

The Cosby Family of Colonial Virginia

by Howell Cosby Curtis

For over a hundred years the narrative about the origin of the Cosby family of Colonial Virginia has been that they descend from a Cosby family seated at Stradbally Hall, County Laois, Ireland¹. One Charles Cosby who married Mary Loftus was supposed to have come to Virginia in 1628, bringing his young son John who was born 1623, with him. The area where this Charles was supposed to have settled was either York or Warwick County. No records have been found for a Charles Cosby from Colonial Virginia in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The first record found for a person of the Cosby surname or variant spelling thereof is one Thomas Causby, who was listed as a headright of Richard Peirce who patented 600 acres in James City Co. September 12, 1636². No further records for this Thomas Causby have been found.

A John Cosby was listed as a headright for Robert Yeo in 1654³. Since headrights were often not listed for a number of years after the actual transport of the persons listed, it is possible that this John Cosby came to the Virginia colony a number of years earlier. On January 5, 1656, one John Cosby patented three tracts of land in New Kent County totaling 2,560 acres⁴. A Mary Cosbye is mentioned in connection with a land patent to Anthony Arnell dated 25 Oct. 1657- "Beg on N. E. side of a branch of Chickahominy Sw. running N. by Mary Cosbye."⁵ It should be noted that this tract of land is located in the James River watershed whereas the three tracts mentioned above belonging to John Cosby are in the York River watershed.

On November 30, 1657, the young daughter Mary of one John Cosby was accidentally burned to death⁶. This John Cosby lived in Hampton Parish, York County, Colony of Virginia and can be followed in the records of that county, which remain intact. It is not certain whether this John Cosby is the same John Cosby who patented the three tracts of land in New Kent County mentioned above. If they are the same person it appears he never claimed the three tracts of land. His will was probated March 4, 1696 and mentions daughters Sarah, Mary,

Elizabeth and Margaret and sons James, Charles and John⁷. The will of his second wife Sarah was probated July 21, 1740 and lists sons James, Charles and John⁸.

Charles Cosby, probably the eldest son of John Cosby and Sarah, is said to have lived in King and Queen and New Kent counties⁹. The records of those counties have been lost. He is said to have married Jane, daughter of David Meriwether. He is said to have left at least two sons:

1. James Cosby, born about 1703, died 1783. Lived in York Co.
2. David Cosby, born 1705, died 1770, married Mary Garland Overton.

John Cosby, the second son of John Cosby and Sarah, was born about 1780¹⁰. His will was probated in Louisa Co., Colony of Virginia May 26, 1761. He acquired large landholdings, mostly through purchase, in that part of Hanover Co. that later became Louisa Co. He married first Martha Garland about 1710. His second wife was Anne Johnson Meriwether. No issue by this second marriage. Children of John Cosby and Martha Garland are:

1. John Cosby, born 1711, married Mary Wingfield.
2. William Cosby, born 1713, married Carr or Minor.
3. James Cosby, born about 1715, married Sarah Nelson.
4. Mary Cosby, born about 1716, married Bartlett Anderson.
5. Amy Cosby, born 1718, married Clevears Chisholm Duke.
6. Ann Cosby, born about 1720, married Griffith Dickinson.
7. Elizabeth Cosby, born about 1722, married _____ Snelson.

James Cosby, the youngest son of John Cosby and Sarah was born about 1682¹¹. He lived in York Co. and married Ann whose last name is unknown. His will was probated Feb. 15, 1747. Children of James Cosby and Ann are:

1. Samuel Cosby, born 1705, died 1743, married Magdalene Pasteur.
2. Mark Cosby, died 1752 in York Co., married Mary Pasteur.
3. Stribling Cosby, born after 1720, married Miss Mitchell.

Another Cosby/Cozby family, probably not related to the John Cosby discussed above, is that of John Cozby, born abt.1713, and lived in Amherst Co., Colony of Virginia¹². He married Elizabeth Trimble. This Cozby family moved to 96th district in S. Carolina before the Rev. War. Their children were John Jr. married Elizabeth Paxton, Robert, Dr. James C. Cosby married Isabella Woods and Elizabeth who married William Casteel.

1. John Slaughter Carpenter, *The Cosby Family*, Unpublished manuscript, ca.1910.
2. Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers* Vol 1. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. p. 46.
3. Ibid., p. 292
4. Ibid., p.335
5. Ibid., p. 348
6. Walter Garland Duke. *Henry Duke, Councilor His Descendants and Connections*. Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, Inc.,1949. p. 301.
7. Noah Harrison Bradley. *My Wife's Family*. Forgotten Books, 2012. p. 201.
8. Ibid., p. 202.
9. Duke, p. 301.
10. Duke, p. 315.
11. Duke, p. 330.
12. <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/surnames.cozby/43.1> (18 May 2004)