

White, Henry, Jr. ^[1]

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by Thomas E. Terrell, Jr., 1996

1642–3 Aug. 1712

Henry White, Jr., [Quaker](#) ^[2] leader, colonial official, and poet, was born in [Isle of Wight County](#) ^[3], Va. His father, Henry White, Sr., a cooper, married, first, Elener (surname unknown) and, later, Rebecca Arnold, and it is unclear which was the mother of Henry White, Jr. The younger White also was married twice; by his first wife Mary were daughters Ann (1669), Elizabeth, and Elkanah (1679), and sons Robert (1674), and twins James and John (1676), of whom only Robert and John survived childhood. By his second wife, Damaris Morison, were daughters Mary, Damaris, Content, and Naomy, and sons Henry III, Arnold II, and Isaac.

White, like his father, bought land in North Carolina in 1663; he eventually moved to a plantation along the west side of Little River in [Perquimans](#) ^[4] Precinct at least by 1679, but probably much earlier. In the 1690s he served as a justice on the North Carolina Higher Court as well as in the precinct county court.

Between 1672 and 1679 he was converted to Quakerism and was one of the earliest members of the Little River Preparative Meeting, one of five meetings that made up Pasquotank Monthly Meeting. White served as the monthly meeting's "registrer" (recording clerk), it meeting alternately at his and Caleb Bundy's home until 1707, when the first meetinghouse was built. This structure was erected partly under White's leadership on land next to his plantation. He was active among North Carolina Friends both as organizer and seemingly as lay minister, evidenced by a few extant writings.

White's lasting contribution was a 302-line poem in rhymed couplet and doggerel verse, written in 1698. This seventeenth-century poem is the earliest known literary work of its kind produced in North Carolina. It is an account of the fall of man in the garden of Eden, his restoration through Christ, and "some holsom exhortations for everyone to take notis of."

References:

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Thomas E. Terrell, Jr., "[Some Holsom Exhortation's: Henry White's Seventeenth-Century Southern Religious Narrative in Verse](#) ^[6]," *Early American Literature*, vol. 18 (1983).

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Boddie, John Bennett. 1973. *Seventeenth century Isle of Wight County, Virginia; a history of the county of Isle of Wight, Virginia, during the seventeenth century, including abstracts of the county records*. Baltimore, Md: Genealogical Pub. Co. <https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/672124> ^[7] (accessed March 22, 2013).

"Pasquotank County | NCpedia." NCpedia home page | NCpedia. <https://ncpedia.org/geography/pasquotank> ^[8] (accessed March 22, 2013).

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