Jonathan Prather

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Jonathan was born in Virginia and later moved to Maryland about 1652/58. His name is recorded in several documents and we find it spelled several different ways. As example; he assigned land he owned, which stated it was land owned by Jonathan Prether, but when he signed the document he signed Jonathan Prater. He is also recorded in such documents as Prater, Prator, Prether, Praither, and Prather. Such was the level of education those days. Most people "sounded out" the spelling and then spelled that way. We find names Prater and Prather the most commonly used in documents concerning Jonathan.

When Jonathan died his wife remarried to John Smith; a very wealthy Planter. He was very good to Jonathan's children and when he died he willed them a Plantation he called "Orphan's Gift" which was located near the city of St. Mary in Maryland. John Smith's will was proved 13 October, 1707. Jane (Prather) Smith's will was proved 7 December, 1713.

We thought for years that "Jane" was a Goldsmith daughter of George Goldsmith, but now know she was Lyle Jane McKay. She was raised by the Goldsmiths.

Jonathan Prather's Coat-of-Arms was registered with the College of Heraldry and has proven to be the continuing and long established "Prater Family" whose ancestrial estates were located on Eaton Water, in the county of Wiltshire, England. The Eaton Water Estates include Latton Manor and Inglesham Manor which are located along the head waters of the Thames River, North of Swindon, Wiltshire, England. Jonathan used the "Prater" coat-of-arms on some of his documents. Several other documents were also found. Examples of some of the documents found:

MSS. (preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office, England) "Muster Rolls of the Settlers of Va."

21 August 1680, Inventory of Estate of Jonathan Prather, dec'd. Appraised by Jn. Mils and Robt. Clark.

12 November 1658, Jonathan Prator demandeth Warrant agst. Cornelius Kennede, warrant to the Sheriff of Calvert County.

1 April 1680, Jonathan Prater serving as Juror at Resurrection Manor in Calvert County, MD.

Ref. Liber Q, Folio 302, Maryland Provencial Records, Land Office, Annapolis, Maryland.

Jonathan Prather was transported by water from Virginia up Chesapeake Bay and the Potomic River to Swan Creek, then to Calvert County, Maryland (now Prince George's County) with four men and one other woman; Alexander Forcarson, Robert MacKay and wife, William Woodrose, William Mill, and William Jones, in a small vessel owned by young George Reed of Calvert

County, Maryland. We suspect that the "other woman" was Lyle Jane MacKay, sister of Robert.

Vol. I, p. 35 "Calendar of Wills - Maryland" Jonathan Prather and wife Jane, on Swan Creek, built their home on their estate they called "Prather Hall Plantation".

They did not live there long and disposed of it to George Gouldsmith, who in his Will of April, 1666, bequeathed Prather Hall to his daughter, Mary Gouldsmith.

This "Prather Hall" was located near the present site of Ft. Washington, near what became Swan Creek Road and the Potomic River (about 10 miles south of the present Capitol building, Washington D.C.).

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Many incorrect records exist that claim thet Jonathan was born in England, but these were assumptions made by people who were involved in the "early" research of our family. Research continues. It was also reported that Jonathan Prather and Thomas Prater (the father of Jonathan) were not of the same family. ......but even these earlier researchers have stated that Jonathan was from Latton, Wiltshire, and Thomas was from Eaton Water, Wiltshire. Little did they know that these two places are in fact the same estate. Eaton Water, Latton Manor, Inglesham Manor all adjoin one another and were owned by John Prater in 1547, and later by his son George who died in 1564. Their property was so vast that it bordered three county lines in Northern Wiltshire.

"Eaton Water" was located in the area known today as Eaton Hastings / Lechlade / Inglesham, and also included Latton Manor which is located along the bank of the Thames River in North central Wiltshire (about 4 miles north of Swindon). I (Historian Gary Benton Prather) have spent many a wonderful evening visiting and exploring this part of England and still find myself returning again, year after year.

In the time of our forfathers, England was the worlds supplier of wool and woolen goods. While England was the supplier of wool, it was Flanders that converted the greatest amount of this wool into products, using their great weaving houses and world market connections. The Thames River was very important to the family because it supported the primary family business, the woolen trade. They used the river waters to wash and process the wool and then transport it down river to the ports of London. This was only one of the many businesses the family was involved in. Today, the village (manor) of Lechlade has grown and is a beautiful village with its sidewalk shops, tea rooms, and a large church of a later period. Inglesham was much larger than Lechlade when John Prater lived there in 1547. Now, "old Inglesham" only has the church to remind us that the village ever existed. "New Inglesham" has about 6 houses and is located about one mile south of the Inglesham of John's day.

At Eaton Hastings, only the old church and "Ferry House" remain to remind us that a village once stood there. The North side no longer exists. Lord hastings came into possession of the Southern part of Eaton village and it became known as Eaton Hastings, while the "old Eaton Water" no longer exists. He built a beautiful manor home on the foundation of the old abot house which sat next to the church. Lord Hastings later decided that he did not approve of the location of the old church because it obstructed his view of the Thames River, so he had the church

moved, stone by stone, and reconstructed about 50 yards West of its original location. The local residents (which most likely included members of the Prater family) were upset with Lord Hastings "for fear for the souls of their ancesters buried in the floor of the old church", and thus took Lord Hastings from his home and "stuffed him down his well, drowning him".

There were several hundred years of Prater ancesters that lay under the floor of that old church at Eaton Hastings, but today they lay in what is now the flower garden of the Hastings Manor House at Eaton Hastings. I (Historian Gary Benton Prather) had coffee with the present residents of the old Eaton Hastings Manor House and to my surprise they were totally unaware that the church had ever been moved, but they did exclaim, "that explains why our gardener finds an odd bone from time to time". (Such is British humor.)

Latton Manor is the most beautiful of what remains of our family manors which sat on Eaton Water, on the Criklade of North Wiltshire. I (Historian Gary Benton Prather) spent several nights in Latton Manor sleeping in one of the homes that stood during the time that George Prater lived there (died, 1564). George Prater is buried under the floor of the church of Latton, Wiltshire. Latton has been in existance since the Roman occupation of England (A.D. 64), and Roman villa ruins can be found there today. It is a small, beautiful, quiet village with only about a dozen houses and the church remaining.

We now know that Jonathan was born near Newport News, Virginia, and was the son of Thomas (Prater) Prather of "Eaton Water, Wiltshire, England" who landed in Elizabeth Cities, Virginia in 1622. Thomas was between 18 and 20 years old when he came to what is now America. Thomas was born in Eaton Water, on the Criklade, Northern Wiltshire, 1602/1604. His son Jonathan was his heir in America. Jonathan Prather's estate was valued at 13,750 pounds at his death. Jonathan, and his wife Jane, lived in their home near the present site of Ft. Washington on the Potomac River, Swan Creek Road, about 10 miles due South of the U.S. Capitol Building. It was called "Prather Hall".

They moved to a plantation at Collinton ca. 1666.

Researched by Gary Benton Prather