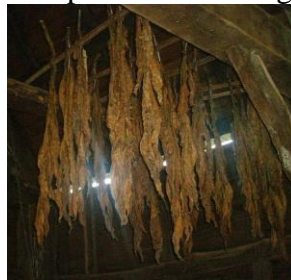


Tobacco

The Indians of Virginia grew a type of tobacco that was not enjoyed by the English settlers in Jamestown, for it was very bitter. It also did not appeal to the market in England. John Rolfe (c. 1585 – 1622), who was one of the early settlers, wanted to introduce to the European market a sweeter type of tobacco. Using seeds he obtained from Trinidad, he successfully cultivated tobacco as an export crop in the Colony of Virginia. He helped turn the Virginia Colony into a profitable venture. (Read – Indians – Pocahontas, as Rolfe married her.) Tobacco can be credited with making Jamestown the first English colony in the New World.



In the year 1758, Virginia exported 70,000 hogsheads of tobacco. The production of tobacco in colonial times required much work. The plants had to be grown from seeds,



set out, weeded, harvested, and cured or dried. Each acre produced about 5,000 plants that required hand care over and over again. Slave labor was used. Profits exceeded any other plant that could be grown.



Tobacco was used as money in Stafford. For example, in order to pay taxes to the crown, a farmer would go to the Parish Church, Overwarton Parish (Aquia Church), and pay taxes in tobacco.... so many hogsheads for so many acres of land owned.

The first tobacco warehouse in Stafford County was at Marlborough Point, though it was soon replaced by a new warehouse at Aquia, the town cut from George Brent's Woodstock plantation on Aquia Creek (today's Aquia Harbour). By the late eighteenth century, this warehouse had been closed and three others had taken its place. Two of these, the Falmouth and Dixon warehouses, were located in Falmouth. Cave's Warehouse was on Potomac Creek. Planters brought their hogsheads of tobacco to these warehouses and from here it was shipped all over the world.



Tobacco inspectors were appointed by the court for a term of one year. This was a very important job, for it was the responsibility of the inspectors to check the quality of the tobacco and set a value upon it. Since tobacco was used as legal currency, the economy of Virginia depended upon the quality and, therefore, the value of the tobacco brought to the warehouses.

Tobacco was extremely hard on the soil and could only be grown for two to three seasons on the same location. Then it had to be planted in a new location. Many of the wealthy and influential men in Colonial Virginia owned tobacco plantations, for they owned many acres. Fitzhugh at Chatham, Carter, and Brent in the Aquia area were names of people who had tobacco plantations. Tobacco, however, was gradually phased out of Stafford's economy for land was overworked and other industries thrived like iron and sandstone quarrying.

Much information used from Jerrilynn Eby's book, "They Call Stafford Home." Heritage Books, 1997.