



Judy Horne by the grave of her ancestor, Rev. Bartholomew Yates in the Christ Church Parish Cemetery.

Tracing family roots at Christ Church Parish

In October Christ Church Parish in Middlesex County had a surprise visit from Judy Horne, who had two ancestors, Rev. Robert Yates and Rev. Bartholomew Yates, serve as church rectors in the late 17th century and early 18th century. Following is what Horne found out about her ancestors.

by Judy Horne

The historical information about the Yates family is a compilation gleaned from Bishop Meade's writing about the parishes in Middlesex: "Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia," from the excellent historical information obtained from Gordon White's book, "Christ Church Parish—Middlesex, Virginia 1666-2016," and from "Colonial Churches of Virginia."

About six months ago, having a few spare moments, I decided to search for information about a great-great-great-great-great grandfather, Rev. Bartholomew Yates. As his story began to unfold, I was absolutely amazed at what I learned, and upon seeing the photographs of your beautiful church, re-built on the original building's "footprint" —and a photo of his grave located just next to the church—I knew I simply had to visit Christ Church.

I arrived in Saluda on a Saturday afternoon and headed straight for Christ Church. It was awe-inspiring to walk where Bartholomew and his family had walked and to touch the words engraved on his tomb so many years ago. However, worshiping with all of you on that beautiful Sunday morning surpassed my visit on Saturday! It was one of the most special, meaningful experiences of my life. I thank you so much for your kind hospitality and lovely welcome.

Here is more information about the Yates' association with your beautiful Christ Church-Middlesex:

In May, 1698, Rev. Robert Yates of Shropshire, England, became rector of Christ Church near Saluda and continued serving until about 1702 when he became ill and returned to England. Bishop Meade wrote that "his record was evidently that of a good and true man, for his vestry continued his salary for some time in hope of his return." However, he remained in England.

My direct ancestor, Rev. Bartholomew Yates (Robert's brother), was born in Shropshire, England, in 1676. He completed his studies at Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1698. Then, according to Mr. Gordon White's excellent book, "Christ Church Parish—Middlesex, Virginia 1666-2016," Bartholomew arrived in Virginia on February 2, 1701. He first served Sittonborne Parish in Essex County and then Kingston Parish in Mathews County, but he also preached occasionally at Christ Church.

In 1703 Bartholomew Yates began serving the Christ Church Parish on a full-time basis and was paid a salary

of 16,000 pounds of tobacco. After 18 years, he was called by the York-Hampton Parish, but the Christ Church vestry increased his salary (still in pounds of tobacco) in order to retain his services. There is a copy of a petition to the General Assembly in the Vestry Book, signed by Mr. John Robinson, to take measures to have him remain where he was so highly esteemed.

So, my Bartholomew Yates did remain at Christ Church Parish until his death on July 26, 1734, having faithfully served the church for almost 31 years.

He is buried beside the church in the beautiful historic cemetery that has a number of interesting table tombs. His grave has the following inscription: "Here lie the remains of the Rev. Bartholomew Yates, who departed this life the 26th day of July, 1734, in the fifty seventh year of his age. He was one of the visitors of William and Mary College, as also Professor of Divinity in that Royal Foundation. In the conscientious discharge of his duty, few ever equalled him, none ever surpassed him. He explained the doctrine by his practice, and taught and led the way to heaven. Cheerfulness, the result of innocence, always sparkled in his face, and, by the sweetness of his temper, he gained universal good will. His consort enjoyed in him a tender husband, his children an indulgent father, his servants a gentle master, his acquaintances a faithful friend. He was minister of this parish upwards of thirty years; and to perpetuate his memory, this monument is erected at the charge of his friends and parishioners."

Rev. Bartholomew Yates had sons in England who were attending Oxford College, so the vestry decided to wait two years until his son, Bartholomew Yates 2d, was ordained. In the meantime the parish was served by the Rev. Messrs. John Reade and Emmanuel Jones, from parishes nearby. Rev. Bartholomew Yates 2d served as rector for twenty-five years, serving the parish until 1767.

Nine years before this date, Rev. William Yates and the Rev. Robert Yates (either grandsons or great-grandsons of the Rev. Robert Yates) were ministers in the adjoining parishes of Pitsworth and Abingdon in Gloucester County, so the Yates name was well-known in the early days of Virginia history.

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