

The Treasurer

Or: The Anglican, Algonquin, Angolan Connection

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The French word *Mélange* means a mixture or a blend. This tale blends stories of ranking early colonists, great Native American chiefs and princesses, pirate captains, and one notable African slave from the very first ship of slaves brought to the British Colonies in the Americas. Each forms a thread woven into a story of despair and triumph, betrayal and honor, legacy and roots. It's a tale of work and individual responsibility overcoming injustice and long odds. It's a family story.

Robert Smith reminds us that our Literary Club - this old and distinguished men's club - has ideological roots in an older organization: The Club, whose charter members included Dr. Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke, who figuratively gaze upon us weekly – patron saints, as it were. The Club was founded in London in 1764.

More than 150 years before that, in 1606, another organization was founded in London, The Virginia Company, when King James I granted it a trade monopoly over most of North America's Atlantic coast. This followed by only seven years the founding of the British East India Company. Both were early joint stock companies, each a for-profit entity seeking financial success. Only East India would find it. ⁽¹⁾

The Virginia Company's first venture was the settlement of Jamestown in 1607.

144 souls started that colony in the midst of what tree ring research has recently determined was the driest seven year stretch for the region in the last 700 years. ⁽²⁾

Most of its original colonists died in its first two years, largely to disease and starvation. However, with multiple subsequent waves of supplies and new settlers, the colony survived what came to be known as the Starving Time.

Another challenge for the colony was that the land was already occupied, mostly by the Algonquin, a branch of the Iroquois. That nation's largest subset was the Powhatan Confederacy, built by Chief Wahunsenacawh, generally called Chief Powhatan ⁽³⁾, or King Powhatan by the British. He was a great warrior and though no longer a young man, many conquests had left him leader of a confederacy of over 30 tribes with an estimated 15,000 inhabitants, and able to field an army of 3,500 warriors. The Powhatan Confederacy occupied Virginia from the Chesapeake Bay to the Blue Ridge Mountains - territory now encroached upon by the British. Of the Indigenous Chiefs in Eastern North America, Powhatan was then among the most powerful, and his proximity dimmed prospects of success for his new neighbors, the Jamestown colony.

Chief Powhatan first looked upon the English as an opportunity: one more village to subjugate and add to his confederacy. He took special interest in their metal tools and gunpowder-based military technology. However, as his efforts to Balkanize the English were unsuccessful, Anglo-Algonquin relations soured. After more than 70% of

the original colonists died during the Starving Time, the colony's leaders took pains to keep their true number secret from the Native Americans assuming knowledge of their true weakness would have encouraged a spirited attack and Jamestown's likely defeat. For a few years, the colony's survival hung by a thread.

John Rolfe arrived at Jamestown in 1610 in the second wave of supply and expansion. He came on a small ship named *The Treasurer* under Captain Samuel Argall after an eventful passage. A hurricane had wrecked the larger ship on which he and his wife had started their journey, stranding them ten months in Bermuda where she fell ill and died. John Rolfe was 25 years old when he arrived at Jamestown via *The Treasurer*, two years after the colony's founding. Of 214 colonists that had preceded him, only 60 had survived to that point.

On *The Treasurer*, Rolfe had brought some exceptionally valuable contraband - a small stash of Spanish tobacco seeds. In Europe, the tobacco native to the Americas was unpopular, considered bitter and harsh. Yet the Spanish had been quite successful growing a desirable strain of sweet tobacco in the West Indies. Their monopoly in production of that tobacco was thought so valuable that a decree was issued making it a capital offense to sell or otherwise convey tobacco seeds to a non-Spaniard. Just how the Englishman John Rolfe obtained his valuable Spanish tobacco seeds in Trinidad was carefully excluded from his writings.

Built in 1609, *The Treasurer* was a Man-of-War of 40 tonnes displacement. Depending on its width at the beam, it may have been only 40 to 45 feet long. ⁽⁴⁾ Excluding the bowsprit and masts, such a ship might fit within our reading room. But it was fitted with cannon and was brand new - its trip to Jamestown in 1610 shuttling John Rolfe, his contraband seeds, and sundry other immigrants and supplies was its maiden voyage. ⁽⁵⁾ It was also fast - in a later journey, *The Treasurer* set a speed record for the Atlantic crossing from England to Virginia.

In the first year of the colony, three years before Rolfe's arrival, Captain John Smith had been captured by Powhatan's hot-tempered younger brother, Opechancanough, and brought to Chief Powhatan. This was when one of Powhatan's daughters, Matoaka, who we know by her nickname Pocahontas (meaning, "playful one"), intervened with her father on Smith's behalf to obtain his release. Some embellish the tale to ascribe romantic interest as her motive. Unlikely. Depending on which of Smith's accounts one believes, she was then only 10 or 12 years old. And as it was not mentioned in his earliest accounts, many think that episode may have been mostly invented by Smith.

Relations between the Native Americans and their British invaders waxed and waned, but shortly before Rolfe arrived, four of Smith's men were captured and held by Chief Powhatan. Smith concocted a scheme to capture Pocahontas to exchange for his men, knowing she was the chief's favorite daughter. Exhibiting ingratitude that defies comprehension (*if* Pocahontas had indeed earlier saved him), Smith's plan was to have

Captain Samuel Argall invite the curious Pocahontas to inspect his ship *The Treasurer* and then to keep her there. It worked. If they had not had the English ship there on which to hold her, capturing Chief Powhatan's favorite daughter might have invited attack on Jamestown to free her. Likely familiar with *The Iliad*, Smith could not want Pocahontas to become his Helen, nor the fort he was charged with defending to become his own Troy, besieged and ultimately defeated. By turning *The Treasurer* into a floating prison, he could hold the girl hostage while not necessarily endangering Jamestown itself.

With Pocahontas detained aboard *The Treasurer*, Captain Smith negotiated with Powhatan for an exchange, and Powhatan released all of Smith's men. But Smith was not satisfied as he also demanded return of certain stolen weapons and tools. Those were not so readily forthcoming, so Pocahontas, a teenager at this point, was held captive on the ship for about a year. During that time, in one of the earlier recorded instances of apparent Stockholm Syndrome, she became enamored of English ways, converted to Christianity, changed her name to Rebecca, opted to remain with the colonists when freed, and two years later married John Rolfe. With those diplomatic developments, Anglo-Algonquin relations improved.

Rolfe had begun to cultivate his tobacco. It would become for the Virginia Company the closest thing to the economic success it had hoped to find in plundered gold, having aspired to the same result as the Spanish in Mexico.

Pocahontas was interested in learning all she could about the rest of the world. John Rolfe embraced the opportunity to teach. No doubt taking a page from one history lesson, Pocahontas insisted on changing the name of her younger sister to Cleopatra, and both her father and sister agreed. Princess Matachanna Cleopatra Powhatan was thought to have been a young teen at the time.

In January of 1615, John Rolfe and Rebecca/Pocahontas had a son. Later that same year, Rolfe, his bride Rebecca, and their infant son sailed to England on *The Treasurer*, accompanied by a handful of other Native Americans, including Pocahontas' sister, Cleopatra. In London, Pocahontas was treated as visiting royalty until she fell ill and died within two years of arrival. Rolfe, having now lost a second wife to illness while traveling, returned to the colony to grow tobacco. Cleopatra returned on the same ship as Rolfe and later married her uncle, Powhatan's younger brother Opechancanough.

The year 1619 brought profound changes to Jamestown and the Virginia Colony. Its London headquarters directed a complete colony redesign that carried great promise: it established private property, creating powerful personal incentives, and replaced absolute governorship with a representative assembly. Just laws, self-government, and the basis for free-enterprise – few have ever been endowed with such a sudden boon. August of 1619, however, would bring equally profound change in the negative.

Over one hundred years earlier, the Portuguese had begun to colonize Angola in West Africa and the slave trade began soon after. In 1576 they founded the city of São Paulo da Assunção de Loanda (now, Luanda, Angola), and by Jamestown's founding, Loanda had about 20,000 inhabitants. Wars were common among various tribes in the region with winners typically enslaving losers. In the Portuguese slave trade, most slavers bought those who had been captured in these wars and sold them in the Portuguese colonies of Recife and Salvador in Northeastern Brazil, and later in the West Indies and in Veracruz, New Spain (now Mexico). The Portuguese encouraged West African tribal wars as they always resulted in more slaves available for purchase in Loanda's nefarious slave market. In 1619, they sent a record number of slaves, about 10,000, in 36 ships to the Americas.

One of largest of those ships was a Portuguese slaver named *São João Bautista* ("Saint John the Baptist"). It was stuffed with 350 African slaves in Loanda and sailed for the Americas that May. It's uncertain where its human cargo had originated, but most believe they were from Kabasa, royal capital of the Kingdom of Ndongo. It was a city of 20,000 to 30,000 about 140 miles from Loanda. Many of the slaves that filled the *Bautista* were likely urbanites.

At least one source says their destination was Recife Brazil ⁽⁶⁾, but most assert they were bound for Veracruz, New Spain. Veracruz (meaning "the true cross") had by this time been active in the slave trade for nearly a century. Most of the *Bautista's* cargo

did not arrive in New Spain. Down in the hold, humans were shackled at the ankles to the person at their side and had to lay on their backs in a space 6 feet long by 18 inches wide. On most ships, they had to remain on their backs the entire journey with no breaks. According to Project 1619, an organization devoted to preserving the memory of this particular voyage, shackled in place for the duration, the slaves "had to urinate and defecate, spit, vomit and bleed where they lay" (7), for about three months. The air was fetid, conditions unimaginable. Suicide was common. Disease was rampant, especially dysentery. Packed three decks high, bodily fluids from the upper decks dripped down on those held in the lower decks. It was hell on water.

About 150 of the *João Bautista's* cargo (43%) did not get to Veracruz because they died in the "Middle Passage", a mortality rate that was both horrific and typical. Short of food and needing medical help, the slave ship stopped for a few days in Jamaica where supplies and a doctor's services were procured in exchange for 24 boys - it was not men, women, or girls, but boys the Jamaicans demanded as payment.

A few days after leaving Jamaica, the crew realized they were being followed by two ships in the distance. Smaller and faster, they caught the slaver two days later about 500 miles from Veracruz. Those two ships, of course, were pirates. One was the *White Lion* under Captain John Colyn Jope, an English ship with a Dutch letter of marque, sailing under a Dutch flag. The other ship was none other than *The Treasurer*.

Apparently, when *The Treasurer* had no paying gig lined up to shuttle passengers and

goods to and from Jamestown, it was sent to slum it down in the Caribbean, pirating here and there. ⁽⁸⁾

After a running battle of a few hours, the *São João Bautista* surrendered. The Pirates were surprised to find only slaves in the hold. There being little gold to plunder from this catch, the disappointed pirates selected 20 to 30 of the fittest slaves to take, not having room for all, and headed for the nearest English port, which was in Virginia. The pirates intended to trade their cargo for tobacco and arrived at Comfort Point, Hampton, Virginia, 30 miles downriver from Jamestown in August of 1619. But very short of food and in a poor bargaining position since trade with pirates was forbidden, they settled for a single barrel of Indian corn as payment for all the contraband slaves.

These were the first recorded African slaves brought to any British colony in the Americas. Their arrival preceded the Pilgrim's landing at Plymouth Rock by more than a year, and for additional context, it preceded the posthumous publication of William Shakespeare's *First Folio* by four years. John Rolfe, widower of Pocahontas, was secretary of the colony then and he was there at Hampton Landing when they arrived. He numbered the Africans as "twenty and odd Negros"⁽⁹⁾ in his report to the London headquarters of the Virginia Company. His report was purposefully vague. Both participating in the slave trade and dealing with pirates could have put the company's trading charter in jeopardy.

As an inducement to encourage immigration to Jamestown, 50 acres of good land were given free to each man who paid his passage to move there. This benefit, or “headright”, also accrued to any person who paid for another's passage in exchange for temporary indentured service, typically seven to ten years. Partly to avoid risking the company's charter and partly so buyers could earn the land bounty, these Africans were not resold as lifetime chattel slaves as was typical later. Rather, they were purchased as indentured servants with seven-year terms.

Though most had likely lived in a city, some of the West Africans were familiar with European farming methods and with tobacco cultivation because of the Portuguese colony in Angola. Some historians credit the success of the tobacco trade in the Virginia colony to the skills of this small group of "twenty and odd" African slaves.

One of those indentured slaves was named John Gowen (G-o-w-e-n, variously recorded as John Geaween, Gowaen, and Goyne). He was one of only a few of that first group of slaves whose names we know today. In a new land with a new language, different food, different culture, and mostly a new condition of servitude, John Gowen had no choice but to improvise. Of course, the colony itself was an improvisation, and improvisation for mere survival was essential for every first-generation slave. But John Gowen's object was not survival, it was freedom.

A year earlier, in 1618, Chief Powhatan had died and his brother Opechancanough took over the family business. Recall he had previously married Cleopatra Powhatan. After four years of repeated assurances of friendship with the colony, the new chief ultimately decided he must eliminate the English and attacked the Virginians in what came to be known as the Massacre of 1622. The initial salvo of that war was a move reminiscent of the Trojan Horse: Opechancanough sent hundreds of what appeared to have been unarmed warriors to the fort and all the Colony's out-settlements laden with food, furs and other goods to trade. Inside each location, at a pre-determined time just before noon, they dropped their burdens, grabbed any weapons or tools they could snatch (and smaller ones they had smuggled) and killed every man, woman and child they could until all the Native American intruders had been eliminated. James Fort itself was spared only because of a late tip from a sympathetic Native American, but scattered plantations and out-settlements were devastated. In Martin's Hundred alone, of 150 settlers, 77 were killed that day, with another 20 women captured and carried away.

War raged for months and seemed to have paused more with exhaustion on both sides than in outright victory or defeat for either. Losses among the English colonists amounted to 347 on the first day alone, somewhere between a third and a fourth of their total number, and losses grew in subsequent months. Casualties among Native Americans and among African slaves, if counted, were not recorded. John Rolfe was among the dead that year in Opechancanough's war. He was 37.

The crop that year, in 1622, was poor due to both direct destruction from the war and to farm laborers being otherwise occupied with guarding and campaigning. The Winter that followed was hard and hundreds more died then of starvation.

The importation of West African slaves that had begun in an almost accidental trickle in 1619 quickly expanded into a flood. Between that and the population loss from the war that began with Opechancanough's Massacre of 1622, by 1625, it is estimated that the colony consisted of many more Africans than Europeans.

Twenty-two years and two wars after his Massacre of 1622, Opechancanough was captured by the Virginians and murdered extrajudicially - shot in the back by one of his guards. ⁽¹⁰⁾ His name in the Algonquin language meant "he whose soul is white".

As to John Gowen and the Africans, another Angolan slave that arrived in one of the first groups was a woman who took the name Margaret Cornish. She was owned by Lt. Robert Sheppard, a member of the House of Burgess. John Gowen was owned by William Evans, one of the largest landowners in the colony. Evans' farm was flanked on one side by Lt. Shepard's farm and on another by John Rolfe's tobacco operation. John Gowen and Margaret Cornish had a son together named Mihil Gowen, later changed to Michael Gowen. There is no record that they ever married, but apparently at least John considered them to have been in a common law marriage.

Margaret Cornish may have been of a different opinion. In 1636, she had a child by another man - a white man named Robert Sweet who also owned a plantation contiguous to Sheppard's. Cornish and Sweet were tried and convicted of adultery in Jamestown court, that being a criminal offense at the time. This was the verdict recorded in the *Jamestown Council and General Court Records* dated Oct. 17, 1640: "Whereas Robert Sweet hath begotten with a child a Negro woman servant belonging unto Lt. Sheppard, the court hath therefore ordered that the said Negro woman shall be whipped at the whipping post and the said Sweet shall tomorrow in the forenoon do public penance for his offense at James City church in the time of divine service . . ."

So Sweet was sentenced to public humiliation in the stocks in front of the church during a service and Maggie Cornish was whipped at the whipping post.⁽¹¹⁾ The court apparently considered public shaming an effective deterrent for a Christian but believed only corporal punishment would do for a heathen. Neither deterrent proved effective: they later had three more children together but never did marry.

The year following Margaret's conviction, in 1641, John Gowen sued in Jamestown court for custody of their son, Michael, and won. For his part, Gowen was a Christian, and part of his argument to the court was that he would raise Michael as such, an argument that was both material and valid in the jurisprudence of the day. John

Gowen, plaintiff in the suit, was at the time, a slave. This was the very first record of a slave suing in a court in the Americas. ⁽¹²⁾

One might think a seven-year indenture would involve seven years of servitude followed by freedom at the end of the period. That was in fact the way it worked for thousands of largely Irish indentured servants in New England: someone here would pay their passage, the servant would work without pay for seven years to repay the debt, and then they would be released from obligation. In fact, one of my 10th great-grandfathers, Edward Doty ⁽¹³⁾ from Ireland, arrived here a year after John Gowen on the first Mayflower voyage in 1620 and was one of the 41 signers of the Mayflower Compact, but he came as an indentured servant. Doty was also an ill-tempered ne'er-do-well, often in trouble with the law: nine times brought before the Plymouth Colony Court on charges ranging from assault to failing to fence his cows. Two of these arraignments were for dueling - the first, a duel of daggers and swords in 1621 was with a cousin and fellow-servant in a dispute over the fair Constance Hopkins, fifteen-year-old daughter of their master, and one of very few eligible young women in the Plymouth Colony at the time. This was the first recorded duel in New England. But temper and legal record aside, when Doty's seven years were up, he was free.

For blacks in Jamestown, however, the expiration of an indenture did not bring manumission. It only allowed them to purchase their freedom! How is that for a Catch 22? After seven years, a slave could buy freedom, but with what?

In John Gowen's case, he raised hogs. Decades later, a Virginia statute would outlaw private enterprise or any making of money by slaves, but in Gowen's day that was allowed. He worked in Mr. Evans' fields six days a week, but on evenings and Sundays he was allowed to do some limited things to improve his lot such as working a private garden or raising a little livestock. And John Gowen raised hogs. Of course, he did not own the land. That made him a full-time slave and a part-time sharecropper, so half of what he produced "on the shares", as they say, also went to the landowner. ⁽¹⁴⁾

It is no wonder then that John Gowen failed to have earned enough money to buy freedom after only seven years. Joseph Heller may have coined the phrase "catch 22", but John Gowen lived his own catch 22 - for 22 years. In 1641, after he won his court case for custody of his son, and after 22 years a slave, he sold all his hogs and purchased his freedom plus that of his five-year-old son, Michael, becoming the first recorded free black man in any of the British colonies in America.

In honor of John Gowen, some verse now that seeks to emulate Robert Smith:

Grandfather John was a black African
But before America, became American
Brought to Jamestown against his will
Of bondage he would have his fill

Seeking Freedom and loving Liberty
We began his tale with his captivity
On a hellish ship suffered Middle Passage
Chained to others as if mere baggage

Captured by Pirates, survived the sea battle
To the New Hope of Freedom was brought like chattel
Many would follow, His group was the first
And that only made them the most accursed

Indentured for a term of seven years
His lot was the bondsman's lash, chains and tears
To purchase freedom from his indenture
He raised hogs as a part-time venture

In Jamestown court he sued and won
Custody of his only son
And purchased Freedom after twenty years and two
Paternal, frugal, shrewd and true

The Treasurer brought him to this fair shore
Which would curse him and bless him forevermore
Later would Abraham fervently pray ⁽¹⁵⁾
The scourge of war speedily pass away

While believing God's will was war as judgement
Blood drawn by sword for blood drawn by lash apparent

But John Gowen knew no Lincoln savior
His Freedom came through his own endeavor
Free at last, free at last, his freedom was also first
Trailblazer, vanguard, pioneer, one injustice reversed

First free Black in an American colony
Yet unremembered in painting or song
We'll honor you now by recounting your progeny
In that smallest way partly right one wrong

John Gowen's son, Michael, married a black woman named Prossa Mnu. Their son Thomas Christopher Gowen married a white woman, and they had a great, great grandson named Joseph Henry Gowan (who spelled his name G-o-w-a-n). Born in 1759, private Joseph Henry Gowan served in the Revolution, and married Judith Pollard, in Bedford, Virginia.

Judith Pollard's father was Francis Pollard whose great grandparents were Captain John Rice "Trader" Hughes and Princess Nicketti Powhatan. "Trader" John was the first European colonist to settle in Amherst County, Virginia. Born in 1620 to a nobleman in Wales, he built and ran an Indian trading post deep in the Blue Ridge

Mountains more than 140 miles from Jamestown. ⁽¹⁶⁾ His wife, Nicketti Powhatan was the daughter of Opechancanough and Princess Matachanna Cleopatra Powhatan.

So John Gowen's fourth great grandson Pvt. Joseph Henry Gowan married the fourth great granddaughter of Chief Powhatan. Joseph Henry Gowan and Judith Pollard had a son named Francis, who spelled his last name G-o-w-i-n and he was a mixture of three races: Caucasian, Black, and Native American. He had a daughter named Patsy whose last name was recorded as Goin (G-o-i-n, and sometimes Goins, with an "s").

In the Cumberland Gap area of Eastern Kentucky, East Tennessee, and Western Virginia, a derogatory term for a person of tri-racial ethnicity is Melungeon. The earliest written use of that term was in 1813 in the records of the Stony Creek Primitive Baptist Church of Scott County Virginia where it was recorded that Sister Kitchen complained about Sister Stallard, "... saying she harbored them Melungins" (sic). ⁽¹⁷⁾

Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924 mandated that every birth certificate record race. It was binary, the only two options being: white or "colored" (which also encompassed Native Americans). It was one of many state laws throughout the South then that defined race by the "one-drop rule", whereby a "colored" person was anyone with any African or Native American ancestry. Virginia already had a law banning

interracial marriage - by 1913, 30 of the 48 states had such laws. This new law in 1924 narrowed the definition of white and criminalized racial intermarriage in Virginia.

It did, however, include an exception, specifically known as "The Pocahontas Exception". Many of the "First Families of Virginia" traced some lineage back to Pocahontas or her extended family, and this exception allowed one to be classified as white if they had no more than 1/16th Native American ancestry.

In 1943, the Virginia State Registrar of Vital Statistics sent letters to the clerks in each county of the Commonwealth warning against "colored" families seeking to pass for "white" which would violate Virginia's Racial Integrity Act. The letter specifically mentioned sixteen surnames for which county recorders should watch, one of which was Goins. ⁽¹⁸⁾

The Virginia official who sent that letter to the county clerks was named Walter Ashby Plecker. As a son of the South myself, [italics are to be read with a Tidewater Southern accent] *I must point out that Walter Ashby Plecker's middle name Ashby is a wonderful example of a fine Southern aristocratic name.* He was the first registrar of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics, serving from 1912 to 1946.

In 1922, in the very place where John Gowen and the first slave ship landed, Plecker founded the Hampton, Virginia chapter of a men's club named The Anglo-Saxon Clubs

of America. Plecker's club was a branch of a men's club founded in Richmond that same year devoted to . . . white supremacy. Described by one as "an elitist version of the Ku Klux Klan" ⁽¹⁹⁾, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America grew to include 32 chapters by the mid-1920s. As a leader in that organization, *Plecker had personally drafted and lobbied for Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924*. With its passage, he adopted as his mission its enforcement by virtue of his office. He energetically pressed schools to exclude mixed-race children from white schools. And remarkably, he even ordered the exhumation of the remains of dead persons of "questionable ancestry" from white cemeteries for reinterment in *more suitable locations*. *Ashby Plecker apparently thought no detail unworthy of attention when racial purity was at stake*. State law for 43 years, Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924 was overturned by the US Supreme Court in 1967, just before I turned eleven. Had I been born not in Lexington, Kentucky but rather a few hours east in Virginia as had so many of my forbearers, my own birth certificate may have been *more colorful*.

The etymology of the term Melungeon is uncertain, but the French *mélange* meaning, as noted, a mixture or a blend is one of its posited origins and seems perfectly self-evident. In 1778, Francis Gowin, son of Revolutionary War soldier Pvt. John Henry Gowan and Judith Pollard became a Melungeon years before that tri-racial mix had a name. Others would follow, but before the end of The Revolution, Melungeon was the most hybrid of contraband seed to find purchase in this dark, rich, American loam.

My father's mother, Jewel Motley, was born Jewel Reynolds. Her great-great grandfather, John Reynolds, married Patsy Goin, daughter of Francis Gowin and Judith Pollard. John Reynolds and Patsy Goin Reynolds were my fifth-great-grandparents. The African slave John Gowen, one of the first "twenty and odd negros" brought here and the first free black man in any of the original thirteen American colonies was my 13th great-grandfather. The slave Margaret Cornish, also an African, was one of my 13th great-grandmothers. Cleopatra Powhatan, sister of Pocahontas, was another of my 13th great-grandmothers. Opechancanough, brother of Chief Powhatan and author of the Massacre of 1622 was also one of my 13th great-grandfathers. Chief Powhatan was a 14th great-grandfather, Pocahontas and her husband John Rolfe were my 11th great-aunt and uncle. Captain John Rice "Trader" Hughes, first European settler in Amherst County Virginia and Princess Nicketti Powhatan were among my 11th great grandparents.

To these facts I add one pure conjecture: While entirely speculation, I note it is possible that some of my Goins, Gowin, Gowan, Goynes, and Gowen forbearers had *their Virginia graves relocated under the careful direction of Mr. Walter Ashby Plecker.*

So, an Anglican, an Angolan and an Algonquin figuratively walk into an establishment and stir the old melting pot for several generations. The punchline, of course, is the specimen that stands before you now.

Besides being my surname, motley is an adjective that means "being of different colors combined" particularly as relates to fabric or clothing, and "exhibiting great diversity of elements". As a noun, it means a combination of multiple colors as well as "a heterogeneous assemblage".⁽²⁰⁾ In other words, it means a *mélange*, a mixture. Motley happens to be a pretty good name for a Melungeon.

The ship that shuttled my distant uncle John Rolfe and his contraband tobacco seeds from Bermuda to Jamestown, the ship that later set a speed record for the Atlantic crossing, the ship that was the lure for my distant aunt Pocahontas' capture, the ship on which she was held captive for a year, the ship on which John Rolfe, Pocahontas, and my distant grandmother Cleopatra were shuttled to London, the ship that pirated part of the human cargo from the slaver *São João Bautista*, and the ship that took the first "twenty and odd" slaves including my distant grandfather John Gowen to the Virginia Colony, was the ship *The Treasurer*, having weaved through this tale no less than seven times.

A loom weaves fabric from individual threads. The part of a loom that carries the thread back and forth adding one strand at a time is called the "shuttle". If the Tidewater region of Virginia was the loom on which was woven the motley fabric of this *mélange* of a Melungeon family story, surely, its shuttle was the ship *The Treasurer*.

Genealogical sources:

This tale did not come down through family lore (beyond “they say we got some Indian blood through Momma Reynolds’ people”). Rather, it was pieced together through research, largely in the genealogical databases: www.familysearch.org and www.ancestry.com. These are “crowd sourced” databases. Users may add and edit names and relationships. Every entry or change is supposed to be documented. Often, there can arise “possible duplicates”: two unique persons in the data file who may have been the same historical individual. Users are free to merge duplicate records (and are asked to document the basis for that decision), selecting one record to remain and the other to delete. Therefore, the database is a living, growing, and sometimes changing thing. Apparently, the parentage of George T. Pollard is under some dispute. Sometimes, FamilySearch indicates his mother was Anne Hughes, granddaughter of Cleopatra Powhatan and Opechancanough. At other times, it indicates Anne Hughes was a daughter of British colonists. The Powhatan connection is the current version of the family tree in the database, but this has been fluid. Exercising poetic (and prosaic) license, I have opted for the more colorful connection to Pocahontas and Powhatan. I will also submit that Mr. Walter Ashby Plecker specifically identified the Goins name as a Melungeon, not just a mulatto name, which would imply an element of American Indian heritage in addition to Caucasian and African. As Virginia State Register, he had full access to all the vital records of the Commonwealth, and he appears to have been a person given to great care regarding detail, so I am relatively comfortable with the idea that the Goins/Goin/Gowin/Gowan/Goyne/Gowen line has an American Indian root, implying that Anne Hughes, George T. Pollard’s mother, was likely Powhatan’s great granddaughter.

General sources:

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Websites:

<http://historicjamestowne.org/history/pocahontas/john-smith/>

[http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Virginia s First Africans#start entry](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Virginia_s_First_Africans#start_entry)

<http://project1619.org/2.html>

<http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/CLAY/2010-04/1271280132>

Specific Footnotes:

[1] The power and financial success of the British East India Company was legendary. The lavish lifestyle of its field managers was evidenced in their twist of the phrase "alas and alakh" into "a lass and alakh a day" representing what a field manager should expect to "earn" daily. To clarify, an alakh was a measure of money - 100,000 rupees, which was approximately 1,000 pounds Stirling, a princely sum then to earn in a year, much less a day. A lass, of course, is a young woman. This was meant to be a joke and would not have been funny if precisely true. But, then it also would not have been funny if it had not at least resembled the truth.

[2] "The Lost Colony and Jamestown Droughts", by Stahle, Cleveland, Blanton, Threl, and Gay, "Science" magazine, April, 1998.

[3] Powhatan was not his name, that was more of a title, referring to the name of his tribe. In the latter part of his life, Chief Powhatan lived near the falls of the James River just west of present day Richmond. Powhatan County, Virginia, named for him, is situated just west of Henrico County, of which Richmond is county seat.

[4] Reverse calculation using the "Builder's Old Measurement" formula, which was the method used in England in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries for calculating cargo capacity of a ship. It estimates the tonnage of a ship based on length and maximum beam. The formula is:

Tonnage = $\frac{((\text{Length} - (\text{Beam} \times 3/5)) \times \text{Beam} \times \text{Beam}/2)}{94}$ where:

Length is the length in feet from stem to sternpost; and Beam is the maximum beam, in feet.

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Builder%27s_Old_Measurement

[5] Missing from *The Treasurer's* cargo in 1610 was a copy of the King James Bible - though James I was then monarch of the British Empire and namesake of the Colony, the bible he commissioned would not be completed until a year later.

[6] This fact is of no consequence to this narrative but is interesting to the author as he happened to have lived in Recife, Brazil for more than ten months in 1977 and 1978.

[7] From the website of Project 1619, a non-profit established to preserve the memory of this first landing of African slaves in the British colonies in August 1619.

<http://www.project1619.org/2.html>

[8] Samuel Argall was not *The Treasurer's* captain on this voyage, but he was part-owner of the ship. Argall had moved up in the world and had recently served as governor of the Colony from 1617 through April of 1619. He went on in 1620 to command a ship in Britain's attack on Algiers, and in 1622 was appointed Admiral of New England and knighted by King James I.

Sir Samuel Argall lead a large fleet in a failed attack on the Spanish port of Cadiz and died the following year at sea. (www.encyclopediavirginia.org)

[9] Letter from John Rolfe to Sir Edwin Sandys, Treasurer of the Virginia Company of London, dated "January, 1619/20".

[10] Opechancanough was said to have been nearly 100 years old and unable to walk unassisted when he was shot in the back by one of his guards.
<http://www.virtualjamestown.org/Opechancanough.html>

After his murder, he was succeeded as chief of the Powhatan Confederacy by one of his sons, Nectowance, who after ruling for nine years was succeeded by his son, Totopotomoi, Chief of the Pamunkey Tribe. Totopotomoi died in the Battle of Bloody Run near present day Richmond in 1656 with his Confederacy fighting in alliance with Colonists against other native Americans. Totopotomoi was my 10th great grandfather (through a different line than any detailed here - that of my father's father rather than his mother), and Nectowance was my 11th great grandfather. Totopotomoi's great-great granddaughter married Patrick Henry, making the firebrand of the Revolution my 3rd cousin 8 times removed's husband.

[11] 330 years after Margaret Cornish was whipped at the whipping post, Greg Allman wrote his song, "The Whipping Post". In 2004, Rolling Stone called the 22-minute live version of that song "the finest live rock performance ever committed to vinyl." But the song was not about Margaret Cornish: "I've been run down and I've been lied to. And I don't know why I let that mean woman make me a fool . . . Sometimes I feel like I like I been tied to the whippin' post. Good Lord, I feel like I'm dying." Yes, this is clearly more apropos of John Gowen than Margaret Cornish. Of the two, he was easily the more sympathetic. ("Whipping Post". *Rolling Stone*. 2004-12-09. Also, Kemp, Mark, 2002-07-16. "The Allman Brothers Band: Live at Fillmore East". *Rolling Stone*.)

[12] The Supreme Court's dreadful 1857 Dred Scott decision is widely considered its worst ever, declaring, among other things, that a free black man had no standing to sue in federal court as he could not be a citizen. That stain on the Supreme Court could have been avoided had it simply followed the then old precedent established more than two centuries earlier in the case of Gowen v Cornish in colonial Jamestown, Virginia.

[13] Edward Doty: www.mayflowerhistory.com; www.edward-doty.org
This website devoted to Edward Doty notes that 144 of his descendants served in the American Revolution.

A "First Encounter" monument plaque was erected in 1920 on First Encounter Beach, Cape Cod Bay that includes his name (spelled Dotey in this instance):

ON THIS SPOT
HOSTILE INDIANS
HAD THEIR
FIRST ENCOUNTER

DECEMBER 8, 1620

WITH

MYLES STANDISH JOHN CARVER
WILLIAM BRADFORD JOHN TILLEY
EDWARD WINSLOW JOHN HOWLAND
EDWARD TILLEY RICHARD WARREN
STEPHEN HOPKINS EDWARD DOTEY
JOHN ALLERTON THOMAS ENGLISH
MASTER MATE CLARK MASTER GUNNER COPIN
AND THREE SAILORS
OF THE MAYFLOWER COMPANY

In 2001, an additional plaque was erected much nearer the parking lot which reads:

NEAR THIS SITE
THE NAUSET TRIBE
OF THE
WAMPANOAG NATION
SEEKING TO PROTECT THEMSELVES
AND THEIR CULTURE
HAD THEIR
FIRST ENCOUNTER

(The balance of the inscription is same as the original)

The trail to the original plaque is said to be not maintained these days so few visitors see it. In this "First Encounter" a scouting party of colonists had been searching for a suitable location for their settlement when the Nauset surprised their camp in an early morning attack. Shots were fired, and arrows loosed, but apparently to no effect as no casualties on either side were reported. The leader of the Puritans' party was Capt. Myles Standish.

Recognizing their own lack of military experience and anticipating a need for a military capability, the Puritans had sought to hire an experienced military leader before embarking. Standish was not their first choice. Proving that celebrity and a book deal going hand in hand is no modern phenomenon, Capt. John Smith had published his "The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia" in 1612 and with that had gained some notoriety (he later published his "Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles and True Travels of Captain John Smith" in 1624 - part geography text, part travelogue, and part how-to book for would be colonizers, this book is considered the initiating work of American literature). To the Puritans, Smith with his Indian fighting experience and swashbuckling swagger and bravado was the obvious pick, so they tried to hire him for the job. But Smith wanted too much money. The Pilgrims settled on Standish.

As an aside, Capt. Myles Standish was one of my 11th great grandfathers though one of my father's father's mother's lines. From my great grandmother Iva Shifflet, the line to Standish traces then through three more Shifflets and then three Lambs to Susanna Cary, daughter of

Mary Standish who was daughter of Myles Standish's son Lt. Josiah Standish. Along with Edward Doty, Myles Standish was another of the 41 signers of the Mayflower Compact.

[14] *Jamestown Council and General Court Records* dated March 31, 1641:

"Whereas it appeareth to the court that John Gowen, being a negro servant unto William Evans, was permitted by his said master to keep hogs and make the best benefit thereof to himself provided that the said Evans might have half the increase which was accordingly rendered unto him by the said negro and the other half reserved for his own benefit: And whereas the said negro having a young child of a negro woman belonging to Lieut. Robert Sheppard which he desired should be made a Christian and be taught and exercised in the church of England, by reason whereof he, the said negro did for his said child purchase its freedom of Lieut. Sheppard with the good liking and consent of Tho: Gooman's overseer as by the deposition of the said Sheppard and Evans appears, the court hath therefore ordered that the child shall be free from the said Evans or his assigns and to be and remain at the disposing and education of the said Gowen and the child's godfather who undertake then to see it brought up in the Christian religion as aforesaid."

<http://www.virtualjamestown.org/practise.html>

[15] Here referencing this part of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

[16] Per notes posted on the familysearch.org genealogical website, the bottom four feet of the stone chimney of "Trader" John Hughes' cabin survived as recently as 1999, and this ruin is located near a hiking trail around Otter Lake at coordinates 37.55627 degrees North Latitude by 79.35203 degrees West Longitude. That chimney was a well-established landmark, used in local surveys for years.

Lynchburg, county seat of Amherst County, Virginia, was founded in 1786 by James Lynch, who had established a ferry on the James River there in the 1740s. He was a Quaker and an abolitionist who freed his slaves during his lifetime. His brother, Charles Lynch, was a colonel in the Virginia militia during the Revolution and led a battalion against the British in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. He also led an extrajudicial court that handed down famously harsh judgements against both Loyalists and runaway or otherwise unruly slaves. It is thought that the etymology of the verb "lynch" and the nouns "lynch law" and "lynch mob" trace to his name (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=lynch>).

In the Civil War, Amherst County, Virginia produced more Confederate soldiers per capita for the CSA than any other county in all the South, and Lynchburg was the only Virginia city that was not recaptured by the US before the end of the war. Situated 20 miles west of Appomattox Courthouse, its surrender did not occur until three days after the war was over in Virginia with the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia.

[17] Minutes of the old Stony Creek Primitive Baptist Church located in Fort Blackmore Virginia 1801-1814, volume 2, page 26 37, September 1813. This record is kept in the Palmer Room of the library in Kingsport, Tn. and is referenced by Jack Goins' Melungeon and Appalachian research (http://jackgoins.blogspot.com/2013/08/update-on-stony-creek-church-minutes_12.html).

[18] Plecker letter to county recorders, 1943:
http://edu.lva.virginia.gov/online_classroom/shaping_the_constitution/doc/plecker_letter.

[19] Lombardo, P. (2000). "Eugenic Laws Against Race Mixing". Archive on American Eugenics Movement Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory
(<http://vector.cshl.org/html/eugenics/essay7text.html>)

[20] Entry for "motley", www.dictionary.com.

The two relevant lines of genealogy:

William Mark Motley, is the son of
Billy Motley (b. 1928 Jessamine Cnty., Ky., d. 2004 Scott Cnty, Ky), son of
Jewell Reynolds (b. 1912 Jessamine Cnty., Ky., d. 1985 Fayette Cnty., Ky.), daughter of
Melvin Reynolds (b. 1882 Jessamine Cnty., Ky., d. 1954 Jessamine Cnty., Ky.), son of
Henry A. Reynolds (b. 1859 Jessamine Cnty., Ky., d. after 1910 Ky.), son of
John W. "Creek John" Reynolds (b. 1833 Jessamine Cnty., Ky, d. after 1880 Ky.), son of
Patsy Goin (b. 1804 Madison Cnty., Ky., d. 1860 Ky.), daughter of
Francis Gowin (b. 1778, Bedford, Virginia, d. 1853 Garrard Cnty., Ky.) son of
Pvt. Joseph Henry Gowan (b. 1759 Virginia Colony, d. 1822 Howard Cnty, MO), and **Judith Pollard** (b. 1760 Bedford Cnty, Virginia Colony, d. 1835 Howard Cnty., MO)

Pvt Joseph Henry Gowan was the son of
James Wm Gowen (b. 1730 Hanover, Va., d. 1805 Madison Cnty., Ky.), son of
John Frederick Gowen (b. 1702 Fairfax Cnty, Va., d. 1764 Lunenburg Cnty., Va.) son of
William Gowen Sr. (b. 1680 York Cnty., Va., d. 1726 Stafford Cnty., Va.), son of
Thomas Christopher Gowen (b. 1655 Yorktown, York Cnty., Va., d. 1726 Stafford Cnty., Va.),
son of
Michael (Mihil) Gowen (b. 1635 James City, Va., d. 1717 James City, Va), son of
John Gowen (b. abt 1615 Angola, Africa, d. after 1700)

And Judith Pollard was daughter of
Francis Pollard (b. 1721 Lunenburg Cnty., Va., d. 1771 Bedford Cnty. Va.), son of
George T. Pollard (b. 1702 Amelia Cnty., Va., d. 1765 Amelia Cnty., Va.), son of
Anne Hughes (b. 1652 Va., d. 1750 Va.) daughter of
"Trader" John Hughes and Princess Niketi Powhatan:
Princess Niketi Powhatan (b. 1625 Va., d. 1720 Va.), was daughter of
Princess Matchanana Cleopatra Powhatan (b. abt 1600 Va., d. 1650 Va.), daughter of
Chief Wahunsenacawh Powhatan (b. 1545 Va., d. 1618 Va.)

Endnote: "23 and Me"

This tale referenced a total of 37 individuals by name. My familial connection to 20 of them is detailed in the narrative. One of those was my grandmother (Jewel Motley), 17 were direct great grandparents of some order, and two were my 12th great aunt and uncle: Pocahontas and John Rolfe. But through one of my father's-father's-father's lines, Pocahontas and John Rolfe were also my 11th great-grandparents.

Of the 17 individuals for which no familial relation was established above, no currently known family connection to me exists for only ten: the three Roberts (Robert Sweet, Lt. Robert Sheppard, and Robert Smith), Dr. Samuel Johnson, Helen of Troy (possibly mythological rather than historical), the two "Sisters" from Scott County Virginia (Sister Kitchen and Sister Stallard), Constance Hopkins from the Plymouth Colony (who married neither of her feuding would-be suitors), William Evans, and Joseph Heller, the author of "Catch 22".

My familial connections to the other seven persons referenced herein - the three captains, the regent, the President, and the white supremacist - are as follows (in order of appearance, each with their familysearch.org ID):

Edmund Burke: my 6th cousin, 9 times removed. (LCR9-TXW)

King James I, Stuart, King of England (formerly King James VI of Scotland), my second cousin, 11 times removed. (9HBC-J4V; his grandparents, King James Stuart V of Scotland and Euphemia Elphinstone were my 12th great grandparents.)

Capt. John Smith: my 1st cousin, 12 times removed. (LTNF-9SF)

Capt. Samuel Argall: my 3rd cousin, 11 times removed. (L5CP-ZJK; he later became governor of the Virginia Colony; see footnote 8)

Capt. John Colyn Jope: husband of my 5th cousin, 11 times removed. (K8Y1-S69)

Abraham Lincoln (KND1-7PN; referenced in the poem: "Later would Abraham fervently pray . . .") was my 6th cousin, 5 times removed. Our common ancestors were his 5th great-grandparents (through his mother, Nancy Hanks) and my 10th great-grandparents: Colonel Richard Henry Lee I (also known as "The Immigrant" to distinguish him from several descendants of the same name) and Ann Owen Constable Lee. Colonel Richard Henry Lee was originally a Shropshire lad, born in 1617 in Shropshire, England. He immigrated to the Virginia Colony in 1639, and married Ann Constable in Jamestown in 1641. They lived in Martin's Hundred and survived Opechancanough's third massacre. He was an Indian trader, planter, lawyer, member of the House of Burgess, Attorney General of the Colony, Secretary of State of the Colony, Justice, Sheriff of York County, and a colonel in the colonial militia. At the time of his death, Colonel Richard Henry Lee I was the largest landholder and possibly the richest man in Virginia. He was a descendant of 18 of the 25 Barons named as Magna Carta sureties in that document. Known as "The Immigrant", he was the first member of the Lee family to live in America. His descendants include the brothers Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee, both signers of the Declaration of Independence, Revolutionary War

Major General Henry "Lighthorse Harry" Lee III, "Lighthorse Harry" Lee's son General Robert E. Lee, President Zachary Taylor, and President Abraham Lincoln. (Yes, this means Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee were distant cousins.) In June of 1776, the Richard Henry Lee that signed The Declaration of Independence put forth the motion to the Second Continental Congress to declare independence from England. We celebrate July 4, the day the language of The Declaration of Independence was approved, but for the participants at the time, the notable date was June 2, the day the Lee Resolution was adopted. (Each of these descendants of Richard Henry Lee I is a distant cousin to me).

Walter Ashby Plecker: husband of my 5th cousin 4 times removed. (KCMX-3W2)

Other notable Virginia relatives include these who were not part of this particular story: Patrick Henry (L5PD-1BN, my 3rd cousin 8 times removed), President Thomas Jefferson (L7RV-G3V, my 4th cousin 8 times removed's husband), and President George Washington (KNDX-MKG, my 1st cousin 10 times removed).

* * *

Of 35 individuals referenced herein, 20 were direct line grandparents, and six others were between 1st and 6th cousins, variously removed. However, footnotes 10 and 13 also identified three other great-something grandparents: Nectowance, Totopotomoi, and Capt. Myles Standish (albeit, each in different lines of genealogy than that noted in the narrative).

Human DNA consists of 23 pairs of chromosomes. Exactly 23 of the 35 (+3) named persons in the tale woven here (including the three buried in the footnotes) were my documented, direct line grandparents of one degree or another. (This is, incidentally, not a large proportion of anyone's ancestors. If one's progenitors include no cousins marrying cousins - and they usually do to some degree - the number of grandparents through just the 15th generation, i.e., through 13th great grandparents, is 65,534. Therefore, these 23 direct ancestors identified here represent only about one third of one percent of my total ancestry through that level, leaving about 99.65% here unaccounted.)

Racial/ethnic heritage has been a hot topic of late thanks to presumptive 2020 presidential contender Elizabeth Warren. Having identified herself for nine years as a racial minority - Native American - in a professional directory during which time she was hired as a law professor at Harvard and having more recently come under criticism for potentially stretching that claim, last month she released a DNA study that asserted she was likely between 1/64th and 1/1024th Native American - in other words, most likely in the 7th generation (0.39%), plus or minus two generations.

Our Walter Plecker of Virginia along with Naomi Drake, Registrar of the Bureau of Vital Statistics for the City of New Orleans, were the most prominent proponents of the "one drop rule" from the 1920s through the 1950s. From 1910 through 1936, nine states in addition to Virginia adopted statutes codifying the "one-drop rule" into law. Some thought this binary view of racial heritage largely faded away when these various state laws were overturned in the 1960s and 1970s. But just last month, in reporting Senator Warren's DNA announcement, the news arms of ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS each asserted this vindicated her earlier claim of being a Native American. Apparently, the "one drop rule" is alive and quite well today and any thoughts of its demise have been . . . exaggerated.