The King's Silver…or not!

It doesn't really make much difference whether a little Episcopal church in Botetourt County now owns or ever did possess a set of communion silver from the eighteenth century, a gift from King George, III. However, for a few of us on the church's history committee, this question has stimulated our curiosity and inspired us to search for the truth behind this controversial claim. If we can get to the bottom of this research question, we may also learn, not insignificantly, about an important and little known chapter of Virginia history.

Historians have generally avoided the topic of religious conflict between Anglicans and Presbyterians (and other dissenters) leading up to the Revolutionary War. And, very little has been written about Loyalists (Tories) on the Virginia frontier, or about the awkward circumstances faced by those who continued to feel loyalty and affection to British culture during the transition from colony to republic. Most of us don't really understand the strange mixture of politics and religion that characterized the settlement of Virginia's western counties, and we're not sure how to describe it.

In Fincastle, Virginia, local historians point with pride to the fact that their little settlement was chosen as the site for the first church, glebe and court house for Botetourt County, established in 1770, and thus the center of government for a region reaching as far as the Mississippi. However, these same historians are not so sure what to say about the decline of the church in Botetourt Parish, or about those few families who remained loyal to the Anglican form of worship.

Patriotism generally means taking pride in our **dissent from**…and not to our **loyalty to** the King of England. The great majority of settlers in the region were dissenters, who had no loyalty or fondness for the Anglican (established) Church, and they were eager to set up their own churches. Back in 1770, only a small percentage of the population in Botetourt County had been raised as Anglicans and remained loyal to their English heritage and faith. In order to discover whether the first church ever had a silver

communion service, it would be helpful to find out more about those families who cared enough to preserve the traditions of the Church of England.

Before the Revolution, many dissenting Presbyterians served as members of the Anglican Vestry, but only because it was politically expedient to do so. Once the colonies severed ties with England, dissenters began to openly profess their true church affiliation and abandon the Anglican Church. During the decade between 1770 and 1780, it seems that there were, however, two main reasons why dissenters (mainly Presbyterians) claimed to be members of the Established Church: to have an Anglican clergyman perform marriages, and to be eligible to hold office. Loyalists and true Anglicans had to keep a low profile during the war and for many decades to follow.

Anglican clergy faced an especially difficult challenge. Because of the angry sentiment directed against the British government, Rev. Adam Smyth, even though he had made every effort to demonstrate his support for the patriotic cause, never received his salary, and he died a bitter man.

By the 1790s, the original church building had been abandoned, to be taken over by Presbyterians in the early nineteenth century. The few remaining loyal Anglicans found refuge in private homes, particularly with the Breckinridge family. According to most accounts, very little information survived concerning the identity of these loyal Anglican parishioners. We have no list of members, no vestry minutes, no description of services held, or any mention of the existence of a silver communion service. If there were such a communion set, one can only assume that the few remaining Anglicans put them to good use in worship services over many decades, preserved them, and then brought them out again in 1837, when a new vestry and a new Protestant Episcopal Church was formed. Here are some arguments to support that claim.

According to a story passed down by parishioners, Lord Botetourt, Royal Governor of Virginia, sent a silver communion set to the Vestry and Trustees of the newly formed Botetourt Parish in 1770, as a gift authorized by King George, III, himself. Some say that

the silver may have actually been older, from the reign of King George, II, who died in 1760. (Obviously, George II could not have had any part in this gift, but it is possible that the silver service could have dated from his reign.) No description of this silver has survived, so no one can say for certain if it was solid silver or plated, whether it was made in Williamsburg or in England, or whether it had a royal seal. The communion service that is now in use at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, in Fincastle, could, in fact, be the same set that was originally provided to the church back in the 1770's, but we cannot be sure. This set is plated, not solid silver, and has no marks to trace back to a royal silversmith, thus prompting arguments and debate about its provenance and authenticity.

Parish records from the early years are missing, in great part due to a fire at Grove Hill, home of the Breckinridge family, in 1909, consuming a wealth of irreplaceable documents and artifacts. The earliest parish document to survive is a ledger containing lists of baptisms, confirmations, funerals, and members…from 1849. Another stash of records was lost in 1959, when Greenfield, home of the Preston family, fell victim to a devastating fire.

Various court house records have survived, preserving vital information about deeds to land and buildings, but nothing to shed light on the existence of a set of communion silver. Some scholars have suggested the possibility that our original communion service might have been sold to pay off debts, in the 1780's – especially to pay for the services of the Rev. Adam Smyth, or that perhaps the Yankees found them in buried treasure during the Civil War. Remarkably, however, the story persists… that the communion service survived both of those threats, and that what we have today has been preserved for about 245 years.

In the 1940s, the first woman to serve on the vestry of St. Mark's Church, Maude Hopkins, began to stir up interest in this remarkable story. According to a variety of sources, Mrs. Hopkins sent off the communion service to Tiffany's in New York to have the set repaired and appraised. Although a copy of the report from Tiffany's has yet to come to light, Mrs. Hopkins reported that the experts in New York declared the silver to

be from the eighteenth century (1780-90's), and thus authentic and quite valuable. We do not know what they reported concerning royal marks, or even if the set was solid or plated.

By 1970, Mrs. Hopkins was still doing her best to attract the world's attention to the church's remarkable possession, by contacting the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and arranging to have the set featured in a special exhibit on Colonial church silver. We have tracked down a publication produced by the Museum, listing our set as being from the eighteenth century, and accompanied with a nice photograph. (see attachment)

During the thirty or so years while Mrs. Hopkins promoted this interesting story, other members of the church and community may have begun to express doubts. In 1955, Miss Mary Peck, who taught history for many years at Longwood College, began to do some thorough and careful research into the matter, and contacted various experts, including the Historiographer for the Diocese of Virginia, Rev. Y. MacLaren Brydon. After corresponding for many months they reached the conclusion that the communion set was probably not colonial…but dated from the 1830's or '40's. Mary Peck shared her research with Harry Kessler in 1985.

It is hard to know how Miss Peck's research influenced the opinion of others around the parish, or whether she prompted, perhaps inadvertently, a series of rumors. The rumors include – 1) that the Presbyterians stole it; 2) that the Breckinridges sold it; 3) that the Yankees carried it off; or 4) that there never was any royal gift or fancy eighteenth century communion set! Fast forward to the twenty first century, and an attempt was made to put this controversy to rest by approaching Bob Miller, of Ken Farmer Auctions, to get his opinion. He stated, emphatically, that the set was definitely not a gift from the King of England…since it had no seal, and since it was silver plated! One might wonder why the experts at Tiffany's and at Ken Farmer's Auction have reached such different conclusions.

Now armed with specific questions, I have started looking for the missing pieces to this puzzle - in libraries, family archives, interviews, and by searching again through the

parish records (now scanned and available electronically). In the Virginia Room, at the main branch of the Roanoke City Library, I found a wonderful book called Notes on the Breckenridge Family, by Malcolm W. Bryan, III. His research helps to identify those families loyal to Anglican traditions, making the point that James Breckenridge's wife, Anne Selden, may have been responsible for steering the Breckinridge family away from the Presbyterian faith. According to Bryan,

> …the Breckenridge family had always embraced the Presbyterian faith… Ann Selden was born an Anglican and died an Episcopalian. The latter denomination was formed during her lifetime…. It cannot be denied that her influence nurtured the Breckenridge loyalty to the church of the Selden family. Miles Selden, the uncle of Ann, was rector of St. John's Church in Henrico (Richmond) from 1752-1776. This, of course, indicated the existence of a strong conviction in the family which was transferred to the children of James and Ann, and which continued for many generations.

Not long after stumbling upon this book by Bryan, I happened to notice another historical account from a different branch of the Breckinridge family. Jane W. Breckinridge, another descendent who has obviously done thorough and careful research, wrote a paper called "Notes on Some Early Members of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Fincastle." I found her three page history in a batch of papers collected by Dottie Kessler, along with several other recorded histories, and was delighted to discover such a stash of missing information! Here is a long passage from her article:

> James Littlepage Woodville (1791-1848), my great-great grandfather, was undoubtedly the moving spirit in the 1820s revival of the Fincastle Episcopal church. (His middle name is incorrectly given as Stephenson on the first Vestry plaque at St. Mark's.) Originally from Culpeper, he had studied law in Richmond with Andrew Stephenson and had moved first to Sweet Springs, where he married Mary Sophia Lewis, daughter of the spa owner there. In 1819 or so the young couple moved to Fincastle. Woodville immediately established a law practice and became active in community affairs. He joined the Fincastle Masonic Lodge and Captain Cary Breckinridge's militia company; represented Botetourt County in the Virginia House of Delegates (1825-26); and later served as president of the trustees of Botetourt Seminary.

James Littlepage Woodville had grown up in a devout Episcopal household. His grandfather was the Reverend James Stevenson (died 1909), whose ordination certificate is pictured in Katharine Brown's *Hills of the Lord*. His father was the Reverend John Woodville, a Greek and Latin scholar who was rector of St. George's Parish, Spotsylvania County (1792-94) and director of the Fredericksburg Academy. In 1794 the Reverend John Woodville traded parishes with Stevenson, his father-in-law (from St. George's to St, Mark's in Fincastle) and thereafter served in Culpeper until his death in 1834. He was a dedicated Mason, apparently belonging to the Fredericksburg Lodge of which George Washington was a member, and at his own particular request was interred in the Old Mason's Burying Ground there.

After his move to Western Virginia, James Littlepage Woodville must have been deeply affected by his distance from an Episcopal Church. His wife, Mary Sophia, was from the Presbyterian Lewis family of Sweet Springs but had Episcopal ties in Fincastle – her mother was a sister of John Breckinridge. Like the Lewises, the Breckinridges and Prestons were originally Presbyterians but increasingly were embracing Anglicanism. These connections and the possibility of association with an Episcopal Church may have persuaded the Woodvilles to move to Fincastle.

James Littlepage Woodville was ideally situated to assume leadership in the revival of the Botetourt Parish church, a fact borne out by family correspondence and recorded history. The Reverent Nicholas Cobbs, a friend of the Culpeper Woodvilles, may have begun his "fifth Sunday" ministry in Fincastle (probably at "Grove Hill") through Woodville's intercession. On at least one occasion in the 1830s the Reverend John Walker Woodville of Fredericksburg (James L.'s younger brother) visited Fincastle and conducted services.

James Littlepage Woodville's stature in the Fincastle community was probably enhanced by his political connections as well as his ecclesiastical ones: he was a nephew of Andrew Stephenson (Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives 1928-34 and U.S. Minister to England 1836-41). Stevenson was a regular and highly visible visitor to the spas at White Sulphur and Sweet Springs and an occasional visitor to the Woodvilles in Fincastle. And Mary Sophia Lewis Woodville was a niece of two Virginia governors: James Patton Preston (1816-19) and Dr. John Floyd (1830-34).

> When construction of the present Fincastle church began in 1837, James L. Woodville was a member of the first board of trustees and first vestry. Family tradition has it that the church's new name was chosen in honor of St. Mark's of Culpeper.
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> About 1838, James L. Woodville moved to Buchanan with his widowed mother and conveyed his house in Fincastle to his son (Lot 71 on the 1880 map). In 1885 Trinity Church, Woodville Parish, was organized in Buchanan, and Woodville again was a member of the first board of trustees and first vestry. According to one Episcopal historian, the parish name was chosen to honor his late father, the Reverend John Woodville of Culpeper. However, it seems likely that the honor was intended for James Littlepage Woodville.

After finding all this wonderful information from Jane Breckinridge, I have new clues that should help me uncover other letters, journals and hidden treasures. Many of the present parishioners at St. Mark's may have connections to the founding families, with names such as Breckinridge, Preston, Woodville, and Lewis. In fact, there are descendants scattered through the land, with names that now bear no resemblance to the original surnames. For example, I happen to be a descendent of Andrew Lewis, Martha Burwell, Sarah Breckinridge, and Robert Harvey, but you'd never know that from my name. The point is that there may be other researchers working on the history of this community, and that someone, somewhere may have some missing information about the communion silver!

It may be important to remember that many Anglicans migrated into Botetourt County from the eastern tidewater region during the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. One example is that of Martha Burwell, who moved to Fincastle after suffering financial losses, since the soil back east had been depleted and could no longer support tobacco farming and hundreds of slaves. She set up a more modest household (only fifty slaves) and introduced many of the social customs of the Tidewater gentry.

The influx of Tidewater gentry helped create a seedbed of Protestant Episcopalians who helped bring the church back to life in the 1830s. Malcolm W. Bryan noted that the vestry members of St. Mark's, in 1837, included Edward Watts, George P. Tayloe, and William

Langhorne. "These gentlemen mentioned above, ably assisted by their wives (Mrs. Watts was the daughter of James Breckenridge) later were the nucleus of St. John's Episcopal Church in Roanoke, Virginia." Another thread that helps to explain how the Anglican church survived…concerns the devoted efforts of the Rev. Nicholas Cobbs, of Bedford County, Virginia. "The church in Botetourt owes its existence to 5th Sundays: i.e. to the days which Mr. Cobbs reserved for missionary work."

A daughter from one of a prominent Bedford family, Leticia M. Burwell, wrote a memoir in 1895 called A Girls Life before the War, in which she described her childhood visits to Fincastle, and to the home of Mrs. Burwell. She left us this wonderful description of Rustic Lodge.

> Not far from Greenfield was a place called Rustic Lodge. This house, surrounded by a forest of grand old oaks, was not large or handsome. But its inmates were ladies and gentlemen of the old English style.
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> The grandmother, Mrs. Burwell, about ninety years of age, had in her youth been one of the belles at the Williamsburg court in old colonial days. A daughter of Sir Dudley Digges, and descended from English nobility, she had been accustomed to the best society. Her manners and conversation were dignified and attractive.
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> Among reminiscences of colonial times she remembered Lord Botetourt, of whom she related interesting incidents.
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> The son of this old lady, about sixty years of age, and the proprietor of the estate, was a true picture of the old English gentleman. His manners, conversation, thread-cambric shirt-frills, cuffs, and long queue tied with a black ribbon, made the picture complete. His two daughters, young ladies of refinement, had been brought up by their aunt and grandmother to observe strictly all the proprieties of life.
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> This establishment was proverbial for its order and method, the most systematic rules being in force everywhere. The meals were served punctually at the same instant every day. Old Aunt Nelly always dressed and undressed her mistress at the same hour. The cook's gentle "tapping at the chamber door" called the mistress to an interview with that functionary at the same moment every morning. – an interview which, ;lasting half an hour, and never being repeated during the day, resulted in the choicest dinners, breakfasts and suppers.

Exactly at the same hour every morning the old gentleman's horse was saddled, and he entered the neighboring village so promptly as to enable some of the inhabitants to set their clocks by him.

This family had possessed great wealth in eastern Virginia during the colonial government, under which many of its members held high offices.

But impoverished by high living, entertaining company, and a heavy British debt, they had been reduced in their possessions to about fifty Negroes, with only money enough to purchase this plantation, upon which they had retired from the gay and charming society of Williamsburg. They carried with them, however, some remains of their former grandeur: old silver, old jewelry, old books, old and well-trained servants, and an old English coach which was the curiosity of all vehicular curiosities. How the family ever climbed into it, or got out of it, and how the driver ever reached the dizzy height upon which he sat, was the mystery of my childhood.

But although egg shaped and suspended in mid-air, this coach had doubtless, in its day, been one of considerable renown, drawn by four horses, with footmen, postilion, and driver in English livery.

How sad must have been its reflections on finding itself shorn of these respectable surroundings, and, after the Revolution, drawn by two republican horses, with footman and a driver dressed in republican jeans!

A great-uncle of this family, unlike the coach, never would become republicanized; and his obstinate loyalty to the English crown, with his devotion to everything English, gained for him the title "English Louis," by which name he is spoken of in the family to this day. An old lady told me not long ago that she remembered, when a child, the arrival of "English Louis" at Rustic one night, and his conversation as they sat around the fire – how he deplored a republican form of government, and the misfortunes which would result from it, saying: "All may go smoothly for about seventy years, when civil war will set it. First it will be about these negro slaves we have around us, and after that it will be something else." …And how true "English Louis'" prediction has proven. Doubtless this gentleman was avoided and proscribed on account of his English proclivities. For at that day the spirit of republicanism and hatred to England ran high; so that an old gentleman – one of our relatives whom I could well remember – actually took from his parlor walls his coat of arms, which had been brought by his grandfather from England, and, carrying it out in his yard, built a fire, and, collecting his children around it to see it burn, said: "Thus let everything English perish!"

> Should I say what I think of this proceeding I would not be considered, perhaps, a true republican patriot.

Jane Breckinridge, borrowing from the work of Katharine Brown, historiographer of the Diocese of Southwest Virginia, stated that "the revival of the Fincastle church began about 1820 with eleven members." Then she lists the "probable communicants of Botetourt Parish in 1920":

> …General James and Ann Cary Selden Breckinridge. (She was from an Episcopalian family in Hampton)
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> …Henry W. and Matilda Breckinridge Bowyer. (She was a sister of General James Breckinridge and was 21 in 1820, the year she married Henry W. Bowyer.)
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> …Cary, Mary Ann, James, Robert, and John Breckinridge, unmarried children of General James Breckinridge. (In 1820 their ages ranged from 11 to 24.)
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> …James Littlepage and Mary Sophia Lewis Woodville. (They and their infant son would have become active in the church soon after their move to Fincastle.)

One other way to gain insights into the distribution of Anglicans in Virginia during the transition from Pre-revolutionary days to the Republic is to study some of the histories of counties to east of Botetourt, such as Franklin or Bedford. T. Keister Greer wrote a paper on Franklin County while an undergraduate at the University of Virginia, in 1950, and continued to expand on his research throughout his life time. In his book entitled Genesis of a Virginia Frontier: The Origins of Franklin County, Virginia, 1740-1785, he described a situation very much like what we've found to have existed in Botetourt County.

> When the Revolution ended, the Anglican Church was scarcely alive. Official disestablishment administered the *coup de grace*. The church properties were confiscated; glebes all over Virginia were sold or taken over by other denominations. The condition of the Church in Halifax County may be considered typical. In 1794, of four pre-war Anglican churches, one was a dwelling, one a Baptist Church, a third was a stable, and the other had been burned. So complete was the fall of the Church of England that in 1840 the Episcopal Church had but "eight

> communicants, and they all females, in the three counties of Pittsylvania, Franklin, and Henry."

However, through his persistent efforts, Mr. Greer was able to find convincing evidence that one of the early Anglican churches survived, and had been used by Baptists for many, many years. This church is believed to have been built in 1769, within a year or so of the church in Fincastle. Here is the conclusion Greer reaches, concerning the influence of Anglicans in Piedmont Virginia.

> The significance of the discovery of an Episcopal Church erected in Franklin County while Virginia was still a royal colony is twofold. First, the Old Chapel Church stands as an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual Anglicanism which permeated the Piedmont Frontier in Virginia, a tangible refutation of the myth that the Church of England was restricted in its influence to the Tidewater. Second, this ancient church, unmarked and forgotten, comes as a welcome reminder that behind the modern façade of illegality, notoriety and democratic excess there was a Franklin County worthy of the old families who two centuries ago brought the common law and the prayer book to Chestnut Mountain and the Blackwater.

Turning our attention back to the families who faithfully kept St. Mark's alive during the twentieth century, we are fortunate that Dottie's Kessler kept a collection of church histories. Full of names and specific information, this one was written by Viola Painter, who was organist at St. Mark's for 42 years. Here are her "reflections":

> The following kept the "little Church" going: Louise Breckinridge (lovely soprano voice), Gwen Simmons, Nan Reid, Mary Ed Godwin, Helen and Fulton Waid (I took them in my car to every service) and Viola Painter. We had a service on the third Sunday of every month at four in the afternoon.
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> Bishop Jett would send down any minister that he could get to hold a service, sometimes one from Clifton Forge or Covington. If he could not get anyone then Bishop Jett, himself, would come. Sometimes his daughter, Mrs. Rogers, would attend with him and sing a solo to the Audience of Maude Hopkins and one or two others who would drop in to worship with us – namely Marie Housman, Hazeltine and Weir Thompson and F. A. Lewey.
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> In spite of the small congregation in the late 30s and early 40s, the church building underwent a renovation. A complete paint job… The

front brick patio…The addition of plaques on the walls honoring Emma Breckinridge Squires…The pews redone…The addition of carpets, etc., …The early vestry and so forth…

Much later the Sunday school addition was built with the aid of T.A.P. and was used for the first few years as their school.

Then, the church purchased the Annie Austin property (the large white house to the right of the church). This building was used for a few years as a youth center then was later torn down. The debris was cleared away and the ground smoothed to make a parking lot.

…In the '50s the Prestons moved back to the county and became very faithful members. Gertrude, John and Jane sang in the choir. Gertrude had a beautiful soprano voice. John and Jane also sang in the choir. John is responsible for the present Hammond organ that we now have. He was determined that Mary Ed and I should not have to wear out our legs pumping the old organ.

Then the congregation began to increase in number and the Bishop decided to assign a regular minister to the Fincastle and Buchanan churches. I remember several of the ministers very well. (The rectory was in Buchanan so they lived there.) In the '30s Minister Koch from Pulaski, Father MacCammond, Hugh White, who added the flags, and others whose names I do not remember.

Harry and Dottie Kessler moved back to Fincastle from Decatur, Georgia. Harry was a wonderful help in the pulpit, sometimes conducting the services himself and doing an excellent job. The services then were held every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Harry Kessler redesigned the side steps to the inside railing and altar which improved both the appearance and usefulness. Weir Thompson made two little corner tables, one of which I used in the organ corner. Weir also fixed the light at the church entrance and spot lights to shine on the church from his yard.

The new rug for the church was selected by Maude Hopkins, Nan Reid, and Gwen Simmons. The altar cloths were made by a Mrs. Tice or Roanoke. New pads were made for the kneeling step and for all of the pews in the church. Matching vases for flowers were placed on the altar. The choir section was moved by Hugh White from the opposite side to its present position in the church. Two benches were placed sideways so that the choir could face the audience.

The original wood stoves were moved and electric heat was installed. I know that the old organ was given to Mary Ed Godwin but I do not know what happened to the old wood stoves.

> Father Rutherford added new members, helped the choir to secure robes (with John Preston's financial backing) and added new chants and responses to the services. He could sing extremely well and enjoyed doing as much of the service as possible with the interchange between the part he sang and the choir. He added many other innovations to the various services such as the choir and congregation marching around the aisles carrying palm fronds on Palm Sunday.
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> This about brings up to date the arrival of Jacques Bossiere, who in my judgment the church is extremely lucky to have. He has been most faithful in coming by the nursing home to see me and to celebrate communion with me and Jack Albert's mother.
> My best wishes to all of you…your organist for 42 years. 1933-1975.

Finally, here are a few odds 'n ends I have located from among the vestry minutes. In August of 1970, under new business, it reads:

> Mrs. Hopkins expressed her feelings about using the silver tankard for communion regularly and asked that a motion be made to this effect. Such a motion was made and seconded. After some discussion, it was decided that this was a matter for the Vicar to decide. Another motion was made, seconded, and passed that it be left to him.

Here is an interesting comment from Cocke's history concerning the year 1950:

> St. Mark's still had no rector at the time of the 1950 Council was held in Covington, but Fulton T. Waid and Miss Mary E. Godwin were lay delegates. This was the first time in its history that St. Mark's had been represented at the annual Council by a woman. St. Mark's had 30 communicants, but the activities of the church were down to probably the lowest level in its history. Daily Offices were conducted only six times during the year, and Holy Communion had been celebrated the bare minimum of two times. (page 67)

Cocke, writing in 1969, gave a good summary of the state of the parish in 1836:

> In his report to the convention in 1836, the Rev. Mr. Wharton said, in part: "The officiating minister, since his removal to his Parish in August last, has preached regularly at two stated places – one at Fincastle, where he is indebted to the kindness of his Presbyterian and Methodist brethren

for the use of their houses of worship – the other at a free church in the south part of the county." The Parish in 1836 had 20 communicants. Lay delegates to the convention that year were Thomas N. Burwell and James L. Woodville. The lay delegates reported that $200 had been subscribed for the construction of a church.

On August 16, 1837, James M. Harvey and Alice, his wife, for the sum of $175, conveyed to Edward Watts of Oakland, James L. Woodville of Sweet Springs, Thomas Shanks of Boxwood, Thomas L. Burwell and Nathaniel Burwell of Rustic Lodge, Jeremiah Whitten, William Langhorne of Cloverdale, William M. Peyton of Elmwood, Jordan Anthony of Bedford, William H. Terrill of Roselawn, George P. Tayloe of Buena Vista, and Alexander P. Eskridge of Montgomery County title to the land in the Town of Fincastle upon which was erected the present St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The original deed may be seen in the church vestibule along with a memorial plaque on which the names of the vestrymen are inscribed.

The one connecting link between the original church in Fincastle and present St. Mark's is the silver communion service given to the first church by George III through the Royal Governor, Lord Botetourt. Mrs. Garland Hopkins, of Garland Orchards, Troutville, who is on the present vestry of St. Mark's, says that when the Presbyterians took over the Established Church building after the revolution, the George II communion service was kept at "Grove Hill," the Breckinridge home two miles north of Fincastle. One Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Henry Reid (Miss Nan Goodwin) had occasion to send the flagon to Tiffany's to have the handle repaired, and the renowned New York shop called it one of the finest pieces of George II silver in America.

"You are lucky it (the communion silver) was not seized by the Overseers of the Poor and sold after the State passed the act seizing all the property of every kind that was acquired by any parish prior to 1776." Dr. Brydon wrote to Miss Peck in May 1955. Perhaps this can be attributed to the Rev. Mr. Smyth who was a respected member of the Fincastle community both before and after the Revolution.

Also in 1969, in the Vestry minutes from October, Mrs. Hopkins made a report about the communion silver, "Mrs. Hopkins said that the Virginia Museum in Richmond would like to borrow some of St. Mark's communion silver to display in an exhibit of old church silver. Permission was deferred as there is no hurry." By a stroke of good fortune, I

found an insurance form dated July 3, 1970, with the names insured as "The Episcopal Churches in Botetourt County" and the total listed value for fine arts was only $1,875.00, which seems low considering that it covered all items in three churches (Trinity, Eagle Rock, and St. Mark's). Liability coverage included:

Buildings and Contents…$227,500

Additional Expense….$5,000

Fine Arts…….$1,875

The insurance estimate was indeed too low, for in March, 1971, an insurance agent, Mr. Cover, suggested a change to St. Mark's policy…

> …He suggested a continuation of blanket coverage for the three churches increased to the rates shown on the attached breakdown. It was noted that the Fine Arts coverage for St. Mark's was not enough. Mr. Cover was given a copy of the receipt from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts which showed that the communion service was insured by them for $2,000 when displayed in February and March of 1970 as a part of an exhibition titles Church Silver of Colonial Virginia. Mr. Cover thought this would be sufficient evidence of value and suggested that our Fine Arts coverage be increased $2,000 plus the $430 already shown on the schedule. St. Mark's and Trinity vestries voted to accept the coverage suggested.

After all of my research we are really not much closer to resolving this ongoing church controversy, but it is gratifying to bring together all these loose ends and give others a chance to see the details. Perhaps if this paper gets published onto the internet and widely distributed, we'll receive further clues that will prove things one way or the other. At least we'll all feel better informed about the struggles of this tiny church and of its effort to hold itself together for two and one half centuries, and of the devoted efforts of many to keep the faith alive. Whether or not we have the King's silver, we still have the church his Governor, Lord Botetourt, established, which survived the Revolution, the Civil War, and the relative isolation of this rural community. And we still have a great story to tell!