

The Dill's Tavern Chronicle

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Purpose: To promote and encourage the study, collection, and preservation of the historical heritage of the Northern York County area.

Learning from Mathew Dill's Will

Mathew Dill the founder of the Dill clan in this area died in 1750 at the age of 52. Since his arrival in this vicinity in the early 1740's he had amassed quite a large estate of real and personal property. His will is one document we have that gives us an idea of the man who lived two and a half centuries ago. Although Mathew never lived in the stone house we see today, we believe he did live on this site in a log house.

Quite often we think the early colonists were poorly educated and though many had little formal education, they were just as interested in providing for their families as we are today. Early records abound for disposition of estates including wills and accounts that show disbursements. There are also many records naming guardians for minor children in an era when mortality rates were high.

The will we are referring to (shown on the back) is a public record available at the County Archives Building in York. The Archives houses many early documents of county residents and is open for research. Since York County was formed in 1749, this will has to be one of the earliest records of its type for this county.

Mathew's will begins as most wills of the period do with an Invocation to God and an Affirmation of Faith followed by provisions for his burial. The next section is where we learn of his wishes for the disposition of his estate and this is where his wife and children are listed. Mathew names his wife Mary and children James, Tomas, Mathew, Mary D. McAllister, John, Nancy, and Sarah as his heirs.

James the oldest received the property he currently lived on especially with "*ye benefit of ye mill.*" (The mill was undoubtedly on Dogwood Run.) Thomas and Mathew were both to get the lands they resided on too if they paid the debts owed to the Honorable Proprietors (The Penns). Mathew, the younger, also received two cows.

Thomas happened to die in 1750 after his father wrote the will and there is a note to the court when the will was probated that removes him as one of the executors for the estate. We have to assume that his share of the estate passed on to his heirs since he was married and had a family of his own. From other sources we know that he was only 28 years old when he died.

Mathew's married daughter Mary (married to the founder of Hanover) received 15 pounds current money of this Province as her legacy.

John (15) was to receive the farm that Mathew lived on when he became twenty-one. He was also to get two horses and two cows. Mathew's wife Mary was to have control of the land and the benefit of the servant, John McCall, until John became twenty-one. Mary was also directed to maintain Nancy (13) and Sarah (9). Once John came of age, he was to provide for his mother during her natural life.

Nancy and Sarah were to receive 2 warranted tracts of land provided "*dutiful to their mother.*" Mary his wife plus Nancy and Sarah were also to receive 1/3 each of the movables in the estate to be divided equally. The document listing the inventory taken after Mathew's death is very revealing of the personal property the family had.

The final section of the will names Mary and sons James and Thomas to be the executors.

So, what did we learn from this one document? We know the names of his wife and surviving children, that his daughter Mary was married and three others were minors. We can see that he owned or had warrants for numerous

