

493 HILL, JOHN

Bookbinder

Norfolk County

Bookbinder in Norfolk County (1622-48).

John Hill was an English bookbinder who settled in Norfolk County in about 1622 – a landing date that is remarkable considering the stunning massacre of English settlers carried out by the Powhatan Confederacy in the spring of that year. Whether Hill actually plied his trade in Virginia is uncertain; but the public record shows that he did not hide the fact that he had been trained as a bookbinder.

Surviving records from the county's early days indicate that Hill was a significant personage then. The only evidence of his background comes from the minutes of the county court in January 1648 [o.s. 1647/8], wherein Hill appeared to establish his *bona fides* to serve as a burgess in the General Assembly, even as he had served in the Assembly as early as 1639. He was the son of a fletcher (i.e. arrow-maker) in Oxfordshire named Stephen Hill, and had been employed in the bindery shop at Oxford University before coming to North America. That same year he was noted as a vestryman for the Elizabeth River Parish, and apparently served in that role until his death. Land records for Norfolk County demonstrate that he was responsible for transporting at least 13 settlers to Virginia between 1644 and 1646, thereby qualifying him for head-right grants exceeding 500 acres over those few years alone; he also gained another 600 acres from the head-rights assigned to him by another colonist in 1644. Subsequently, Hill was named as a justice of the county court in 1651, before becoming high sheriff of Norfolk County sometime before 1661. At that time, the county court ordered him to take into custody one Benjamin Forby for hosting Quaker meetings in his home, an open violation of Virginia and English law. That record provides the last known reference to Hill, suggesting that he died shortly thereafter, then being nearly seventy.

Personal Data

Born: In 1590s Probably in Oxfordshire, England.

Died: After 1661 In Virginia.

No record of wife's name or date of marriage yet found; a son named Samuel survived him and lived in York County.

Sources: MEDSA Index no. 16461; Norfolk County Wills & Deeds (1646-51); *History of Norfolk County, Virginia* (1902); Greer, *Early Virginia Immigrants* (1912).

A nineteenth-century family history incorrectly names Samuel Hill, the treasurer of Buckinghamshire in 1642, and an officer in Cromwell's army, as John Hill's father. That error appears to be based on Samuel's eventual emigration to Virginia, where he settled on lands previously granted to John.