History of the Butt Family in Virginia
and North Carolina

The first of the Butt Family to come to America were two brothers, Robert and James of Warrenton Hall, Cambridgeshire, England. These two brothers came over in 1653 and settled near Norfolk, Virginia, where they were granted lands. Family records show that Robert and James were granted lands from 1650 to 1675. This record is borne out by research made in the land office at Richmond, Va. and the original list of "Persons of Quality" by John Camden Hatton. This shows that lands were granted to James in St. James Parish, Barbados, and to Robert in Virginia. These brothers were the progenitors of the Butt (Butts) family in America.

It has not been possible to trace the family of Robert and James in England, but possibly they were kinsmen of Sir William Butts who was personal physician to King Henry VIII. According to an ancient volume of Holbein sketches of prominent persons of the court of King Henry, assembled for King Edward VI there is one of Lady Margaret Butts, daughter and heir of John Bacon, gentleman of good family, in Cambridgeshire, and wife of Sir William above. Some say that this only a myth dreamed up by someone who wanted to make money on a book, and we have not been able to authenticate the facts in England.

There is no record of Sir William Butts or Warrenton Hall. However Robert and James must have come from an influential family to have been granted so much land.

In Patents of Land, Book 5, Page 35, 1,200 acres were granted to Robert at one time by Sir William Berkeley, Knight, Governor, etc. in the County of Lower Norfolk on the east side of the Elizabeth River (South Branch). This grant was dated January 7th, 1656. Five Hundred more acres were granted to Robert in 1666 (Book 6, Page 5) and before and after this smaller allotments were made to Robert. Part of this land was in the Great Cypress Swamp where there were large amounts of timber and Robert became a "timber baron" and probably quite wealthy for that time.

Robert was said to be a man of great influence both in the Colony and in England. His plantation was called "Blacksworthy". He died in June 1706 and his estate was left his wife, Lady Elizabeth Jane Bruce Butts, and four sons, Richard, Henry, Thomas and Robert.

Robert apparently dropped the "s" from his name but some branches of the family retained it. They were supposed to have left England seeking political freedom. They were Whigs.

Lady Elizabeth Jane Bruce Butts was from Fife, Scotland. Her family home was Earlshall Castle where members of the Bruce family have lived since 1438a. The Earl of Elgin is now head of the Bruce family who are descended from Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. Queen Mother Elizabeth of England is also a Bruce decendant and one must have her permission to use this line.

Richard Butts, son of Robert and Lady Elizabeth, was twice married. First to his cousin, Dinah Butts, daughter of his Uncle James Butts and therefore his first cousin. She died about 1726 and Richard married as second wife, Frances, possibly a cousin also. There were nine children of the first marriage - Joseph, Samuel, Thomas, Frances, Caleb, Arthur Abigail, Richard and Anthony. Frances survived Richard by eight years and married William Fairfield. They had a daughter, Elizabeth Fairfield, born in 1742, who in 1755 married John Butt (b. 1739 d. 1772. son of Nathaniel Butt (d. 1750). By this remote connection with the Fairfield family it seems probable that the name was transmitted as a baptismal name to the Butt family.

To his son, Joseph, Richard left Poplar Ridge Plantation. His own plantation was left to his son, Samuel, for his lifetime. To his son, Thomas,