

The 1863 Election

One of the most difficult elections and certainly the one with the smallest participation in Prince William County history would have to be the election of May 28, 1863. This was an election in the Union controlled area to elect a state senator and member of the Virginia House of Delegates from the Third District, comprised of the counties of Stafford, King George and Prince William. Only 21 people voted in this district, and all had lived at one time in Prince William County and considered it home. At the time of the election, all considered themselves refugees and lived in Alexandria and the Federal City. To be eligible to vote in the election, you had to be a white male, be a freeholder, prove you lived in the district, provide proof you were loyal to the Union and, most of all, be willing to travel a long distance in a war zone.

G. W. Joy, A. M. Arrington, James Draney and Jno M. Stewart filled the above requirements and agreed to act as commissioners, conductor and clerk. They were to certify that they and all the loyal persons voting were recorded in the poll list. On the day the planned vote was to be held, they hired a steamboat and headed for Dumfries. A place selected to be the voting precinct because it would be easier for the refugees to return without risking a long trip by land. But when the party reached the mouth of Quantico Creek in Prince William County, they were prevented from landing by the military authorities of the United States even though all had obtained passes. Consequently, they were not able to open a poll at Dumfries Precinct and were compelled to return to the City of Alexandria, the first place in Virginia where they were permitted to land to exercise the right of suffrage.

Twenty-one people from the Third District, encompassing the counties of Stafford, King George, and Prince William, voted; all voted for C. H. Snow for state senator and John Underwood for the Virginia House of Delegates. All the voters were apparently from Prince William County.

The following are the twenty-one voters with their places of residence in Prince William County and their places of birth.

NAME	RESIDENCE	PLACE OF BIRTH
John Depue	Brentsville	Pennsylvania
Jacob Depue	Brentsville	Pennsylvania
J. M. Stewart	Bristoe Station	Pennsylvania
J. Curl	Buckland	New Jersey
John H. Cornwell	Dumfries	Virginia
Hiram T. Eastman	Dumfries	New York
James B. Seymour	Dumfries	England
Joseph Seymour	Dumfries	England
W. Mattox	Haymarket	Maryland
W. C. Avery	Independent Hill	New York
J. G. Draney	Occoquan	New Jersey
A. M. Arrington	Occoquan	Virginia
Thomas C. Frazier	Occoquan	Delaware
T. Selectman	Occoquan	Virginia
E. Duvall	Occoquan	Virginia

Edward Chamberlin
John Berry
John G. Horner
William Turner
G. W. Joy
J. C. Kelly

Occoquan
Occoquan
Occoquan
Occoquan
Occoquan
Occoquan

Pennsylvania
District of Columbia
New Jersey
Virginia
Vermont
Vermont

It is interesting to note that the only Virginia born of the voters were John H. Cornwell, A. M. Arrington, T. Selectman, William Turner, and E. Duvall. These twenty-one men went to so much trouble to vote. I wonder how many of us would vote in such difficult times.