

The Warner Family of Warner Hall

The first Augustine Warner (1611-1674) arrived in Virginia in 1628 at the age of seventeen, as one of a group of thirty-four brought in by Adam Thoroughgood. It was seven years before Warner accumulated enough assets to make his first land acquisition, patenting two hundred fifty acres in 1635.

He continued the typical pattern of seventeenth-century success in Virginia as a merchant, investor in land, and statesman. He rose through the colonial hierarchy to become a member of the House of Burgesses in 1652 and then in 1659 a member of the Council, the highest office a colonial Virginian could attain. There he continued until his death in 1674. He was prosperous enough by 1657 to send his son to school at the Merchant Taylors School in London. At about this time he moved across the York River to Gloucester County, where he settled and built the first house at Warner Hall.

Augustine Warner died in 1674, at the great age, for a seventeenth-century Virginian, of sixty-three, and was succeeded at Warner Hall by his only son, the second Augustine Warner (1642-1681). After his English education in London and at Cambridge, the younger Augustine Warner returned to Virginia, and soon, by 1666, became a member of the House of Burgesses, and then Speaker of the House in 1676. In 1677 he took his seat on the Council, but his career was cut short by his early death in 1681 at the age of thirty-nine.

A fascinating glimpse of Warner Hall and insight into the Warners' activity as merchants is afforded by the affidavit of their cousin John Townley, who was overseer in charge at Warner Hall in September, 1676, when Bacon's Rebellion took place and Bacon invaded Warner Hall. Townley tells how he had been entrusted with the guidance of the house and family as overseer, and had "alsoe delivered to him by Inventory all the household goods and other merchandizeing goods and stores in and belonging to the sd Coll. Warner and laid up and stored in his said house and storehouses thereto belonging, the Keyes of which houses and storehouses were demanded and commanded from him by the said Bacon and those with him; wch Keyes being afterwards in the hands & keeping of Capt. Wm. Bird." According to his report, Captain Bird shortly after coming to Warner Hall took a plate-handled scimitar and black-fringed shoulder belt belonging to Warner and wore them while there, and was still wearing them about a fortnight later when John Townley again saw him at Col. Warner's house at "Chieskake." He tells how Bird at Warner Hall opened the stores and chests and issued the goods to the armed men, who carried them away. He took particular notice that when Bird was delivering out the goods and "mett with any ffine goods, as Silke ffine Hollands, or other ffine linnings, silke Stockings Ribband, or the like he sent them into Bacons roome, where he was often called in and was very Conversant." After the intruders were gone, John Townley, on the understanding that they intended to return, packed of the remainder of the goods and put them on board the ship Lady Frances, taking an inventory so that he knew what was missing and that the true value of the purloined goods was 845 pounds 2 shillings sterling. His deposition, which he

sighs, is followed and confirmed by the testimony of William Blackburne and William Sympson, servants, and Richard Scarlett, a freeman and sharer, all living at Warner Hall. (81V351)

Besides the son Augustine Warner the second, the first Augustine Warner (1611-1674) had at least two daughters. One married David Cant, and the other, Sarah, married Lawrence Townley, and was the ancestor of General Lee.

It has always been well recorded and understood that the second Augustine Warner (1642-1681) had three sons, all of whom died unmarried, and three daughters, who inherited the Warner property and left huge progenies. What is less commonly noticed is that at least two, if not all three of the sons survived their father, and were in possession until their deaths, so that only then did the daughters and their husbands come into the bulk of the property. We have exact dates for only one of the sons, Augustine (1666-1687), the third of the name. It seems that George Warner must have survived this brother, and been the last Warner to own Warner Hall, for in a 1728 land grant the heirs of the three sisters are referred to as the heirs of George Warner, suggesting that it was from him the three sisters finally inherited.

The three were, of course, Mary Warner, who married in 1680 John Smith of Purton, Mildred Warner, who married about 1690 Lawrence Washington, and Elizabeth Warner, who married about 1691 John Lewis, and kept the Warner Hall house itself in the division of the Warner properties after the brothers' deaths. From Mary descends the present Queen of England. Mildred was the grandmother of George Washington. Elizabeth was the grandmother of Fielding Lewis, who married first George Washington's cousin and second his sister, both ladies also being grandchildren of Mildred Warner.

When it comes to ancestry, there has never been any mystery about Mildred Reade, the wife of the second Augustine Warner. The Reads trace back through Windebank and Dymoke, Champion of England, to the blood royal. However, the ancestry of the Warner family and the identity of Mary, wife of the first Augustine Warner, were completely unknown until comparatively recently. This always seemed odd, because the name Augustine Warner was distinctive, he obviously came from an educated class, he used a coat of arms, and it seemed reasonable to expect to find records.

It remained for a very able scholar, Mrs. Mary Derrickson McCurdy, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to notice a clue in Raine's edition (2883) of Dugdale's 1664-5 Visitation of ...Lancaster. Mrs. McCurdy had been studying the Townley family, and came across a chart in this visitation of a branch of the Townley family which included the marriage of a Mary Townley to an Augustine Warner. Proceeding from here, she developed a magnificent 3ssay in the July, 1973, Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, which gives Augustine Warner's ancestry, identified his wife as Mary Townley, and shows several other connections of the Townleys with the Warners and other early Virginia families. It is from Mrs. McCurdy's article that the account of Bacon's invasion of Warner Hall is copied (supra).

It is interesting to follow the given name Augustine through these families. In the 1400's there was an Augustine Boyce in Norwich, Co. Norfolk. His grandson, Augustine Steward (1491-1571), frequently Mayor of Norwich, in turn had a grandson, Augustine Sotherton (ca1550-1585), an Alderman of Norwich. His daughter Elizabeth Sotherton married Thomas Warner of Hoveton, near Norwich, and they were the parents of our first Augustine Warner (1611-1674) in Virginia. From his granddaughters, of course, the given name of Augustine has continued to this day in the Smith and Washington families, but apparently not in the Lewis family. On the other hand, the name Warner persisted as a given name in the Washington and Lewis families, but not with the Smiths.

Warner Hall stayed in the eldest male line of the Lewis family, through a succession of eldest sons named Warner Lewis, until 1834, when it was finally sold by a daughter of the last of them, Elizabeth Lewis (Mrs. Matthew Whiting Brooke).

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