

RED HILL

THE OLD ELLIS SEAT IN AMHERST COUNTY BY CHARLES ELLIS OF TUCKAHOE, HENRICO COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

(Extract of a letter written some years ago)

The transfer of the remains of the Ellis ancestors from the Red Hill graveyard to the Amherst Cemetary, over which a monument is shortly to be erected bearing the names of these transferred, brings to mind the coming to Amherst, now nearly two hundred years ago, from Tuckahoe Creek, in Henrico County, of Charles Ellis the son of John Ellis of that County, who was one of the first settlers in that end of the county, in 1754.

When these emigrants migrated into other territory they ~~###~~ almost invariably located on a stream with the prospect of thus getting the best land, as well as having water for running a mill which was a necessity, and for plenty of water for domestic purposes.

This Charles Ellis settled on the river to which it is thought he gave the name PEDLAR, after a river of like name in Wales whence his ancestors had come, and on a creek called Horsleys, and on which he erected a mill, but he called it Pedlar Mills, thus showing preference for the name of the stream heard of his childhood, though he had then a grant of a thousand acres of land on the creek, from the Crown. He soon added a store and a blacksmith shop, as the custom was to attract new comers or any who might have preceded him.

By this and other grants of land and by purchase he soon was a planter of large possessions, but Red Hill was the choice of all the four miles of land ~~##~~ running along the river. Here he must have erected a frame building as he selected this as his burying place, to which he was to be carried not many years hence. This four miles and more of land included the plantations of Cloverdale, Bruery Kerowe, Red Hill, Round Top and Pedlar Farm.

The son Josiah, being busy with church and county affairs seemed contented with a frame building, when he took to wife a neighbors daughter, but the grandson Richard Shelton, then a merchant, going far afield a partner of his bosom—even to Westmoreland County—set to work to replace, by the time of the coming of the bride, the frame building with the present beautiful mansion, built along true colonial lines, with spacious halls, high mantle pieces, room high ceilinged and capacious. But the attraction which delights the eye is the winding stairway in the back of the hall which must be sought to be seen, as it is practically hidden from the entrance, but found presents hand carved balustrades and trimmings after the Italian order and drawn by Jefferson, as the tradition with many such. This however may be true as Amherst was one time part of his County and he had a home in the neighboring County of Bedford—the one to suggest interest and sympathy; the other to make them more effective. However that may be the interior of the house is as attractive as the outside is commanding and impressive. It may be added that while the grandson built the house and brought in his Westmoreland bride, he failed before he could build the porch, and it stood porchless for years with a mere platform at the front door, till a new owner built a double barrelled non de scorpe affair, and finally the last owner, Mr. Ford gave it the true colonial porch he mentioned, thus making house and grounds symmetrical and comporting each with eac in being altogether impressive and imposing.

The large terraced garden was in those days a thing of beauty and much admired for its elegance.

HISTORY OF "RED HILL", PEDLAR MILLS, VIRGINIA.

The title to RED HILL has been abstracted and the records in the office of the Register of DEEDS, in the State Capitol examined, together with inquiries of decendants of the Ellis family, and all of them bear out the information, set forth in the attached letter written about 1930 by a descendant of the family, to another relative.

It appears that one Charles Ellis received a grant, of one thousand acres of land on Horsleys Creek, for War Services, about 1754. He gradually added to his possessions until he owned a very large boundary of land lying between Horsleys Creek and along Pedlar River.

The house was built in 1800 by Richard Shelton, a grandson of Charles Ellis and the property remained in the Ellis family until some twenty-five or thirty years back, when it was sold from John E. Ellis. It changed hands several times between 1910 and 1930, until the present owner bought it in 1931.

At one time the Garden was surrounded by a brick wall and there was a brick office building in the northeast corner of the yard and three brick buildings in the back yard only one of which remains, and that being the smallest one of the three.