



This 1908 post card shows three young men sitting on a rail cart at Burhans' Wharf near Locust Hill. The rail cart was used to transfer goods coming from Baltimore and Norfolk, arriving to the wharf by steamboat. John S. Burhans of Westfield, New Jersey, built the wharf on the Rappahannock River in 1887 and named it after himself. John Burhans was also the first postmaster at Cooper, located on shore near the wharf. The post office was founded at Cooper on December 13, 1887. (Courtesy of the late Jack Miller)

## Bickering between two churches led to creation of Christ Church Parish

*Fifth in a series*  
by Larry Chowning

During the colonial period in Middlesex, the area known as Christchurch became the center of religious and social life in Middlesex County, and its prominence lasted for over 100 years.

Early districts within Middlesex were formed by the creation of two church parishes. On May 27, 1657 the area from central Middlesex to Laneview was established by Henry Corbin and others as Lancaster Parish. Probably a little before that, Edmund Kemp on the Piankatank and others in the lower end of the county had already started forming what would become Piankatank Parish and Lower Church.

The early Anglican parishes in Virginia had the power to collect taxes from their congregations. Tithes were a tax used to support the church facilities, to hire ministers, to purchase glebe land (home for the

minister and a parcel of cultivated land, belonging to and yielding revenue for the parish church), to maintain roads and to provide social services for the poor, orphans, and bastard children living in the parish.

Shortly after the formation of the two parishes, an issue arose as to just where the parish lines in the center of the county ended and this grew into a nasty feud between the two parishes. This feud would become so heated that it eventually ended up before authorities in Jamestown. In 1661, Charles Hill, an attorney, was employed by the Piankatank vestry to go to James City "for the defending of some differences" between the two parishes.

The parish boundary dispute was centered in the middle of the county where two of the largest plantations were located. The Wormeleys at "Rosegill" owned 3,500 acres extending from the Rappahannock

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