



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 008

Name: Woodson, Sarah

Dates: (- wp 17 Jan 1660/1)

Colonial Society: VA

Date added to ROA: Before 2009

Service: Historic Founder: Passenger, "The George", 1619

Authority: Dorman, Adventurers of Purse and Person, 4th ed., vol. 3: 712-713.

Biography:

Sarah Winston was born in Dorsetshire England in 1590 supposedly to a Quaker family. Not much more is known of her early years. It is thought that John Woodson (1590-1660) was a fifth son of an aristocratic English family who were members of The Church of England. Family lore states that John fell in love with Sarah and willingly forfeited his inheritance as a Baron to marry the woman he loved. Sarah and John married in Devonshire. When Sir George Yeardley offered John a flattering gift of land holdings in the new world, he accepted the task of ship's surgeon and physician and welcomed the opportunity to make a new life in Virginia for the young couple.

Sarah and John, and Sarah's brother Anthony Winston, were among the first immigrants to the new Jamestown Colony in Virginia. They sailed on January 29th, 1619 on the *George* and arrived in April 1619. The *George*, commanded by Sir George Yardley, the incoming Governor, brought about 100 passengers to Virginia.

John and Sarah first lived at Jamestown and survived the Indian massacre of 1622. They eventually settled in Fleur de Hundred, about 30 miles upriver from Jamestown where their two sons were born in 1632 and 1634. The stability of living without Indian attacks for several years changed on April 18, 1644 when the Woodson home was attacked with Sarah, her two sons, and Lt. Col. Thomas Ligon inside. Sarah hid one boy in the potato bin hole beneath the cabin floor and the other in an upturned empty wash tub in the corner of the built-in shed. Ligon used the Woodson family rifle, a massive 7-foot, 4-inch English long fowler often referred to as the "Woodson" musket, to defend the house. This rifle now holds a place of honor in *The Story of Virginia* exhibit at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture in Richmond. Sarah and Ligon killed several Indians during the attack, both outside the house and those who came down the chimney into the house. John was killed as he rode back to the house from the tobacco fields.

Sarah married a second time to a Mr. Dunwell and a third time to a Mr. Johnson outliving both. Sarah died on January 17th, 1659 at the age of 63/4. Today many Woodson descendants refer to themselves as "potato hole" or "washtub" Woodsons based on their ancestors' safety location during the Indian raid.