

# Merging History and Family – Our Connection with American Independence<sup>1</sup>

Eric Hyatt

In Qualla Elementary School I listened attentively – well, as attentively as I could anyway – about the Pilgrims and Puritans, and the ships they sailed in from England to colonize America. I learned about their desire for religious freedom in the new country they were about to settle. I remember learning about the terrible conditions they endured on those ships until they reached the “towns” to which they sailed. These “towns” were just settlements. Settlements with names like Jamestown and Plymouth. At that age I never really researched the important differences between the Puritans and Pilgrims, though I knew there were differences.

I took a school trip to Jamestown with my Father serving as a chaperone on a less than comfortable 50's era school bus. We also took a trip or two to the same destination on family vacations during my childhood. Learning about the settlers and their trip from England was interesting, but in some ways it always seemed distant - and almost abstract. These were our country's early founders, but that fact wasn't personal to me – and it didn't really become personal until I was an adult. It was then I learned one of those settlers was one of my ancestors – a young man of 22 whose name was Thomas Hyatt (he was born in 1612). He was from the Chipping Norton Parish, Oxfordshire area of England. Thomas married Kathryn Parsols in 1633. They left together for America the very next year.

Thomas and Kathryn were representatives of one of more than the 7100 Pilgrim families that sailed from Great Britain to The New Colony in the early 1600's. The ship they sailed on in 1634 was named the H.M.S. Bonaventure, and was part of a fleet owned by the Virginia Company. Their destination was Jamestown. Jamestown no longer seemed so abstract to me! I was also glad they were Pilgrims and *not* Puritans because though many of the Puritan ships sailed to Plymouth, about as many sailed to Barbados and to its many fields of sugar cane (and all I could think of was how hot and sticky Barbados must have been). How different the lives of his descendants would have been if Thomas had gone there!

After arriving in Jamestown, Thomas Hyatt and Kathryn went north to Ann Arundel County, Maryland where Thomas had acquired 400 acres of an area named “Aquia River” from a Valintine Peyton, and held another land patent believed to be about 500 acres acquired from Lord Baltimore. Near this time, Thomas and Kathryn gave birth to their first son, John, in 1635. Thomas died in Prince George's County, Maryland on September 9, 1656. His descendants would become numerous.

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks goes to Leo Moon for his earlier research that removed the “abstraction” for me!

In fact, one such noteworthy descendent was born 84 years later – Edward Hyatt. Edward – born in 1740 – would go on to help settle part of western North Carolina. Edward served as a patriot in the American Revolution, further helping remove the abstractness of history and merging the lines of history and family. I am related to Edward through his son Elisha and his grandson Robert Abel Lafayette, then from there through Samuel Leonidas, and thereafter my grandfather John Lafayette and finally my father John Shelton Hyatt, Sr. Edward is buried in the Hyatt Cemetery off of Olivet Church Road in Jackson County, North Carolina in Whittier.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to my first cousin Robert Hyatt for helping ensure the lineage is correct!