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## HIGGINBOTHAM FAMILY OF VIRGINIA

BY WILLIAM MONTGOMERY SWEENEY, Astoria, Long Island,  
New York

Great, great, great grandson of Aaron and Clara (Green?) Higginbotham,  
and great, great, great grandson of William and Rachel (Higgin-  
botham) Morrison.

Higginbotham. "Arms, *Ar.* a rose *gu.*, barbed *vert*, seeded  
*or.* Crest, a dexter and sinister arm discharging an arrow from  
a bow, all *proper.*"

The name Higginbotham (and variants of the name), is  
found in several counties of England, especially in Lancashire  
and Cheshire, at least as early as the sixteenth century. The  
earliest mention I have been able to find is the following:

"The names of all and singular Knights, Esquires, Gentle-  
men and Freeholders in Com. Cestriae.

Harl. 1424 fol. 7 Harl. 1505.

Maxfeild Hundred.

1580

An<sup>o</sup> 1579, 22<sup>o</sup> Eliz.

Nic<sup>o</sup> Hichingbotham of Moorepoole."<sup>1</sup>

The parish registers of one town, alone, Stockport, (Cheshire,  
England), contain 88 references to Higginbothams between the  
years 1584 and 1620.

Members of the Cheshire branch of the family settled at an  
early date in Barbados, B. W. I., and among the probate acts of  
the Prerogative Court of Chancery (in London), we find a will of  
Otwell Higginbotham, "17 Sept. 1649, in the Barbados, being  
bound in a voyage for England," in which he makes bequests to  
"my cosen Captain John Higginbotham in the Barbados," and  
to John, Joan, Martha, Alice, Sara, Priscilla and Mary, children  
of Captain John Higginbotham, Nicholas Higginbotham, of  
Cheshire (England), and Captain John Higginbotham, of Bar-

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<sup>1</sup> *Trans. of the Harleian Soc.*, Vol. 93, p. 9.

bados, are named as executors of the will which was proved (in England), "30 Jan. 1651-52." <sup>2</sup>

Captain John Higginbotham, Sr., ("Lieutenant-Colonel," in his will), was a wealthy and influential planter of Barbados, whose will was entered for probate (in Barbados), November 27, 1673. His Son, Captain John Higginbotham, Jr., was engaged in trade with Jamaica and New England, "In February, 1683, Chr. Codrington leased to him his two plantations, in St. John's parish, Barbados, called Didmartons and Consetts, together 750 acres, at the annual rent of £2,200 sterling." <sup>3</sup>

Captain John Higginbotham, Sr., is mentioned as early as 1638, in "A List of the names of the Inhabitants of Barbados in the year 1638, who then possessed more than ten acres of land." <sup>4</sup> He may be identical with the "Jo. Hickcombottom, 24 years old," <sup>5</sup> who was a passenger on the *Bonaventure*, sailing from London for Virginia in 1634.

In a list of "Gentlemen of the country," [Barbados] about the year 1666, we find mentioned: "Lt. Coll. Higgenbottome, Lt. Coll. Rich<sup>d</sup> Bayley & Maj<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Bates, stout men and fitt for comand." <sup>6</sup>

On 12th August, 1663, proposals were made to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, by "several gentlemen and persons of good quality," in the island of Barbados, for a settlement in Carolina, between Cape Fear and Florida. In the same year commissioners were sent from Barbados to explore the Cape Fear River, and their favorable report of the country and its advantages for settlers, resulted in a settlement, or, rather, two settlements, for about the same time proposals were also opened be-

<sup>2</sup> *Probate Acts of the Prerogative Court of Chancery*, Lon., 1902; and transcript of original will in possession of W. M. Sweeny.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Vere L. Oliver (Editor, "*Caribbeana*"), Weymouth, England, July 20, 1917, to William M. Sweeny.

<sup>4</sup> *Memoirs of the First Settlement of Barbados*, etc., Lon., 1743.

<sup>5</sup> Hotten's: *List of Emigrants*, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> B. P. R. O. *Col. Papers*, Vol. 20.

tween the Lords Proprietors and Major William Yeamans, a high official of Barbados, and others, for a settlement on the Cape Fear. Unhappily, however, the two settlements "broke up in the summer or early fall of 1667," some of the settlers going up "to the Albemarle settlement and to Nansemond County in Virginia in part and in part to Boston."<sup>7</sup>

It is possible that Captain John Higginbotham, Sr., was interested in the Cape Fear settlement and that some of his family settled there, and went thence to Nansemond County, Virginia, where we find the name of record in the years 1783 and 1784.

In a list of English marriage licenses and allegations for marriage license, of the seventeenth century, are found the following, which may have some Virginian significance:

"1668-9 Feb. 13 Benedict Prosser, Cripplegate, Lond., Goldsmith, Bach<sup>r</sup> ab<sup>t</sup> 26, and Sarah Higginbotham, of St. Botolph's, Bishopgate, Sp<sup>r</sup> ab<sup>t</sup> 22, with consent of her father, Mr. Geo. Higginbotham; at St. Botolph's or St. Giles afs<sup>d</sup>." (Har. Soc., Vol. 33, p. 261.)

"1684 March 27, Henry Washington, of St. Saviour's Southwark, Bachelor, 25 and Margaret Higginbothome, of St. Ethelburgh, London, Spinster, 25, at St. Leonard's Shoreditch." (Idem. Vol. 26, p. 305.)

"1689 Dec. 28 John Sedley, of St. Andrew's, Holborn, Midd., Hosier, Bach<sup>r</sup> ab<sup>t</sup> 25, and Elizabeth Higginbotham, of Watham Abbey in Essex, Sp<sup>r</sup> ab<sup>t</sup> 17, with her father's consent; at Woodford, Essex." (Idem. Vol. 31, p. 129.)

Another branch of the family settled in Ireland, and among other records of the family preserved in the Public Record Office, Dublin, is the original will of a Cromwellian soldier, John Higginbotham, or "Hicknebothom," of Staples troop, probated in the year. 1656.<sup>8</sup>

The late Chief Justice George Higinbotham, of Victoria, Australia, was a representative of the Irish branch.

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<sup>7</sup> *Col. Records of N. C.*, preface Vol. 1, pp. X, XII and XIV, and p. 67.

John and Frances (Riley) Higginbotham came to Virginia from Ireland, early in the eighteenth century, with several children, one of whom was named John;<sup>9</sup> others are said to have been Moses, Aaron, James and Anne, and settled in what is now Goochland County. Tradition has it that John Higginbotham, Sr., came to Virginia in the winter and died in the spring, "having taken cold prospecting government lands."

Other children of John and Frances (Riley) Higginbotham, evidently born in Virginia, were Benjamin, Joseph, Rachel and Thomas.

In the office of the Land Register at Richmond (Virginia), are recorded patents to Higginbothams for about 20,000 acres of land in Albemarle and Amherst Counties between the years 1749 and 1800.

We find from the records of Albemarle County (formerly a part of Goochland County), that Moses Higginbotham (who was apparently the eldest son), under dates of April 23 and 24, 1745, purchased from George Braxton, Jr. (a brother of Carter Braxton, the Signer), of King & Queen County, two parcels of land consisting of 1,000 and 1,430 acres respectively, located on Buffalo River, Albemarle County. Between April 30 and May 11, 1751, Moses conveyed 2,024 acres of this property to his brothers and to William Morrison (died 1761), who had married his sister Rachel Higginbotham. All of the parties to the transaction (except George Braxton, Jr.), were of Albemarle County. The consideration named was the nominal sum of five shillings, "current money of Virginia," for each parcel of land, as follows:

To Aaron Higginbotham,	204 acres
" Benjamin " " ,	204 "
" John " " " ,	200 and 204 acres

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<sup>9</sup> From the Bible record of Tirzah (Higginbotham) London, (1783-1841), daughter of Captain John and Rachel (Banks) Higginbotham, and wife of John London (1775-1823): "Tirzah London was a daughter of John Higginbotham who came from Ireland when he was nine years old with his father and mother and several other children." This record is in possession of Miss Emmie Cabell Davies, granddaughter of Tirzah London, Amherst Court House, Virginia.

To Joseph Higginbotham,	200 and 204 acres
“ James “ ,	200 “ 204 “
“ William Morrison,	200 “ 204 “

We conclude from the above, that this was a division of the estate left by the father to his eldest son, Moses.

As no mention is made of his sister Anne, it is presumed that she either received her share in money, or else had died previous to the above date. Moses's brother, Thomas, apparently received his share in money, as we find that about this time he sold his holdings in Albemarle County, and removed with his family to Georgia.

According to the census returns and tax lists the following heads of families of the name were living in Virginia towards the close of the eighteenth century:—

<i>Amherst County</i>					
1783				1785	
	a	b	c	d	e
William Higginbotham,	6		7		
*Benjamin “ “ ,	3	10			
*Benjamin “ “ , Jr	3	1			
*Jacob “ “ ,	8	4			
Joseph “ “ ,	4	7	3	1	
Samuel “ “ ,	10	6			
Aaron “ “ ,	2	15			
Aaron “ “ , Jr	4	3			
James “ “ ,	4	14 (Col. James)	5	1	5
John “ “ ,	11	18 (Capt. John)	11	1	5
Moses “ “ ,	8	7	6	1	8
*Caleb “ “ ,	6	3			

<i>Nansemond County</i>					
Wm. Higembotham,	6	6			
Wm. Hickumbotham.			7	1	2

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\* These Higginbothams migrated to Elbert County, Georgia, where their names are found of record. The name of Aaron Higginbotham, Sr., is not found on the census of 1785, he having died in that year. Samuel Higginbotham is supposed to have migrated to Georgia and settled in Glynn County.

*Greenbrier County: 1784-1786*  
(Name taken from county tax list.)

Jos. Hickenbottom,  
Moses Hickenbottom.

- a. white
- b. black
- c. white
- d. dwellings
- e. other buildings

*The descendants of John and Frances (Riley) Higginbotham.*

*Moses Higginbotham*, was apparently the eldest son. He died in Amherst County, in 1790 or 1791, and his will was entered for probate February 7, 1791. (Will Book 3, p. 165.)

To his wife Frances, he bequeaths six negroes: Lewis, Phillis, Elizabeth, Amy, Sarah and Caroline and "204 Acres of Land I now live on and all my Horses, Cattle, Sheep and Hogs and all my Household Furniture during her widowhood or life." To son Joseph, a negro boy, Solomon and "Two Hundred Acres of Land on both sides of Rutledges Creek the Land my aforesaid son Joseph now lives on." To son Robert, one negro boy, Fountain and one Feather Bed. To son Moses,<sup>10</sup> a negro boy, Stephen.

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The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, of December 8, 1763, contains an interesting letter from Captain William Christian, dated "Roanoke (Virginia), October 19, 1763," describing an affair with the Indians which took place October 12th, from which we extract the following:

"Being joined by Captain Hickenbotham, with twenty-five of the Amherst militia, we marched on Tuesday last to Winston's Meadows, where our scouts informed us, that they had discovered a party of Indians about three miles off. Night coming on, prevented our meeting them; and next day, being rainy, made it difficult to follow their tracks. As they were on their return, Captain Hickenbotham marched to join Captain Ingles down New River, etc."

Unfortunately, Captain Christian does not state which Captain Higginbotham was concerned in this affair. There were six Higginbotham brothers living in Amherst County in 1763, Aaron, Benjamin, James, John, Joseph and Moses, any one of whom was at that time old enough to have been the "Captain" Higginbotham mentioned.

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<sup>10</sup> He migrated to Tazewell County, Virginia, prior to 1800, where he died in 1826. See an account of his descendants in "*The Utah Gen. & Hist. Magazine*," Vol. 7, No. 4, October, 1916, pp. 189-201.

To son William, a negro boy, John, and 204 acres of land "whereon I now live" to take possession "at my well beloved wife's Marriage or Death." To daughter Rachel Higginbotham, a negro boy, Lewis, and 200 acres of land on the branches of Harris's Creek, to be taken off the lower end "of my Tract of Four Hundred Acres of Land." To son Charles, a negro boy, Bartley, and 200 acres of land on both sides of Rutledge's Creek, and adjoining Buffalo River, "on the South side Whereon I formerly had a Mill." To daughter Frances<sup>11</sup> Higginbotham, a negro girl, Easter, and one feather bed. To sons, Joseph, William and Charles, "all my Black Smith's tools and one Still and one Whipsaw," to be in common between them. To sons, Robert and Moses, 200 acres of land on the branches of Harris's Creek, to be taken off of the upper end of "my Tract of Four Hundred Acres,—to be equally divided between them."

Should wife die or remarry, then said negroes left to her are to be equally divided amongst testator's children,—Joseph, Robert, Moses, William, Rachel, Charles and Frances Higginbotham.

To sons, Charles and William and daughter Rachel, "all my Horses, Cattle and Hogs," to be equally divided amongst them" at my well beloved wife's Marriage or Death."

Sons, Joseph and William, executors and wife, Frances, executrix.

Dated, 29 September, 1790.

Witnesses, John, James and Rachel Higginbotham.

Executor's bond, £3,000. Securities, James and Charles Higginbotham.

*Joseph Higginbotham*, (son of Moses, Sr.) died in Amherst County in 1827. Will proved September 17, 1827. (Will Book 7, p. 34.)

To son, James S.,<sup>12</sup> "during his natural life and no longer, all the lands that I may have in my possession at my death, except my right and title to part of a Tract of Land belonging to the Estate of my brother Charles Higginbotham deceased"; also a negro man, Pleasants, and "all my Household and Kitchen Furniture except my Feather beds and Furniture; all my stock of Horses, Cattle and Hogs, and one half of my stock of sheep, and one half of all my negroes, exclusive of the one already mentioned"; and at death of James S. Higginbotham to his lawful issue, in default of which, then to grand-children of testator, children of his daughter Frances McDaniel, viz: Joseph, James, Preston and Mary McDaniel; also to said grand-children, "one half of the negroes I may die

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<sup>11</sup> Married 1788, Joseph, son of Benjamin Higginbotham, Sr., M. L. B. December 15, 1788.

<sup>12</sup> Married Mecha—— whose will was probated December 7, 1863.



possessed of", and "all my right and title to my part of a tract of land belonging to the estate of my brother, Charles Higginbotham,<sup>13</sup> deceased"; also 40 dollars to build a house on a lot adjoining the lot "where the Baptist Meeting House now stands"; also one half "my stock of sheep and also my feather beds and furniture, except the best bed I have which I give to my grand-daughter, Mary McDaniel."

Dated November 11, 1826.

Witnesses, James Higginbotham, Saml. W. Christian, Eugene Higginbotham.

In a codicil to his will, dated September 6, 1827, he leaves to his son, James S. Higginbotham, "a fee simple Title to the Tract of Land I now live on containing about 100 acres", also two negro boys, Reuben and Zackeria.

Witnesses, Jesse Higginbotham, Allison Ogden, Eugen Higginbotham.

Executor's bond, \$10,000. Securities, Thomas Higginbotham and John Penn.

*William Higginbotham*,<sup>13a</sup> (son of Moses, Sr.,) died in Amherst County, in 1832. Will proved February 20, 1832. (Will Book 8, p. 174.)

To son, Robert, (on condition that he provides for his mother, Mary, wife of the testator, should she survive, him, the testator,) whole of estate, viz: 204 acres of land whereon testator now resides; houses and lots in New Glasgow; thirteen negro slaves: "my man, John, his wife, Frances and their six children, little John, Washington, Mary, Henry, Malinda, and Henrietta, — also old Caroline, my man Hector, and my woman, Jordania and Betsy and George the child of Betsy, — together with the natural increase of the females of said slaves, from this time to the day of my death"; at death of Robert, then "to be equally divided among his children then living and the legal representatives of such as may be dead, share and share alike — the representative party if composed of more than one person to take such share only as the progenitor would be entitled if living"; also to son, Robert, all the stocks of horses, cattle, sheep and hogs, "likewise all such crops, plantation utensils, household goods and kitchen furniture, to which I may be in any wise entitled at the time of my death, and all the debts that may be then due me on account of my former grocery at New Glasgow, and he may be able to collect them."

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<sup>13</sup> Died 1815(?). On March 20, 1815, Joseph and William Higginbotham were appointed administrators of the estate of Charles Higginbotham, (their brother), deceased. (Will Book 5, p. 93.)

<sup>13a</sup> Married March 16, 1790, Mary Shannon, in Augusta County. See *Jour. of the American Irish Hist. Soc.*, Vol. 13, p. 223.

To grand-children, Shannon T., Sterling F., Robert William and James M. Watts, "children of my daughter Jane S. Watts, deceased," the following eleven negro slaves, Matilda and her son, William, Mary and boy, Bury (now in possession of their father James D. Watts,) Sophia, and her six children, Peter, Eliza, Anne, Egypt, Ellen and Shadrick, together with the natural increase of the females of said slaves, from this time to the day of my death, to inure to the common benefit of my said grand-children during their minority, or until either of them shall marry, upon the happening of which event or when the eldest which may be living shall attain the age of twenty-one years, I direct that the aforesaid eleven slaves and their increase shall be equally divided among my said four grand-children, share and share alike, or the survivor or survivors of them if either or any of them shall die in the meantime, and their respective portions delivered them as they shall respectively attain the age of twenty-one years or get married as aforesaid, but in case either or any of my said grand-children after the delivery of their respective portions shall die unmarried, then the portion thus delivered shall revert to his or their surviving brother or brothers to be equally divided as aforesaid. I also direct that my executors sell my interest (being one and a half shares,) in the lands of my brother Charles Higginbotham, deceased, on Buffalo River, and divide and pay over the proceeds of such sale between my said four grand-children or the survivor or survivors of them in manner and form as herein before directed as to the slaves.

It is also my will and desire and I do hereby direct that all the monies I may have on hand at the time of my death, other than those devised to my son Robert as aforesaid, when collected, shall by my said executors be put out to interest upon proper securities, to remain as a joint fund for all my grand-children, as well the children of my son Robert as of my said daughter Watts—and to be paid over to them of principal and interest, in just and equal proportions at the time of payment, as they shall respectively attain the age of twenty-one years, or get married; but this subject of my estate is in the first place to be applied to the payment of any just debts which I may owe at the time of my death—and provided also that if any, or either of my said grand-children shall die without issue, not having received his or her or their portion of this monied fund, this legacy as to them shall thereby abate, and go to the surviving grand-children in equal proportions.

To son Robert, "my negro man named Isaac, who, it is my wish, shall not be sold out of my family."

Executors, "my son Robert Higginbotham, and my son-in-law James D. Watts."

Witnesses, Hudson M. Garland and William H. Knight.

Dated January 2, 1832.

Executor's bond, \$12,000. Securities, James S. Higginbotham and William S. Knight.

(To be continued)