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# Married, but at Whose House?: Parson Rose and the Colonial Virginian Wedding

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Married, but at Whose House?  
Parson Rose and the Colonial Virginian Wedding

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Virginia, 2011

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of William and Mary  
in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Lyon Gardiner Tyler Department of History

The College of William and Mary  
May 2013


## APPROVAL PAGE

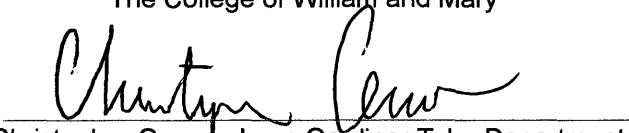
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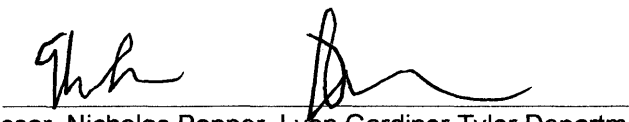
Master of Arts

  
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## ABSTRACT PAGE

While throughout history weddings were often important social events, in colonial Virginia in the mid-eighteenth century, the particular location of the wedding was also significant and can offer insight into a community's social relationships. Though by Anglican canon and Virginia-wide law a wedding had to be performed by an Anglican minister inside a church, ministers frequently broke the law and married couples in private homes without being punished. Rather than assume this change from English custom was because of longer distances to colonial churches, I argue that ministers were willing to break the law because of the lay-dominated nature of Virginia's Anglican church and the desires of both ministers and elite landholders to confirm social and religious authority in their communities.

The diary of Parson Robert Rose, the Anglican minister of St. Anne's Parish in Essex and then in Albemarle County, reveals a pattern of marriage location that reflected the varying social motivations of minister, host, and families of the bride and groom. Rose actively sought to reinforce his status in the community by compromising for only the most important community figures (vestrymen, sheriffs and councilmen) while making other parishioners come to where it was convenient for him. With the use of other diaries and accounts of colonial weddings, I argue that elites requested home weddings, particularly at the father of the brides, in order to prove their patriarchal consent to the match. They also used such occasions to display their wealth and hospitality to distinguished guests and while hosting weddings of overseers and middling planters, to their dependents. Furthermore, these wedding ceremonies were still treated with the sincerity of religious acts and their location in these plantation homes reflected a community-wide agreement that certain estates were not just public meeting spaces but also sacred spaces, acceptable loci of religious practice.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedications	iii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Parson Rose and the Itinerant Wedding	10
Chapter 3. Ritual and Prestige: The Plantation Home Wedding	19
Chapter 4. Hospitality and Creating Sacred Space	32
Chapter 5. Conclusion	40
Bibliography	49

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This thesis is dedicated to my family, for their love and support.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1748, Captain Charles Lynch, the sheriff of Albemarle County, Virginia, celebrated an important event for his family and community. That evening, at his riverfront plantation of over a thousand acres, he hosted the wedding of his daughter Penelope Lynch to Robert Adams, a wealthy planter and son of a vestryman in Goochland County.<sup>1</sup> Like others of his means and distinction in the colony, Lynch most likely provided quite a feast for his distinguished company of guests. The party would have lasted late into the night, filled with dancing, drinking, and toasting in honor of the new couple. Among his wedding guests was the minister of St. Anne's Parish, Parson Robert Rose, who rode his horse to Lynch's estate, Pen Park, that day in order to fulfill a pastoral duty. For, before the party started, Rose had performed the wedding ceremony following the Anglican liturgy inside Captain Lynch's own home.<sup>2</sup>

To the modern reader, this home wedding followed by a reception sounds rather conventional. In eighteenth-century Virginia, however, according to both Anglican canon and colony-wide law, what Parson Rose did that day was illegal.<sup>3</sup> From 1624 when it became the established religious institution of the colony until disestablishment in 1780, the Anglican Church held an absolute monopoly on the

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Emmett Fall, ed., *The Diary of Robert Rose: A View of Virginia by a Scottish Colonial Parson, 1746-1751* (Verona, VA: McClure Printing Co., Inc., 1977), 181-2; Benjamin Weisiger III, *Goochland County Will and Deeds, 1728-1736* (Athens, GA: Iberian Publishing Co., 1995), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Rose, *The Diary of Robert Rose: A View of Virginia by a Scottish Colonial Parson, 1746-1751*, Ed. Ralph Emmett Fall (Verona, VA: McClure Printing Co., Inc., 1977), 43. For discussion of the customary celebration after a colonial wedding see, Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House, Planter Family Life in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 152; Jane Carson *Virginians at Play, Colonial Virginians at Play* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1965), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Gibson, *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani: Or, The Statutes, Constitutions, Canons, Rubrics and Articles, of the Church of England*, (London, 1713) 1:512.



performance of marriage.<sup>4</sup> Virginia law, beginning in 1632, stated that a licensed Anglican clergymen had to perform all weddings following the liturgy laid out in the Book of Common Prayer and all marriages had to “be done in the church except in cases of necessity.”<sup>5</sup> While the law provided some leeway in case the wedding *had* to take place outside to the church because of an emergency, it essentially banned home weddings.

Though against the law, the Lynch wedding at Pen Park was not out of the ordinary. James Blair, in a 1719 letter to the Bishop of London written on behalf of the clergy convention in Williamsburg, and Reverend Hugh Jones in *The Present State of Virginia* (1724), both pointed out that ministers frequently had to perform marriages in private homes.<sup>6</sup> Blair in particular complained that even though the law existed, officials were unable to enforce it effectively and no one was ever punished for this transgression.<sup>7</sup> The fact that home weddings in colonial Virginia could be both illegal and socially acceptable at the same time needs a clear explanation, especially when in England a church wedding was by

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<sup>4</sup>George Elliot Howard, *A History of Matrimonial Institutions*, vol. 1-2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 232.

<sup>5</sup>George Elliot Howard, *A History of Matrimonial Institutions*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 232; William Waller Henning, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all the laws of Virginia from the first session of the Legislature in the year 1619*, Vol. 1 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969) 181-183. By 1632, persons desiring to get married had to have banns published in their churches for three consecutive weeks to ensure that there were no objections to the marriage from the congregation and if under 21, both parties needed the consent of their parents. Instead of publishing banns, the couple could pay more money and obtain a license from the clerk of the governor but the wedding itself still had to be performed by an Anglican minister. If they had banns published, the fee was 5 shillings for the ceremony and 1 shilling 6 pence just for publishing the banns. If married by license the fee was 20 shillings to the county clerk and 20 shillings to the minister. See Robert Beverley, *History of the Present State of Virginia* (1705), 262; Henning, *Statutes*, 1:156-7.

<sup>6</sup>James Blair, *The Fulham Papers at Lambeth Palace Library* (London: World Microfilms, 1970) 11:264; Rev. Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, Ed. Richard Morton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956) 98.

<sup>7</sup>Blair, *The Fulham Papers*, 11:264.

far the established custom. England associated weddings outside of the church with couples of “the working classes... particularly those who had little to no religious affiliation” and corrupt clergymen who agreed to marry a couple cheaply and in secret without their parents’ knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Often English couples seeking clandestine weddings went to the homes of “Fleet parsons,” priests serving terms in debtors prison in London, or travelled north to Scotland, where ministers required neither the liturgy nor the location of a church.<sup>9</sup> Roger Lee Brown in his article “The Rise and Fall of Fleet Marriages” claimed that these “abuses” of marriage custom in England “threatened the whole fabric and security of family life.”<sup>10</sup> In Virginia, the opposite was often true: couples marrying outside of the church were not a threat to the patriarchal order of the family but a confirmation of it. By hosting the ceremony at his own estate surrounded by friends and family, Sheriff Lynch made his consent to and control over his daughter’s wedding completely obvious.

What made Virginians break with English custom over wedding location? Why did Charles Lynch and others like him get away with hosting weddings at their own homes and why did ministers like Rose agree to perform the ceremonies against orders from both the colonial government and the Bishop of London? As for the argument that large parishes with few churches necessitated

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Lee Brown, “The Rise and Fall of Fleet Marriages,” in R.B. Outhwaite, *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, Europa Publications Limited, 1981), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* Abridged Edition (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), 32; T.C. Smout, “Scottish Marriage, Regular and Irregular, 1500-1940” in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R.B. Outhwaite (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1981), 208. See also: George Elliot Howard, *A History of Matrimonial Institutions*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 228.

<sup>10</sup> Roger Lee Brown, “The Rise and Fall of Fleet Marriages,” 133.

home weddings, the same excuse Blair used in the clergy letter to the bishop in 1719, one finds repeated evidence that many chose to marry at home even when they were fully capable of making it to a church.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the wedding at Sheriff Lynch's, Parson Rose stayed at Pen Park that night and went to the Mountain Chapel only several miles away the very next day. Several times in his diary Rose specifically stayed or dined at Lynch's home because of its proximity to the chapel.<sup>12</sup> Though some ministers claimed the vague clause in the prohibiting legislation "in cases of necessitie" included when parishioners lived too far away from the church, this was simply an excuse given to justify their actions to Anglican superiors in Britain. It was neither an accurate explanation for the Lynch wedding nor many of the other home weddings ministers performed.

Parson Robert Rose's diary, which recounts his duties as minister in Essex and then Albemarle County, offers valuable insight not found anywhere else in colonial Virginian records. Nowhere else is there such a clear picture of where weddings happened for those not a part of the local elite. Wedding location in these two parishes was based on Parson Rose's relationship with the families of the bride and groom as well as their social status. Of the thirty marriages he recorded performing, only two occurred at a church. At the same time, not all the rest happened in the family home; he only made a special trip to the father of the bride's estate if the families were members of the local elite, whose patriarchs were officeholders and vestrymen. For the average parishioner,

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<sup>11</sup> Blair, *The Fulham Papers*, II: 264.

<sup>12</sup> For an example of a wedding in Williamsburg that occurred at home instead of the church just down the street see: William Byrd II, *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*, Ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling. (Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1941) 437-39.

the wedding party had to compromise with Rose and come to where it was more convenient for him, often where he was already preaching or visiting someone else. Rose married non-elite parishioners at public locations like courthouses and taverns, but also at his own home and even more commonly at the home of a local elite with whom Rose had an established friendship. From this diary one gains a deeper understanding of the social ramifications of particular wedding locations as well as a broader view of what was considered religious practice and ceremonial space in the colony.

This pattern of marriage location based so much on social status was not because of custom or distance but because of the unique church environment in Virginia and the willingness of ministers to adapt to it. Unlike in England, ministers serving in Virginia lacked the formal protection of a great patron who supplied them with a glebe and salary. Virginia's clergymen also had no supervision and support from either ecclesiastical courts or a bishop on this side of the Atlantic. As John Nelson, Rhys Isaac, and Patricia Bonomi have all pointed out, this lack of a religious hierarchy created churches that were dominated by the existing secular powers, particularly wealthy county officials and vestrymen. These elite parishioners had a lot of power over the hiring process in a church as well as a minister's salary and tenure. In order for a minister in colonial Virginia to have any sort of job stability and establish social status and authority in the community, he had to befriend the local elite planter families.<sup>13</sup> If they

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<sup>13</sup> On ministerial dependence on local elites, see: John Nelson, *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.134-144; Patricia U Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion,*

successfully adapted to this lay-dominated church structure and made connections with the right people, ministers could live comfortably and even profit handsomely from serving in Virginia.

A minister's role in performing a wedding and determining its location offered him an opportunity to befriend elites and confirm his status position in the community, an opportunity unique to Anglican-dominated Virginia. While in 1717, Maryland's General Assembly enacted a marriage law requiring weddings to occur in an Anglican church or a minister's home, the law clearly exempted "any persons of persuasions in Religion different from that of the Church of England." For these dissenters, "the manner of their proceedings in marriage may intirely remain unaltered by this act...as if this act had never been made."<sup>14</sup> As for the Carolinas, Charles Bolton in *Southern Anglicanism* notes that the early dominating presence of Baptists and Presbyterians in South Carolina, in particular, prevented Anglicans from monopolizing the performance of weddings, both by law and by practice.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, even in frontier Virginia when a growing dissenter presence arose in the 1740s and 1750s, Anglican parsons still controlled the performance and location of marriage, de jure and de facto. For example, in 1759, Colonel James Gordon, a "prominent Presbyterian merchant

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*Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 42-43; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 145.

<sup>14</sup> *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, 1717-April, 1720* Vol. 33, "An Act for the Publication of Marriages, and to prevent unlawful Marriages" reproduced in William Hand Browne, Edward C. Papenfuse, et. al. eds., *Archives of Maryland*, (Baltimore and Annapolis, Md., 1883-), 33: 114. This series is ongoing and available on line at <ht /archivesofmaryland.net>

<sup>15</sup> Charles Bolton, *Southern Anglicanism: The Church of England in Colonial South Carolina*, Contributions to the Study of Religion, No. 5 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 40.

planter” hosted his daughter’s wedding at his own home but still had to acquire the services of the Anglican minister of Christ Church Parish (Lancaster), David Currie, to perform the ceremony.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of the religious affiliation of the couple, Virginian Anglican ministers were able to confirm friendships with local elites through their willingness to make special trips to perform home weddings and established their status above the common parishioner by having the couple travel to where it was convenient for the priest. By conducting weddings outside of the church, they showed an ability to adapt to their colonial environment, even at the expense of their duty to follow religious tradition or the law.

Virginia wedding location outside of the church, particularly elite home weddings, reflected not only the motivations of the social climbing minister but also the pressures which started in the sixteenth century in Europe for stricter sexual regulation and parental consent before marriage. As John Gillis explained, those with inheritance to bestow wanted “tighter control over secret betrothals” as well as punishment for “premature marriages and misalliances that would drain resources from the family economy.”<sup>17</sup> By 1720 in England, clergy faced heavy pressure to crack down on clandestine marriages and enforce a requirement that all marry within the church surrounded by their families. In 1754, Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act made church weddings the only legally valid form of marriage in the country.<sup>18</sup> At the same time as Britain made efforts to enforce the

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<sup>16</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 223; James Gordon, “Journal of James Gordon” WMQ 1 ser., 12 (1902): 104-5.

<sup>17</sup> John Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 85-86.

<sup>18</sup> Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, 32; 397.

church wedding, Virginia let laws on marriage location slide. Although Virginia's elites established the opposite wedding location custom, they did so for the same patriarchal regulating motivations as Britain. In both places, wedding location was indicative of existing power structures and in Virginia, where vestrymen and officials held religious authority, the ceremony moved outside of the church and into the family home.

While traditionally marriage has had the power to solidify kin and friend relationships, in colonial Virginia, negotiation of the wedding location was also particularly important for relationship building. Just as Rose used weddings as public events in which he could actively assert his position in the social hierarchy, so too did the local elites who hosted marriages in their homes. Kathleen Brown and Rhys Isaac have both argued that in eighteenth-century Virginia, the elite planter identity became increasingly tied to the physical site of his plantation. There, as Isaac argued, the home served as the gentleman's stage, where he could act out the part of a patriarch surrounded by his dependents.<sup>19</sup> For the father of the bride, a home wedding was a perfect opportunity to show to both the minister and his guests his status as a hospitable master of the house who gave consent to the new union. Additionally, as host of other weddings in his home, an elite claimed social authority as benefactor to those of lower status in the community. Ultimately, the locations of these weddings reflected the collaborative

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<sup>19</sup> Kathleen Brown and Rhys Isaac both discuss in further detail the conflation of the identity of a patriarch with his ownership of estate mimicking an English aristocrat. See, Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 120-132; Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 26.

efforts of Virginia's planter elite and its ambitious Anglican clergy to reinforce each other's social authority in the colony.

At the same time, these weddings in private homes were more than just social gatherings in which parties made claims to secular power. These estates hosted not only the wedding receptions but also the wedding ceremonies, held in front of homemade altars in drawing rooms and following the liturgy laid out in the Book of Common Prayer. Though not an official sacrament of the Anglican Church, marriage was considered a "holy estate" and the wedding served as the sanctification of matrimony, an event of great spiritual significance for the couple and the community. When Reverend Jones in 1724 complained to his English superiors that home marriages reflected the parishioners' lack of reverence "for the house of God and holy things," he represented an established belief in a clear separation between sacred and profane space, a separation that became increasingly blurred in the new colonial environment.<sup>20</sup> Those Virginian elites who hosted weddings made claims to religious authority by treating their homes as public ceremonial spaces, loci of religious practice in the community. This overlap of public and private, of sacred and secular within the space of a household, reflected a Virginian Anglicanism at peace with the material world, whose religious practices could not easily be detached from their larger social and economic meanings.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, 98.

<sup>21</sup> Lauren Winner makes a similar claim in her work, *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith: Anglican Religious Practice in the Elite Households of Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 2-3.



## Parson Rose and the Itinerant Wedding

Parson Robert Rose is an excellent example of a colonist who embraced this overlap between sacred and secular worlds in order to become a successful minister to his parishes, a wealthy planter, and ultimately a member of the local elite. In 1724, Rose migrated from Scotland and befriended the retired Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood by serving as the minister at Spotswood's private chapel on his plantation, Germanna. Spotswood was a valuable connection to have in the colony and after a year as his minister and bookkeeper, Rose became the parson for the entire St. Anne's Parish in Essex County, where he served until moving to St. Anne's Parish in Albemarle in 1748. Rose's diary, which recounts his daily pastoral duties and interactions from 1746 to 1751, repeatedly shows the efforts he made to advance himself in both parishes. Rose described friendly dinners and business relationships with county sheriffs, Burgesses, seven men who served as president of the colony's council, and three others who served as lieutenant governor. With the help of connections to elite families in his parishes like the Lees, Frys, and Cabells, Rose became a substantial property owner, land speculator, and tobacco planter, eventually laying claim to over 33,000 acres in Albemarle County alone.<sup>22</sup> As Junius Fishburne, Jr. remarked in his forward to Ralph Fall's annotated version of

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<sup>22</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, x.

Rose's diary, through these friendships with local elites, Rose "assumed his place in the first ranks of Virginia's social world."<sup>23</sup>

Rose also established alliances with local elites through his own two marriages while serving as parson in Essex, a region populated with tobacco farmers who had a convenient connection to the Chesapeake Bay by way of the Rappahannock River. In 1733, he married Mary Tarent, daughter of the sheriff of Essex and two years after she died in 1738, he married Anne Fitzhugh, the daughter of a wealthy planter in Bedford.<sup>24</sup> Alliances like these were common for colonial ministers. In a study on Virginian clergy and social class, Joan Gunderson recorded that of 130 ministers from 1723 to 1766, 42 married into "influential families" and 56 married into the "middle gentry."<sup>25</sup> The possibility of marrying into status was so important to attracting ministers to Virginia that Reverend James Blair in 1724 wrote a letter to the Bishop of London assuring him that any "good sober men" would have no problem finding such a match.<sup>26</sup>

While Rose's own marriages helped advance his social status, his influence over others' wedding locations confirmed his social position in relation to his parishioners. Although Rose preached regularly to large congregations at the parish's two churches, he only reported performing two church weddings, one at the lower or Sale's church and one at the upper or Vauter's church.<sup>27</sup> In both

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<sup>23</sup> Junius Fishburne, Jr. forward to *The Diary of Robert Rose: A View of Virginia by a Scottish Colonial Parson 1746-1751*, Ed. Ralph Emmett Fall. (Verona, VA: McClure Printing Co., Inc., 1977), viii.

<sup>24</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, xiv-xvi.

<sup>25</sup> Joan Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1766: A Study of Social Class* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989) 81-82.

<sup>26</sup> Blair, *The Fulham Papers*, 12:35-36.

<sup>27</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 109, 116.

of these cases, the families of the wedding parties were parishioners without any sort of elite status. On Sunday, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1747, Rose travelled the sixteen miles from his glebe to the upper church to preach and then married John Sheppard and Sukey Boulware.<sup>28</sup> Sukey was most likely the daughter of Benjamin Boulware, a farmer who owned several hundred acres near Occupacia Creek, which flowed between Vauter's Church and the glebe.<sup>29</sup> In comparison to estates of Virginia's leading planters, the Boulware farm would have seemed rather modest. Captain Charles Lynch, for example, had *Pen Park* covering over 1,000 acres and owned another 5,000 acres in the area.<sup>30</sup> Though there is no surviving record of the groom before the marriage, John Sheppard's will presented in June of 1749 stated that he owned no slaves and left an estate of only about £31.<sup>31</sup> Hugh Thomas in *The Slave Trade* estimated that in Virginia from about 1750 to 1800 a single slave cost about £28 to £35.<sup>32</sup> In comparison to Virginia's elites who left large estates with many slaves, the Sheppards were not particularly well off. Perhaps because of their status as small planters, Rose felt no need to conduct the wedding at a family home.

In the only other example of a church wedding in Essex, Rose married the couple in the lower church, five miles south of his glebe. The wedding, on Sunday, September 25, 1748, was also conducted following a church service. In

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<sup>28</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Ruth and Sam Sparacio, *Deed Abstracts of Essex County, Virginia, 1721-1753* (McLean, VA: Antient Press, 1988), 68.

<sup>30</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 181.

<sup>31</sup> Ruth and Sam Sparacio, *Abstracts of Essex County, Virginia, 1748-1750* (McLean, VA: Antient Press, 1991), 74.

<sup>32</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 807.

his diary, Rose only mentioned the name of the groom, John Marr.<sup>33</sup> None of the colonial parish registers, which would have recorded the marriage and listed the bride's name, have survived nor was she listed in any court records. The groom, however, worked as an overseer, with status similar to a tenant farmer, living on and managing the property of a wealthy landowner rather than running his own farm.<sup>34</sup>

In both instances of church weddings, not only did neither family own a substantial amount of property, but they also did not have relatives who held any local offices that would have distinguished them in the community. Both of these weddings happened on a Sunday after Rose had already come to preach the divine service. These weddings happened at the church, but more specifically, at a time and a place that was convenient for Rose's schedule.

When Parson Rose transferred to St. Anne's, Albemarle in May of 1748 where he had recently patented some 30,000 acres, he faced many pastoral challenges, including the parish's lack of established churches. Located along Virginia's western frontier, Albemarle County was only officially established in 1744. Because of its smaller population spread out over a larger area of 2,561 square miles, Rose was forced, more so than in Essex, to travel to new places to preach as well as to perform marriages.<sup>35</sup> Although he was able to preach at the Mountain Chapel near Captain Lynch's and at the courthouse in Scottsville, in order to reach more settlers Rose often preached at parishioner's houses or at

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<sup>33</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 42.

<sup>34</sup> Several years later Rose hired Marr as an overseer for his plantation on Robinson Creek in Culpeper County. Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 228.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

his own 2,000-acre plantation, Bear Garden. Even after Ballinger's Creek Church and the new church at Clear Mont were built in 1750, Rose only preached there once or twice and never used the buildings for weddings.<sup>36</sup>

More so than in Essex, wedding location was dependent on distance; in order to meet the needs of such a large community and at the same time decrease his burden of constant travelling, Rose often performed marriages at the same location as he was preaching sermons or performing baptisms. Importantly, however, Rose only did this for weddings of non-office holding families whose status did not justify a special trip to the family home. Although distance clearly played an important role in Albemarle, it was not the most important factor. Just as in St Anne's, Essex, Rose's social relationship with the families of the bride and groom determined exactly who had to travel the farthest.

Often, Rose performed weddings for common parishioners in Albemarle in public locations as part of longer trips taken to complete other pastoral duties. On Easter Sunday morning in 1749, Rose married John Barlow to Hannah Dameron, daughter of a shoemaker, "at Rockfish," (referring either to Rockfish Gap or the banks of Rockfish River) at the same time and location as he "christened a child." By noon that day he reported arriving at the Scottsville courthouse, where he "preached to a large congregation" before leaving to visit the Colonel Samuel Jordan at his plantation on Slate River, where he stayed for several days.<sup>37</sup> Though not inside a church building, the Barlow-Dameron wedding location, at

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<sup>36</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 232.

<sup>37</sup> Rose, *Diary* 78; Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 291.

the same time as a baptism, reflected the busy Easter schedule of a frontier minister.

On Sunday January 22, 1749,<sup>38</sup> Rose married Matthew Tucker and Lucretia Childress at the Scottsville courthouse after he was already there preaching the Sunday service to a congregation.<sup>39</sup> The groom was an overseer in Albemarle County and the bride was a daughter of the modest planter, Abraham Childress.<sup>40</sup> Once again, because social status did not necessitate a home visit, Rose acted out of efficiency by conducting the marriage at the same time and location as he preached that day.

Furthermore, Rose performed this particular wedding ceremony as part of a nine-day pastoral journey around his parish. The day before (Saturday) he had preached for a group gathered at Warminster, the estate of vestryman, Captain William Cabell. On the following Tuesday and Thursday he preached at two other private residences, the widow Mrs. Glover's and Captain Allen's, and on Friday he performed baptisms at two different homes along the Slate River in present day Buckingham County. Rose reported in his diary on Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup> that he "got home after a journey of about 130 miles in discharge of my duty as minister of St. Anne's Parish, Albemarle."<sup>41</sup> More so than in Essex County, the wedding location for non-elites in Albemarle reflected the busy schedule of

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<sup>38</sup> Rose dated his diary according to the old Julian calendar in which the first day of the year was March 25<sup>th</sup>. The dates in this paper have been standardized according to the calendar, which begins on January first.

<sup>39</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Abraham Childress' will listed he owned 200 acres, a small estate when compared to the plantations of local officials and vestrymen in the county. Fall argues Tucker was an overseer because he signed a petition of 250 overseers in 1776 who wished to serve in the militia even though they were exempt from duty. Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 245.

<sup>41</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 51.

Robert Rose, technically a parish parson, but with the daily duties of an itinerant minister of Virginia's frontier.

At the same time, not all the weddings Rose performed in public locations were arranged around his pastoral schedule; some were conducted in locations more convenient for Rose while he made private trips to visit friends or to manage his tobacco business. Back in Essex County, Rose married Thomas Goode and Mary Rennolds in August of 1748 at Dr. Parker's ordinary in Tappahannock. Rose frequently reported stopping at this ordinary to dine or lodge on his way home from conducting business outside of his parish.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Alexander Parker, who owned the ordinary, was also a trustee of Tappahannock, physician, former sheriff of Essex, and justice of the peace.<sup>43</sup> The bride and groom came from much less prominent families in the community. The bride was the daughter of a modest planter and the groom was the orphan son of Edward Goode, who left him an estate worth £28.<sup>44</sup> Neither families of the wedding party were important enough to warrant a special trip by Rose to the family home.<sup>45</sup>

On this particular occasion, Rose stopped at Parker's tavern on his way to visit Col. Thomas Lee at his home, Stratford Hall, which was on the other side of

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. Rose mentions going to Parker's on eight different occasions in his diary.

<sup>43</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 156.

<sup>44</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 224; *Will Abstracts of Essex County 1748-1750*, 77.

<sup>45</sup> The exact identity of the bride is unclear, although there were several Rennolds listed in the records as living in Rexburg, just west of Tappahannock, including James Rennolds Jr. and Sr. Both owned several hundred acres and it can be assumed that they were no more than middling planters because of how they were described in records of land deeds. Often official records listed the persons involved and included with the names a description of their occupation. Both James Rennolds were listed as, "Mr. Rennolds, planter." In comparison, John Miller, a store owner near Rose's glebe, was listed as "Mr. Miller, merchant" and Alexander Parker the justice was listed as, "Mr. Parker, gentleman." Though planters, the Rennolds were not considered gentlemen in the county. *Deed Abstracts of Essex County 1742-1745*, 24-25; *Will Abstracts of Essex County 1748-1750*, 18.

the Rappahannock River in Westmoreland County. Rose rode south to Tappahannock, performed the Goode wedding at Parker's Tavern, and then took Thomas Lee's ferry, located right below Tappahannock, to cross the river and get to Lee's 1,500 acre estate, Stratford Hall.<sup>46</sup> The priority was the trip to visit Colonel Lee, a Burgess of Westmoreland county and councilor. By the next year, Thomas Lee would even become the president of the council.<sup>47</sup> The wedding was performed not at a church or other location of a pastoral duty, but in a tavern on Rose's way to visit one of the most important men in the colony.

This particular wedding also did not occur on a Sunday or as Anglican canon law required, "in the time of Divine Service."<sup>48</sup> It appears that Sunday was not a particularly popular day for a wedding throughout the colony. In a study of the marriage records of Christ Church Parish (Middlesex) from 1704 to 1733, John Nelson determined that "only a handful of weddings (six percent in sampled years) were celebrated on Sundays."<sup>49</sup> In St. James, Northam from 1756 and 1775, only 14 percent of weddings occurred on Sunday.<sup>50</sup> Out of the 34 weddings Rose recorded performing from 1746 to 1751, Sunday weddings only happened three times in Essex and three times in Albemarle.<sup>51</sup> More importantly, these Sunday weddings were never arranged for couples from elite families and always coincided with Rose's pastoral duties on the Sabbath. Like the wedding location, the day of the week of the ceremony was more flexible in colonial

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<sup>46</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 39. Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 198.

<sup>47</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 239, 315.

<sup>48</sup> Gibson, *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani*, 1:512.

<sup>49</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 224.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 426.

<sup>51</sup> This amounts to 18% of weddings Rose performed over the course of his diary.



Virginia than it was in England; the busy schedule of a travelling minister and his relationship with the couple, rather than canon law, determined a wedding's timing.

## Ritual and Prestige: The Plantation Home Wedding

The majority of weddings Rose performed in both Essex and Albemarle Counties occurred not on Sundays and not in public locations such as churches, courthouses, and taverns, but within the private homes of vestrymen, councilmen, and large landholders. On Saturday, September 3, 1748 in Essex, for example, Rose married John Lee to Mary Hill at her deceased grandparents' estate, at that point owned by her uncle, John Micou.<sup>52</sup> The estate, Port Micou, was over 1,600 acres with four miles of riverfront property on the Rappahannock, prime real estate for any Virginian tobacco planter.<sup>53</sup> The bride's deceased father was Leonard Hill, a wealthy man and extensive landholder; in his will, presented in 1734, he left his daughter a dowry of £500.<sup>54</sup> Mary's mother, Mary Micou Hill, and her earlier marriage to the famous surveyor Joshua Fry, also gave the wedding added importance as a social event for elites. Fry was not only the surveyor to the crown, but also a former professor at William and Mary, justice of the peace, sheriff in Essex, and at the time of the wedding, a Burgess for

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<sup>52</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Micou, "Paul Micou, Huguenot Physician and His Descendants," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 46, No. 4 (Oct 1938): 363.

<sup>54</sup> This amount looks even more impressive when compared to the earlier groom married in Vauter's church, John Sheppard, who left an entire estate valued at £31. In a much more extensive study, *A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750*, Darrett and Anita Rutman also used the factors of estate value, number of acres owned, and offices held to determine the relative social status of members of the community. The figure of John Sheppard most closely compared to the character sketch the Rutmans gave of William Provert, a former indentured servant who died in 1710 leaving 76 acres of land and an estate valued at roughly £35. Leonard Hill and John Micou's estates and property holdings on the other hand, compared with some of the leading officeholders in Middlesex County at the time, who owned a median of 829 acres and held a median estate valued at £615. From Darrett and Anita Rutman, *A Place in Time*, 144, 151-154. Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 227; Elizabeth Hawes Ryland, "The Families of Micou and Hill of Essex Co," *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 16, No. (July 1936): 490.

Albemarle County.<sup>55</sup> Though Fry and his new wife had moved to Albemarle in 1744 while Mary Hill stayed in Essex with her uncle, the bride's family, including her esteemed stepfather, would have been in attendance at her wedding, ensuring a special trip from Rose to preside over the event.<sup>56</sup>

The groom, John Lee, was also a distinguished man in Rose's community. Living just a mile or so south of the lower church in Essex, Lee served as the clerk of Essex County and was a vestryman of St. Anne's Parish.<sup>57</sup> Like Lee's home, Port Micou was close to a parish church, described by Ralph Fall as "just north of Vauter's church."<sup>58</sup> Just like with the wedding of Sheriff Lynch's daughter in Albemarle, Rose got up and preached the Sunday service the very next day at the nearby church. Even though both the bride and groom's homes were within a few miles of church buildings, Rose married the couple at the bride's family home, in front of her distinguished friends and relatives.

For Virginia's local elite who survived to see their children marry, a wedding in the home of the father of the bride became the new norm. This included the marriage on 1751 of John Walker and Elizabeth Hunter at the home of her father, John Hunter, a former constable, magistrate, and sheriff in Albemarle County.<sup>59</sup> The groom, John Walker, was a worthy match to the family's

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<sup>55</sup> Finding a direct correlation between the number of acres and the value of the estate an individual possessed with the importance and exclusivity of the offices he held, the Rutmans would have put Fry in the highest social strata of the county. See Darrett and Anita Rutman, *A Place in Time*, 146-7.

<sup>56</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 110.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>59</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 105; Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 206; Hunter owned an estate off of Crooked Creek in present day Fluvanna County and Rose mentioned staying at his home on seven different occasions: Rose, *Diary*, 28 53, 56; Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 206.

prestige. He was the son of a Burgess of King and Queen County, Thomas Walker, who owned the extensive estate, *Locust Grove*, as well as the shipping port he coined *Walkerton*.<sup>60</sup> The details of the diary entry make it clear that the social importance of the wedding party outweighed Rose's desire to spend less time travelling by performing all of these pastoral duties on the same day in the same location. Rose recorded that he preached at Captain Allen's who lived on Hunt Creek, a tributary of Slate River, and then came separately to Mr. Hunter's to marry the couple. Later that night, Rose rode with the father of the bride, Mr. Hunter, to Mrs. Glover's further down Slate River where he preached again on Sunday.<sup>61</sup> Due to the importance of the Hunter and Walker families in the community, the bride and groom did not have to come to where Rose was preaching that day or where he preached the next day; instead Rose made the compromise and came to them.

In addition to the minister's status motivations, the families of these elite couples also had clear reasons for requesting home marriages, including guaranteeing parental consent of the union. During this first half of the eighteenth century, Virginia's leading families were in the process of creating a colonial class hierarchy and used marriage with families of similar wealth and position to claim English gentry status in the colony. With the family's economic and social standing at stake, these wealthy planters, more so than middling farmers,

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<sup>60</sup> As evidence of Thomas Walker's wealth, when John's sister married Dr. Gilmer of Williamsburg in 1732, her father provided her with a dowry of £5,000 sterling! Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 206; Alfred Bagby, *King and Queen County, Virginia* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1989), 70.

<sup>61</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 105.

remained deeply involved in the marriage choices of their children, especially their daughters. Letters and literature from the period stressed the custom and “duty” of these elite children to submit to their parents’ wishes when it came to marriage. In the work *The Whole Duty of a Man* (1684), found in Virginian libraries more than any other book except the Bible, Richard Allestree argued that, “children are so much the goods, the possessions of their parents that they cannot without a kind of theft give away themselves without the allowance of those that have a right to them.”<sup>62</sup> In order to force obedience, some fathers threatened to withhold dowries. William Byrd II, for example, in a 1723 letter to his daughter Evelyn, cited “the sacred duty you owe to a parent” as justification to disinherit her and promised to “avoid the sight of you [Evelyn] as a creature detested” if she married against his wishes.<sup>63</sup> As Ed Morgan noted in *Virginian’s At Home*, “custom in Virginia demanded what in some northern colonies the law required, that a man get consent of a girl’s parents” before he proposed marriage.<sup>64</sup> What could be greater proof of the father of the bride’s consent to the match than his willingness to host both the wedding ceremony and reception within his own doors?

The importance of parental consent was obvious in Rose’s diary entry from 1748 when he wrote that he, “went with Robt. Brooke to Mr. Covington’s,

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<sup>62</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 334; Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House* 140.

<sup>63</sup> William Byrd II to Evelyn Byrd, July 20, 1723, *Byrd Correspondence*, I, 343; Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House*, 141.

<sup>64</sup> Edmund Morgan, *Virginians At Home, Family Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Williamsburg, VA: William Byrd Press, 1952), 29. See Spruill, 143: By Virginia law, couples needed parental consent if they were under 21, but most elites followed the social convention of asking permission of parents anyways regardless of age.

married Richd Coleman to his Daughter.”<sup>65</sup> Mr. Covington, the host of the wedding and the father of the bride, was not only a large landowner (he patented 1,091 acres in Essex in 1698), but he also served as a Justice of the Peace, a Burgess, and the sheriff of Essex County.<sup>66</sup> While in his will presented in 1759 Covington mentioned having four daughters, Rose did not record which one was the bride that day.<sup>67</sup> Clearly, her father’s identity was far more important to Rose than her own.

Marriage announcements published in the Virginia Gazette from this period also reflected a focus on family reputation much more than the identity and personal accomplishments of the couple and of the bride in particular. In 1737, for example, an announcement for Molly Power’s engagement described her simply as, “daughter of Major Thomas Power of James City County, a beautiful young lady with a handsome fortune.”<sup>68</sup> The most distinguishing traits listed for the bride were her father’s name and the size of her fortune. Often newspapers announced the exact sum of the bride’s dowry, such as for Betty Lightfoot that same year, who brought “upwards of £5,000 sterling to husband

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<sup>65</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* The groom, Richard Coleman, came from a family with an important and long lasting reputation in the county. The Coleman family, which owned a significant amount of land, gave its name to Coleman Town located on the Rappahannock at Layton’s Warf. They also owned *Scotchman Tavern* and the mansion *Anderton House*, both historic sites still standing in the town of Tappahannock.

<sup>67</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 222. Fall also noted Covington’s importance to the community in helping pay for the construction of the courthouse when it was located at Caret.

<sup>68</sup> Nuran Cinlar, “Marriage in the Colonial Chesapeake 1607-1770, A Study in Cultural Adaptation and Reformation,” Ph.D. dissertation (Johns Hopkins University, 2001), 169.

Berkley Randolph.”<sup>69</sup> For Virginian elites, at least, a marriage was still considered a social and economic merger between two families.

The wedding itself, however, was also a religious ceremony and within the plantation home, one finds a blurring of holy and profane space similar to what Dell Upton noticed in the construction and furnishing of parish churches.<sup>70</sup> Like a colonial house of God, the home of a Virginian gentleman was a symbol of the power, permanence, and wealth of its patrons; it was built with brick instead of wood and furnished with ornate carpets, fine linens, and silver dishware. The decoration of both spaces reflected what Kathleen Brown has called, “a highly ritualized and rich material culture that distinguished the wealthiest planters from their less prosperous neighbors,” offering visual confirmation of a divinely ordained class hierarchy.<sup>71</sup>

The gentleman’s home not only looked the part, but also like the parish church, played host to a variety of religious exercises. In her work *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith*, Lauren Winner used home baptisms, funerals, religious education, and feast day celebrations as evidence that “a vital tradition of lay religious practice flourished in elite houses.”<sup>72</sup> Home wedding ceremonies at the father of the bride’s should be added to this list. Though Rose never went into detail describing these events, other surviving accounts of elite home weddings emphasized the seriousness of the religious ceremony which followed the liturgy

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<sup>69</sup> Morgan, *Virginians At Home*, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia*, 153-158.

<sup>71</sup> Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs*, 272.

<sup>72</sup> Lauren Winner, *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith*, 16.

of the “Form of Solemnization of Matrimony.”<sup>73</sup> Katherine Jacques, a guest at the 1757 home wedding of Laetitia Young, daughter of a Maryland council member, for example, noted that she “paid her complements to the bride who was dressed in a white watered Tabby and appeared with the gravity and conclusion natural to a modest and thinking young lady on such an occasion.”<sup>74</sup> Sticking to the words of the Book of Common Prayer did not necessarily mean a lack of emotional response to the ceremony, either. In 1785, Robert Hunter, a young merchant from London, attended the wedding of Robert Beverley’s daughter in the drawing room of Beverley’s Blandfield estate in Essex and found that, though brief, “the ceremony was really affecting.”<sup>75</sup>

Not only did participants treat the occasion with the earnestness of a religious rite, but the family of the bride also created a specific ceremonial space within the home that reflected the religious significance of the event. In 1787, Helen de Maussion, wife of a French soldier stationed in Virginia and guest of such a wedding, remarked that the bride’s family had created an “altar in the drawing room, very prettily decorated with flowers” where the minister performed the ceremony.<sup>76</sup> Then, in a decisive act of fatherly consent, “the bride was led by her father to the altar in the drawing room...and ‘was given away’ as they call it

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<sup>73</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1662), 171.

<sup>74</sup> Allan Kulikoff, “Throwing the Stocking,’ A Gentry Marriage in Provincial Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 71 (1976): 516-521.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Hunter Jr., *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786 being the travel diary and observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London* (Ed. Louis B. Wright. San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1943), 206.

<sup>76</sup> Helen de Maussion, *They Knew the Washingtons, Letters from a French Soldier with Lafayette and from his Family in Virginia*, tr.: Princess Radziwill (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1926), 166.



here” to a new patriarch, a new master of the house, her husband.<sup>77</sup> This religious rite, like other practices of the Anglican Church, was not in conflict with Virginia’s hierarchical social order but instead reinforced patriarchal values. The liturgy of marriage gave the minister the opportunity, as Brown stated, “to instruct brides in the divine decree of wifely obedience to husbands.”<sup>78</sup> Guests and family members alike would have found comfort in a liturgy that urged, wives, “submit yourselves unto your husbands”<sup>79</sup> just as the sermons preached in church reassured them of “the divine origin of a social hierarchy that set rich over poor, men over women, and white over black.”<sup>80</sup>

This patriarchal order of a slaveholder society was even more evident at a home wedding ceremony than in the church because slaves stood witness. Unlike the average planter, elite landholders could afford to move slaves, particularly women, off of tobacco fields and into domestic positions which included the tasks of cleaning, cooking, and serving food for a large company of wedding guests.<sup>81</sup> More than just another party, the occasion of a wedding would have been a particularly poignant reminder of those rights denied to them as

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs* 16.

<sup>79</sup> *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), 175.

<sup>80</sup> Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1997), 15.

<sup>81</sup> Kathleen Brown wrote that an increasing number of slaves over the course of the eighteenth century took on roles inside the home, “bringing black and white people into intimate contact under the roof of the mansion.” See Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs*, 263.

black servants: slaves were not legally allowed to marry whites, free blacks, or even each other.<sup>82</sup>

While social status in Virginia informally restricted wedding location, the right to even marry at all was strictly racially exclusive. Philip Fithian, a plantation tutor for the Carter's in the 1770s, recorded that one of the reasons why "slaves in this colony never are married" was because of "their Lords thinking them improper subjects for so valuable an institution" as the Christian ceremony.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the practical implications of marriage had to be considered; slaves could not be granted the right to make pledges of fidelity, "to death do us part" when at any moment their owners had the right to intervene. Slave couples were not exempt from individual sale, nor were their bodies protected from sexual exploitation by other slaves or by their masters. Though slaves were permitted to informally marry through ceremonially jumping over a broomstick, these unions were not the same as the marriage of a white couple where, "what God has joined, let no one put asunder."

At the same time as they were denied the right to marry, slaves and the labor they performed were responsible for the wealth and status which an elite host hoped to show off at his own family's wedding. This was particularly true during the reception, which was filled with dining, dancing, and drinking toasts to the new couple, lasting late into the night and continuing on for days. In 1787,

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<sup>82</sup> Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial America, 1619-1776* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 41; Steven Mintz, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of the American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 69-72.

<sup>83</sup> Philip Vickers Fithian, *The Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1957), 51.

Helen de Maussion commented to her mother-in-law back in France that in Virginia, “Weddings are very elaborate occasions...the custom is to keep open house for a week or more after a marriage, which makes them expensive affairs.”<sup>84</sup> These weddings were particularly expensive because of the number and status of those invited. When Rose went to the wedding at former sheriff Covington’s home, he wrote that he came with his cousin, Robert Brooke, son of Robert Brooke, Sr. who died in 1744 but had assisted Joshua Fry as Surveyor to the Crown and served as a Justice of the Peace.<sup>85</sup> Though it is unclear how many guests besides Mr. Brooke attended this wedding, other accounts of Virginian home weddings offered more extensive detail. Often the longest part of the entry was the list of guests with specific mention of those that were part of the “the cream of local society.”<sup>86</sup> At the Beverley wedding at Blandfield estate, Hunter listed Carters, Pages, Braxtons, Birds, Randolphs, and Fitzhughs in attendance, giving the wedding extra distinction as the social event of the season.<sup>87</sup> Even if names were not listed in these accounts, the status of the wedding guests was evident; in 1687, Huguenot exile Durand de Dauphine reported attending a wedding of a Virginian lieutenant at the father-in-law’s house in Gloucester where, “there were at least a hundred guests, many of social standing and handsome, well dressed ladies.”<sup>88</sup> Hunter also noted social status

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<sup>84</sup> De Maussion, *They Knew the Washingtons*, 165.

<sup>85</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose* 110.

<sup>86</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 223.

<sup>87</sup> Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina*, 206.

<sup>88</sup> Durand de Dauphine, *A Huguenot Exile in Virginia, or Voyages of a Frenchman exiled for his religion, with a description of Virginia and Maryland*. Ed. Nicholas Hayward (New York: The Press of the Pioneers, Inc., 1934), 138.

by commenting on wedding guests expensive travel arrangements: “most of the company left in their phaetons, chariots, and coaches in four, with two or three footmen behind. They live in as high a style here, I believe as any part of the world.”<sup>89</sup> These guests represented a distinguished community that would give approval not only to the new union but also to the host, who proved his aristocratic status through displays of hospitality.

Over any other virtue, Virginian elites took particular pride in their hospitality. In 1773, Philip Fithian noted that “the people are extremely hospitable and very polite both of which are most certainly universal characteristics of the gentlemen of Virginia.”<sup>90</sup> With travel and house guests both constant occurrences in the colony, they sought to live up to Robert Beverly’s proclamation in his 1705 history of Virginia: “Here is the most Good-nature, and Hospitality practis’d in the World.”<sup>91</sup> Visitors constantly evaluated their neighbors’ hospitality and wedding accounts from this period were filled with such judgments. The Huguenot Durand of Dauphine was impressed that his Virginian host not only sent two slaves by boat to transport him to the wedding but also found a place for him to sleep that night “after much carousing” at the reception: having fallen asleep in a chair, “the master of the house saw me and...collecting all the blankets, he laid me a bed on the floor, saying he would not put it in the hall for fear the drunken fellows would fall over me and keep me from sleeping.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina*, 209.

<sup>90</sup> Fithian, *The Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian*, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, 308.

<sup>92</sup> Durand of Dauphine, *A Huguenot Exile in Virginia*, 168.

More than just a good Christian virtue, however, hospitality was a way guests evaluated the host's status as patriarch, judging his ability to manage the dependents of his household, both family and servants. Kathleen Brown wrote, "cleanliness, sweet smelling bed linen and an abundance of fine food at the table revealed to visitors a plantation mistress's good character, even when such tasks were clearly being done by female slaves and servants."<sup>93</sup> When a wedding went well, often it was the master of the house who received the praise. After the Blandfield wedding, for example, Hunter recorded that "the manner in which this affair has been managed does honor to Mr. Beverly. To see everything go so smooth, and such harmony prevail in so large a company is something uncommon."<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, at a home wedding reception, the father of the bride officially took over the position of "head of the table" and "director of ceremonies" from the Anglican minister. Rather than following the wedding ceremony with a Eucharistic feast of communion as recommended in the liturgy, the guests sat down to a much larger and more extravagant meal prepared by the host's dependents. Hunter commented at Blandfield that they had "a most sumptuous and elegant dinner that would have done honor to any nobleman's house in England,"<sup>95</sup> while Durand of Dauphine proclaimed that at the wedding he attended, "they served us so copiously with meats of all kinds that I am sure there would have been enough

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<sup>93</sup> Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs*, 270.

<sup>94</sup> Hunter, *Quebec to Carolina*, 208.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

for a regiment of five hundred soldiers.”<sup>96</sup> The wedding feast, like the ceremony, displayed the comfortable overlap between the sacred and the secular for Virginian Anglicans and the willingness of ministers like Rose to share control over traditionally pastoral events. The host took an aspect of religious authority away from the minister, expressed through his Christian duty to feed the people who came to his table, while also using the occasion to show off his affluence. In this world, the principles of generosity and self-aggrandizement co-existed and guided the actions of Virginia’s Anglican gentlemen.

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<sup>96</sup> Durand of Dauphine, *A Huguenot Exile in Virginia*, 138.

## Hospitality and the Creation of Sacred Space

Hospitality was not reserved only for other elites; Virginia's gentry showed charity and generosity to their less wealthy neighbors and indentured servants in order to prove their benefactor status, similar to English aristocrats and their patron-client relationships. Dell Upton argued that such hospitality was "more likely to be extended to ones inferiors in ritual settings where power was celebrated or sought."<sup>97</sup> Weddings offered such ritual settings, particularly when hosted by plantation owners for couples who bore no relation to them. Here, the landholder took a socially and spiritually powerful role away from the father of the bride; not only was he the host and the director of ceremonies, but he also was the one who as witness, gave consent to the marriage.

In both Essex and Albemarle counties over the course of Rose's diary, this particular wedding scenario of non-elites married at the home of their wealthier neighbors was the most popular. The frequency of such wedding locations reflects a variety of motivations. Along with providing a ritual occasion for a host to act as patriarch over dependents in the community, ministers like Rose most likely found performing pastoral duties at the homes of their friends more convenient to their itinerant schedule. These occasions also offered the opportunity to reinforce friendships with the powerful figures in the parish that hosted them. An example of this is found in Rose's diary entry for Wednesday, March 4, 1747: "A rainy day, at home, read part of Tuly pro Celio, went in the

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

evening and Married James Bates at Wm. Thomas'."<sup>98</sup> According to Fall, Rose's glebe and William Thomas' home were both located on Thomas' Neck, named after William's family which owned the surrounding land.<sup>99</sup> William Thomas was particularly important to Rose because Thomas was a major contributor in funds for the construction of Vauter's church.<sup>100</sup> As for the wedding party, the wife was identified only as "Ann" in deed records, and the groom, James Bates, was a carpenter from Tappahannock whose father owned a tavern in town.<sup>101</sup> It is unclear whether James Bates was living in the area at the time of the wedding, but he did at least own property there and would have known his neighbor, William Thomas.<sup>102</sup> Instead of having Rose come to the bride's home, the Bates family home in Tappahannock, or even to the groom's own property nearby, the wedding party came to the home of Rose's neighbor, William Thomas, the man largely responsible for the building of Vauter's church. Marrying the couple at his neighbor's home was also for Rose's own convenience as he was able to spend the rest of the day reading at home instead of travelling.

Particularly in Albemarle, Rose often performed marriages where he stayed during his pastoral rounds, at the homes of his most prominent allies in

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<sup>98</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 3.

<sup>99</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 109. Edward Thomas, William's deceased father, was responsible for this, having patented the 8,800 acres that his son inherited. Edward was also a justice of the peace and the sheriff of Essex in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>100</sup> In fact, some of the surviving bricks of the church still have his name on them. Lawrence Buckley Thomas, *The Thomas Book* (New York: Henry T. Thomas Company, 1896), 103.

<sup>101</sup> In his father's will presented in September 1746, James received a slave, "Willobe" and one acre of land. This land appeared to have been not too far from Sale's Church and Thomas' Neck. From Sparacio, *Deed Abstracts of Essex County, Virginia 1749-1752*, 276-8; 54.

<sup>102</sup> A few years later, James and Ann Bates bought 75 more acres from Rose near the glebe. See Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 132.



the parish. In March of 1751, Rose rode to Viewmont, Colonel Joshua Fry's estate, in order to preach the Sunday service at the newly constructed and nearby Clear Mount Church the next day. That night, Rose married "an old man, John Searles" to an unidentified bride.<sup>103</sup> It is clear that Rose himself did not know the groom nor did he consider him important enough to know. Joshua Fry on the other hand, was Virginia's surveyor to the crown, a magistrate, burgess, and extensive landowner. Rose's understanding of Fry's status and his effort to befriend him were evident in the number of times Rose visited Viewmont: a total of twenty-nine times during the course of the three years he served as Albemarle's minister. The wedding of "an old man John Searles," then, occurred where Rose was already visiting with an important figure in the county.

Similarly, Rose performed three different marriages at Captain Dr. William Cabell's home, Warminster, not only because Cabell was a magistrate and owner of over 26,000 acres in the county, but also because he was the vestryman that initially recommended Rose for the job.<sup>104</sup> Here was the man Rose was most indebted to for his position in the community and Rose confirmed this friendship through frequent visits, at least twenty-five different times from 1748 to 1751. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1751, Rose recorded that he had come to Capt. Cabell's, "in order to go the next day to the Church at Ballinger's Creek." That night, at Warminster, he married Anne Hall to George Duncan, most likely a

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<sup>103</sup> Searles' identity is also unclear; there is no record of a John Searles owning land in Albemarle, so perhaps he worked for Fry as a tenant, Rose, *Diary*, 102.

<sup>104</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 146-147

kinsman of Martin Duncan, one of Cabell's indentured servants.<sup>105</sup> The bride and the groom travelled to the home of a kinsman's master and were married where Rose already was. The wedding itself was secondary to his larger purpose of visiting his friend and lodging in order to preach the next day.

By coming to Cabell's home to perform his pastoral duties, particularly weddings, Rose not only showed his friendship to the vestryman, but also reinforced his friend's elite status in the community. In April of 1750, when Rose married an unidentified bride to an overseer Francis Steel, he was at Warminster for reasons more clearly unrelated to his ministerial position.<sup>106</sup> Rose stopped by the estate to visit Cabell on his way back from delivering a note of security to Richard Powell on Buffalo River for the sale of two slaves.<sup>107</sup> For both of these weddings, the bride and groom were of lesser status in the parish and in order to get married, they had to make the trip to Cabell's estate where Rose was already visiting his important ally in the community.<sup>108</sup>

What, then, were the motivations of the couples who might have wanted and requested to get married in the setting of their neighbors' mansions? Perhaps they found their own homes too small or aesthetically unsuitable for the

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<sup>105</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 99. The bride was the daughter of Richard and Ann Hall of Albemarle. The Halls were most likely small farmers; in his will, Richard Hall left each of his children a single shilling as their inheritance. From, Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 318; Sparacio, *Albemarle County, Virginia Wills 1752-1764* (McLean, VA: Antient Press, 2000), 52.

<sup>106</sup> Francis Steel would later work for Rose as an overseer on one of his Piney River plantations. From Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 293.

<sup>107</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 80; Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 293

<sup>108</sup> Rose performed a third wedding at Cabell's home in 1750 for Richard Ripley, a joiner and carpenter, and his unidentified bride. Rose was already there that day serving a pastoral role by arbitrating a dispute between James Christian (who lived on the south side of the Fluvanna, just across the river from Cabell) and Christian's sister. Like other occasions, Rose did not come to Cabell's specifically to perform the wedding but to fulfill a pastoral duty and to visit with his prominent friend and ally. Rose, *Diary*, 91; Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 251, 280, 318.

wedding celebration. Perhaps they, too, wanted to confirm friendships with their wealthier neighbors, just as Rose was doing. The design and function of the elite plantation, however, offer another explanation. Cabell's estate, Warminster, for example, was much more than a private residence; it looked and operated like a small town, including a mill, tavern, and even a small hospital. Even without the tavern and hospital, however, most elite plantation homes had what Anburey Thomas in his 1779 travel journal called, "the appearance of a small village": each had a "dwelling house in the center with kitchens, smoke-houses and out-houses," along with a series of indentured servant and slave quarters.<sup>109</sup> Likewise, Fall described Brooke's Bank, an estate along the Rappahannock where Rose performed the wedding of Robert Miller and Sarah Mitchell in 1747, as more than an elegant Georgian-style mansion, "more than a plantation-house and a friendly stopping-place; it was the hub of a small trading community, and news-dispensing center."<sup>110</sup> Rhys Isaac argued that colonial Virginians would have sought this position for their homes. They were completely unfamiliar with the current idea of the home as a "center of private domesticity" and instead, "lived or aspired to live in the constant presence of servants and guests."<sup>111</sup> Perhaps couples were more willing to travel to these plantations to marry because they saw them as their owners had intended: like a church or a courthouse, as a public meeting space for visitors of all social classes.

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<sup>109</sup> Anburey Thomas, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of America*, Vol. II (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1923), 187.

<sup>110</sup> Ralph Emmett Fall, "A Historical Sketch of Brooke's Bank," *Essex County Historical Society Newsletter* 12 (Nov, 1977): 1-2.

<sup>111</sup> Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 70.

Moreover, maybe these couples saw places like Warminster and Brooke's Bank not only as economic and social centers for the community, but also, as their owners had hoped, as public ceremonial spaces for religious practices. This was evident in Essex County, even with its two conveniently located churches, and in the frontier county of Albemarle, even when these hosting plantations were close to chapels. Those who attended and requested weddings within these homes embodied a community-wide agreement that these private spaces were acceptable locations for religious ceremonies. Throughout Virginia, sacred and secular, public and private, overlapped particularly in the wedding location of a plantation home in order to meet not only the needs of the host and minister, but also the needs of the marrying couple.

Lastly, Rose also performed weddings at his own home on the parish glebe in Essex and at his plantation house in Albemarle. This allowed him to take a break from constant pastoral travel as well as, like other elites in his community, assert his social status by claiming the power to make others come to him. In December of 1750, for example, John Key, a mill owner on the Rivanna River, and Agatha Nettle, most likely related to the copper miner Nettle on Tobacco Row Mountain, came to Rose's Bear Garden to be wed.<sup>112</sup> Bear Garden, one of Rose's many landholdings in Albemarle, was a 2,000-acre estate with a large brick home on the bluff overlooking the Piney River rapids and surrounded by storehouses, slave quarters, and tobacco fields.<sup>113</sup> Not only did the bride and groom's families lack the social status to warrant a home wedding,

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<sup>112</sup> Rose, *Diary* 98.

<sup>113</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 140, 183, 305.

but also Bear Garden, like the plantation estates of Fry and Cabell, would have been an appropriate wedding location.<sup>114</sup>

Though not as impressive as Brooke's Bank mansion or his later estate at Bear Garden, the Essex glebe house, which still stands today, was also meant for a man of status, and was the setting for several weddings. In 1957, it was described as, "a small Georgian type house with bricks laid in Flemish bond," the same brickwork used in the construction of Vauter's church. Inside was "very good paneling and woodwork" and a "particularly impressive" mantel in the parlor.<sup>115</sup> On a Friday in March of 1747, John Cochrane, a Caroline county factor, and Sarah Landrum, daughter of the middling planter, James Landrum, came to Rose's plantation in order to be wed, perhaps in the parlor mentioned above.<sup>116</sup> The second wedding at the glebe, that of Philip Edward Jones and Sarah Muscoe on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1748, was slightly different. While the groom was a middling planter owning several hundred acres on Piscataway Creek, the bride was the orphaned daughter of Salvator Muscoe, a wealthy gentleman who served multiple terms as Burgess for Essex County. More importantly, though, when her father died in 1741, Sarah moved into the glebe and Parson Robert

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<sup>114</sup> Perhaps Key owned some land on Tye River as well because several months before the wedding, Rose recorded that Key had killed a wolf for the bounty on one of Rose's Tye River plantations. From Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 287. Key killed the wolf on May 29, 1750: Rose, *Diary*, 84.

<sup>115</sup> *Old Homes of Essex County* (Tappahannock, VA: Essex County Women's Club, 1940), 17-18.

<sup>116</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 3; Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 132. James owned several hundred acres on Occupacia Creek near Vauter's church and in his will, he left one daughter, Dorcas, a single slave as her dowry. Remembering Hugh Thomas' estimation that a slave at this time was worth £28-£35 and Mary Hill's dowry from her elite father Leonard Hill of £500, the Landrums were most likely middling planters. Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 132. *Will Abstracts of Essex County 1735-1743*, 77.

Rose became her guardian.<sup>117</sup> As her guardian, Rose played the part of the father of the bride and, confirming his role as an elite, conducted the wedding at his own home instead of at the church. Rose understood that in order to further establish himself as a member of the local gentry, he had to pursue the performance of certain social conventions that provided opportunities to prove his status as a hospitable, landed patriarch. Furthermore, even a minister understood that, contrary to Anglican canon law, the church was not the only acceptable ceremonial space in a Virginian parish. By claiming his own home as a central sacred space, suitable for both family and parishioner weddings, he too claimed spiritual and social authority in the community that extended beyond the Sunday church service.

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<sup>117</sup> Fall, *The Diary of Robert Rose*, 210.

## Conclusion

As shown by Rose's account of the weddings he performed, most parishioners in Albemarle and Essex Counties at this time were married outside of the church and in the homes of elites. The significant question about colonial Virginian weddings, is not "why did Virginians rarely marry in the church?" but instead "at whose home did they marry?" and "for whose advantage?" In Essex, where the parish had two conveniently located churches and distance was less of an issue, it was clear that Rose and other local elites chose to have weddings at private homes because of their own status motivations and not because of an inability to make it to the church. Even in the frontier parish of Albemarle, however, who travelled and to whom depended more specifically on social status. While long distances led Rose to perform a common parishioner's wedding at the same time and location as other pastoral duties to decrease his own travel burdens, he was willing to make special trips out of his way to the homes of important families, which acted as social and religious centers in the community. Thus, the answers to these questions reflect the different motivations of minister, host, and marrying couple.

Rose's diary offers unique insight not only into the social Married of marriage location for parishioners of all classes, but also into how ministers more generally adjusted to a lay-dominated environment in order to create a position of authority within the community. Performing weddings outside of the church was not the only way in which ministers broke Anglican canon laws as a method of colonial adaptation. Because of his itinerant schedule, Rose preached on lessons

not prescribed in the liturgical calendar, repeated the same sermon two weeks in a row for different audiences, or preached on weekdays instead of Sundays.<sup>118</sup> None of these adaptations, however, followed a pattern based on the social status of the parishioners involved the way that marriage location did.

Although Virginians broke from British custom and performed weddings outside the church, unlike in England this did not necessarily imply clandestine marriage. In fact, for elite Virginians, it was just the contrary; home weddings were the ultimate indication of the father of the bride's approval of the match. Rose also consistently broke other Virginian and Anglican canon laws about weddings besides their locations, but none of these broken restrictions affected the real concern colonists had over marriage: ensuring parental consent. Like other ministers, including William Douglas of St. James Northam Parish (Goochland) in the 1750s and 1760s, Rose often ignored the prohibitions on performing marriages on weekdays as well as during the church seasons of Advent and Lent.<sup>119</sup> Virginian ministers, including Rose, also presided over weddings outside of the prescribed hours of eight in the morning until noon.<sup>120</sup> Ministers in Virginia, however, were fined not if they performed weddings at the wrong date and time but if they failed to publish banns of matrimony three weeks

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<sup>118</sup> See Rose, *Diary*, 66-67; 51-54.

<sup>119</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 224; Rose, *Diary*, 3, 23, 28, 54, 97, 102, W.M. Jacob also noted that "Lent and Advent prohibitions of marriage were decreasingly observed over the course of the eighteenth century in England." See: W.M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 72.

<sup>120</sup> Rose, *Diary*, 3, 31, 97.



in advance of the wedding, married couples outside of their home parishes, or without parental consent if couples were under the age of twenty-one.<sup>121</sup>

Rose's diary also confirmed that other pastoral duties including funerals and baptisms often occurred outside the church. Lauren Winner has suggested that elites had home baptisms and funerals to assert the importance of the family and household in religious ritual. Though Winner left out any discussion of weddings, her conclusions for baptisms and funerals reflected a similar desire to the local elites in Rose's parishes who wished to show off the status of their families with home marriages.<sup>122</sup> While more research would be needed to determine if the pattern for marriage location with non-elites was the same for other pastoral duties, it seems less likely that they would have had the same variety in location as observed with weddings. A parishioner's burial was not going to happen at a tavern or Rose's own home, for example, and the reason given for home baptisms was so that new mothers and newborns would not have to travel. A marriage location was more flexible for negotiation from the start and offered a minister the opportunity to confirm relationships not only with elites, but also with parishioners of all social classes.

Another question this study raises is whether or not one can generalize beyond Essex and Albemarle Counties. Should Rose's willingness to conduct

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<sup>121</sup> Henning, *The Statutes at Large*, 1:157; Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies*, 139; Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 222-3.

<sup>122</sup> In a statement that could be applied to weddings as well, Winner noted, "household baptism quietly asserted that the household, not the church was the locus of Christian practice...that the community into which the new Christian was being inducted was not the whole parish, but a more select group, friends and family who were gathered together not in the pews, but in a grandee's great hall..." From Winner, *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith*, 36.

marriages outside the church because of social motivations be considered exemplary of a larger trend for colonial Virginian ministers, or was Rose exceptional? There is evidence that some ministers in Virginia were not as successful as Rose in adapting to the colonial environment and befriending the right people. A common theme in the histories of Virginia's Anglican Church has been the endemic nature of the conflict between elite parishioners and clergy that played out in arguments over tenure, ministerial misconduct, and the possession of religious authority. John Nelson in particular saw these struggles as less because of a lack of quality ministers and more because of personal conflicts between ministers and leading families.<sup>123</sup>

These tensions also played out in disagreements over religious practice in the home instead of the church. Nelson, for example, pointed to Landon Carter and his conflict with Parson Giberne, minister of Christ Church, Middlesex, who refused to perform a baptism at the Carter estate in 1770.<sup>124</sup> Winner also referenced the Carter example and interpreted more generally the frequent negotiations over home funerals and baptisms as a struggle between ambitious elites and resistant clergy. Ministers like Giberne opposed performing marriages outside of the church because of an insistence on playing by the old rules to establish authority; they tried to enforce canonical purity, which was not possible

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<sup>123</sup> Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 144; Winner, *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith*, 25; Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 42-43.

<sup>124</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 215; Landon Carter, *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*, Vol. I, Ed. Jack P Greene (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1965), I:374-375.

in a colonial church that lacked a religious hierarchy and was dominated by the secular elite.

At the same time, it appears that for Virginian ministers, seeking social status in the community through befriending elites was incredibly common. For one, making these connections was necessary in order to be a successful colonial pastor who was respected as both a religious and secular figure of authority. Joan Gunderson wrote in her study on the Virginian minister and social class that, “ordination brought a certain acceptance by the upper class, but not necessarily membership to it.” Her conclusions about who ministers married revealed one of the common means to social climbing: from 1723 to 1766, three fourths of Virginia’s elite had married into some level of the gentry and the other fourth either married into other clerical families, brought wives from England, or never married at all.<sup>125</sup> Some ministers did quite well for themselves; they owned large tracts of land, lived in nice houses and, as Bonomi noted, “were invited to dine with the great planters.”<sup>126</sup>

Other ministers in Virginia besides Rose also performed marriages outside of the church, in the plantation homes of elites, often without any apparent conflict. Though parish registers listed only basic information about weddings and left out their location, some guests specifically described home weddings at the father of the bride’s in personal accounts including Durand of Dauphine, Robert

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<sup>125</sup> Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1766*, 59.

<sup>126</sup> Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 81.

Hunter, and Helen de Maussion.<sup>127</sup> Since these diaries were written by elites and only included the weddings of other elites they attended, they provide no picture of where their ministers performed the weddings of common parishioners to compare to Parson Rose's diary. It can at least be concluded that other ministers were breaking the rules for the most prominent families in their communities.

It is also clear that throughout colonial Virginia, distance and convenience were not necessarily the determining factors for wedding location. In 1711, William Byrd II attended the wedding of Colonel David Bray's daughter at the colonel's home in Williamsburg. Even though Bray was a vestryman of Bruton Parish and he lived just down the street from the church, the wedding ceremony still happened at the family home.<sup>128</sup> Just as Nelson has argued, ministers were probably facing local pressures from landholders looking to confirm their social status by playing the part of hospitable patriarch in a home wedding.<sup>129</sup> It is not unreasonable to suggest that these ministers, who, like Rose, were looking for status and authority in the community, also negotiated wedding location as a way to confirm their positions in the parish.

When Scots-Irish immigrants brought Presbyterian and Baptist congregations to Virginia's frontier in the 1750s and 1760s, both Anglican ministers and the colony's planter elite faced new challenges to their control over marriage as well as to their patriarchal society, which such marriages reinforced.

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<sup>127</sup> These weddings occurred all over Virginia and cover a wide timespan of the colonial period.

<sup>128</sup> William Byrd II. *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*, Ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1941), 437-439.

<sup>129</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 223.

These New Light churches, which often converted wives and daughters, urged their members to marry those of “religious like-mindedness,” challenging the authority fathers had over their daughters to pick matches based on wealth and social status.<sup>130</sup> Particularly in western counties, an increasing number of couples entered common-law marriages or more temporary living arrangements without the approval of the Anglican Church or the colonial government.<sup>131</sup> Still, up to the Revolutionary War, Virginian Anglican ministers had complete control over the performance of legal and legitimate marriage. While those who identified with the Presbyterian or Baptist church would have been even more likely to marry outside of the walls of an Anglican church, they too had to find an Anglican minister to perform the official ceremony at the family home, just as the Presbyterian planter Col. James Gordon did for the marriage of his daughter in 1759.<sup>132</sup> John Brown, a Presbyterian minister in Augusta County, reportedly performed two marriages in 1755 but stopped when informed that to do so was illegal.<sup>133</sup> Later on in the eighteenth century, it appears that at least one minister along the frontier worked out a secret “gentlemen’s agreement” in which the dissenting minister performed weddings for his own congregation but had to pay the Anglican minister of the parish the legal fee for the service; on June 4, 1774, Parson Jones of Augusta County recorded receiving “three pounds five shillings,

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<sup>130</sup> Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1997), 140.

<sup>131</sup> Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 225.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>133</sup> Joseph Addison Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County* (Richmond, VA: W.M. Ellis Jones Book and Job Printer, 1886), 131.

being the amount of ten marriage fees” from the Baptist minister, the Rev. John Alderson.<sup>134</sup>

It was not until after the American Revolution, with the official disestablishment of the Anglican Church, that Presbyterian and Baptist ministers were legally allowed to challenge patriarchal control over marriages and publically perform weddings for members of their congregations. For Anglicans and dissenters alike, the colonial custom for elites of home weddings at the father of the bride’s continued to be the norm; Helen de Maussion and Richard Hunter’s personal accounts of such weddings were both from the 1780s and in 1799 Anne Ritson’s “Poetical Picture of America” also described a wedding held “in the drawing room” of the bride’s family home.<sup>135</sup> If anything, disestablishment, which led to the loss of both Anglican ministers and church buildings, made household religious practice even more essential. It was through ceremonies such as weddings and baptisms that Virginia’s elites in particular preserved Anglican traditions and through which ministers sought to hold onto a semblance of their former social status in the community.

Ultimately, the story of the Anglican minister of colonial Virginia was one of adaptation. Within the lay-dominated colonial church, the successful ministers were the ones who, like Rose, adapted to a new environment and adjusted where they performed their pastoral duties. As Reverend Hugh Jones warned in

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<sup>134</sup> Brydon, II:76.

<sup>135</sup> Anne Ritson, *A Poetical picture of America being observations made during a residence of several years at Alexandria and Norfolk, in Virginia : illustrative of the manners and customs of the inhabitants: and interspersed with anecdotes, arising from a general intercourse with society in that country, from the year 1799 to 1807* (London: W. Wilson, 1809), 114.

1724, not everyone was as successful as Rose: “some clergymen are indeed unskillful in and others are not studious of, reconciling their own interest and duty with the humor and advantage of the people.”<sup>136</sup> In order to hold authority in his community, a minister in Virginia had to abandon some of his duty to canonical purity as well as to colonial law. Both to be a better minister and to meet the needs of his parishioners but also to fulfill his own secular motivations for status confirmation, ministers discarded the Anglican tradition of the church wedding in favor of a new pattern based on kin and friendship connections.

Those elite landholders who hosted weddings in their own homes were also adapting, taking advantage of the lay-dominated nature of the colonial church to claim both social and religious authority through household religious practices. Hosts and guests alike, no matter their status in the community, embraced the concept of a blurred sacred and profane world. It is because of this fluid understanding of ceremonial space that the particular location of a colonial Virginian wedding was so important; a wedding ceremony had the power to give the location, to give the elite’s plantation home, a social standing in the community that surpassed even the parish church.

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<sup>136</sup> Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, 100-101.

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