

## Preface and Acknowledgements

This is an account of how over a period of approximately eight centuries one particular line of the Parrish family found its way from Paris, France to Pleasant Grove Township in Johnston County, North Carolina. Documentary material on which this historical account is based consists of public records in The Library of Congress, The DAR Library, and the U.S. Archives in Washington, D.C.; the Virginia State Archives in Richmond; the N.C. State Library in Raleigh; and county library and courthouse records in New Kent, Goochland and Brunswick Counties of Virginia, and Granville and Johnston Counties of North Carolina. In addition much information was gleaned from published histories of various branches of the Parrish family by: Nancy Elizabeth (Parrish) Gardner of Tupelo, Mississippi; J. J. Parrish of Adel, Georgia; Scott Lee Boyd of Santa Barbara, California; and Katherine Cox Gottschalk of Baltimore, Maryland. And a special debt of appreciation is due the following individuals for the valuable assistance and encouragement they provided during the research phase of this document: Margaret McLemore Lee of Smithfield, North Carolina; the late Belva Batten Creech of Micro, North Carolina; and the following descendants of the Parrish families of Virginia and North Carolina: Marian (Parrish) Watson of Ft. Worth, Texas; Roberta (Parrish) Blomberg of Bowie, Maryland; Lewis Parrish of Knightdale, North Carolina; Todd Johnson of Smithfield, North Carolina; and Kay and Carolyn Parrish of Wilsons Mills, North Carolina.

The author has intentionally omitted all reference footnotes in an effort to keep this account as simple and readable as possible. All critical comments will be welcomed by the author who can be contacted at: 1128 Cresthaven Drive, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903 TEL: (301) 434-6929.

## The French Connection

The surname Parish (Parrish) appears to have originated from the Norman French name Paris (Parris). The earliest recorded date that the name appears in England is December 16, 1246 when William de Paris, Knight, is listed as a landholder in Buckinghamshire County. This William de Paris was reported dead on December 28, 1255, leaving co-heirs. In Bardsley's dictionary of English surnames is listed the name Paris in Hertfordshire in the year 1273. Listed as a knight of Edward I in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century is a Sir William de Paris from Lincolnshire. He was summoned on June 30, 1314 to serve in combat against the Scots and again on June 20, 1322 to serve in person against the Scots as a Knight of Hertfordshire. Sir William was summoned to the Great Council at Westminster on May 9, 1324 but "was so ill his life was despaired of". He apparently recovered however because he was again summoned on January 26, 1326.

Early English Chancery Records for the years 1385-1467 give the following variations of the Paris surname as: Paryce, Parys, Paryse and Paryssh with given names John and William predominating.

Again in Bardsley's Dictionary the following names appear: Wilhemus de Paryseh and Thomas de Paryseh of Yorkshire in 1379 and Marjorie de Paryseh of Yorkshire in 1455; Robert de Paris of Hertfordshire, Ralph de Paris of Kent, Roger de Paris of London, and Johannes Paris of Yorkshire in 1573. Recorded elsewhere was a Robert Parris, son of Thomas Parris, Gentleman, of Hitchen, Hertfordshire, who was granted use of arms on June 15, 1573.

From the foregoing there can be little doubt that the Parish (Parrish) name came from Paris, France. The almost continuous presence of the French preposition "de" followed by the various spellings of Paris clearly indicates that the first to use the "de Paris" designation did so to distinguish himself from others in the vicinity with the same given name; thus John de Paris or William de Paris. It further appears that the French character of the name begins to disappear in England in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>

centuries probably because of the unpopularity of Englishmen retaining French-sounding names during periods of hostility between the English and French. The French “de” seems to have disappeared first and then later the letter “h” was added to form the surname Parish. The fact that church districts in England at the time were called parishes may also have had some influence on the name formation. A second “r” also begins to appear in the name to possibly differentiate the family surname from the church parish.

### England to Colonial Virginia

The first Parish (Parrish) of record to come to the New World was Thomas Parrish, age 26, who was transported to the Virginia colony from England in the year 1622 on board the ship CHARITY. On February 16, 1623 Thomas Parish was living at Bass’ Choice in Elizabeth City County, Virginia and is listed as a servant of Thomas Spilman. Elizabeth City County was then the area centered around present day Hampton, Virginia. Thomas Parrish and Thomas Spilman next appear on a colony muster in 1624. Another Thomas Parish, identified as a clothier, age 22, was transported from England to the New England colony in April, 1635 on board the ship, INCREASE, Capt. Robert Lea, Master. On June 24, 1635 an Edward Parish was transported to Virginia, presumably as a headwright, by Adam Thoroughgood who had been in Virginia since at least 1624.

Sketchy family records indicate that this Edward Parish was born about 1600 in Yorkshire County, England. A William and a Charles Parish may also have come to Virginia from Yorkshire, England around 1635 but again records are scant. In May of 1648 “Edward <sup>1</sup> Parish, planter, of Elizabeth City County, Virginia purchased 200 acres of land in said county”. This tract was part of an original land patent awarded to John Graves. Edward <sup>1</sup> Parish had several sons: Edward <sup>2</sup>, William, Robert, Richard and possibly a John and a Charles. Edward <sup>2</sup> moved to Anne

Arundel County, Maryland and eventually became a large landowner in the vicinity of present day Baltimore. A 2,000 acre patent to Edward <sup>2</sup> Parish became known as “Parrishes Range”. Part of this 2,000 acres along with part of a 350-acre tract known as Parrishes Fear and owned by Edward <sup>2</sup> Parish’s son, Edward <sup>3</sup>, now makes up a major part of the municipally-owned Druid Hill Park of Baltimore.

Edward <sup>2</sup> was drowned in 1680 when his boat capsized in Maryland waters. He was buried at his homeplace in Maryland. He and his family were members of the Quaker religious faith in Maryland. Some descendents of Edward <sup>2</sup> Parish may have moved back to Virginia and quite a number still live in and around Baltimore.

A John Parish appears on a jury in Charles City County, Virginia on January 9, 1662, and on July 22, 1662 a right to 350 acres of land in Charles City County was assigned to John Parish by George Noble. At that time Charles City County consisted of the area south and west of the Chickahominy River to Henrico County which began at about present-day Richmond. Charles City County also extended south of the James River but very little settlement was then occurring south of the James.

On July 30, 1663 John Parish and Margaret Parish assigned a right to the above 350 acres to Thomas Calloway, and on October 22, 1663 Margaret Parish, wife of John Parish, confirmed the foregoing. In 1673 presumably the same John Parish was declared “a verry poore sickly person being discharged from payeing levies in his (church) parish of Weynoke is hereby released from other public levys for this yeare”. John apparently recovered from this “verry poore sickly” condition, however; because on November 20, 1682, John Parish of Charles City County and Wyanoke Church Parish obtained 390 acres on the north side of James River for the transportation of eight persons. (As compensation for paying the transportation costs of each person from England to the New World, the sponsor was awarded one headright which generally entitled him to 50 acres of land).

So far a relationship has not been established between this early John Parish and the

earlier (1622) Thomas Parish and the (1635) Edward <sup>1</sup> Parish. Although there is some indication that Edward <sup>1</sup> may have had a son John, there is no evidence that he was the (1662) John Parish of Charles City County. It would appear more likely that this John was descended from either the Charles or William Parish, supposedly brothers, who came to Virginia around 1635 and settled in Charles City County, because the given names John, Charles and William seem to be prominent in later generations of this family line.

On April 28, 1691 Joseph Parrish of Charles City County married the relict (widow) of Andrew Atkins. This Joseph could have been a son of the (1662) John Parish.

The name Humphrey Parish first appears on September 4, 1698 when Anne, the daughter of “Humpy Parish and Mary, his wife” was baptized in St. Peter’s Parish in New Kent County. Other children of Humphrey Parish recorded in St. Peter’s Parish were: Jane, born December 20, 1699; and Henry, baptized April 27, 1701. Also registered in St. Peter’s records was the baptism of Joseph, son of John Parish, on September 20, 1713.

In 1708 Humphrey Parish was living in St. Paul’s Parish, New Kent County, and in obedience to an order of the county court took part in clearing a “Bridle Road from Major Meriwether’s Mill to the three runs of Chickahomany Swamp”. In the same year Humphrey Parish was mentioned as one of three to procession land boundaries in the precinct where he was a landowner.

Humphrey was probably named after Humphrey Belt who was living in Virginia in 1635. According to family records he had a granddaughter who married a Parish and they named one of their sons Humphrey. There is no record of the given names of the parents of Humphrey Parish; however, there is a good possibility the father was the John Parish of 1662 whose wife was named Elizabeth (Belt?).

In the 1720’s and 1730’s the Parishes of Charles City, James City and New Kent Counties began to migrate westward and on September 28, 1728 “John Parish of James City County patented 400 acres on the North Side of the James River on both

sides of Ready (Reidy) Branch, a branch of Tuckaho Creek, in Henrico County”. This was near the then Henrico-Hanover county line and just northwest of the frontier settlement of Richmond.

The western part of Henrico became Goochland County in 1728 and Louisa County was created from Hanover in 1742. In June 1733 William Atkinson of Hanover County sold four tracts of land “on the north side of James River” in Goochland: (1) 100 acres “on branches of Licking Hole Creek to William Parrish”; (2) 200 acres on “East most branch of Licking Hole Creek to Thomas Parrishes Wife Elizabeth Parrish of Goochland”; (3) 200 acres “on East most branch of Licking Hole Creek to Humphrey Parrish, Jr.”; and (4) 300 acres “on branches of Licking Hole Creek to John Parrish of Goochland”. Humphrey Parrish was a witness to the first and fourth of these deeds and Humphrey Parrish, Jr. witnessed the livery and seizing for the first deed, that to William Parrish.

On August 20, 1734 John Parrish patented 400 acres in Goochland County “on Wild Boar, a branch of Treasurers Run, and on October 3, 1734 Humphrey Parrish patented 400 acres near the Hanover County line “on the north side of the James River on the branches of Treasurers Run.” In 1739 William Parish patented 104 acres and Henry Parrish 400 acres, both tracts on Little Byrd Creek in Goochland. This William Parrish was probably a son of the John Parish who died in Goochland about 1751 and Henry was probably the son of Humphrey Parrish who was baptized in St. Peter’s Parish in New Kent County on April 27, 1701. Humphrey Parrish, Sr. of St. James Parish of Goochland County died in 1743 and his will prepared in 1740 named his wife Mary, son David and daughter Mary. The will was witnessed by Henry Martin, John Parrish and Bresse Parrish. Bresse (Bressie, Brissie) was the oldest son of John Parrish and John was no doubt either a younger brother of Humphrey, Sr. or an older son. The 1740 will of Humphrey Parrish, Sr. was somewhat vehement in that he disavowed any former wills or settlements probably resulting from some family disagreement. It is almost certain that the Humphrey

Parrish, Jr. who witnessed the land transaction of William Parrish in Goochland in 1733 and the Henry Parrish who patented 400 acres in Goochland in 1739 were sons of Humphrey Parrish, Sr. and for some reason were not included in Humphrey, Sr's. will of 1740. The fact that he left his estate to his son David, daughter Mary and wife Mary indicates that David and Mary were younger children still living with their mother Mary. This could have been a second family of Humphrey, Sr. including a second wife Mary because David was born about 1725 based on an estimation from his will dated 1789 and from his military muster record dated 1753. Thus he was about 17 years old when his father died and his sister Mary was also young and unmarried at the time. Although we know that Humphrey, Sr. and his wife Mary were having children at least as early as 1698 in St. Peter's Parish in New Kent County, it does not seem likely that the same wife Mary could be having more children 25 to 30 years later in Goochland County; thus the conclusion that there was a second wife Mary.

### Virginia to North Carolina

From this point on this paper will focus on Bresse (Brissie) Parrish, the oldest son of John Parrish who died in Goochland County about 1751, and his descendents who came to North Carolina.

Bresse Parrish was probably born sometime between 1715-1720 in Charles City County or New Kent County, Virginia. The name Bresse was unusual and probably came from his mother's family which could have been Bressie. The Bressie family name does appear in early colonial Virginia and on a few occasions the Bressie Parrish name is recorded.

When John Parrish died in 1751 without a will his land devolved to his oldest son Brissie. In October 1751 Brissie "for love and affection and five shillings" conveyed to each of his brothers, William Parrish (of St. Martin's in New Hanover County) and

Charles Parrish, 50 acres of land in Goochland that had belonged to their father. Witnesses to the deed from William's tract were Humphrey Parrish, Jr., John (X) Parrish, Thomas (X) Parrish and Charles (X) Parrish; those for Charles' deed were John Parrish, Jr., John (X) Adams and John (X) Parrish. In 1753 Brissie Parrish, then of Lunenburg County, Virginia sold 150 acres of the Goochland inheritance to his brother William. Witnesses were John Parrish, John (X) Parrish and Charles (X) Parrish. In 1758 William Parrish sold this 150 acre tract to John Witt; witnesses were John, Joel and Humphrey Parrish. Other than Brissie, William and Charles the names of other possible children of the elder John Parrish of Goochland are not known. Assuming that this was the same John Parrish who had a son, Joseph, baptized in St. Peter's Parish on September 20, 1713 then we must further conclude that the son Joseph died young.

In 1757 Brissie Parrish, was living in Granville County, North Carolina. At that time Granville County consisted of most of present-day Warren, Vance, Franklin, Granville, and Person Counties and some parts of Durham and Wake Counties. Several Parrishes were living in Granville County before Brissie arrived; Thomas Parrish since at least from 1750; David Parrish, and John Parrish in 1754. The relationship between these Parrishes and Brissie is not known but it is certain that they were closely related, perhaps 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins. David Parrish was probably the younger son of Humphrey Parrish who was named in Humphrey's will of 1740 in Goochland County, Virginia.

On June 19, 1758 Brissie purchased 150 acres of land on the south side of Ruin Creek in Granville County and on February 9, 1763 he purchased 50 acres on Tabbs Creek. These two tracts of land are located a few miles west of present-day Kittrell, North Carolina. In 1762 Brissie Parrish was serving as a township constable in the Fishing Creek tax district and recorded one son, Justice, as being over 16 years old. This shows that Justice was his oldest son and was born about 1745 while Brissie was still living in Goochland County, Virginia. Also shown in 1762 Granville County



records is a Charles Parrish as a landowner in the Henderson District of Granville. This Charles may have been Brissie's brother. Brissie Parrish and his oldest son Justus (Justice) appear in a 1786 list of households in the Fishing Creek District of Granville County. In Brissie's household there were: three white males under 21 years of age and one over 60 years of age, 1 female and 1 black. Thus Brissie would appear to be over 60 years old at this time. In Justice's household there were: 1 white male between 21 – 60 years of age (presumably Justice himself); 1 white male under 21; and 8 white females of all ages. Justice was about 40 years old at that time (1786). The Fishing Creek District of Granville County in which Brissie and Justice lived was located in the vicinity of Warrenton in present-day Warren County.

Justice Parrish came to Johnston County in 1787 along with his brother George who may have come a year earlier. Justice was accompanied by one small son, a wife (name unknown) and seven daughters. His brother George was unmarried. Justice and George were preceded in Johnston County by a Charles Parrish who purchased 440 acres from Alexander Avera and obtained a 640 acre grant on the south side of Little Creek in 1781 – 82. He later purchased 100 acres from William Sanders on Swift Creek and 300 acres from John Duncan. The relationship between Charles and Justice and George Parrish is not known but he was probably a first cousin.

Justice's father Brissie died in Granville County in 1790 at about 70-75 years of age and named his oldest sons: Justice, George and Humphrey, executors of his estate. The will was proved at the February 1791 session of the Granville County Court and left "to son Noel Parrish 200 acres whereon I now live, horse, bridle and saddle, my gun, bed and furniture; son David, rest of land over 200 acres; wife Agga, all remainder of estate for life; then to sons Justice, George, Humphrey, John and David, except 10 pds. To John Parrish".

The composition of this will indicates that sons Noel and David were the two youngest sons and would be expected to tend the land and take care of their mother for the remainder of her life. Also the fact that Brissie named one of his sons

Humphrey is indicative that the earlier Humphrey Parrish of Goochland County, Virginia was a close relative, probably his grandfather. Brissie named another of his sons after his father, John, who died in Goochland about 1751.

George was the first of the two Parrish brothers to obtain land in the Pleasant Grove area of Johnston County when in 1793 he obtained a grant of 250 acres on the south side of Black Creek. Justice obtained his first land in 1795 when he purchased 600 acres in Pleasant Grove Township from James Carrol. The fact that Justice in 1795 was able to purchase 600 acres may indicate that his mother, Agga, had died in Granville County and he had received an inheritance as specified in his father Brissie's will of 1790. Justice obtained additional land in 1797-98 through land grants and an 1808 purchase for a total of over 1,200 acres. Beaverdam and Polecat Branches and a good part of the road stretch between Coats and McGee Cross Roads pass through the tract.

On May 30, 1797 Justice Parrish married Avisilla Flewellen. Justice was over 50 years old by that time and that was at least his second marriage. The name of his previous wife is not known but we know that when Justice came to Johnston County in 1787 he had one young son (Braxton, b. 1785) and seven daughters. Another son, Johnson, was born in 1788, and two other sons, Isom and Presly, were born around 1790 but they both died young. It appears that Avisilla gave birth to five sons and one daughter: Peter and David in 1798 (they may have been twins), William in 1799, Justice <sup>2</sup> in 1800, James in 1801, and Parisada in about 1805.

Justice <sup>1</sup> Parrish died in 1808 at about 63 years of age. In his will of July 5, 1808 (probated in August 1808) his widow, Avisilla, was left the plantation house and 380 surrounding acres for the remainder of her natural life, then this inheritance was to go to their youngest daughter, Parisada. To each of nine sons he left 100 acres and to each of his six older daughters he left 5 shillings. In 1819 when the land was actually divided, however; the 200 acres that were originally willed to sons, Presly and Isom (then deceased), were equally divided between the six older daughters and

the surviving seven sons.

In the late 1700's and early 1800's some of the nearby neighbors of Justice Parrish were the (James) Carrol, (Reuben) Barber, (Edwin) Smith, (Barnaby) Johnston, Dozer, Clifton, Beasley and Flewellen families. And in due course there were marriages among these neighboring families. Some of the early marriages of sons and daughters of Justice <sup>1</sup> Parrish were:

Nancy Parrish married Archibald Flewellen about 1790

Sarah Parrish married Philip Swanson, November 12, 1792

Betsy Parrish married John Cook, March 16, 1803

Portoch Parrish married Hartwell Ivy, August 11, 1809

Parisada Parrish married Frederick Johnson, February 15, 1825

Johnson Parrish married Martha Stevens, March 11, 1815

Peter Parrish married Edith Stevenson, November 16, 1819

David Parrish married Elizabeth Johnson, November 25, 1819

William Parrish married Edith Langdon, July 25, 1821

James Parrish married Elizabeth Jones, December 7, 1827

Braxton Parrish married Polley \_\_\_\_\_, about 1820

Most of these marriages resulted in large families which accounts for so many of the Parrishes of Johnston and neighboring counties being descended from Justice Parrish.

In addition to George Parrish, brother of Justice <sup>1</sup> and Charles Parrish, probably a cousin, there appears a John Parrish in an 1803 Johnston County land transaction. This John died in 1822 and left some of his estate to his wife Edith. A relationship between Justice <sup>1</sup>, George and John has not been established but based on John's probable age (his wife Edith was 60 yrs. old in 1850) and the fact that he lived in the same community as Justice <sup>1</sup> and George makes it quite possible that he was the

brother John mentioned in their father Brissie's will of 1790 in Granville County. To further complicate the ancestry of the Parrishes of the western part of Johnston County still another Justice Parrish settled near Gully's Mill in Wake County near Clayton in the early 1800's. He supposedly came from Ireland and raised a fairly large family. Some of his sons were: Willis (b. 1827); Mordecai (b. 1829); Nathan (b. 1836); Pinkney (b. 1837); Putney (b. 1839); and Paschal (b. 1843).

A Jacob Parrish appears in a 1778 land transaction in old Dobbs Co. (now Wayne Co.) and in 1850 a later Jacob Parrish, age 42, was living near Lowell Mill in eastern Johnston Co. This later Jacob had a fairly large family with sons named: John (b. 1832); Thomas (b. 1836); Jacob, Jr. (b. 1840); Samuel (b. 1844); and Needham (b. 1847). At the end of the War between the States Jacob was living on a farm at the present site of the new North Johnston Middle School at Micro. The land and funds for construction of Parrish Memorial Church, located between Micro and Princeton in eastern Johnston Co., were provided by Jacob's youngest son Needham as a memorial to his parents, Jacob and Willie (Davis) Parrish. A large number of Parrishes in the eastern part of Johnston Co. are descended from this union.

The next page family chart projects the family of David Parrish, the fifth son of Justice <sup>1</sup> Parrish, and subsequent descendants of Justice <sup>3</sup> Parrish, the youngest son of David. This particular line of Parrishes is presented here because it represents the line from which the author is descended.

The author, Luther C. Davis, Jr., is the great-great-great grandson of Justice <sup>1</sup> Parrish and the son of Vera Vaughn (Parrish) Davis. This account of the Parrish family migration to Johnston County, North Carolina is hereby dedicated to the memory of his mother, Vera (Parrish) Davis and his cousin the late Carl K. Parrish, Jr. of Wilson Mills, North Carolina.

# FAMILY CHART

