

Matthew Benthall Will and Analysis

John Sharp, 06-Aug-2024

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From: Virginia, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1652-1900 for Matthew Benthall,
Northampton, Wills and Inventories, Vol 21-22, 1754-1762

The image of Matthew's will is included at the end of the transcribed will and any analysis that I may add.

In the Name of God amen I Matthew Benthall of Northampton County in Virginia [Water?] man being sensible of the frailty of this Life and that it is appointed for all men to die being in Sound Mind & Memory doth make this my last Will & Testament in manner & form following

Imprimis I constitute order and Ordain that all my Just Debts & funeral Charges be paid of & fully discharged. Item I give & Bequeath unto my Sister Susannah Benthall all my Estate both Real & Personal to her and Heirs forever; Except all my wearing apparel , which I give and Bequeath unto my Brother Reuben Benthall. Lastly, I Constitute and Ordain my Sister Susannah Benthall abovementioned my Sole Executrix to this my Last Will & Testament Revoking all former Wills whatsoever, as Witness my Hand & Seal this third Day of May, in the Year of our Lord God One thousand Seven hundred & Fifty four, and in the twenty seventh year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France & Ireland, Defender of the Faith _____

*Signed Sealed & Delivered
In the Presence of us*

Matthew Benthall (L. S.)

*Stratton Caple
William Grice
Susannah (her mark) Grice*

At a Court held for Northampton County the 10th Day of June 1755:

The last Will & Testament of Matthew Benthall Dec'd was Proved by the Oaths of Stratton Caple & William Grice Witnesses thereto and Ordered to be recorded and upon the motion of Susannah Benthall the Executrix therein appointed and she having given Bond with Security &

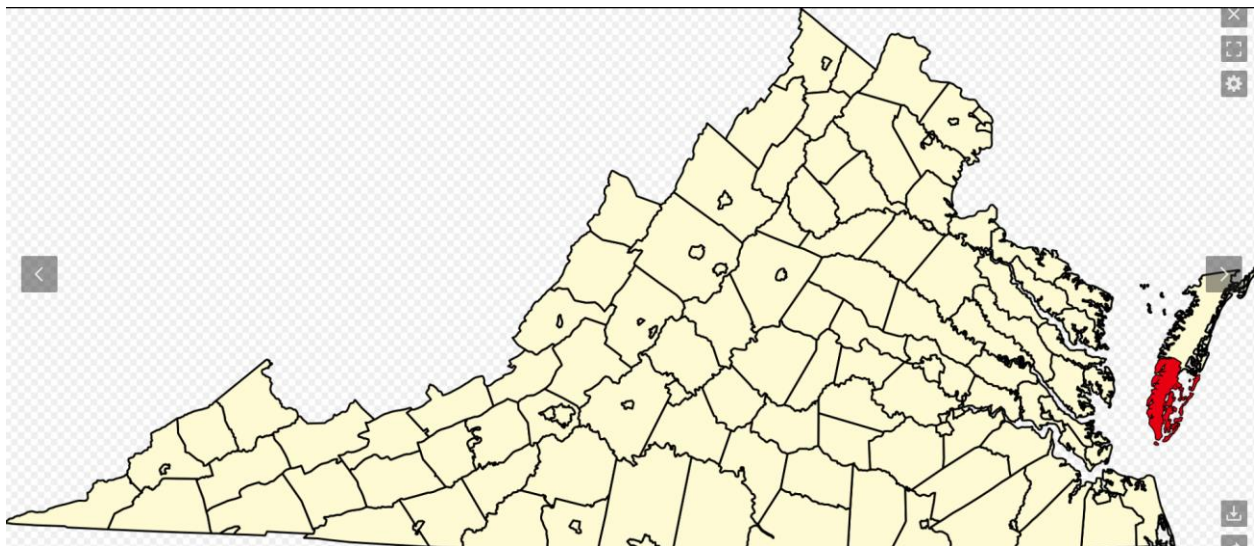
taken the Oath according to Law, Certificate is granted her for obtaining a Probate thereof in due form.

Teste

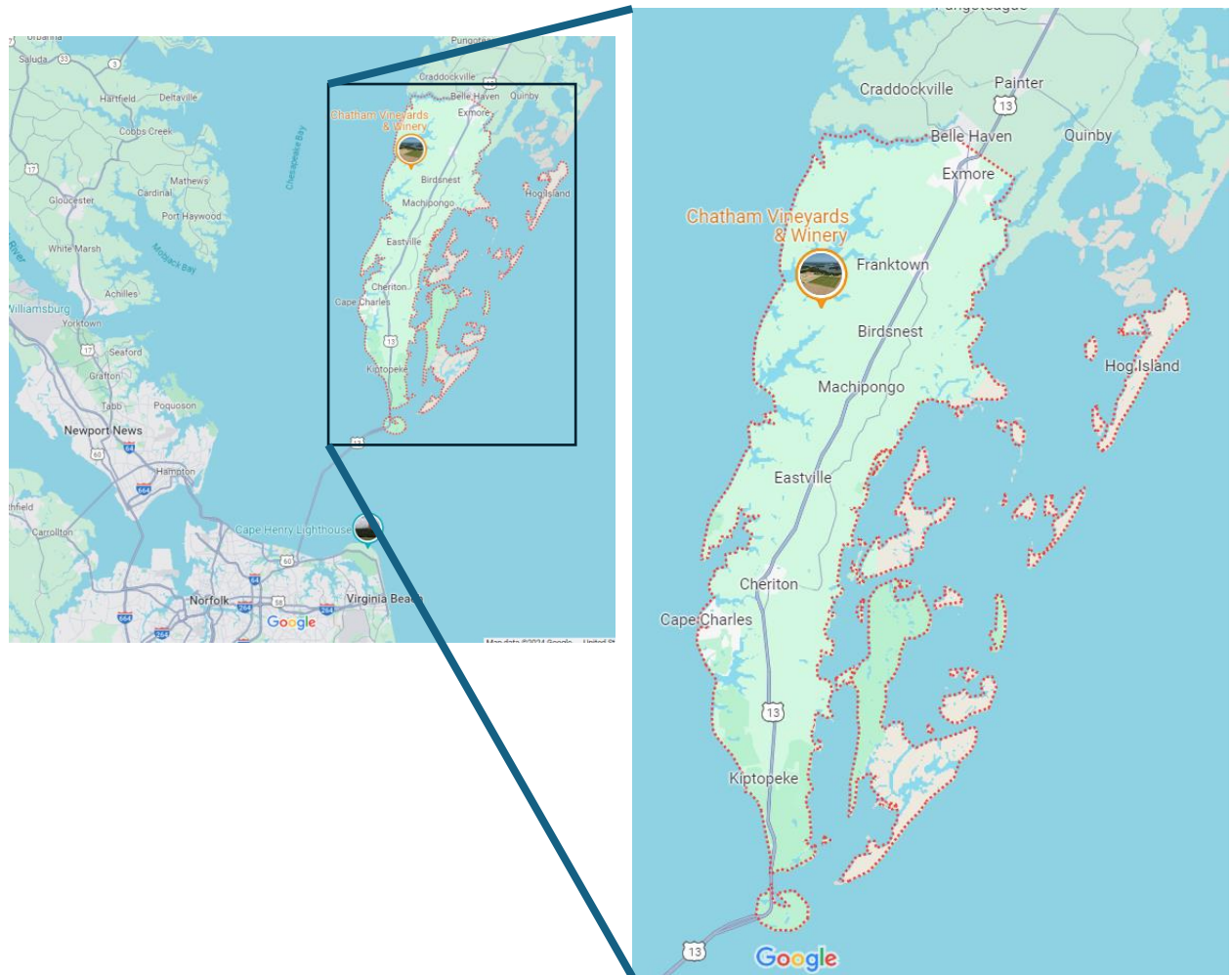
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Analysis of the will:

- Susannah gets everything but Matthew's clothes which go to Reuben.
- It's interesting that in 1754, King George was also listed as the King of France in this will. I don't know if that was common to do in wills, but I haven't seen it in any earlier wills, even in the Benthall family. Maybe Matthew was a supporter of King George (or the person who wrote the will was, as there is probably some standard, boiler-plate language that goes into these).
- Matthew says he is a "water man". I have seen wills in my family where the dying say they are "planters" (e.g., John Benthall, Reuben Benthall). I looked up what a "water man" was at this time, and [Wikipedia](#) says it was someone who transported people and goods by boats across rivers or other bodies of water. This makes sense, as we look at the map of Virginia below and see Northampton County in red on the right side of the map:

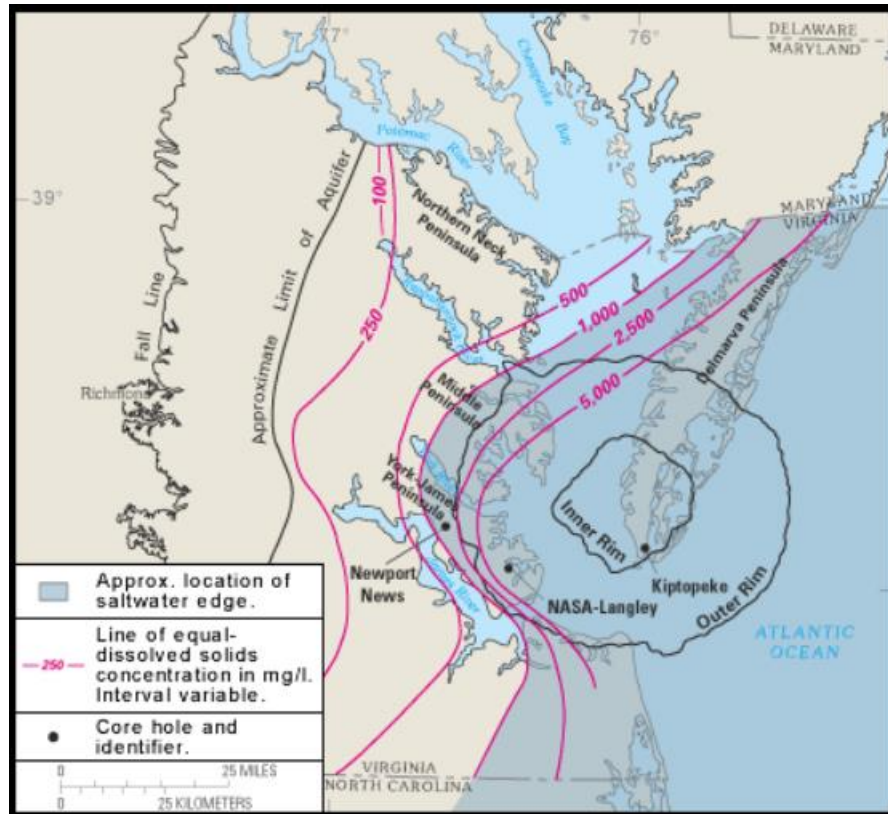


If we zoom in using Google maps, we see:



As we look at the zoomed in map of Northampton County to the right in the upper image, we can see why a “water man” may have been needed! The goods and people needed transport across rivers, across the water to the small islands, and possibly across to the main land.

- Although not part of Matthew’s will, when researching Northampton County, VA, I ran across the super interesting fact that Northampton County was the epicenter of a meteor strike about 35.5 million years ago! Wow! Here’s a map from [Wikipedia](#):



According to the Wikipedia article:

"The entire circular crater is about 85 km (53 mi) in diameter and 1.3 km (1,300 m; 0.81 mi; 4,300 ft) deep, an area twice the size of Rhode Island, and nearly as deep as the Grand Canyon. ...

The surrounding region suffered massive devastation. USGS scientist David Powars, one of the impact crater's discoverers, described the immediate aftermath: "Within minutes, millions of tons of water, sediment, and shattered rock were cast high into the atmosphere for hundreds of miles along the East Coast." An enormous megatsunami engulfed the land and possibly even reached the Blue Ridge Mountains."

You just never know what you are going to learn when you start going down rabbit holes! And that's about all I can get from this very short will of Matthew Benthall.

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In the Name of God amen I Matthew Benthall of Northampton
County in Virginia Major man being sensible of the frailty of this Life and
that it is appointed for all men to die being in Sound Mind & Memory
doth make this my last Will & Testament in manner & form following -
I hereby constitute order and Ordain that all my just Debts & funeral
Charges be paid of & fully Discharged. Item I give & Bequeath unto my
Sister Susanna Benthall all my Estate both Real & Personal to her and heirs
forever, except all my wearing apparel, which I give and Bequeath unto my
Brother Heaben Benthall. Lastly I constitute and Ordain my Sister Susanna
Benthall above mentioned, my Sole Executrix to this my Last Will & Testament
revoking all former Wills whatsoever, as Witness my Hand & Seal this third
Day of May, In the year of our Lord God one thousand seven hundred &
fifty four, and in the twenty seventh year of the Reign of our Sovereign
Lord George by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain France & Ireland
Defender of the Faith

Signed Sealed & Delivered
in the Presence of us

Matthew Benthall (L.S.)

Stratton Caple
William Grice
Susanna ^{Grice}

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the motion of Susanna Benthall the Executrix therein appointed and she
having given Bond with Security & taken the Oath according to Law,
Certificate is granted her, for obtaining a Probate thereof in due Form

Teste
Griffith Keith Esq.