

THOMAS GODWIN OF ENGLAND AND NANSEMOND COUNTY, VIRGINIA
AND SOME OF HIS DESCENDANTS

"WHO LIVED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD"

by

John McCay Godwin

a descendant from Polk County, Georgia

The first record I have found of Thomas Godwin in Virginia is in Lower Norfolk county court minutes, "Book B", under date of March 4, 1647. It records receipt by a Mr Hough [by gods providence bound for England] of "one bill of ladeing under Mr Goodwines (Godwin) hand for 4 hhds of tob."

For Thomas Godwin to have tobacco ready for shipment to England in March, 1647 is an indication that he had been in the colony for several years prior to that date. It took time to acquire land, build his homestead and clear and prepare land for cultivation. Once land had been prepared for planting of tobacco, the seeds were planted in special beds to germinate (sprout). When the plant leaves grew to the "breadth of a shilling" they were tranplanted to the field in "hills" of a few thousand per acre. Then came the task of weeding, suckering, worming, topping and cutting. After this the curing process took an average of six weeks or longer if it required smoke firing to hasten the curing process. The cured leaf was then packed into barrel like containers called "hogsheads".

The hogsheads were then rolled over a road made smooth enough to prevent damage to the nearest wharf for loading aboard ships bound for England.

Elizabeth City county court minutes under date of November 17, 1651, records that Thomas Edmunds acknowledged judgement for 1013 lbs of tobacco due Thomas Godwin. He to pay in ten days.

Thomas Godwin is listed as one of the Commissioners present at a court for Elizabeth City county on November 1, 1653.

Elizabeth City county was one of the original counties formed in 1634. New Norfolk county was formed in 1636 from that portion of Elizabeth City county on the south side of the James river. New Norfolk was divided into Lower Norfolk and Upper Norfolk in 1637. Upper Norfolk became Nansemond county in 1642 which borders on Isle of Wight County.

His plantation, called "Old Castle" was on the border of the two counties. A long dispute as to the boundary line between the two counties was the subject of four acts of the Assembly from 1636 to 1772. An act in 1674 provided that "the house and cleared grounds of Captain Thomas Godwin, who hath bin an ancient inhabitant of Nansemond Countie Court, be, remain, counted and deemed in the County of Nansemond, anything in this act to the contrary notwithstanding".

In the year 1646 a treaty with the Indians designated the York river as the line to separate the settlements of the English and the natives. However, the increasing number of English settlers forced the Governor and Council, upon representation from the Burgesses to open up the land north of the York and Rappahannock rivers after the year 1649. At the same time the provision making it a felony for the English to go north of the York was repealed. [See W. Stitt Robinson, Jr., Land Grants in Virginia, 1607-1699]

Virginia land patent records lists two patents dated in May, 1650, to Thomas Godwin and Richard Exum. One grant, for 550 acres, located on the southside of the Rappahannock river in old Rappahannock county, was for transporting eleven persons, one of whom was Richard Exum. The other grant for 1000 acres in the same county lists twenty persons, one of whom was Thomas Godwin. The date of the land grants indicate they had selected the location of the land prior to the lifting of the ban. He later sold his interest in this land. He received a patent for 200 acres in Nansemond county, dated March 11, 1655, for transporting four persons, and another for 179 acres located at "Chuckatuck," dated February 6, 1667, for transporting four persons. He was then titled "Captain" in one of these patents. By the time of his death he had acquired other land for he left his son, Edmond, three hundred acres on the Western Branch and one hundred seventy-five acres located on the Eastern Branch of the Nansemond river.

The evolution of Colonial Militia, described in Maryland Historical Magazine, (Vol XXXV), states that "in all the earlier English colonies, the Captain of Militia was a person of importance and responsibility. It was his duty to see that each house-holder had his proper outfit of arms and ammunition and that each colonist had such instruction as would make him able to do his part in time of danger".

The dates on which a person was granted a land patent is not the actual date of that person's arrival in the Colony. The persons named in the grant as being transported, as a general rule may have arrived in the Colony long before the grantee had entered claim for land. Nor is it to be assumed that the headright is necessarily an immigrant. A good example is in the list of persons transported by Thomas Godwin and Richard Exum in which they listed themselves as being transported even tho they had long been in the Colony. This was common practice among all early settlers. (Robinson's Land Grants in Virginia 1607-1699)

Unfortunately, the early records of Nansemond County, Virginia were destroyed by fire. A small number of records of that county in the hands of private persons, other County Courts, Colonial Church Parish Registers, and the Colonial Virginia Government, now in the Virginia State Library (VSL) have been preserved.

The last Will and Testament of the first Thomas Godwin of Nansemond County and of his son, Thomas II and Edmond, son of Thomas II, copied by Mrs Henry Litchfield West of Washington, D. C. is on file in the Research Branch of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D. C. By his will, dated March 24, 1676, he provided legacies to his two sons; Thomas and Edmond, and his daughter, Elizabeth. It mentions his wife, but does not give her name. Other records of the period indicate his wife's given name to have been Elizabeth. Miles White, Jr's book "Early Quaker records in Virginia" records that Elizabeth Godwin, Senior, Thomas Godwin and Edmond Godwin were present at a Quaker marriage at Chuckatuck in March, 1688.

Records of Quaker meetings at Chuckatuck list as present at a Quaker marriage in October, 1679 the names of Edmond Godwin, Thomas Godwin, Elizabeth Godwin and Elizabeth and Joseph Woory. Elizabeth Woory was the daughter of Thomas Godwin I, mentioned in his will. She married first, James Webb by whom she had children. After his death in 1675 she married Joseph Woory. Joseph Woory died in 1692, and she then married Colonel Samuel Bridger. She had no children by her last two husbands. Her Will is recorded in Isle of Wight County, dated in 1718. She left legacies to among others, her daughters, Elizabeth Wilkinson, and Patience Milner; and to her granddaughters Patience Milner and Elizabeth and Martha Norsworthy.

Based on the few records available, the first Thomas Godwin of Nansemond County, was a planter and merchant-trader. He represented Nansemond County in the Virginia House of Burgesses in the years 1654-55 and 1658. He was a Justice of the County Court and Colonel Commandant of the county at the time of his death in the year 1676/7 (Old English Style).

John Bennett Boddie in his work on Virginia Historical Genealogies included the pedigree of a Godwin family of Somerset county in southern England, and suggests that our Thomas Godwin came from this family and place.

The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Vol XIII) contains a history of a Brent Family in the County of Somerset, and traces it back to the time of Edward II (1307-1327). A John Brent married a daughter and co-heir of a Thomas Godwin and added to his estate the manors of Godwins Bower and West Bagborough, which he purchased of Thomas Godwyn.

A later descendant of this John Brent, Captain Giles Brent, came into Maryland in the year 1638, and brought with him six servants, one of whom was Devereux Godwin. The record is not clear as to whether Devereux was already in Virginia or came with Brent from England (See Vol V - Maryland Historical Magazine). Captain Brent was later made Commander of Kent Island and Devereux Godwin apparently went with him as his

name appears on a tax roll for Kent Island in 1642. Devereux Godwin settled in Northampton County, Virginia on the Eastern Shore before 1653 and died there in 1679.

The late Gordon Warren Godwin Chesser of Baltimore, Maryland did extensive research on the Godwins in England and in America. He stated that Devereux and Thomas Godwin were brothers and nephews of a Sir Arthur Godwin who came to Virginia about 1615, but stayed only two years; that Thomas Godwin came in 1634 and Devereux Godwin came in 1638. Unfortunately, Chesser did not give the source of his information. His research notes were published in book form after his death, titled "The Godwin Ancestry". A copy of his book is in the History and Genealogy section of the Library of Congress.

The name of a Thomas Godwin, age 30, appears among a list of 137 men and 5 women aboard the ship "Mathew of London bound for St Christophers, dated May 21, 1635, per warrant from the Earle of Carlisle". St Christophers is located in the island chain in the Caribbean Sea called the Leeward Islands. It is now called St Kitts/Nevis. The Earl of Carlisle (James Hay) was on July 2, 1627 made Governor of the Caribbe Islands. His son, James Hay, also Earl Carlisle, established his hereditary right to Barbados, then called the Carlisle Islands. He went there in person and lived for several years

during the English Civil War. He employed several hundred persons and arranged their transport. Large sugar cane plantations were established on many of these islands, including St Christophers and continues to the present time. Commerce and trade between these islands and the Virginia Colony became a normal way of life. In the absence of any positive record as to how or when our Thomas Godwin arrived in Virginia, he quite possibly is the same man listed on the ship bound for St Christophers in the year 1635. (See Burke's Complete Peerage in England and Hotten's List of Immigrants to American Plantations). Also see my text "Godwins in England" attached to this record.

Thomas Godwin II (Thomas I), married Martha Bridger, a daughter of Colonel Joseph Bridger, of Isle of Wight County. He, like his father, was a planter, merchant trader, tobacco agent and ship owner. Based on the large number of legal cases in which their names appear in Virginia and North Carolina, both he and his father appear to have been Counselors-at-Law. He represented Isle of Wight county in the Virginia house of Burgesses in the years 1676 and 1699. Apparently it was he, and not his father, who was Speaker of the House of Burgesses during Bacon's Rebellion.

Miss Mildred Holladay compiled a record of the Godwin family of Nansemond and surrounding counties from notes made by her father from records in the Nansemond county court house before it burned. She records that contemporary history shows him to have been a man of very independent spirit and a lover of liberty. During Bacon's rebellion he came out strongly on the side of Liberty as shown by the quotation from Bancroft's History of the United States, "A Majority of the Burgesses returned were much infected with the principle of Bacon, and their Speaker, Thomas Godwin, was notoriously a friend of all the treason and rebellion that distracted Virginia".

Ironically, his father-in-law, Colonel Joseph Bridger, was one of Governor Berkeley's Generals during Bacon's Rebellion. He was denounced along with other prominent Virginians in Bacon's Proclamation of 1676 as "wicked and pernicious Councillors, aiders and assistors against the Commonalty in these our cruel commotions." He fled to the Eastern Shore with Governor Berkeley during the Rebellion. In spite of their differences, the Godwins recieved their full share of Colonel Bridger's estate and named their second son, Joseph, for him.

John Bennett Boddie's book titled "Seventeenth Century Isle of Wight County Virginia" records that "Richard Bennett and Captain Thomas Godwin, Speaker of the House in 1676, were neighbors and Merchants in Nansemond. They seemed to have early learned the "Yankee method of trading" for on May 12, 1671, Lord Ashley, one of the Lord Proprietors of Carolina, wrote Sir Henry Chicheley, Governor of Virginia, that "The Lords Proprietors of Carolina had fallen into the hands of two men of Virginia who, instead of being in debt to the Lord Proprietors, have the Proprietors in their debt, Richard Bennett and Thomas Godwin".

In February, 1728, William Byrd and his party while on their way to begin the survey of the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina, visited and remained overnight with a Colonel Thomas Godwin near Chuckatuck. Byrd recorded in his diary that "Colonel Godding was very hospitable both to man and beast, but the poor man had the misfortune to be deaf, which hindered him from hearing any parts of the acknowledgements that were made to him; he prest everybody very kindly to eat, entreating 'em not to be bashful."

In copying the Will of this Thomas Godwin Mrs West stated that "while it is dated in 1778, he was an old man who had seen Colonial service as shown by the records. He married Mary Pitt, daughter of Colonel Henry Pitt and his wife, Mary West, of Isle of Wight County. He lived at Cherry Grove, a fine old mansion which for many years was a social center in the county. When the Colonies declared their Independence, Colonel Godwin was an ardent sympathizer in the cause, and at the request of the Court, he appeared before it and pledged his loyalty to the cause of Independence, promising to help in every way. He was old and feeble and could not fight. The old Minute Book in which this record occurred stated that this was done because Colonel Godwin was a man of great influence in the County and his opinions would aid the cause".

At the present time, there are two old homes still standing on land near Chuckatuck, that according to legend, were built by members of the Godwin family. One is a three story English basement design, of brick masonry. The other is of the same style and size but constructed of wood. The homes are located approximately one mile, on opposite sides of the main road leading from Smithfield to Chuckatuck and on to Suffolk. The compiler visited in the one built of masonry in November, 1990. According to the current occupant, the records show it to have been built in 1690.

While seeing both homes, and visiting in the one, it brought to mind Mildred Holladay's humorous account of the legend that whenever a Godwin was accused of a misdeed, the other Godwins all claimed it was one of the Godwins who "lived on the other side of the road."

Colonel Thomas Godwin II (Thomas I), by his will dated May 3rd, 1712, and probated May 17, 1714, bequeathed "to my well beloved wife, Martha Godwin, my new dwelling plantation houses and out houses, my mill and the apurtenances, etc." He left legacies to each of his six sons and three daughters. Their names were Thomas, Joseph, Edmond, Samuel, William, James, Martha, Mary and Elizabeth.

His son, William Godwin, received two hundred acres of land in Isle of Wight county, Virginia. This son, William Godwin (Thomas II-Thomas I) lived and died in Isle of Wight county. He married Elizabeth Wright, daughter of Thomas Wright of Isle of Wight county. He acknowledged receipt of his wife's legacy on September 6, 1666, bequeathed her by her father's last will.

By his will, dated November 8, 1710, and probated September 25, 1720, William Godwin (Thomas II-Thomas I) left legacies to each of his eight children; three sons and five daughters. The will reads in part as follows:

** * to my beloved son William the land and plantation whereon he now liveth, namely all my land on that side of the main road that now runs to him * **

** * to my son Joseph the land and plantation whereon he now liveth * **

** * to my son John my house and plantation whereon I now live and all my land on this side of the road adjoining to my son William * **

The two brothers, William and John Godwin, (William-Thomas II-Thomas I) later sold the land they had inherited from their father, William, as mentioned above. The deeds of sale read in part as follows:

** * February 1st, 1749, William Godwin, of Suffolk Parish in the County of Nansemond, doth sell to Thomas Bullock a certain parcel of land situate, lying and being in Newport Parish in the county of Isle of Wight containing by estimation one hundred acres. It being the same land and plantation whereon the said William Godwin did formerly live and bounding on the lands of "Barnaby" Godwin, the same being a part of a patent formerly granted to Geoffry Hunt for six hundred acres and by the said Hunt conveyed to Henry Reeves of Rappahanock who did by deed of bargain and sale bearing date of the 19th day of December, 1688 convey and sell two hundred acres of the said land to Thomas Godwin of Chuckatuck in Nansemond and the said Thomas Godwin did by his last will and testament give and bequeath the said two hundred acres unto his son, William Godwin, father of the aforesaid William, party to these presents, who did by his last will and testament bequeath the same to his two sons /viz/ William and "Barnaby" Godwin, each to have an equal dividend of the said land which is now divided and bounded by consent of each party * * Sarah Godwin, wife of the aforesaid William, having been privately examined, relinquished her right of dower to the land mentioned in the said deed ****

By deed of sale dated August 20th, 1752 "Barnebe" Godwin, Planter, of the county of Granvall (Granville), Province of North Carolina, sold his one hundred acres to Benjamin Beal of the county of Isle of Wight and Parish of Newport. The deed

describes the land in the same manner and wording as his brother William's above. The deed further states that "at a court held for Isle of Wight county, February 1st, 1753, Barnebe Godwin came into court and acknowledged the within indenture and sale to Benjamin Beal. Wilkinson Godwin, wife of the said Barnebe, having been privately examined, relinquished her right of dower to the land mentioned on the said indenture which is ordered to be recorded".

The will of William Godwin (Thomas II, Thomas I) in which he bequethed land jointly to his two sons, "William and John" and their subsequent sale of the land in which the deeds of sale reads "Barnaby-Barnebe" instead of "John" proves that "John and Barnaby-Barnebe Godwin" were one and the same person.

Miss Holladay's record of the Godwin family which states that the father of Barnaby Godwin was the William Godwin who married Ann Pitt, is in error. She apparently confused him with another William Godwin who did marry Ann Pitt of Isle of Wight county. This marriage is proved by the will of John Pitt, the father of Ann Pitt, dated December 16, 1729. By his will, he gave a legacy to his daughter, Ann Godwin, and appointed her husband, William Godwin, executor of his estate. The will was presented by William Godwin to Isle of Wight county court for probate on February 14, 1734.

The William Godwin who married Elizabeth Wright and father of "John- Barnaby", died prior to September 25, 1720, the date his will was submitted for probate. This date is fourteen years earlier than the date that the William Godwin, who married Ann Pitt, submitted the will of his father-in-law, John Pitt, for probate on February 14, 1734.

Elizabeth Wright Godwin, widow of William (Thomas II, Thomas I) and mother of William and John (Barnaby) Godwin, among other children, made her will in Isle of Wight county, dated February 4, 1726. She named her two sons, John and William as legatees for certain property. She named her "two sons and five daughters" to share equally in the remainder of her estate. She named her son, John, [Barnaby] as executor of her estate. The will was submitted for probate at a court held for Isle of Wight county March 27, 1727. She did not name her other son, Joseph. He apparently had settled in North Carolina. The last Will of Daniel Camerlen of Northampton County, North Carolina, dated January 7, 1747, registered in the May Court, 1752, lists as legatees his daughter, Bridget Godwin, and grandson, Joseph Godwin. (See J. Bryan Grimes "Abstracts of North Carolina Wills)

John Barnaby Godwin (Williwm, Thomas II, Thomas I) described himself as " Planter" in Granville County, North Carolina on August 20, 1752, the date of the deed by which he sold his one hundred acres of land in Isle of Wight county, Virginia that

he had inherited from his father, William Godwin, as mentioned above. By a deed dated October 10, 1752, he purchased one hundred and fifty acres of land lying on the north side of the Tar River (in present day Franklin County). By deed of sale dated March 26, 1760, he sold the land. The deed describes him as then living in Edgecombe County, North Carolina.

The State Records of North Carolina, volume XXII, contain a muster roll of the State Militia Regiment in Granville county, under the command of Colonel William Eaton, taken at a general muster of the regiment on October 8, 1754. Barnaby Goodwin (Godwin) is listed as a member of Captain Benjamin Simm's Company. Other Goodwins' (Godwins') listed as members of this Regiment are John , Thomas, and Theophilus, Sr. and Jr., all in Captain Sugar Jone's Company.

John Barnaby Godwin and his wife, Wilkinson, were parents of two daughters, Lilory and Elizabeth, and one son, Jonothan, for whom provable records exist. There may have been other children whose names appear in both North Carolina and Georgia records. According to records in the possession of their descendants in Georgia, Lilory married Jonas Shivers and Elizabeth married John Milner. Based on Inferior Court Minutes in Hancock County, Georgia, Jonothan Godwins' wife's christian name was Martha. Her maiden family name is unknown. The date and place of marriage of all three couples has not been found.

Their names do not appear on any of the published records of early marriages in Virginia or North Carolina.

The Shivers Genealogy, compiled by Marcus O. Shivers, and published by the Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, date 1950, states that "Jonas Shivers and Lilory Godwin, were married about 1771 or 1772, then living in Edgecombe county, North Carolina". He made the same mistake concerning whom William Godwin (father of Barnaby) married as did Miss Holladay, both stating he married Ann Pitt which is in error as proven above.

A compilation of Bible records in Georgia, by Jeannette Holland Austin, contain entries from "Jonas Shivers' Bible", owned by Martha Milner, of Barnesville, Georgia. These entries state that Jonas Shivers was born on October 14, 1750, and that Lilory Shivers, daughter of Barnaby Godwin and Wilkinora, his wife, was born on December 22, 1750. This is the first record of [John] Barnaby Godwins' wife's given, or christain name. All previous records used her maiden name of "Wilkinson". Only one child of Jonas and Lilory Shivers is recorded; Barnaby Shivers, born July 29, 177--?, in Virginia.

A Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers in Georgia, Volume III, compiled by Mrs Howard H. McCall, [an official of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Georgia Chapter], lists Jonas Shivers serving in the Georgia Line during the

Revolution and receiving a bounty grant of land. It states that both he and his wife died in Warren County, Georgia in 1826. It lists their children as Barnaby, Willis, William, Thomas and James.

The same roster lists John Milner as serving under Generals Pickens and Sumpter in South Carolina. It states that he was born in England in 1746 and married Elizabeth Godwin of Virginia in 1765. It lists their children as Willis, Pitt, Simeon, Benjamin, John, Jonothan, Lucy, Nancy and two other daughters, (not named).

A supplement to the history of Oglethorpe county, Georgia, submitted by Mrs John Tyler Mauldin of Atlanta, Georgia lists the date of birth of Elizabeth Godwin Milner, circa 1748, died 29 January, 1812, in Oglethorpe county. John Milner, born May 16, 1746, died December 16, 1812, in Oglethorpe county. Their children; Willis, Pitt, Benjamin, John, Jonothan, Mary, Sarah, and Nancy.

In the absence of written proof of the place of birth of John Milner, and with due respect to Mrs Mc Call and Mrs Mauldin, their statement that he was born in England is questionable. The Milner, Godwin, Pitt and Shivers families were early settlers of Colonial Virginia and the Province of North Carolina, with several inter-marriages among them. Thomas Milner and Thomas Godwin both settled in Nansemond County and

were Burgesses from that county as were some of their sons in later years. The records lists several John Milners' of that era in both Virginia and North Carolina. The will of Betty Milner of Isle of Wight County, Virginia, dated February 12, 1763 and probated April 7, 1763 names as legatees her two brothers, John Milner and Pate Wills Milner. Deed book 3, page 61 for Bute County North Carolina, dated May 9, 1770 shows Pate Wills Milner selling 200 acres of land to John Milner. The deed was acknowledged by Pate Wills Milner at the Bute May Court, 1770 and registered on November 27, 1770. A marginal notation on the deed reads "14th Augst. 1771 Deld. to Britain Harriss". Bute County was formed in 1764 from Granville County. Granville County was formed in 1746 from Edgecombe County. Bute County was divided into Franklin and Warren Counties in 1779.

The exact year in which John Barnaby Godwin, his wife, Wilkinson, and their son, Jonothan Godwin left North Carolina to settle in Georgia has not been determined. Some of the last dates of record in North Carolina, indicate it to have been in the year 1789.

John Barnaby Godwin purchased land in Edgecombe County in 1785; the deed was witnessed by Jonathon Godwin. He sold the land in 1789. The deed states "the land being the same whereon the said Godwin lately lived". The deed was witnessed by Jonas Sheavers (Shivers), his son-in-law.