

Marriage Banns

*Sarah Wells and William Bull were married
on August 25, 1718.*

The three Indians who guided Sarah to this very patent take their places in the Keeping room. Seeing the Dennes arrive, Sarah flinches. *If anyone objects it will be them; I don't give a hoot what these blasted settlers think!* William insists marriage have banns offered thrice or our marriage could be banned, so that's what we'll do.

But the baneful truth is there isn't a priest for miles. The Crommelins, who sponsored William, nod and take their seats. The short, chubby magistrate crosses the Keeping room and throws open the front door parroting the Anglican ritual to the trees. Stoically they stand, neither consenting nor objecting.

Then he moves through the entry hall, past the bannister into the Keeping room to the back door and queries the cows and outbuildings, *If any of you know just cause why Sarah and William may not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, you are bidden to declare it!* The cows snort and chew

their cud. Then our man crosses the threshold and announces the banns to the wilderness. *This is the third and final time of asking.* A soft wind rises from the trees fluttering branches against a cloudless sky whereupon Sarah and William are married.

Donna Reis