly Val.

Allen's, line of Henry Lucas, Daniel Gaines line that joins to Peter Cornwells -- with Peter Cornwells line, etc. to beg. . . given under my hand at James City 24 Mar 1664 SS William Berkley (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 36)

Sep 1, 1666. I Peter Cornwell for consideration of 3,300 lbs. tob. have sold to John Spearman his heirs, etc. 400 ac. pt. of Pat. date 24 Mar. 1664/5 containing 947 ac. viz. that wch lyeth next & adj. Daniel Gaines upon hd br. of Mr. Thos. Lucas, Sr. Creek, Cattail Swamp to place 1st mentioned, sd Peter Cornwell & Mary his wife warrent good & lawful title. SS Peter Cornwell Mary x Cornwell. Wit: Alex Fleming, John Catlett Deed Ack. SS Alex Fleming, Hump. Booth (*Old Rappahannock County Records, 1663-1668*, p. 30)

According to *Cavaliers and Pioneers -- Patent Book 5*, page 557, Peter had a land grant for 947 acres in Old Rappahannock County, a mile and a half from the river and on the head of Mr. Thomas Lucas, Sr. Creek, "four hundred acres of the said land being purchased by the said Peter Cornhill of John Speede and William Wilton. The residual being 547 acres of land is due unto the said Peter Cornhill by and for the transportation of eleven persons."

Mary Cornwell, wife of Peter Cornwell, appointed Robert Davis of same county as her attorney to ack. dower. (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 31)

Feb 5, 1665. Peter Cornwell wit. for James & Alice Cogbill (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p.57)

Peter Cornwell & Richard Stafford wit. for Mary Allen (ack. her dower with John Speed her atny) (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 58)

Feb 1666. Peter Cornwell Grantee from Col. Jno Catlett Feb 1666. Col. Catlett makes Oath of indebtness & desires benefit of Act of tender -- Appraisers, Richd. Stevens, Jno. Cooke, Richd Stoakes. (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 86)

Oct 11, 1667 (11 8br 1667). Peter Cornwell and Mary Cornwell wit. for William x Wilton who sold to James Cogbill pt. of land fmly belonging to Wm. Wilton, so side Rappa. Rec. 22 Dec. 1667. (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 110)

James and Alice Cogbill relinq. to Wm Wilton their int. - wit. Peter & Mary Cornwell (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 126)

Oct 22, 1667 (22 8br 1667). I Peter Cornwell for 400 lbs tob. from John Spearman sell one small tract of land in Parish of Sittingbourne on so. side Rappa ri. & n.w. side Cattail Sw. 20 ac. being all that I have on that side adj. land of Spearman to land of James Cogbill & Mr. Daniel Gaines. SS Peter Cornwell Wit: John Catlett, Daniel Gaines. (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 134)

Nov 19, 1673. Peter Cornwell wit. for Mary Cogbill. She apts. Daniel Gaines her

attny to ack. her int. in 100 ac. sold by James Cogbill to Edmond Lakin. (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1671-1676*, p. 138)

Bet. Thos. Page & wf, Elizabeth to John Smith & Edward Smith 800 ac. Part of 3,075 ac. by Pat. 3 Apr. 1667 to Thos. Page, Wm. Hodgson & Samuel Welding & in right of death of sd. Wm. & Samuel, now in sole possession. . . adj. Robert Payne & Peter Cornwell. . . SS Thomas Page, Elizabeth Page, Wit: Daniel Gaines, John Rymon, John Hull, George Jones (*Old Rappahannock County, VA, 1663-1668*, p. 158)

On May 5, 1675, Peter Cornwell was a witness to the will of John Speede, Sittingbourne Parish, Rappahannock County, and it was mentioned that Peter was aged about 41 years, putting his birth between May 6, 1633 and May 5, 1634 if he were 41.

Jun 15, 1675-7 Jul 1675. Bet. Andrew Gilson, Gent. of Co. of Stafford & Peter Cornwell of Co. of Rappa., Planter -- sd. Andrew with consent of Beth_hellin his wife & Thomas Gilson, son. . . etc. & Bethheline Gilson, dau. to sd. Andrew & Bethhelen to whom it was fmly given by Capt Alexander Fleming a tract in Rappa Co. on bothe sides the River and bounded partly by land of Robert Payne & Valentine Allen--back in the woods abt. 3 miles, containing 1,050 ac. excepting 100 ac. fmly grnted by sd. Gilson to Ed. Stafford. . . for 5,500 lbs. tob. From thos. & Bethhelin, son and dau. and Beth helen before mentioned bond for 200 lbs. sterling money of Eng. SS Andrew Gilson Wit: Robert Howson, Anthony Bridges. Rec. 7 Jul 1675 (*Old Rappahannock County, VA 1663-1668*, p. 293) (*VA. Magazine of History and Biography, Volume 38*, page 184)

In 1681, Peter Cornwell was a grantor of a land grant in Old Rappahannock County.

In 1692, the Old Rappahannock County was abolished and Essex and Richmond Counties were created. Essex County took over the old records. Since Essex County is on the south side of the Rappahannock River, it is assumed that Peter's land was now in Essex County.

Oct 25, 1695: According to *Cavaliers & Pioneers - Abstracts of Virginia*, by Nugent: *Patent Book 9*, page 2, Mr. Edwin Thacker of Middlesex County, 2634 Acs. Essex Co. on Br of Portobago, Cockershell Cr. & Tuckahoe, p. 7 adj. Cornelius Wood & John Amis, on br. of Occupation, etc. Imp. of 53 pers: Peter Cornwell.

On May 10, 1697, Essex County records show that "510 acres, late in the possession of Peter Cornwell is found to escheat to his Sacred Majesty." Some land in early Virginia automatically reverted to the Crown and could not be passed on in a will, due to the proprietary form of land ownership, where some lands were granted with only lifetime interests. The escheatment process was begun by the Court and Jury as they sat in session. The Court kept this case open for seven years, until they met on Apr 11, 1704 and declared the 510 acres escheated to the Crown. The Court then granted the 510 acres to John Battaille. (*VA. Colonial Abstracts, Volume 29, Book 11*, 11 Apr, 1704, page 230, Essex County)

Apr 26, 1698: According to *Cavaliers & Pioneers - Abstracts of Virginia*, by Nugent: Patent *Book 9*, page 18, John Battaille, 510 acs. Essex Co, page 131. Escheated from Peter Cornwell (Cornwall) by inquisition under James Williams

Nov 5, 1712: According to the above source: *Patent Book 10*, page 127, Capt. Lawrence Smith of York Co. 438 acs. & 60 perches (N.D.); St. Anne's Parish in Essex Co., Beginning. . . to land of Jobb Spearmon and Buckingham Brown which was formerly Peter Cornwells. (Also *Cavaliers and Pioneers, Vol III, 1695-1732*, page 127)

If the biographical sketch of Governor John Jacob Cornwell of West Virginia is correct, then this Peter Cornwell was the likely father of:

*i. **Dennis**, b. ca. 1655, m. Ann Dunkin, d. ca. 1735

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