

## **From (BILLINGSLY-BILLINGSLEA ) IN AMERICA**

By Harry Alexander Davis (1936)

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### **I JOHN BILLINGSLEY**

Born County Salop, England, circa 1612, moved to Holland with his parents who were Quakers and forced to leave England. The exact date of his coming to America is not known, tho' there is evidence it was prior to 1649 and that he was located in Nansemond County, Virginia. Evidence also shows his brothers James and Francis were with him in this locality. In the records he is styled Major but nothing has been discovered to indicate the origin of the title. The date is evidenced by a grant of land in Maryland some years later and from a record in Richmond Land Office from which it appears he was granted 500 acres of land at Chucatuck, Nansemond County, Virginia, and said land was wholly escheated. This occurred during the period of 1649-1656 when all Quakers were forced to leave the colony of Virginia. Reference to this land will appear again in this account chronologically.

On 20 July 1652 warrant to lay out to Colonel Thomas Burbage 2000 acres and Major John Billingsley 1000 acres in any place in the Province not fully taken up was issued. In connection with this warrant is the following: "William Parker of the Severn in Ann Arundell County, planter, is possessed of 800 acres of land upon the Cliffs adjoining land of Richard Bennett: I, said Parker, do fully grant to Col. Thos. Burbage & Maj. Jno Billingsley both of Virginia, merchants 600 acres of the said 800 acres, the sd Burbage & Billingsley do obligate themselves to seat the land between now and 25 December next & to pay charges of survey, etc. dated 24 June 1652" (A B & H fol. Q13). It appears he purchased 700 acres of land from "Mattapony & Patuxon Indians." It was surveyed in the name of Major John Billingsley and he evidently died before he obtained a patent. This land was subsequently regranted:

"Henry, George, and John Billingsley, sons & heirs of Maj. John Billingsley, late of our Province of Maryland, deceased, hath due unto them 700 acres of land in this Province surveyed in the name of Major John Billingsley and to him assigned in the rights of fourteen persona from Captain Thos. Cornwallis, transported by him in 1650 into this Province as appears upon record dated at *London 2 July 1649* with such alterations bearing date of 26 Aug. 1658 occurring upon records in our Province of Maryland, do grant all that parcel of land called 'Our Legacy' on the West Side of Patuxent River in the fresh, and on the East side of Billingsley's Creek, etc., dated 5 March 1663." (Lib. A. A., fol. 407).

Major John Billingsley was a merchant and resided at Chacatuck, Virginia. From a record Richmond Land Office it appears he was granted 500 acres of land at Chacatuck, Nansemond County and that said land was wholly escheated. On 18 Nov. 1671 appears this record: "Sir William Berkeley, Lieutenant Governor, grants to George and Henry Billingsley 500 acres of land in Chucatuck, Nansemond County, formerly

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granted to John Billingsley, wholly escheated; inquisition recorded in Secretary's office under hand & seal of William Alford, Deputy Esechater for sd county, 18 Nov. 1671; jury sworn before him, grant to George & Henry Billingsley who have made their composition to be paid according to Act, 500 acres except one and one half acre granted to Parish Church, - etc. dated 28 Oct. 1672" (Lib. 6, fol. 1,07). He owned several sloops and was associated in business affairs in Maryland with Thomas Burbage, who was called by Captain Cornwallis, "my goode Friend Collonel Burbage.

He married late in life Eliza, born circa 1637, and believed to be a sister of John Cobreath. His name occurs in many court actions in Maryland and among the last is: "Know all men by these presents that I, John Billingsley, of Chucatuck in Virginia, Gent., for and in consideration of '2500 pounds of Tobacco & Caske' paid by George Reed, grant bargain & sell to George Reed of Patuxent River, Planter, one light bay mare, etc. In witness whereof the aforesaid John Billingsley have hereunto Sett my hand & Scale this September, 1657. On 6 Nov. 1657 John Cornelius "Sayeth that he doth testify that George Reed did tender down the 24<sup>th</sup> of September three hogshead of Tobacco for use of Major John Billingsley" (Md. Arch. Vol. x, *ct. proc.*).

In court proceedings Vol. xi, fols. 282-283 is an interesting document. "Deposition of John Cobreath aged 48 years or thereabouts, being duly sworn before me this 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1678 with that in the year 1658-1659 the said deponent carried Letters from John Billingsley living in Chucatuck in Nansemond county, Virginia unto his mother Agatha Billingsley living in the city of Rotterdam in Holland and delivered said letters to her and brought Answer of them to ye sd John & his mother said unto the deponent at ye same time that if ye said John Billingsley had sent some tobacco unto his brother itt had been better for him and ye deponent saith further that the bearer hereof George Billingsley is the sonne of ye said John Billingsley of Virginia, further sayeth not. 8 January 1679. Recorded John Cobreath. Sworn before me, Samuel Bourne"

John Billingsley died during the latter part of the year 1659 and John Cobreath was named as executor of the estate and trustee for the widow. On 11 Jan. 1660 Prov. Ct. Rdc. Lib. S1, fol. 391, Adam Augustine Kerman appeared before the Court and asked a warrant to arrest John Cobreath, executor of Major Billingsley, descd, in an action of debt of 4000 pounds of tobacco, warrant issued to sheriff to be returned 19 February 1660 Court.

Eliza married (2) prior to 1662 John Cobreath, trustee for Major Billingsley's relict, now wife of William Burgh, had a warrant for 1000 acres of land William Burgh. On 24 Feb. 1663 (Lib. vi fol. 202, and *Prov. Ct. Rec. Lib. 1 F.*) No data as to death of Eliza tho' she was apparently deceased before 1681.

## Children:

- i Henry: b ca 1654, was under age .1674 and deceased prior to Dec. 1681
- ii George: b ca 1656. Was under age in 1674 was the only surviving heir to his father's lands. He dated his will Dec. 21 1681, George Billingsley, of Chucatuck, Upper Norfolk, Virginia. This will is recorded at Annapolis, and also in Deeds, Lib. E, fol. 129 Prince Georges Co., Md. He devises plantation where I now live at Chucatuck, Va. to Thomas Jordan who married my sister Elizabeth & heirs, if no heirs at their decease to revert to sisters Mourning & Margaret & heirs.
- Sister, Mourning to have land in Calvert Co., Maryland 300 acres and her heirs, in case none then to revert to Margaret & her heirs.
- Sister, Margaret, land on Patuxent River in Maryland called "Billingsley's Point," 500 acres part of tract of 700 acres, should she die without heirs then to pass to other sisters equally.
- My loving friend Barbany Kearne & heir heirs 200 acres on Patient River, Maryland, part of a tract of 700 acres. (This land was possessed in 1711 by Thos. Greenfield from B. Kearne, and held for Hollyday's orphans; possessed 1722 by James Holliday.)
- Should sisters, Mourning & Margaret, be frustrated in any way of just rights to land in Maryland they shall have full and equal parts of Plantation on Chucatuck creek.
- The money left me by my grandmother, Mrs. Agatha Billingsley, as a legacy, in the hands of John Griffitts, Drugster, in Rotterdam, her executor, which sum amounts to 500 pounds and interest at 4 per cent and the same being due these fifteen years as follows:

Barnaby Kearn & heirs	50 pounds
Sarah Bainbrig	25 pounds

Thomas Jordan, Mourning & Margaret all the rest of sd money equally.

Captain John Cobreath of Virginia to pay all debts, etc. and to stand as friend to my sisters concerns thereas you have hitherto my father's and mine. This will was probated 13 Feb. 1681-2, Nansemond Co., Va. He never married

Owing to loss of early records of Nansemond County, Virginia it has not been possible to learn of disposition of lands devised in this will.

- iii John: b ca 1658-59. Was living 1663, and deceased before 18 Nov. 1671.

John Billingsly died ("lost at sea", probably in Chesapeake Bay or other tidal waters in Virginia and Maryland) when his three sons were no older than 5. As noted in the text above, his widow Eliza married William Burgh. Although their daughters (who were born in the early 1660's) had no Billingsley blood, they were a core part of the boys' family and were listed by Harry Davis.

- iv Elizabeth Burgh: b 166- 2d marriage, no Billingsley blood.
  - m (1) 10 June 1679 Thomas Jordain. He died and she
  - m (2) 23 Dec. 1721 Cornelius Ratcliff. They had:
    - 1 Thomas Jordain: b 19 May 1681.'
    - 2 Elizabeth Jordain: b 18 Nov. 1683.
    - 3 Martha Jordain : b 22 Jan. 1685.
    - 4 William Jordain: b 25 May 1688.
- v Mourning Burgh: b 166-, m after 1681 Pettus (?).
- vi Margaret Burgh: b 166-, m 9 Dec. 1688 John Jordan. She was devised land in Maryland by her brother George Billingsley. An Act was passed 1724 by Prov. Assembly, Maryland to cut off the entail of a tract of land called "Billingsley's Point" and enable John Jordain to make sale of same. He sold 500 acres to James Holliday in 1725. No record of children.