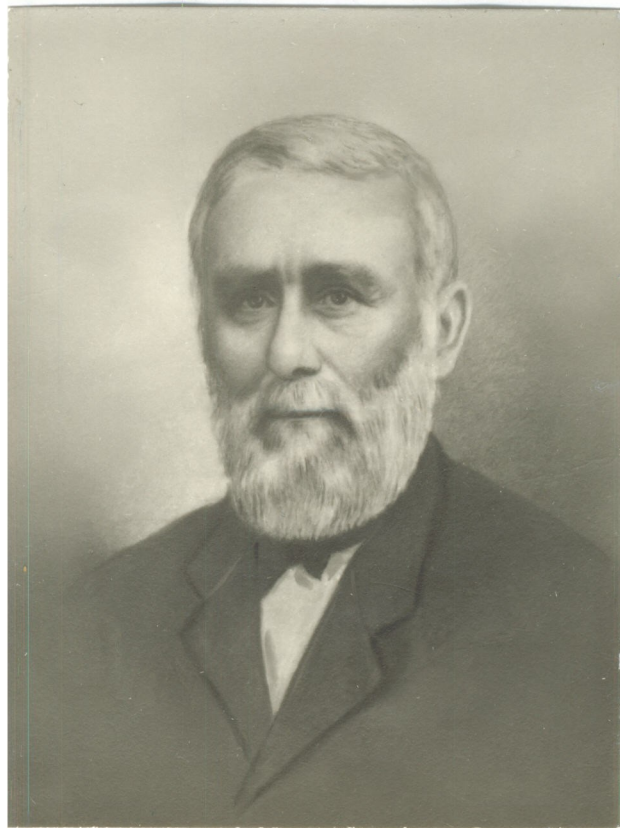




THE HISTORY OF
JOHN WATSON COLONNA

1805 - 1871



He had two wives and seven children. Two of the children were Charles Jones Colonna (1849 - 1920) founder of Colonna's Shipyard - 1875 in Berkley, Norfolk, Virginia and Benjamin Azariah Colonna (1843-1925) of Washington, D.C.

THE HISTORY OF JOHN WATSON COLONNA

AUGUST 15, 1805 - APRIL 8, 1871

Pennyville - Nandua - Pungoteague, Accomac County, Virginia

Pennyville is 1.3 miles S.W. Pungoteague at intersection of roads Eastern Shore of Virginia

The Son of Benjamin Colony-Colonna February 16, 1763 - July 1, 1851 and Elizabeth Beach - October 17, 1784 - January 8, 1848.

STORE OWNER

He owned and operated a general merchandise store at Pennyville. His house was alongside the store and the two were connected with a Colonnade. The store and house were located next to the S.W. corner of his father Benjamin's 100 acre farm and home. It is written by John's children to go to grandfather's house we followed the path up the hill and a rather short distance across the field.

At the time of this writing (February, 1986), Benjamin Colonna's farm is owned by Mrs. Melvin E. Drummond with approximately the same boundary lines and his original house that he lived in from 1825 - 1851 is still standing but with some additions built off the front.

PROMINENT FARMER

We know that he owned and operated his father's farm close to his store at Pennyville from 1851 at his father's death for about 10 years until he sold it.

A complete detailed history of this farm in the 1850's describing its people, buildings and ways of life can be found in the biography by his son Benjamin A. Colonna.

VESSEL OWNER AND OPERATOR

He owned and operated several wooden sailing vessels in and around the Civil War era. We know they sailed to northern ports and the Bahama Islands trading iron cooking utensils, etc. for rum and molasses with a crew of 4 to 5 persons. The Captains were white because only whites knew navigation and were mostly relatives of John W. Colonna, making the majority of the crew blacks who were treated very well as they may have stayed with the blacks in the islands and not returned otherwise, although it is noted that John and his father Benjamin were very kind to their slaves.

John often sailed through the Yankee blockade across Chesapeake Bay with his boats at night carrying supplies for the Confederates. At the war's end, the Yankees told him they knew of this and just missed catching him on several occasions and insisted he sign a pledge of allegiance to the United States which he refused to do at first but later did before they would issue him a license to operate a steam boat.

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS

1. John was often mistaken for General Robert E. Lee so much so that he was often annoyed by it. Once he realized a crowd of people following him and when asked what they wanted they replied "we want your autograph General Lee". When he told them he wasn't Lee they replied "Oh, yes you are".
2. This picture of John Watson Colonna is a copy of the original photograph (copied December, 1985), although the original is fastened to the back of copied picture. The original probably taken in the middle 1860's has silver fish holes and is very brittle from age. The original picture and this original frame probably belonged to John Watson Colonna; from there we know it hung in the home of his son, Charles J. Colonna. Next it was owned by Willoughby W. Colonna, Sr., John's grandson, then to Willoughby W. Colonna, Jr., John's great grandson and hopefully to Willoughby W. Colonna III, John's great-great grandson, etc.
3. He died in a hotel in Norfolk, Virginia of yellow fever, contracted from mosquito bites on a sightseeing trip into the Dismal Swamp (a large swamp south of Norfolk) and is buried in a copper casket in the large Colonna family cemetery 6/10 miles southeast of Pennyville.
4. John Watson Colonna's Father (Benjamin Collony-Colonna- 1763-1851) was born an Englishman and died an American. An American Soldier Revolutionary War and War of 1812. His name was Collony when born and Colonna at death. He changed the spelling of his name as a result of a meeting held by Dr. Nicholas Sherar in the yard of his residence on Nandea Creek near Pennysville in 1835 for the purpose of adopting a common spelling of the family name.
5. This photograph of John Watson Colonna is the oldest known picture of the Colonna family ancestry.
6. He was reduced to penury as a result of the Civil War (extreme poverty).

Above information compiled and written March, 1986.

BY: Willoughby W. Colonna, Jr. - Great Grandson and his wife Evelyn of Norfolk, Virginia

John Owen Colonna - Grandson of Waco, Texas

Ellen Britton - Great Granddaughter of Princess Anne, Maryland