

CLIMBING THE FAMILY TREE

The Daily Press NEW DOMINION
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Sunday, February 17, 1974

HUDGINS FAMILY

HUDGINS FAMILY OF GLOUCESTER AND MATHEWS & ELIZABETHE CITY CO., VIRGINIA. This data continues from back issues in December of 1973. This data was furnished by one of our readers who so kindly offered same for our use and the many readers throughout Tidewater, Virginia. We begin with the alphabetizing listing of the family:

(C). William and Mary Hudgins. Upon their marriage, William & Mary Hudgins moved to Liverpool, England, the home of his father, the shipbuilder and merchant, Robert Hudgins. They had four sons, two of them in Liverpool and two of them born in Gloucester County, Virginia:

Houlder Hudgins, 1- 1738-1815

William Hudgins, -- 1740-

Lewis Selwyn Hudgins, -- 1744-

Robert Humphrey Hudgins, -- 1746-

Thus commenced the given name of Houlder Hudgins. Note the change in spelling from Holder to Houlder.

HUDGINS MIGRATION TO VIRGINIA. The early 18th Century witness tremendous interest in the commercial development of the New World where opportunities were seemingly unlimited. To a large degree, the primitive pioneering days had passed, three generations had passed since a group of religious fanatics has settled in the Massachusetts Bay colony and since Capt. John Smith had conducted a party to Jamestown, Virginia. Colonial governments were reasonably stable, Queen Elizabeth had made the seas safe enough for general purpose and the reign of William & Mary was one of prosperity and peace, the Colonists were loyal, industrious and deeply religious.

The trade between the mainland colonies in America, the West Indies and the mother country was brisk and profitable. At first it was conducted on English bottoms of all British materials. Later the forrest opulence of the new land gave forth better timber and pitch for hull spars at lower costs and, still later, the greater productivity and motivation of the colonial ship-wrights took over much of the finished ship building. Only

cordage and sailmaking remained as homeland monopolies.

The lush fields of Tidewater, Virginia invited families with a desire to farm to come and raise those most valuable of money crops, tobacco, corn and timber. For hard labor, slaves might be purchased from the West Indies, if one had the means. With slaves one could also add cotton and with cotton tobacco and cord man could get rich. This was the lure of Virginia; stimulated by easily available grants of land from the King, provided of course that one had money, for the Royal Treasury was always in need of money then, as it is now.

It was only natural that Robert Hudgins of Liverpool, himself a builder of ships and an owner of a fleet that plied its trade between the West Indies, the Colonies and his home port would encourage four sons to move to Virginia. He had the means to finance them, they had the knowledge of the sea as each was a captain of his own ship. Each of them had made many voyages to the new country and was experienced in the matter of trade and barter.

Of the four sons of Robert, William was the most highly possessed of spirit of entrepreneurship and he was a natural leader. He formed his brothers into a group which sold their properties in England and obtained grants of land in Virginia, took off in a year 1743 to settle permanently.

The entire group of the Planketank River side of what was then Gloucester County (this area became Mathews County in 1791). As his headquarters, William Hudgins purchased a manor known as Hess Castle from Capt. John Armistead. As time passed they worked their lands, most of which were located in Middlesex, Your, Elizabeth City and Hanover Counties. They prospered and they traded. In a few years William had acquired by exchange or otherwise all the manors surrounding Hesse and owned a continuous strip that extended for miles down the river to Seaford overlooking Old Point Comfort (Elizabeth City

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County, now the city of Hampton, Va.).

At this point it should be stated that the group of four brothers under the leadership of William Hudgins were not the only Hudgins' who migrated to the New World. It is obvious there were several others of the name who settled there at about the same time. I have found the name in early records in places all the way from the West Indies to Massachusetts. In the historical Tower of St. Georges in Bermuda there is a list of the original forty Englishmen, including one Robert Hudgins, who were shipwrecked in 1609 on the Island (then known as Bermudez after its discoverer Juan de Bermudez). These men, now affectionately referred to in Bermuda as "The Forty Thieves" claimed the island in the name of England, built a ship out of island woods and some of them sailed on to their original destination, Virginia, where they saw to it that Bermuda was made a part of the Old Dominion. (Those who remained on the island, the Triminghams, the Smiths and the Friths have earned their titles well since.) The name Hudgins also appears in Jamaica, Nassau and many of the windward islands. It is also common in Georgia and the Delta States.

Mary Holder Hudgins died in 1748 at Hesse Castle in Gloucester. This left William with a problem, how to raise his children, particularly his oldest boy, Houlder for whom he had great love and expectations.

In 1748 William Hudgins sent his son Houlder back to Liverpool to his grandparents, Robert and Charlotte Hudgins to be educated and to receive proper training in the Navy as befitted to the eldest son of a family of position. Houlder Hudgins was educated at Christ College in Bristol and at the Naval College at Dartmouth, from which he graduated in 1756 and was commissioned an officer in the Royal Navy.

Houlder Hudgins served in the Royal Navy for nine years and attained the rank of Captain. In 1765 he resigned from the service. He must have served with distinction because he applied for and received

a grand of 1200 acres of land adjacent to lands of his father's along the bank of the Planketank River in Gloucester, Virginia, overlooking the beautiful Gwyn Island where lived the girl who was one day to become his second wife.

If William Hudgins had been an astute business man, it must be admitted that his son, Houlder, was even more so. When he returned to his land in Gloucester in 1768 he came fully equipped with all the materials and furnishings for a manor house, twenty skilled workmen from his grandfather's shipyard and the capital tools to set up a shipyard of his own after his house was built.

His grandfather, a man of great means and foresight undoubtedly provided the capital to do this.

"Clifton", the manor house that rose on the site by the river, was reputed to have been the most stately in the county. Its gardens of roses were renowned far and wide, its design one of Colonial charm in the "Grand southern" manner. The main house had twenty-two rooms and there were plantation out-buildings and quarters for families of slaves which grew to number over 200 at the time of his death.

(Note: This Hudgins family data will be continued in the next issue or future issues of this feature for this writer has never found such a detailed amount of data on the Hudgins as has been found in these papers. Thanks to Mr. Edward A. Hudgins, 8148 Tidal Road, Norfolk, Va. 23518, telephone 587-9023.)