John Markham - Who Are You?

by Pamela Hutchison Garrett

The search for John Markham has been a delightful challenge, full of twists and turns, thrilling finds and tedious searches. It would be wonderful to feel that, at the writing of this sketch, everything was settled in good order, and John Markham was clearly understood. But, the truth is - for me, many questions still remain. These sketches about John Markham are not meant to be the last word; rather, I hope they will supply some fresh thoughts and possibilities as the search continues.

This opening sketch, **John Markham – Who are you?**, is a simple outline of John Markham's life. It links to several other sketches that give more detail on particular people, events, or questions connected to John Markham.

John Markham was born between 1700 and 1710 near the town of Fiddown in county Kilkenny Ireland. He was the second born son of Bernard Markham and Rebecca Briscoe, his older brother being William Markham. It is likely that the Markham and Briscoe families came from England to Ireland around the time of the Cromwellian Settlement and John Markham was probably the third generation in Ireland. A more extensive discussion of John Markham's ancestry appears in the sketch, **John Markham – The Story Begins in Ireland.**

John Markham's parents lived out their lives in county Kilkenny Ireland, his father dying there in 1740. The Markham family was of the gentry class, neither very high nor very low on the social scale. Farming was their livelihood. They lived comfortably and intermarried with other land-owning families. The sons probably had some opportunities for education with local tutors, but no record of a university education has been found. A few deeds that have been found, suggest that Bernard Markham had a sizeable estate. But. John Markham was a second-son and the larger portion of the estate was eventually going to fall into the hands of his older brother, William Markham.



Fiddown Protestant Church, built 1747.

Being a second-son may have inspired John Markham to seek his fortunes in a new place. Sometime in the 1730's John Markham set off for America and by 1737, purchased property and settled down in Orange county New York. A more extensive discussion of when John Markham arrived in New York and where he settled is found in the sketch, **John Markham comes to New York**.

About 1737 or 1738, John Markham was married to Catherine Mathews. She was the daughter of Peter Mathews and his wife Bridget of Albany New York. Her ancestry has been widely debated and is discussed further in the sketch, **A Wife for John Markham**. As was common for the time, there are few records that mention Catherine Mathews Markham. No marriage record has been found for John Markham and Catherine Mathews. Just how they met and married remains speculative. The few bits and pieces of available information are compiled in a sketch entitled, **John Markham meets Catherine Friends in the Neighborhood**. John Markham and Catherine Mathews lived out the first twelve to fifteen years of their marriage in Orange county New York and five or six of their older children were probably born there.

Around the year 1750, John Markham sold his New York property and removed his family to Chesterfield county Virginia. What inspired this move is not known. Movement from New York to Virginia was not one of the most common migration patterns of the period, but there are good reasons to support the theory that the John Markham in Orange county New York is the same man who shows up in Chesterfield county Virginia. See the sketch, **John Markham moves to Virginia - Where is the Evidence?**



John Markham lived for almost twenty years in Chesterfield county Virginia. See John Markham's Life in Virginia. There are numerous records of his activities in Virginia, beginning with his purchase of a six hundred acre tract in 1752. He served in a variety of capacities in the community and was followed by his five sons -William Markham, Bernard Markham, John Markham Jr, Vincent Markham and George Markham - who are all of record in Chesterfield and surrounding counties in Virginia.

Virginia sunken road

There remain some questions about Catherine Mathews Markham which are discussed in the sketch, The Question of a Second Marriage for John Markham. Catherine probably migrated to Virginia with her husband and children, but it is not certain that she was the mother of John Markham's younger children. He may have had a second marriage in Virginia, but no evidence has been forthcoming.

John Markham died in Chesterfield county Virginia in 1770, at about the age of sixty-five. His Will does not name a wife, but clearly identifies nine children living in 1770. His children were the five sons listed above, three daughters – Catherine Markham Smith, Judith Markham and Rebecca Markham – and the likely youngest son, Archibald Markham. No further evidence of Archibald Markham has been found and it is believed that he died in childhood. Further detail on his death and the settlement of his estate is found in the sketch, **Death Comes to John Markham**.

The Scattering of John Markham's Children tells the story, in brief, of the next two generations – John Markham's children and grandchildren. Most of his children married and remained in Virginia for another generation. But, as the nineteenth century dawned western movement began. The first stops for the Markham grandchildren included, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama and Missouri. One generation later descendants are found in no less than ten Southern and Midwestern states, and California.

Do you want to know more?
<u>Links to John Markham's Story (A Table of Contents)</u>
Link to John Markham (database)

About the photos:

Fiddown Protestant Church, built 1747; County Kilkenny Ireland.

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