

# THE STORY OF THE FAMILIES

By Joseph Vernelle Phillips

## PART 1: THE AMERICANS

### Chapter 3: Nicholas Gentry—English Poor Boy, Indian Fighter and Planter



Troops on the move in the English civil wars

In the mid 1670s in Essex County, England, northeast of London, religious bigotry was rampant even though the English civil wars had ended and the Stuarts had been restored to the throne. Still Protestants were killing Catholics or stripping them of their wealth, lands and titles. Death sentences were carried out regularly by orders of the crown and the manorial system was coming to an end.

Family farms were cropping up everywhere on former lords' manors. Even John Wright, lord of the Gentry hometown manor in Kelvedon Parish and a devout Catholic was stripped of his property and wealth by the crown and stripped of all his civil rights. The long plough lines (English ploughing) of the manorial days, which required extensive labor, were giving way to the smaller plough lines of the family farm which could be worked easily by boys from the family.

All this turmoil meant fewer jobs for boys like Nicholas and Samuel Gentry, probably sons of Nathaniel and Mary Gentry of Kelvedon Parish. And there was a feeling of dread abroad and fearfulness for many people including young Nicholas, undoubtedly named for St. Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors and of Essex County and name of his parish church.



Epping Forest, a Royal Forest  
In Essex County, England



Old St. Nicholas Church, Kelvedon Hatch,  
Essex County  
(Photo Courtesy Kelvedon Hatch History)



Ruins of Old St. Nicholas Church,  
Kelvedon Hatch, Essex County.  
(Photo Courtesy Kelvedon Hatch History)



Kelvedon Hall, with ruins of St. Nicholas Church on left, Kelvedon Hatch, Essex County, England. Once manor hall Of John Wright, Lord of the Manor.  
(Photo Courtesy of Kelvedon Hatch History)



Swan Pond, Kelvedon Hatch, Essex County, England  
(Photo Courtesy of Kelvindon Hatch History)

Nicholas Gentry, probably a lean teenager, dressed most probably in worn-out knee breeches, with a wool belt about his waist, woolen stockings streaked with runs, well-worn long linen shirt which also served as underwear, and a cocked hat. His buckled shoes were coming apart just like his world of dreams.

He was becoming increasingly hopeless and fearful about his future. And he didn't seem willing to join His Majesty's Navy nor His Redcoats stationed abundantly in the county. He wanted to be a landowner just like the lords of the manor. Land ownership meant power and wealth in merry olde England. Such were the daydreams of this Nicholas, a daydreaming cock of the rock without a shilling in his pocket.



A countryman of the 17th Century  
Essex County, England



A citizen of the 17th Century  
Essex County, England

(From woodcuts, History of Kelvedon Hatch)

Then, he thought he saw a way out.

British planters in the new Jamestown Colony in Virginia were offering free trips to America aboard sailing ships if people would sell themselves into servitude for four or five years working on their tobacco plantations. Tobacco was like gold in those days. In return, the king offered the planters 50 additional acres of land grants—called headrights-- for each white servant they brought over. Headrights could be used right away, saved up for later or even sold. For each headright, the owners had to pay the king a quitrent of two shillings for each 100 acres.

The king wanted to enlarge his colony to ward off possible encroachments of Spaniards and Frenchmen, who had burgeoning colonies in North America. It seemed a good deal for everybody and, especially, for the daydreamer Nicholas and his brother Samuel who found themselves on hard times in Essex County.



Reconstructed Jamestown Sailing Ships—  
The Sarah Constant, Godspeed and Discovery--  
Much Like Those Which Brought the  
Gentrys to America

So, Samuel and Nicholas Gentry found agents for planters in Virginia and offered their services. They may have come at different times or they may have come together. They were ecstatic now thinking they could make their dreams come true. The agents booked them on sailing ships and, after four and one half months on turbulent and stormy seas, eating rancid food and suffering seasickness, they docked at Jamestown, Virginia, where they met up with their planters, or, more likely, were put off at their respective masters' own docks along the James or York rivers or large creeks. Sailing ships could do that in those days.

Samuel must have owned land earlier than is known, yet no record exists, and was wealthy enough to

transport six persons himself to the colony. He used his headright in 1684 to apply for land for himself, according to the Journal of Gentry Genealogy, an impeccable scholarly work published on the internet. The journal, in an article written by A. Denny Ellerman, lists the following entry for Samuel Gentry:

“Samuell Gentrey (granted) 300 acs., New Kent County; S. side of York (Pamunkey) River; Betw. Brs. of same and brs. of Tottapottamoys Cr. Adj. Col. John Page, Esqr.; Edward Houchin & Nicholas Gentrey. Trans. Of 6 pers; John Morris, Francis Middleton, Hen. Tully, Elizabeth Ody, Mar. Gardner, 2.” (Taken from John Fiskes, Historical Writings, “Old Virginia and Her Neighbors,” Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and New York, 1900, Vol. II, p. 202ff and p. 91.)

Since Samuel’s headright states it was adjacent to land also already owned by Nicholas Gentry, we can know that Nicholas Gentry, who was known to be in Virginia in 1680 when paid for his militia service and was also probably still an indentured servant then, was a landowner by 1684. However, the Journal of Gentry Genealogy notes that Nicholas’s headright was “apparently accumulated along with others for many years and not used until April 24 , 1700.” According to the journal, that headright states:

“George Alves (granted) 1014 acs. New Kent Co. in St. Peters Par; on both sides of Totopotomoys Cr. Adj Roger Thompson, Charles Turner & Thomas Wilkinson...Trans of 21 pers (including Nicholas Gentry).” (Taken from “Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants,” abstracted by Nell Marion Nugent, published by Virginia State Library, Richmond. Vol. III (1695-1732), p. 37 (Patent Bk 9, p. 268), published 1979).

No date is given for the transportation of Nicholas Gentry nor of the others.



The Fort at Jamestown, Reconstructed.





The 17th Century Church Ruins at Jamestown.

The planters put them right to work in the tobacco fields. And the boys worked themselves like beavers while sucking up all the knowledge they could about tobacco farming. They knew they wanted to grab their share one day of this brown-leafed gold. They watched and even helped unload English ships that sailed right up to the docks of individual plantations, left off expensive manufactured goods and luxury items from England and loaded tobacco aboard the ships for return to the homeland. Tobacco was the currency of the day. The colonists rarely used money.



Tobacco Patch in Williamsburg near Jamestown.



Harvesting Tobacco in the Colonial Era





Drying Tobacco in Jamestown



Drying Tobacco, Brown Gold  
Hanging from the Rafters





Cured Tobacco Being Graded

Nicholas Gentry's learning about tobacco cultivation—a difficult and soil destroying crop--was interrupted, however, as the Powhatan Indians, so often betrayed by the white settlers, continued sporadic attacks on the Jamestown colonists, taking to killing and torturing planters and burning down farms and plantations along the creeks and rivers—the James, the York, the Chickahominy, the Pamunkey, the Mattaponi, the South Anna and the North Anna rivers and numerous of their tributary creeks like the Totopotomoy's, Matadequin, and the Stonehorse creeks. The colonists' sometime friend, the Great Chief Powhatan, was no longer alive, having died in April, 1618, at age 71.

Powhatan was supreme ruler of most of the Indian tribes in the Chesapeake Bay area from north of the Mattaponi River, a tributary of the York River, beyond Richmond to areas south of the James River. Captain John Smith described him as “a tall well proportioned man, with a sower look, his head somewhat gray, his beard so thinne, that it seemeth one at all, his age near sixtie, of a very able and hardy body to endure any labour. What he commandeth they dare not disobey in the least thing. It is strange to see with what feare and adoration all these people doe obay this Powhatan. For at his feet, they present whatsoever he commandeth, and at the least frowne of his browe, their greatest spirits will tremble with feare and no marvell, for he is very terrible and tyrannous in punishing such as offend him.”

His real name was Wahunsonacock and he had a daughter named Matoaka, better known by her nickname Pocahontas who saved the life of John Smith. At its peak, the Powhatan nation included 31 tribes, each led by its own chief who paid tribute to Powhatan. He began with six tribes and conquered 25 others. His people farmed, especially corn, squash, beans, sunflower seeds and tobacco; in wintertime gathered roots, nuts, berries and wild grains; fished with spears, nets and traps, especially for shad but also other fresh and saltwater fish; hunted, especially for deer and bear; and also gathered shellfish, including mussels, clams and oysters. Their villages were mainly along rivers for food and transportation. Powhatan saw mutual benefits from peaceful relations with the colonists, mainly through trade--Indian foodstuffs for manufactured goods such as axes and such trinkets as beads.

After his death, the peace came to an end. In 1622, a new ruler, his son Opechancanough, launched attacks on English settlements across Virginia, burning plantations and killing and torturing men, women and children.

For more than 10 years, the English in return razed villages, seized and destroyed crops, killed men and women and captured children from the environs of the Jamestown colony and north beyond Richmond. In 1644, Opechancanough made a final try at forcing the English off his land. Hundreds of colonists were killed and Opechancanough was captured by the English and shot. His successor made treaties with the English severely restricting their territory and herding them onto reservations. By 1669, the number of Powhatan Indians had dropped to 1,800, down from 13,000 to 14,000 when the colonists arrived in 1607, and by 1722 many of the tribes comprising the Powhatan empire were reported extinct.



Mattaponi Indian Museum, Mattaponi Indian Reservation

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)





The Mattaponi River at the Mattaponi Indian Reservation

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)



The Pamunkey Indian Museum, Pamunkey Indian Reservation

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)





## The Pamunkey River, Pamunkey Indian Reservation

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)

Such Powhatan tribes as the Mattaponi, the Upper Mattaponi, the Chickahominy, the Pamunkey, the Nansemond and the Rappahannocks still survive on small reservations in Virginia—none far from Jamestown. They operate museums, create beautiful crafts and sell them to tourists. I have a wonderful earthen vase made by Red Wing, a proud Mattaponi on the reservation astride the Mattaponi River, that cost me \$15. The long conversation with her and her shad-fishing husband was worth thousands, however.

They are a beautiful people. They live in modern homes, unlike the impoverished and often alcohol-addicted Indians in the West, and some in beautiful riverside mansions. The men especially still do a lot of shad fishing, the major ingredient of those shad-planking events held every year by Virginia politicians and candidates for office. Some are farmers. But the younger Indians are moving to major cities nearby mainly for economic reasons and are melding into the broader population, often intermarrying with white people. Some fear the days of the Powhatan Indians are numbered.

Every Thanksgiving, Virginia's Powhatan Indian chiefs pay tribute to the governor of Virginia by presenting him with gifts, such as a deer buck killed on the hunt, a wild turkey or fish taken from the rivers. Most people don't know that the first Thanksgiving was celebrated in the plantations along the James River years before it was in the Plymouth colony. Most historians, mainly from the north, ignore Virginia's claim. That is the price it pays for seceding from the Union in the Civil War. But truthful historians know and write the facts. I have visited the site of that first Thanksgiving on the Shirley plantation along the James River, a national historical site.



Reconstruction of Powhatan Indian Village.



Powhatan Indian Longhouse, or Yehakin, Jamestown.



Reconstruction of Powhatan Indian Village.



Powhatan Chiefs





The Great Chief Powhatan



The Great Chief Powhatan  
Painting Created by Charles Banse



The Great Chief Powhatan

The planters became increasingly fearful and alarmed at the Indian attacks. These Indians not only killed but also liked to cut their victims open and squeeze out their guts and other innards while they were still alive—sometimes tied to trees.

In his magnificent book, “The Virginia Adventure,” Ivor Noel Hume goes back in history to recount some of the horrors of Indian attacks in the early years at Jamestown. When George Percy was interim president of the starving colony (selected after Captain John Smith returned to England), he sent John Ratcliffe (who had been deposed as president by Smith) as his emissary and trader to Powhatan at the latter’s new capital at Orapakes (when I was in the orphanage in Norfolk before and during World War II, they sent me to summer camp at Camp Orapax nearby), between the Chickahominy and Pamunkey rivers, to trade copper and beads for corn. He sailed up the York River on either the pinnaces Discovery or Virginia and then transferred with sixteen of his men to a barge to sail up the Pamunkey.

All went well until the colonists discovered the Indians were cheating them by pushing up the bottoms of the wicker baskets where the corn was placed, thus shortening the load. An argument ensued between the trading partners and Powhatan walked out. Ratcliffe gathered up the corn he had already purchased and they started walking back to their barge a half mile away. Hume recounts:

“They never made it. Indians in ambush in the woods and fields beside the trail picked them off one by one. Two escaped into the forest and eventually got home overland; but Ratcliffe was seized and tied naked to a tree, and a fire was lit at his feet. Then out came the razor-sharp mussel shells, this time in the hands of women, who scraped the flesh from his bones and, while he lived, tossed the pieces into the fire. ‘And so,’ as Percy later put it, Virginia’s second president ‘for want of circumspection miserably perished’.”

Years before Nicholas arrived at Jamestown, the fearful planters and the colonial government decided to form the Virginia Militia, groups of 50 men each, to defend their plantations from the Indian attacks. Every 40 planters had to supply one militiaman. They offered many of their indentured servants a chance for freedom if they joined up to fight. They provisioned all their men and furnished them with all the guns, equipment, and food they needed--and pay on top of that.

The major Indian attacks and war had subsided by the time Nicholas Gentry arrived in America but the colonists still lived in dread of renewed violence and there were sporadic attacks. Nicholas saw another opportunity and joined the militia as fast as his fear-crazed master would agree. He was posted at the Mattaponi Garrison (Barracks) along the headwaters of the Mattaponi River—now located west of the



Army's Camp A.P. Hill just east of Richmond.

With land running out near Jamestown, settlers were pouring into this Indian territory to stake out their own tobacco plantations. The barracks is located only a few miles from Totopotomoy's Creek where Nicholas's first plantation later was laid out on both sides of the creek. And soon, along with his 49 militia buddies, he was killing marauding Indians from behind forest trees and from canoes along the creeks and rivers. His master George Alves owned a plantation along Totopotomoy's Creek adjacent to land later acquired by Nicholas. Perhaps as he canoed up and down the creek Nicholas liked the land on either side of the water and decided that's where he also wanted to settle when he was free of his servitude. The creek was named for Chief Totopotomoy of the Pamunkey tribe who was friendly to the colonists.



Totopotomoy's Creek.  
Nicholas Gentry's First Virginia Plantation Was Located on Both Sides  
Of the Creek.

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)



The Upper Reaches of the Mattaponi River Near Where  
Nicholas Gentry's Barracks Was Located

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)

These Colonial soldiers also were being slaughtered and wounded by the ferocious Indians, who ogled them from tall grass and thickets, looking for opportunities to pounce. The horror of being taken alive was enough to curdle any young colonist's blood. Everyday activities were filled with terror. Many were killed or captured alive while they went off alone to answer the calls of nature. It was better never to wander off alone but to take your friends along with you.

The Powhatans were leery of attacking groups of colonists or soldiers but would do so if they found them weak or careless. Their favorite strategy was to watch loners and then spring from the tall grass and thickets with complete surprise and sometimes blood-curdling whoops. Sometimes, they slaughtered soldiers who stepped off their canoes into the thickets and then went back for his companion waiting at the beached canoe. These were still perilous times for young Nicholas Gentry but he came through the horror with gallantry and valor—and freedom.

In the *Journal of Gentry Genealogy*, Volume I, Issue 2, Willard (Bill) Gentry writes that in the November, 1680, session of the York County Court:

“It is the opinion of the Court and accordingly ordered that what wages is due to Nicholas Gentry for being a soldier at Mattapony Garrison till June last be paid to Nicholas Sabrell by the forty which Gentry serves for, and the Sabrell pay Gentry what wages is due him by and according to conditions made between them.”

Hening's *Statutes*, Volume 2, pp. 433-440, “An Act for the Defense of The Country Against the Incursion of the Indian Enemy, describes Nicholas Gentry's obligation to the “Forty”:

“...Bee it enacted...that every forty tythables within this country be assessed and obleiged...to fitt and sett forth one able and sufficient man and horse, with furniture well and completely armed...and alsoe that each respective forty tythables doe provide and sent up to the severall store houses...provision for such man and horse...and that each respective County send theor proportion of men as is heereafter sett downe and expressed, vizt...New Kent County, Yorke County, and one third part of Glocester County souldiers to be sent to the garrison at the head of Mattapony (River)...”

Nicholas was probably expendable because he had no family, and indentured servants served in military expeditions during their indenture or soon after obtaining their “freedom dues,” according to Willard Gentry.

Nothing is said about this Nicholas Sabrell. Perhaps he was Gentry’s master, the man holding his indenture and who gave him up to the forty for militia duty or perhaps he was head of the group of planters that put this militia group together. Again, perhaps his master was George Alves who received a headright for transporting Nicholas to the Jamestown colony. Or perhaps Alves had sold him to Sabrell for his headright. We may never know.

At any rate, Nicholas Gentry owned land on both sides of Totopotomoy’s Creek adjacent to Alves and adjacent to his brother Samuel Gentry in what was then part of New Kent County and now part of Hanover County. The quit rent rolls listing all landowners in Virginia in 1704 do not show Samuel Gentry or his son Peter, baptized in St. Peter’s Church on April 10, 1687.

But first, Willard Gentry in Vol. I, No.3, of the Journal of Gentry Genealogy points to an important new discovery by Gary E. Young of Centreville, Md., of a date for the transportation of Samuel Gentry to Virginia as an indentured servant. This court entry places Samuel in Virginia 10 years earlier than the 1684 date previously known and six years earlier than Nicholas’s service in the Virginia militia. Young points to a reference in Court Order Book One for Middlesex County, Virginia, dated Sept. 7, 1674:

“Certificate is graunted this day to Nicholas Cocke upon his oath according to Act for transportation of Seven persons (Vizt) Richard Anderson, Samm Salmon, Daniell Allpool, Jane Ward, Robert Reppett, Clemcent de Loppo, Saml. Gentry.”

Further, Nugent’s Volume III, page 107, concerning land patents issued between 1695 and 1732, notes the following:

“David Holt, 300 acs. New Kent Co., S side of York River, bet. Brs. of Sd. River and brs. of Totopotomoy Creek, 2 May 1700, p. 728 (of Patent Book 9). Adj. Col John Page Esqr., land of Edward Hawkins and Nichol Gentry, Granted Samuell Gentry, 21 Oct. 1684, who deeded same to David Crawford, Grandfather of said David Holt, 5 Jan. 1685, who by deed of gift, dated 28 May 1686, conveyed to said David Holt, then and still a minor, the land is granted by order, etc.”

Samuel Gentry stayed on his land less than two years. Thereafter, Samuel Gentry and his son Peter vanish from the Virginia Colony, which leaves all other Gentrys thereafter as descendants of Nicholas Gentry. Perhaps Samuel and his family became sick and died or perhaps they returned to England finding life in the colony not their cup of tea. We may never know.

Now, let’s look at other evidence of Nicholas Gentry at the Jamestown Colony. That evidence will be found in the records of St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s churches where he and his children did their duty by building roads and where his children were baptized. The Virginia Assembly granted churches many government powers. We can’t look at many court records since the courthouses were burned down by the British in the War of 1812 and, what was left, by the Yankees in the Civil War.



St. Peter's Church, the Oldest Episcopal Church in Virginia, Where Nicholas Gentry's Children Were Baptized and Which Called Him to Processioning Duties. He Probably Was Married Here. George Washington and Martha Custis Also Were Married Here But Some Historians Say They Were Married in the Nearby Rectory.

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)





Façade of St. Peter's Church

(Courtesy Joseph V. Phillips)

According to the Journal of Gentry Genealogy, the following baptisms of Nicholas Gentry's children are contained in the vestry book of St. Peter's Parish, New Kent County:

Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas Gentry, on August 29, 1689; Nicholas, his son, May 30, 1697; and Mabell (Mable), his daughter, December 13, 1702. Subsequent processional research confirms that Nicholas also had an oldest son named Joseph, born at least by 1688, and another son named Samuel. In addition, Willard Gentry has proposed another daughter Mary born about 1694 died after 1765 and married to a John Spradling (Spradlin), died about 1733.

St. Paul's parish was established in 1704 closer to Totopotomoy's Creek and Nicholas afterwards was in this parish and no longer in St. Peter's. Research, based on processional records from the vestry book of St. Paul's parish, indicates that Nicholas Gentry died sometime between 1709 and 1712, according to Willard Gentry. St. Paul's Church no longer exists having been destroyed many years ago.

Nicholas Gentry always lived in the vicinity of Totopotomoy's Creek in New Kent County now part of Hanover County. The creek runs west to east about 15 to 20 miles from the outskirts of Richmond to the Pamunkey River. A new community called Totopotomoy is located at the head of the creek about two miles north of Richmond and just off Interstate 95.

A. Denny Ellerman in Volume I, No. 1, of the Journal of Gentry Genealogy, lists the following line of evidence for Nicholas Gentry in the vicinity of the creek:

1684 Nicholas Gentry is cited as an adjacent landowner in the previously cited patent which granted 300 acres on the creek to Samuel Gentry.

1689 Nicholas is named in a processioning order of St. Peter's Parish Vestry.

1689 Nicholas is cited as the father of Elizabeth in St. Peter's Parish baptism.

1697 Nicholas is cited as father of Nicholas in St. Peter's Parish baptism.

1701 Nicholas is ordered paid for clothes and funeral charges for a Mabel Wood in St. Peter's Vestry Book.

1702 Nicholas is identified as the father of Mabell in St. Peter's Parish baptism.

1703 Nicholas and all the "tithables up the north side of Totopotomoy's Creek" are ordered to help George Alves clear the roads in his precinct, St. Peter's Vestry Book.

1709 Nicholas Gentry and "Jo Gentry" are named as land-owners in Precinct 12 for the 1708/09 processioning for St. Paul's Parish.

1709 Nicholas is appointed overseer for and keeping in repair an unspecified road cited in a county court order of Jan. 8, 1708/09. Joseph Gentry as well as several others named in the Precinct 13 processioning order for this year are ordered to assist. St. Paul's Vestry Book.

1709 Nicholas Gentry enters complaint that more assistance is needed to keep his road passable and the vestry wardens order that 12 additional tithables be sent for two days to assist him in making bridges over Crump's Creek and the Deep Swamp. Crump's Creek is a tributary of the Pamunkey River to the north of Totopotomoy Creek and south of Mechumps Creek on which the Hanover County Court House would later be located.

1709 Nicholas Gentry is cited in a payment order of the St. Peter's Parish vestry wardens in connection with Henry Chiles for keeping Benjamin Billingsly. St. Peter's Vestry Book.

The foregoing pretty much tells all there is to know about Nicholas Gentry in Virginia. Perhaps he entertained himself like many of his fellow planters by dancing at balls, by hunting parties including fox hunts, and by attending cock fights.

The typical plantation in the Jamestown Colony, according to British historian Samuel Eliot Morison, included a wharf where tobacco was picked up and luxury goods from England were left off; a modest mansion with a clutch of wooden cottages for servants; an orchard, kitchen garden and corn patch, and fields of green tobacco. Cattle grazed and pigs rooted in the forests separating the plantations.

Transportation within the colony was mainly by boat on the creeks, rivers and bays that were plentiful in the colony.

Now, let's explore who the possible wife was for Nicholas Gentry. We have to eliminate the fictitious wives dreamed up by numerous genealogists, including the patron inventing one wife for the library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The fictitious wives include Lucy Cornelius and Mabel Wood. One common theory has Lucy dying at Fort Nashboro before 1749 when the settlement was not built until 1780. And Mabel Wood is merely repayment of Nicholas for the clothes and funeral of this lady, which was really a community expense not a personal one.

I like the astute Willard Gentry's **Hypothesis** best. He thinks she may have been a daughter of his neighbor David Crawford Sr. of St. Peter's and St. Paul's parishes. Crawford is listed as a resident of St. Peter's in 1689 along with Nicholas. He was old enough where he could have had a daughter of marriageable age. He had a son David Jr. contemporary with Nicholas and who was in a number of St. Paul's records along with Nicholas. David Sr. was a vestryman for St. Peter's and its successor St. Paul's. He also purchased Samuel Gentry's land in 1686 and thus a close neighbor to Nicholas. Two of Nicholas's sons, Samuel and Nicholas Jr. who would have been grandsons of David Crawford Sr., named a son David, and the third son Joseph had a grandson named David.

There is no formal grant found for Nicholas's land he occupied in 1684. In a number of other cases, where there is no surviving record the occupant was on land owned by a family member or father in law. In the case of Nicholas it is very plausible that he was living on land owned by his father in law.

Nicholas was presumably unmarried when he served in the militia in 1680 and probably married when he owned land in 1684. Therefore, Willard Gentry gives a probable date of marriage as 1683 to 1684.

And who were the parents of Samuel and Nicholas Gentry?

The Gentry Journal refers to an extensive search by British genealogists for Mrs. Herbert G. Gentry of Austin, Texas, for Gentrys in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England. No references or church records for a Nicholas Gentry in the 1600s was found by any of Mrs. Gentry's correspondents. Most of the Gentrys they located were in a small portion of Essex County. Willard Gentry writes:

"These Gentrys were common folk, and included brick layers, brick makers, weavers, tavern keepers, bakers, yeomen (farmers), and the like. None of their sons were likely to have had much money to spend on paying for passage from England to the Colonies, lending support to the probability that Nicholas and Samuel both spent a period of indentured service in Virginia in exchange for their passage."

Many Gentry historians assert that Samuel Gentry and Margaret Draper of Great Easton in Essex County are the parents of Samuel and Nicholas Gentry. But there is no evidence for or against such an assertion. According to Mrs. Gentry's correspondents, the Gentry grooms whose marriages were recorded in the 1630s to the 1650s include:

In Thaxted parish: 22 Aug 1655 Samuel Gentry of Easton married Margaret Draper of the same.

Willard Gentry writes:

"Great Easton is located close to Thaxted where Samuel Gentry and Margaret Draper were married. There are later records to what appears to be the same Samuel in Lindsell parish. The three communities, Thaxted, Great Easton, and Lindsell lie within a circle of only a few miles radius, so Samuel and Margaret could easily have moved from one to another parish."

Baptisms of interest in Great Easton parish include: 4 Aug. 1657 "Susan, d. of Samuel Gentry and Elizabeth (erased) Margaret" and 9 Aug. 1663 "Sammuell, son of Gentry and his wife."

Willard Gentry continues, "...the fact that the Samuel who was born in Great Easton is unlikely to have been the Samuel who landed in Virginia in 1674 (when he was 11 years old). The timing of Samuel Jr.'s birth would allow one or more other children to have been born between Susan and Samuel but for some reason the baptism not recorded. If Samuel and Margaret were the parents of the Samuel and Nicholas Gentry of Virginia, Nicholas could have been born in the period between 1657 and 1663, but it is very unlikely he could have been born in 1664 or later given his service in the Virginia militia in 1680."

Mrs. Herbert Gentry of Austin, Texas, lists another most interesting group of baptisms in Kelvedon parish: 20 Sept 1644 Mary, d. of Nathaniel and Mary Gentry; 22 Jul 1649 Samuel, s. of Nathaniel and Mary Gentry; and 14 Feb 1654/55 Simon, s. of Nathaniel and Mary Gentry.

“The children of Nathaniel and Mary Gentry fit better with the possibility that this couple were the parents of a Nicholas as well as the Samuel recorded above,” wrote Willard Gentry in the Gentry Journal. “Since there is a lack of documentation for Nathaniel’s marriage to Mary, it may not be unusual for a baptism of a son Nicholas to not be recorded. As a date of birth for this hypothetical Nicholas, the period between 1649 and 1655 or the period after 1655 would both be possible alternatives.”

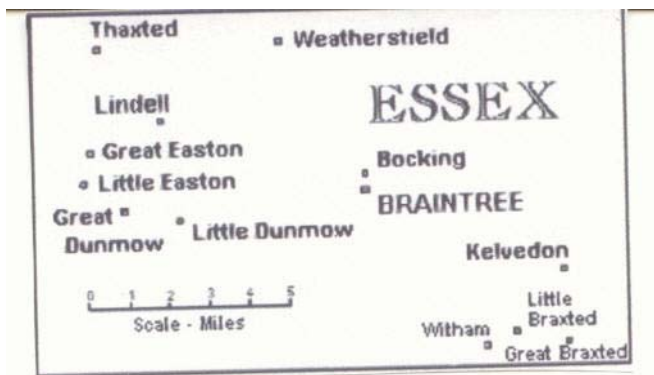
He also wrote, “...Presumably, Nathaniel and Mary were married about 1642 or 1643. An apparent second marriage is recorded for Nathaniel, to Susan Kendall in Kelvedon parish in 1669. (In addition to marriage and baptism records, there are multiple references to Nathaniel in the Essex Quarterly Court Records between 1651 and 1695 in connection with a tavern in Kelvedon of which he was the proprietor.)”

He also concluded, “It is very doubtful that Samuel Gentry and Margaret Draper of Great Easton and Lindsell parishes were their parents...Nathaniel and Mary Gentry of Kelvedon parish could have been parents even though there is no reference to a Nicholas Gentry as a child. The evidence neither refutes this hypothesis nor firmly supports it...Samuel and Nicholas’ parents may have been other Gentrys, so far not identified, who may or may not have lived in Essex.”

I have adopted Willard Gentry’s hypothesis in this chapter for Nathaniel and Mary Gentry of Kelvedon parish as the parents of Samuel and Nicholas.

Mrs. Herbert Gentry also lists other genealogical records from her correspondents in England:

In South Weald parish: 1634 Thomas Gentry married Elizabeth Turner. And in 1635 Richard Gentry married Sara Cole.



Kelvedon Parish Is at Lower Right  
About Five Miles Southeast of Braintree

In Lindsell parish: 1 May 1635 Roger Gentry married Rebecca Wallis.

In Great Dunmow parish: 1655 Philip Gentry married “John” (Joan?) Philpot. And 1657 Samuel Gentry married Sara Eve.

In Little Wenham parish, County Suffolk: 1636 Robert “Gentrie” married Anne Liveing.

Nicholas Gentry, the day-dreaming poor boy from Essex County, had fared better than John Wright, the disenfranchised, impoverished, and persecuted John Wright, lord of the manor in Kelvedon.



He had led an adventurous life full of excitement, hardship, and danger. He had retched his way across a storm-tossed ocean in a small wooden sailing ship. He had been an indentured servant, a white slave, sweating over tobacco plants in the hot Virginia sun. He had been a soldier in the Virginia militia at the Mattaponi Barracks fighting savage Powhatan Indians. He had cleared the woods on both sides of Totopotomoy's Creek to found his own tobacco plantation. He had built his home and servants' quarters. He had cleared land for a meadow and built a wharf so sailing ships could come up the Pamunkey River and send a pinnace to pick up his brown gold and leave off luxury goods from England.

He had married and had children—Joseph, Elizabeth, Samuel, Mary, Nicholas, and Mabel—and a minimum of 26 grandchildren and 150 great-grandchildren. His posterity now stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans.

He was indeed lord of his own manor. You can almost hear his shoe buckles clink as he danced with joy.

(I want to thank the Commonwealth of Virginia, Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown for use of numerous of their pictures used in this chapter.)