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Thomas Jefferson had a lifelong love of Virginia Bluebells. He searched for them, with his sister, as a child. He grew them, at Monticello, as an adult. In this image, we see Virginia Bluebells growing at the Botanical Gardens in Berlin. Photo by Christian Hummert; online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

On the 25th of July, 1717, Isham Randolph - member of a prosperous family and Virginia's Colonial Agent in London - married a British girl named Jane Rogers. Their wedding (according to reported notes in Isham's Bible) took place at Bishop Gale Church in Whitechapel parish.

Living in Shadwell parish (now part of London's East End), the couple had a baby daughter in 1720. They named the child Jane, after her mother, and she was baptized at St. Paul's Church, Shadwell. (The church was demolished in 1817.)

In 1725, when she was five years old, Jane Randolph's parents moved their growing family to the changing American colony of Virginia. At nineteen, Jane married Peter Jefferson, a big, strong, self-taught Virginian.

In what was then a frontier area, Peter and Jane had a plantation at the foot of a small mountain in Albemarle County. They called it Shadwell, after the place where Jane was born in London. They ultimately had ten children. Their third child - a boy named Thomas - was born at Shadwell in 1743.

Thomas had reddish hair, freckles and fair skin which tended to sunburn. His "in-school" education began after the Jefferson family moved to Tuckahoe Plantation, just west of Richmond.

William Randolph II (a wealthy cousin of Tom's mother) had died but, before his death, had asked Peter Jefferson to take over the education of his four children. The one-room schoolhouse - where the children studied with a tutor - survives at Tuckahoe. When Jefferson was nine, his family returned to their own home at Shadwell.

The growing boy loved being outside but also enjoyed reading his father's books. It is said (see Jefferson the Virginian, Volume I, page 48) that he was shy - and a bit thin-skinned. (Even later in life he didn't like criticism.)

Tom was very close to his older sister, Jane. According to biographer Willard S. Randall:

Together they wandered in the lowlands and searched for bluebells and picked their way through the woods, looking to see the wild violets open. More than anyone else, Jane encouraged her younger brother's reading, cultivated his taste for music [he played the violin], and taught him to sing the psalm tunes. (Thomas Jefferson: A Life, page 13.)

Shadwell, for the Jefferson children, was an idyllic place to live.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-BOY-S-LIFE-Thomas-Jefferson>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-BOY-S-LIFE-Thomas-Jefferson>

Media Stream



Isham Randolph - Maternal Grandfather, Thomas Jefferson

Image online, courtesy the findagrave.com website.

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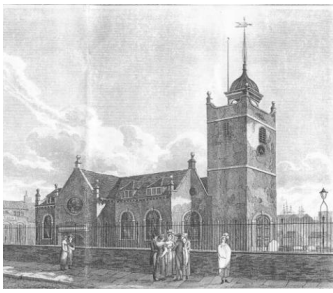


London East End - Historic Map, 1745

Library of Congress.

PD

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St. Paul's Church - Shadwell

Image online, courtesy Tufts University Digital Library.

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St. Paul's Church - Shadwell (Interior View)

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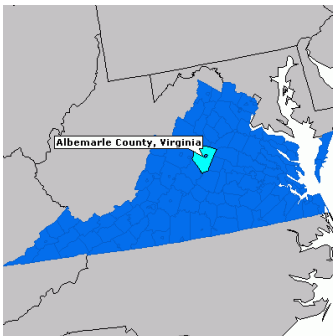
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Colony of Virginia - 1607-1776

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Albemarle County - Map Locator

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Thomas Jefferson - Lock of His Reddish Hair

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Tuckahoe - One-Room Schoolhouse

Image online, courtesy the nightquestparanormal.com website.

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