

3. FROM VIRGINIA TO THE CAROLINAS

Throughout the colonial period, the records of our people are extremely sparse. Almost all we know about them for certain is their names and that they were part of a general migration from Virginia into the Carolinas.

The First Native Generation

The younger Samuel. The younger Samuel probably was born about 1711 as we noted earlier, as his older child known to us was born in 1729. He first appears to us here in the church register with his wife, Mary, in the birth and baptismal notices of their children.

**Jonathan son of samuel and Mayr [sic] Sental Born 26th May
Bapt 6th June 1729**

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**Jane D: of Samuell & Mary Sentall Born 5th March 1733 Bap^t
20 May 1734.¹**

Perhaps the girl had been named for her grandmother. We can almost view the family group united in a baptism service in the old Ferry Chapel by the Appomattox -- the proud parents and five-year-old Jonathan, the elder Samuel seated and frequently shifting to keep weight from his feet, and of course the grandmother doting over her namesake. Perhaps she wondered whether this granddaughter would spare the family the disappointments of their own daughter, Anne.

Anne Sentall. Anne Sental was probably born to Samuel and Jane about 1713, but our first notice of her is in the parish register entry for the birth and baptism of a son in 1734.

**Henry Fitz Son of Ann Sental Born 18th July 1734 Bapt 26 day
Septemb^r ²**

We suspect that the mother is the same Anne Sentall who appeared in a warrant published three years later. The notice in the **Williamsburg Gazette** stated that four Irishmen "some Time in the Month of August last past, in the Night Time," gained entry to the dwelling of a Prince George County merchant "on Pretence of delivering a Letter," and made off with considerable property and cash. Among the suspected felons was one Thomas Robertson.

¹ Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, **The Vestry Book and Register of Bristol Parish, Virginia, 1720-1789** (Richmond: C. G. Chamberlayne, 1898), pp. 364, 366. These dates are Old Style, of course. Jane was baptized about three months after birth; the new year began in March.

² *Ibid.*, p. 366. **Fitz**, from Old French meaning "son of," has been used generally to denote illegitimate children.

The said Robertson is a small thin Man, a thin face, a long Nose: and speaketh pretty much upon the Brouge; between Thirty and Forty Years of Age, can likewise talk Scotch, and professeth the making of Leather Breeches; He went off in Company with one Anne Sentall, who passeth for his Wife, a middle sized Woman, aged about Twenty Four Years.³

Another Sentall of unknown relationship, possibly another son of Anne, appears as a ward of Bristol Parish from 1743 through 1746. The vestry book notes payments each year during this time for the upkeep of one Richard Sentall.

With this exception, the family disappears from the Parish records after 1742, the year in which the new parish of Bath was established out of part of Bristol Parish south of the Appomattox River.

Unfortunately, for the story of our family, the records of Bath Parish for this period are lost.

A Move to Brunswick County

The younger Samuel and Mary his wife probably began their life together on Hatcher Run. There are no holdings nearby registered to him so far as we know, and we suspect that the young couple earned their way on his father's plantation during their early years. Since he had a son born in 1729, he would have been old enough to take over the tobacco cultivation when the elder Samuel sought disability relief from the parish vestry in 1726.

Land was cheaper than labor in those times, and it was widely treated as an expendable commodity to be used and then vacated. Successive plantings of tobacco soon depleted the soil, and then the Tidewater farmers moved on to other lands to repeat the process.

Life became harder as the soil gave out, and the small planters toward the middle of the century were increasingly pressed by the competition of the large property holders who were able to produce tobacco more cheaply with Negro slave labor on their huge plantations.

Perhaps these circumstances motivated our Virginia ancestors to leave their modest plantation on Hatcher Run sometime before 1748 and move some thirty miles southwest across the Nottoway River into Brunswick County.

On 12 January 1748 for twenty-five pounds "current Virginia money," Athanasius and Cordelia Robinson conveyed one hundred acres on the

³ **Williamsburg** (Virginia) **Gazette**, 21 October 1737, p. 2.

Claybank Branch of Redoak Run to Samuel Sentall.⁴ Both parties to the transaction were described as residents of Brunswick County and the parish of St. Andrews.

On 13 June 1748, a Samuel Cental in Brunswick County voted for Sterling Clack and Drury Stith in their successful bids for seats in the Virginia House of Burgesses, sessions of October 1748 and April 1749.⁵

Then on 5 February 1753, for thirty-five shillings consideration -- apparently the "current Virginia money" was not worth too much -- a patent was issued by the Land Office to Samuel Sentell Junr for 316 acres "lying and being in the County of Brunswick on the South side of red Oak run."⁶ Apparently for new land, conveyed as it was from the government to Samuel Junr, we have no reason to suppose that this property adjoined that purchased from the Robinsons five years earlier. Yet most likely it was close by. Both holdings were on or close to Red Oak Run, a watercourse which is probably identical with Red Oak Creek in northern Brunswick County today on the Camp Pickett Military Reservation.

The patent also conveyed certain responsibilities. Samuel Sentell had an obligation for "Cultivating and Improving three Acres part of every fifty . . . within three Years," and paying an annual "Fee rent" of one shilling per each fifty acres, "to be Paid upon the Feast of Saint Michael the Arch Angel."⁷

⁴ **Brunswick County** (Virginia) **Deed Book 4** (Archives Division, Virginia State Library), pp. 197-200. The deed was recorded 26 September 1750, the property "Beginning at Claybank Branch where Abraham Pheenice's line crosses the said branch thence along said line to Redoak Run thence up sd run to line of John Killcrease thence along line its several courses to the Claybank Branch thence down branch as it meanders to Beginning -- it being part of Land that Wm Reynolds sold to Richard Parr."

⁵ "Brunswick County, Virginia, Poll List 1748," **William and Mary Quarterly** , 26 (1st Series): 59-64, July, 1917.

⁶ **Virginia Land Patents, No. 32, 1752-56** (Archives Division, Virginia State Library), pp. 28-29. Bounded in part by Reynolds, Chamberlayne, and Richard Swanson, all on the northwest side, this property was an elongated section extending from northeast to southwest: "Beginning at a shrub white Oak on Richard Swansons Line thence South seventy nine Degrees East eighty six Poles to a white Oak thence North twenty eight Degrees East two hundred and twenty eight Poles to a Pine thence North seventy three degrees East one hundred and thirty four Poles to a white Oak thence North thirty nine degrees East one hundred and thirty six Poles to a live Oak in a Branch thence North six Degrees East fifty six Poles to Reynold's line thence along his line South seventy two Degrees West one hundred and seventy two Poles to Chamberlaynes Corner red Oak thence along his line South forty seven Degrees West two hundred and Ninety Poles to his Corner Shrub White Oak thence South forty Degrees West sixty eight poles to Swansons Line thence along his Line South ten degrees East ninety four Poles to the Beginning . . ."

⁷ On September 29th.

Here on Red Oak Run we believe the family lived and prospered until they joined the general migration into the Carolinas after the Revolution. All perhaps except Samuel. In the 1800 Census we note a Samuel Sentel (over 45 years of age) living alone just across the state line in Warren County, North Carolina. If this is the younger Samuel, he had to be at least eighty-five, and was probably pushing ninety-five years. And, as we shall see, he survived his only son known to us who had moved on to South Carolina.

Jonathan Sentell (1729-1799)

Jonathan Sentell was born in Prince George County, Virginia, son of Samuel and Mary Sental on 26 May 1729. His birth is recorded in the Bristol Parish register, as is his baptism on 6 June following.

He probably grew up tending tobacco on his grandfather's Hatcher Run plantation with his father and mother. He had at least one sister, to our knowledge, five years younger than he was.

Jonathan and his wife Ann had at least six children, two girls and four boys. We know one of the boys (William) was born in 1756 and another (Sterling) was born in 1775 or 1776.⁸

The family probably lived on Red Oak Creek or nearby while their children were arriving. We find in military pension records that their son

. . . [Samuel] was born in Brunswick County State of Virginia as he believes in the year 1759 . . . [He] was informed when young that he was baptized & that his name was recorded in the Church of England in the Parish of Dinwiddie County State of Virginia.⁹

Sometime after the Revolution, and before the first Federal Census in 1790, Jonathan Sentell moved to Edgefield County in South Carolina. The census taker counted four people at his home -- three white males (probably him and his sons Steirlling and Jonathan) and one white female (wife Ann, no doubt) -- all over sixteen years of age. His sons William and Samuel had also moved to South Carolina by this time with their own families, and though not living next

⁸ If, in fact, this is the **Starling** Sentell, aged 74 years, who appears in Edgefield County, South Carolina, in the 1850 Census; and the **Steirlling** Sentell in Jonathan's will.

⁹ Samuel Sentell, Military Pension Records, W.6017; Bounty Land Warrant 33754-160-55, National Archives Building. Probably he was baptized at his grandparents' home. The Hatcher Run plantation would have been in the part of Prince George County from which Dinwiddie County was erected in 1752.

door to one another, they settled fairly close together, if we can judge by their order on the census record.

Their holdings were probably in the vicinity of Little Stevens Creek in present-day northern Edgefield County, and Red Bank Creek in western Saluda County.¹⁰

Jonathan died before March 1799, the term of court in which his will was proven. He left nearly everything to his son Steirlling, and provided a life interest in the estate for his wife.

In the name of God, Amen, I *Jonathan Sentell* of the State of South Carolina; Planter, being very sick and weak in body but of perfect mind and memory thanks be given unto God; calling into mind the mortality of my body, and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die, do make and ordain this my Last will and Testament; that is to say, principally and first of all I give and recommend my soul into the hand of Almighty God, that gave it and My body I recommend to the Earth to be buried in decent Christian burial, at the discretion of my Executors, nothing doubting but at the general resurrection I shall receive the same again, By the Mighty power of God, And as touching such worldly estate wherewith it hath pleased God to Bless me in this life, I give Demise, and Dispose of the same in the following manner and Form -- First I give and bequeath unto my son *Steirlling Sentell* the Tract of Land whereon I now live to him and his heirs -- Also my will and Desire is that *Ann Setell* [sic] my Wife Shall peacibly [sic] enjoy the said Tract of Land During her Natural life, I give and bequeath unto my son *Steirlling Sentell* one Mare filly, Also I give and bequeath unto My son *Steirlling Sentell* one Heffer -- Also my will and Desire is that after my wife *Ana* [sic] *Sentell* Decease that the rest of my goods and Chattel Shall be Equally Divided among the rest of my Children to wit *Elisabeth Clark, William Sentell, Saml Sentell Sarah Sentell Jonathan Sentell* , And I do Apoint and ordain *Jonathan Sentell* as my Executor And I do hereby utterly disallow, revoke and Disannull all and every other former Testament, Wills, Legacies, bequests, and Executors, by me in any wise before named, Willed and bequeated, Ratifying and Confirming this and no other to be my last will

¹⁰ These streams are mentioned on several land transfers by Sterling Sentell. We suspect the home place was on the "180 Acres Land whereon I now live in Red Bank Creek" which Sterling conveyed to Aaron Clark, Jr., 22 October 1803. If so, his mother would have died before this date since her life interest is not mentioned in the deed. See in particular **Edgefield County** (South Carolina) **Deed Books 24**, p. 77; **28**, p.1; **31**, p. 123.

**and Testament In Witness whereof I have hereunto Set my
hand and Seal this Twenty-ninth Day of November One
thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety three --**

**Jonathan Sentell
X [Seal]
his mark**

**Signed and Sealed
In presence of
Thomas Scott
Arron Clark
Lewis Clark**

**South Carolina
Edgefield County
Recorded in Will Book A
Pages 156 to 157
March Term 1799¹¹**

Modest though the estate seems to have been, we have second-hand testimony¹² that there was keen dissatisfaction in certain quarters with the provisions of the will. Son William said that it was not right, that the war with England had been fought to do away with such notions. No one should have been favored over the others. And this was one of the reasons William and his wife and children moved away.

Whatever the reasons, the family seems to have gone in different directions after Jonathan's death in 1799. The younger Jonathan and Steirlling remained in Edgefield, but Samuel crossed the Savannah River into Georgia, perhaps to draw in the state land lotteries.

And William set out up the Savannah River -- toward the distant high mountains of western North Carolina.

¹¹ **Edgefield County Wills Book A**, pp. 156-157. Witnesses were Arron [*sic*] Clark, Lewis Clark and Thomas Scott. Elizabeth Clark perhaps had married either Arron or Lewis Clark, and Sterling in 1803 would have been selling the land to his brother-in-law or nephew.

¹² Clara Capps Babb, Rt. 3, Box 309, Hendersonville, NC 28739. Interview on 29 December 1978. Clara says that she was told this by her grandmother Martha Marilda Hamilton (1849-1939) who heard the story directly from some of Jonathan's grandchildren who had been present at the time. Martha and her husband were second cousins, both of them great-grandchildren of Jonathan and Ann Sentell of Edgefield County, South Carolina. Sister June Capps Lovell (604 Sunset Avenue, Clinton, NC 28328), who has been a reliable source of later records, discredits Clara's testimony in this particular. Yet the account seems plausible, and this is the only explanation we have as to why the children went different ways.