



Eppes Family Crest

The Story of *Eppington*

The first Francis Eppes arrived in Virginia about 1625. He was elected to serve in the colony's legislature and local politics. He went back to England to collect his family, and by 1635 had patented 1,700 acres, and continued to acquire land. The Eppes would eventually own land in Henrico, Prince George, and Charles City Counties. It was in what is today Chesterfield County where *Eppington* was finally built.

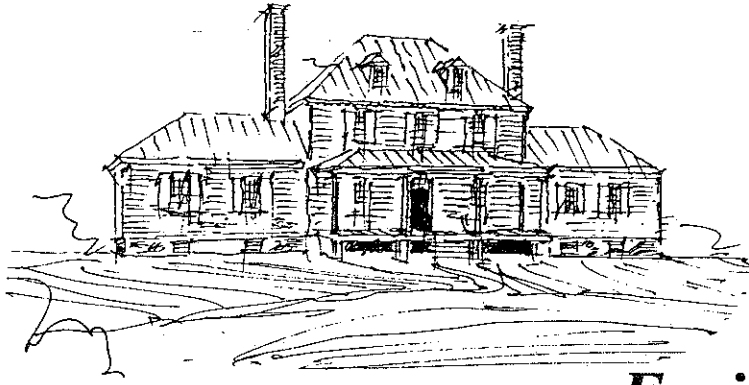
In the mid 1760s, Francis Eppes VI (1747-1808) began to build *Eppington*. It is a rare, almost untouched example of fine Palladian form in Georgian detail. The original house was a two story frame structure without much inside decoration. Interior high ceilings and decorative paneling were later added to give *Eppington* its high style elegance that survives today. Side wings, and a back wing with interior kitchen and bathroom were later added around 1900.

Francis Eppes was the cousin of Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson, and the brother in law of her husband, Thomas Jefferson. Martha and Francis' wife, Elizabeth Wayles Eppes, were half sisters, and the Jeffersons were frequent *Eppington* visitors. The widowed Jefferson left two of his three daughters with the Eppes while he served as minister to France. The youngest girl Lucy died of whooping cough, and is buried at *Eppington*. A broken hearted Jefferson sent for his other daughter Mary to join him and daughter Martha in France. Mary later wed her cousin John Wayles Eppes, son of Francis and Elizabeth, and lived at *Eppington* for a while. She died at Monticello in 1804.

Francis Wayles wrote about his grandfather Francis Eppes:

"The plantation was quite an extensive one, and in the days of my grandfather was remarkably productive. Indeed, it could hardly have been otherwise, under such management as his; for he was eminent for his skill in both agriculture and horticulture; and I have heard Mr. Jefferson, who knew him intimately, say he considered him not only the 'first horticulturalist in America,' but a man of the soundest practical judgement on all subjects that he had ever known."

By 1810 the Lucy Eppes Thweatt inherited *Eppington*. In 1876 the property was bought by a Pennsylvanian named William Hinds. His family intermarried with the Cherry family, and in 1989 they donated the house and 44 acres to Chesterfield County. The *Eppington* Foundation was formed in 1998 to preserve the house and grounds, and it is the site of an ongoing architectural and archaeological investigation. For more information, call Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation Department at (804) 748-1623.



Eppington at a Glance

- Francis Eppes VI built Eppington beginning in the 1760s. The formal Palladian inspired frame house was the center of a busy plantation of about 4,000 acres. Tobacco was a major crop, and afforded the owners many possessions, including African slaves. The manor was high style architecture for its day, with sophisticated features that still survive.
- Francis Eppes was Thomas Jefferson's brother in law, and Martha Jefferson's cousin. Martha and Eppes's wife Elizabeth Wayles Eppes were half sisters. The Jefferson's were frequent visitors to Eppington. Jefferson's daughter Mary married John Wayles Eppes, and lived there.
- While minister to France, two of Jefferson's three daughters stayed with the Eppes; his youngest daughter Lucy died of whooping cough at Eppington and is said to be buried there. Jefferson sent for his slave Sally Hemings who took the older daughter Mary to France to join her grief stricken family.
- Eppington remained in the Eppes family until 1876 when the Hinds (later Cherry) family took possession. They added an addition with a kitchen and bath, and little was changed. In 1989 the family donated the house and 45 acres to Chesterfield County. The house was lived in from about the 1760s until 1985.
- The house is undergoing extensive architectural and archaeological investigation. This is a work in progress, and will take many years.
- The Eppington Foundation was established in 1998 to attract resources for the ongoing renovations, preservation, and restoration. For more information call Chesterfield Parks and Recreation at (804) 748-1623.