



Reliving History, Inc.

*Supporting the ca. 1751 Peter Burr House
The oldest wood frame house in West Virginia*

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Julian vs Gregorian Calendar

When New Year's Day Was March 25th?

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII (1502–85), who was pope from 1572 to 1585, and his astronomer and mathematician created a new, reformed calendar with January 1st as the beginning of a new year. However, Protestant countries continued to use the Julian Calendar where March 25th started the new year.

England and its American colonies did not adopt the reformed Gregorian calendar until 1752. Scotland adopted it earlier, celebrating the New Year on 1 January 1600 and subsequently on January 1st of each year.

So January 12, 1700, was actually Jan. 12, 1701 using today's current calendar. Obviously, this has led to confusion among researchers for any pre-1752 date between Jan. 1 and March 24. So is the record English, Scottish or did it use double dating to bridge the differences.

Double Dating

Double dating sometimes was used in Great Britain, colonial British America, and British possessions to clarify dates occurring between 1 January and 24 March on years between 1582 and 1752. In the ecclesiastical or legal calendar, March 25th was recognized as the first day of the year and was not double dated.

Researchers of Colonial American ancestors will often see double dating in older records. Double dates often were identified with a slash mark (/) or hyphen (-) representing the Old and New Style calendars, e.g., Feb. 5, 1690/1691. Even before 1752 in colonial America, some educated clerks knew of the calendar change in Europe and used double dating to distinguish between the calendars. This was especially true in civil records, but less so in church registers. The system of double dating ended in 1752 in the American colonies with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar.

Visit the Peter Burr House

170 E. Burr Blvd., Kearneysville, WV 25430
(at Burr Industrial Park in the far right back corner)
See website for directions.