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THE WIVES OF PETER<sup>1</sup> AND JOHN<sup>2</sup> RUCKER  
By Jean Brydon Robinson  
April 12, 1989

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RUCKER FAMILY, PLEASE NOTE:

Peter Rucker, Immigrant, married Elizabeth \_\_\_\_\_

John Rucker, his son, married Susannah \_\_\_\_\_.

The first record of land owned by Peter Rucker, Immigrant, was in Essex County, Deed Book 13, p.90, dated January 28, 1707/8. Frederick Coghill and wife Sara "leased to Peter Rucker and his wife Elizabeth 56 acres of land on Cockleshell Creek (on the Rappahannock River) adjoining William Scott's, Frederick and James Coghill's, and is part of 1000 acres granted to said Coghill's father, James." On page 91 of the same book, "Frederick Coghill and wife Sarah of Essex Co. for 2000 lbs of tobacco paid by Peter Rucker, and for the 'kind love and affection I owe unto John, Peter, and Thomas Rucker, sons of said Peter Rucker,' convey unto John Rucker the land leased to Peter Rucker, and in default of heirs to John, to go to Peter, and if Peter dies without heir, to go to Thomas."

From the above, we know that by the year 1708, Peter Rucker had a wife named Elizabeth and three sons. He lived on land adjoining Frederick Coghill and was his good friend. However, there is nothing to indicate that the Ruckers intermarried with the Coghills.

On p. 309, Wood suggests that either Peter Rucker or his son John may have married a Coghill. My thoughts are:

1). There is no evidence that the maiden name of Peter's wife, Elizabeth, was a Coghill. Examination of Coghill Records does not disclose any one of that name of that era. Mary, wife of James Coghill, Immigrant, died in 1715, leaving one surviving daughter, Mary Willis (W. B. 14, p.428, Essex County). Her other two heirs were sons Frederick Coghill and George Dusberry (Duxbury, Duckbary). Mary had remarried Henry Dusberry and had at least one child, George.

2). In 1707/8, Peter Rucker's three sons referred to in the above deed were young boys and the "love and affection" could not possibly refer to an inter-family marriage with the Coghills. Wood, p. 5, suggests that John Rucker came of age (21) in 1725 when he began buying land, making him about four years old at the time of the deed.

Don. Dorothy Johns

3). Susannah Coghill, oldest daughter of Frederick Coghill, was an heiress. Will of George Dusberry, probated Dec. 26, 1715 (six days after his Mother's Will was probated) "To Susanna Coghill, eldest daughter of my brother Frederick Coghill, my plantation, should she die without heir, to go to Richard Booker." (W. B. 14, p.430, Essex Co.) If John Rucker had married Susannah Coghill, why would he have given up an established plantation in Essex County, to go to the "wilds" of what is now Madison County?

4). Frederick Coghill's Will was probated Nov. 19, 1758, D. B. 11, p.223, Essex County. (See Coghill, p.97-99.) He mentions five children including "Suanner Miller," wife of Capt. John Miller. On May 27, 1769 (D. B. 115, p.94, Orange County) Susannah Rucker sold her former home and signed the deed "Susanna Rucker." (Wood, p.11)

The preponderance of evidence shows us that Susannah Coghill was married to John Miller and Susannah Rucker, John's widow, never remarried, therefore, I conclude, Susannah Rucker was not the daughter of Frederick Coghill!

From Vol. 1, Issue 4, Rucker Ruckus, "Susannah Coghill" by Mary Snyder: "It was originally believed that immigrant Peter Rucker's son, John, married Susannah Phillips. Edythe Rucker Whitley has acknowledged this to be an error." (She then goes on to say that John Rucker married Susannah Coghill, but we now think this could not be true.)

Letter from Edythe Rucker Whitley to Mary Snyder, Feb. 13, 1983: "In my book I have it that Peter Rucker, the first, married Elizabeth Fielding. That information was handed down in my family but years after I published the book discovered that she was not a Fielding nor was she kin to the Lloyd family... I would never take a tradition on anything today (learning this) after 68 years of professional research..."

In those days, a wife's maiden name was not written in deeds, wills, or other court records, and we must accept the fact that we may never know the family names of the wives of Peter Rucker, Immigrant, and his oldest son, John.

(The Family of Coghill Continued, by William Hawes Coghill, 1956, and The Rucker Family Genealogy, by Sudie Rucker Wood, 1932, are my main sources of information. If you have any additional information, please share it with the family.)

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# GRIVA News & Notes

Honored by NGS, 2003

Volume XXIII, Number 4

June 2003

## Susannah Rucker The Story of a Colonial Woman

By Jeannie Robinson

This is the story of Susannah, the wife of John Rucker of Orange County, Virginia. We judge her to be born in the early 1700s because her children began coming about fifteen to twenty years later. She only appears in county records when she signs a release of her dower rights to property her husband is selling. John died in 1742/3 and mentioned her in his Will:<sup>1</sup>

*Item, I give to my well beloved wife Susanna Rucker, . . . one third part of my household Furniture & Stock . . . to remain my wife's no longer than her widowhood after to be sold and divided as the rest of my Estate hereafter mentioned.*

At our March GRIVA meeting, Mary Beth McKimmy discussed the difficulties in finding women in Colonial Virginia. Women had few rights and rarely appeared in public records. The most effective way to find a woman is to pursue the records of the men in her life. A single or widowed woman, 'femme sole,' could own land and pay taxes, but a 'femme covert,' a married woman, could own land only with her husband's permission. Usually, however, property was listed in his name.

According to this will, Susannah could stay on John's farm until she died or remarried. In some cases, if a widow remarried, her land would

become the property of her new husband, but in Susannah's case, if her widowhood ended, the farm would go to her children.

Susannah and John had twelve children and most of them moved to Amherst County, Virginia, where John had patented 5,850<sup>2</sup> acres. Only her oldest son Peter stayed in Orange County. They lived on land adjoining Zachary Taylor and the Taylor family currently owns the property, located just south of the town of Orange.

Susannah sold her land:

27 May 1769, Indenture between Susannah Rucker, late of Orange County, and Peter Rucker of Orange County, Extrx. and Extr. to the Last Will and Testament of John Rucker, dec'd, and Andrew Shepherd of Orange County for £70, have . . . granted . . . 130 acres be the same more or less whereon Susannah formerly lived and joyning [sic] to Col<sup>p</sup> John Baylor, Mrs. Thomas Bell, Mr. William Moore which he purchased of Mr. Richard Taylor and Mr. Hancock Taylor, Mr. Zachery Taylor and the s<sup>d</sup> Shepherd . . . Signed Susannah Rucker and Peter Rucker. (Deed Book 15, pp. 94-96, Orange County, Virginia.)

A clue:

The deed said "Susannah Rucker, late of Orange County." It would appear she had died in 1769 as she disappeared (or so I thought), but

*See Susannah Rucker, page 62*

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GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

GRIVA . . . to promote, foster and encourage serious and accurate genealogical and historical research by all means possible, including instruction, seminars, workshops and field trips

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### GRIVA News & Notes

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### Susannah Rucker

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maybe she moved. Where did she go? Her son Peter continued to live in Orange until his death in 1794. Did Susannah move in with Peter or one of her other children in Amherst County? The phrase 'late of Orange County' in the deed suggests she moved away, but I overlooked (or ignored) it at the time. It turns out, she did move to Amherst County and appeared to be living independently. But no record of a land purchase was found. Susannah was a widow who could own land, why wasn't there a record?

Two deeds showed Susannah living in Amherst County:

4 Nov 1776, Thomas Gillenwaters and wife Martha to Jno. McDaniel, 100 acres on Harris Creek. Lines: Edwd. Tinsley, Hugh Rose, Anthony Rucker, *Susannah Rucker*, Geo. McDaniel (Deed Book D, p. 380, Amherst County, Virginia).

7 Dec 1788, Jno. McDaniel to Isaac Rucker, 100 acres. Lines: Anthony Rucker, Hugh Rose, Joshua Tinsley, Edwd. Tinsley, Ambrose & *Susannah Rucker*.

Susannah was also mentioned in the "Lost Order Book" of Amherst County, 1773-1782, dated 1 May 1780:

"Ambrose Rucker, Gent., is appointed Surveyor of the Road from Rutledges to his own Meadow, and it is ordered that he do with his own Male Labouring Tithables, John

*See Susannah Rucker, page 78*

## Susannah Rucker *continued from page 62*

Rucker, Benjamin Plunket and their Male Labouring Tithables, and the Male Labouring Tithables of Harvies Estate and *Susannah Rucker* at Pauls Mountain keep the said Road in repair according to Law.”

At first I didn't recognize this Susannah as John's widow. But then the light dawned—it was she, living in Amherst County! She moved to be near most of her children.

I kept looking and found the following:

3 Jul 1769, Leonard Goff and wife Ann, Bedford County, Virginia to Peter Rucker, Jno. Rucker, Ambrose Rucker, Benj. Rucker, Isaac Rucker, Anthony Rucker, Sarah Marr, Wineford Lee, Mella Ham, Phebe Rucker, of Amherst County, for £50, 100 acres. Lines: Jno. Burford, Rucker's Run, Drinking corner in Jno. Burford's line (Deed Book B, p. 437, Amherst County, Virginia).

Why was this property purchased by all of her children? Look at the date—1769, a few months after she sold the Orange County land. It had to be Susannah's land!

The land was sold some years later:

22 Jan 1781<sup>3</sup> [1791], Peter Rucker, Jas. Rucker as exor. of Jno. Rucker dec'd, Alex Marr, Ambrose Rucker, Jno. Lea, Benj. Rucker, Isaac Rucker, Anthony Rucker, Stephen Ham, and Jas. Morton of Amherst to Anthony Rucker, of Amherst, for £65, 100 acres. Lines: Isaac Rucker, Drinking Corner. (Deed Book G, p. 7, Amherst County, Virginia).

Her children owned Susannah's land! They purchased it in 1769, shortly after she sold the land in Orange and it was probably sold after her death in 1791. And maybe she lived even longer, moving in with a child. Note the above deeds are a good clue to the daughters and their married names.

What we can surmise about Susannah:

She was born early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and lived almost ninety years. She was probably born in the Eastern part of Virginia (Her husband was raised in Essex County, Virginia, and probably married there). They moved to the area that is now Orange County—the frontier of Virginia. Anyone that wanted to settle there was given land (as a buffer between the Indians and coastal 'civilization'). John's father was an immigrant to this country and they had little money or land so they took the opportunity to move west to 'free' lands. From the deeds we know they only had 125 acres—too small to make a living for their twelve children by farming. John ran a tavern<sup>4</sup> in his home and I'm sure Susannah, not only kept the home, a kitchen garden, raised the children, but helped with the tavern. Her husband died young, in early 1743, leaving her with small children (the youngest was a baby). When the children were grown, most of them moved to Amherst County, Virginia. She stayed behind in Orange County with her oldest son, who owned the adjoining property. Then twenty-five years later, in 1769, she sold her land and moved to Amherst where she lived the remainder of her life.

When looking for your female ancestors, remember to study all the county records for her, her husband, her children and her father.

And, one final note, the most important thing our speaker said was the first law of genealogy is "Trust nothing until you prove it yourself!"

<sup>1</sup> Will of John Rucker dated 11 Jan 1742/3, recorded 28 Jan 1742/3 (Will Book 1, p. 248, Orange County, Virginia).

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Land Grant, Vol. 22, p. 596, applied for in 1739, awarded in 1751 to his son Peter Rucker and divided among the children of John Rucker.

<sup>3</sup> The deed is dated 1781, but is filed in 1791 deeds. So I am assuming it is 1791, esp. as she is listed in a deed dated 1788.

<sup>4</sup> 24 Sep 1742, Capt<sup>n</sup> John Rucker was granted a license for keeping an Ordinary at his own house (Order Book, 1741-1743, p. 240, Orange County, Virginia).

**Coming this summer!**

2003 Surname List  
and  
2002-2003

*GRIVA News & Notes Index*

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OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

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Mitchells, Short-VA*

## Flowerdew Hundred's Second Annual Descendants' Gathering

### 23 August 2003

### 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

The Flowerdew Hundred Foundation is inviting descendants of Flowerdew's "first families" to participate in the second annual Flowerdew Hundred Descendants' Gathering on August 23. The Flowerdew Hundred Descendants' Gathering is an event designed to reunite the relatives of Flowerdew's numerous and diverse families. Flowerdew will have genealogical information available for many of these families, including Barkers, Browns, Cockes, Dunns, Flowerdews, Kents (Epes), Pierseys, Poythresses, Seldens, Wilkins, Willcoxes, Woodsons, Yeardeleys and others. Speakers will highlight genealogical topics in Virginia, and descendants can enjoy guided tours

of the Flowerdew Hundred Museum and property. Descendants are encouraged to bring research and family histories they have gathered to share and exchange with other descendants and those interested in their ancestry.

If you are interested in participating in or attending the Descendants' Gathering, please contact organizers at 804-541-8897 or e-mail [flowerdew@firstsaga.com](mailto:flowerdew@firstsaga.com). Also, please feel free to share this information with other Flowerdew descendants and/or post this event on your web page. For more information on this historic Virginia landmark on the James River, visit the Flowerdew Hundred web site at <http://www.flowerdew.org/>.

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