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## Charles Bridges, Painter and Humanitarian

Susanne Hening Neale

*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

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CHARLES BRIDGES: PAINTER AND HUMANITARIAN

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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By

Susanne Neale

1969

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Susanne H. Neale  
Author

Approved, July 1969

Edward M. Riley  
Edward M. Riley, Ph.D.

George H. Reese  
George H. Reese, Ph.D.

John E. Selby  
John E. Selby, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

The object of this paper is to present all known information on the life and work of Charles Bridges. All available source material, including county records, newspapers, letters, diaries, and account books, have been surveyed, and the author has corresponded extensively with authorities in England. The result is a broader picture of Charles Bridges who was more than just a painter.

Because there have been no signed Bridges portraits found, this aspect of his life and work has not been included, except for a discussion of his portraits done in England. These portraits were not signed but engravings were made with inscriptions attesting the identity of the artist. In the future, perhaps, a signed portrait will be found and then the enigma of his art can be unraveled.

This paper includes for the first time facts about Bridges' life in England, his humanitarian work, and his interest in Christian instruction for Negroes in Virginia. The author has relied largely on the records of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in England and the copies of the Fulham and Lambeth Palace papers in the Colonial Records Project.

By necessity this paper is limited because the author has not been able to search personally the resources of information in England. Letters have revealed a great deal, but until a thorough search has been made in England, any discussion of Charles Bridges cannot be complete.

CHARLES BRIDGES: PAINTER AND HUMANITARIAN

## INTRODUCTION

Charles Bridges was an English painter who came to Virginia in 1735 at the age of sixty-seven and remained until around 1744. The number of portraits attributed to him has been large, although no signed portraits have been found. Confusion has existed concerning the identity of a Charles Bridges, believed to be a clergyman, who was in Virginia at the same time as the painter. Recent research has revealed that the supposed clergyman was in reality the painter.

The earliest known discussion of the art of Charles Bridges was included in the addenda by Frank W. Bayley and Charles E. Goodspeed to the third volume of the revised edition of William Dunlap's A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States in 1918. According to this account "Bridges was painting in Virginia for years, and a large number of portraits by him have been preserved."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, rev. ed., Frank W. Bayley and Charles E. Goodspeed, eds. (Boston, 1918), III, 284-285.

In 1952 Henry Wilder Foote published a comprehensive study of Bridges' life and art in The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. He presented new biographical material which enabled him to reclassify portraits attributed to Bridges. He limited the vast number of so-called Bridges portraits.<sup>2</sup> In the winter of 1969 Thomas Thorne went even farther than Foote by concentrating his study on the portraits of three of the Byrd children which he felt safe in saying were the work of Bridges.<sup>3</sup>

No attempt has been made in the present study to delve more deeply into the art of Charles Bridges except for the discussion of his portrait or portraits of the Reverend Thomas Baker in England.<sup>4</sup> Whatever his competence as a painter may have been, he devoted much of his life to humanitarian pursuits.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Wilder Foote, "Charles Bridges: 'Sergeant-Painter of Virginia' 1735-1740" Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LX (1952), 3-55.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Thorne, "Charles Bridges, Limner" Arts in Virginia, IX (1969), 22-31.

<sup>4</sup> The following include discussions of the art of Charles Bridges: Virgil Barker, American Painting (New York, 1951), 102-109; James Thomas Flexner, American Painting: First Flowers of our Wilderness (Cambridge, 1947), 103-108, 344-345; and E.P. Richardson, Painting in America (New York, 1956), 39.

Charles Bridges corresponded with the Bishop of London on Christian education for Negroes in the colonies. He even devised a plan for instruction much like that of the charity schools in England with which he worked for almost fifteen years before becoming a painter.

Because Bridges corresponded with the Bishop of London, he has been referred to as a clergyman who was in Virginia at the same time as the painter. Historians have placed him in St. Martin's Parish and St. Paul's Parish, both in Hanover County, Virginia.<sup>5</sup> The vestry records of St. Martin's Parish no longer exist and from 1737 until 1744 there is no record of what clergyman was in charge. The vestry records of St. Paul's Parish reveal that a Zachariah Brook was the minister until 1737 when Patrick Henry took over the parish.<sup>6</sup>

There is no record that any Charles Bridges was ordained by the Bishop of London or licensed by him for

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<sup>5</sup> Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia (Milwaukee, 1927), 254, and Bishop William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia, n.d.), I, 419.

<sup>6</sup> C. G. Chamberlayne, ed., The Vestry Book of St. Paul's Parish (Richmond, 1940), 139-148.

for ministry in Virginia.<sup>7</sup> He does not appear in the records of the British Treasury of bounties paid to clergymen coming to Virginia.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in his letters to the Bishop of London, Bridges addressed him as "My Good Bishop." No clergyman would have referred to his superior in that way.

Only one conclusion can be drawn. Charles Bridges was not a clergyman. Rather, he was a painter and humanitarian.

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<sup>7</sup>Letter from Godfrey Thompson, Librarian, Guildhall Library, London, England, to the author, September 27, 1968.

<sup>8</sup>Treasury, Classes 31, 33, 34, 60, and 61. Public Record Office, London, England. Microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Research Department, Williamsburg, Virginia. (hereafter referred to as CW Microfilm)

## CHAPTER I

### HUMANITARIAN, 1699-1713

Northampton in central England was the birthplace of Charles Bridges. There at Barton Seagrave he was christened on April 2, 1672. He was the fourth son of John and Elizabeth Trumbull Bridges.<sup>1</sup> The Bridges family was of the gentry of Northampton. As a younger son, Charles Bridges was able to pursue the fields of his choice--humanitarian work and painting.

By far the best known of his six brothers was John, the eldest. A prodigious writer, he compiled a vast amount of material which, more than seventy years after his death, was published in its entirety under the title of The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire. His brother Charles is

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<sup>1</sup>H. I. Longden, Bridges Family Pedigree, #2, Northampton Record Office, Delapre Abbey, Northampton, England. Copy, Colonial Williamsburg Research Department, Williamsburg, Virginia. The records of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge reveal that a Charles Bridges was greatly interested in the charity schools in Northamptonshire. One of his letters to the Society was addressed from the Stamp Office, London. William Bridges, brother of the historian, was secretary of the Stamp Office in the early part of the eighteenth century and had a brother Charles. (Letters from Arthur Barker, Public Relations Officer, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, England, to the author, October 22, 1968, December 15, 1968, and January 22, 1969)

mentioned in the memorial inscription to their parents in the second volume.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hearne, a contemporary of John Bridges, mentioned only three brothers, but not Charles, in his comments on the death of the historian in March 1723/4.<sup>3</sup> However, Thomas Wotton in his English Baronetage, published in 1741, gave a full account of the Bridges family--writing that Charles Bridges was twice married, but had no issue living.<sup>4</sup>

Charles Bridges first married Alice Flower on August 4, 1687 in St. Marylebone Parish, Middlesex, England.<sup>5</sup> As Bridges was in his seventy-seventh year when he died in 1747, he was about seventeen when he married.<sup>6</sup> No record

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<sup>2</sup>John Bridges, The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire (n.p., 1791), II, 221, referred to in letter from Molly Barzatt, Bodleian Library, Oxford, England, to the author, December 11, 1968.

<sup>3</sup>C. E. Doble, ed., Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1907), VIII, 189-190, referred to in Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Wotton, The English Baronetage (n.p., 1741), IV, 188-190, referred to in letter from Sir Gyles Isham, Bart., Lamport Hall, Northampton, England, to the author, December 6, 1968.

<sup>5</sup>W. Bruce Bannerman and R. R. Bruce Bannerman, eds., The Registers of Marriages of St. Mary le Bone, Middlesex (London, 1917), 47, 1687 entry, referred to in letter from Anthony J. Camp, Society of Genealogists, London, England, to the author, March 10, 1969.

<sup>6</sup>H. I. Longden, Bridges Family Pedigree, #1, Northampton Record Office, Delapre Abbey, Northampton, England. Copy, Colonial Williamsburg Research Department, Williamsburg, Virginia.

has been found of his second marriage. Though Wotton does not mention his children, Bridges was accompanied by a son and two or more daughters when he arrived in Virginia in 1735.<sup>7</sup> One of his daughters died in Virginia and was buried in Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, in August of 1736. Another daughter was living in Hanover County in 1740.<sup>8</sup> How many other daughters came to Virginia is not clear. Also, the fate of his children is not known. Apparently, Wotton knew of none living in 1741--perhaps because they were in Virginia.<sup>9</sup>

The facts of Bridges' youth have been obscured by time, but in 1699, he became active in philanthropic work closely connected with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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<sup>7</sup> William Gooch to Thomas Gooch, Williamsburg, May 26, 1735, in possession of Sir Robert E. S. Gooch, Benacre Hall, Suffolk, England. CW Microfilm - Letters of Governor William Gooch, Virginia, 1727-1751, to his brother Thomas.

<sup>8</sup> List of Burials in Bruton Parish Register 1662-1797, deposited at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. Frederick Hall Plantation Books, Group B, vol. 1, Contra, Day Book, 1739-1741, 33, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. CW Microfilm.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Bridges' son probably remained in America. He may have had children as in 1952 there was a William J. Bridges living in Norfolk, Virginia, who claimed that he was a descendant of the painter via a William E. Bridges of Kansas City, who was born in 1846 and who was the grandson of William Bridges of Lebanon, Illinois, whose father was George Bridges, a Revolutionary soldier from North Carolina. This last Bridges was the grandson of Charles Bridges. (Foote, "Charles Bridges," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LX (1952), 7.)

It is to this phase of Bridges' life that one must turn first, as there is no indication that he pursued art as a career until after he had spent many years in charitable pursuits.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was formed early in 1699 by Dr. Thomas Bray and four associates, and met for the first time on March 9, 1698/99. Essentially the work of the Society was centered in four main activities: educational and rehabilitational work by means of charity schools and workhouses; mission work in the English colonies; publication of Christian literature in many languages; and the circulation of Christian literature in England and in the colonies. This society developed naturally in an age experimenting in the concepts of universal benevolence. Surprisingly, lay men and women, more than the clergy, organized and directed benevolent undertakings such as the workhouses and charity schools. One such interested lay man was Charles Bridges.

At the time of the formation of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the English were becoming increasingly aware of the distress of the impoverished people in England. Instead of endeavoring to alleviate the lack of employment with large scale workhouses, the philanthropic among the English strove to establish a systematized charity school

system. Thus this solution was less a reform movement and more an ameliorative effort. Not choosing to work first with the adults by providing useful employment, the leaders chose to concentrate on the children by adopting a plan of well-regulated free schools for the poor, maintained through local donations. The idea of the charity school was not new as there were several established by 1699. By 1705, though, there were over fifty in London alone. Humanitarianism was the ideology sparking the movement. Practically speaking, the charity schools were founded to improve the total English society in which crime ran rampant and illiteracy was prevalent. It was believed that instruction in the catechism and in simple skills would improve the dreadful conditions--especially in the cities.

The Society lent primarily advisory and moral support to the movement; the schools developed through local initiative. Frequently, it was members of the Society, acting on their own, who helped to organize a group of trustees who were an integral part of any school organization. Sometimes the Society supplied funds for schools in distress such as the school in Wapping, a part of London along the docks on the north bank of the Thames River. On May 18, 1699, at one of the first meetings of the Society, Bridges and another agent, a Mr. Mitchell, reported that school did not have sufficient

funds for books and for the master's fees. Bridges was given ten shillings by the Society to help the school.<sup>10</sup> In this instance the Society used its own funds to supplement those accrued through subscriptions--thereby playing an active role in the maintenance and continuance of the school in Wapping.

Maintenance of the schools usually depended on local subscriptions which paid the master's fees and the rent where needed, kept the school heated, supplied books, and provided the children with the bare necessities of dress. In 1712 the approximate cost of dressing a girl was sixteen shillings and for a boy fifteen shillings. The girl's clothing consisted of a gown and petticoats, a shift, an apron, a pair of stockings, a pair of shoes, a pair of pattens or overshoes, and a pair of gloves. For the boy the schools provided a coat, a waistcoat, breeches, a knit cap, a shirt, a pair of stockings, a pair of shoes, and a pair of gloves.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> W. O. B. Allen and Edmund McClure, Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (London, 1898), 31.

<sup>11</sup> M. G. Jones, The Charity School Movement (Cambridge, 1938), 376. For additional information on charity schools in England the following are useful: W. K. Lowther Clark, Eighteenth Century Piety (London, 1944) and The History of the S.P.C.K. (London, 1959); Leonard W. Cowie, Henry Newman: An American in London, 1708-1743 (London, 1956); and Betsey Rodgers, Cloak of Charity (London, 1949).

Charles Bridges was neither a member of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, nor a trustee of any particular school. Rather, he was an agent. Agents were usually appointed by the trustees of the London schools and worked closely with the Society by reporting on the progress of their work.<sup>12</sup>

It should be noted that not until 1709 did the full name "Charles Bridges" appear in the minutes of the Society. Before that date reference was made only to a Mr. Bridges. It is impossible to state beyond a doubt that the two names referred to the same man, but it seems likely since there were few agents in the early years of the Society and both Mr. Bridges and Charles Bridges worked in London and in the provinces of England.<sup>13</sup> And too, Charles Bridges wrote from Virginia in 1735 that he had been active in the beginnings of the charity school movement in England.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Clarke, History of the S.P.C.K., 24.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Arthur Barker, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, to the author, October 22, 1968.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 25, 1735, Correspondence of the Bishop of London, with some miscellaneous papers, Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40, Lambeth Palace Library, England. CW Microfilm. This collection of papers will hereafter be referred to as Bishop of London Correspondence-Fulham Palace Papers. William Wilson Manross, The Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Library (Oxford, 1965) is a guide to this collection.

The Charles Bridges who wrote from Virginia in 1735 was the same Charles Bridges who had much success in establishing charity schools. Most probably he was also Mr. Bridges. A few examples of his charity school work follow.

At the May 18, 1699 meeting of the Society, Bridges and Mitchell reported that members of the parish of St. George, Southwark, on the south side of the Thames River, had subscribed sixteen pounds per year to the school and that there were promises of more help. In July of the same year Bridges informed the Society that the school was in difficulty and in August he reported that the establishment of the school had been delayed until better arrangements could be made about subscriptions. The promises of more financial aid apparently had not been fulfilled; however, by October the school was established and had forty boys.<sup>15</sup>

On May 25, 1699, Bridges reported to the Society that the officers of St. Andrew's Parish, Holborn, agreed to work with subscribers in setting up a charity school in a house promised by the steward of Lord Halifax. By June the School in St. Andrew's Parish had forty shillings subscribed to it, and by July it had amassed nineteen pounds in

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<sup>15</sup> Allen and McClure, Two Hundred Years, 31, 35, 36, 39.

subscriptions. In October Bridges reported that four more pounds had been subscribed and that he expected at least fifty before the end of the year.<sup>16</sup>

In June and July 1699 there were reports by Bridges that the school in St. Martin's Parish (St. Martin-in-the-Field) would be established because representatives of the Society in that parish had subscribed nearly the entire amount needed.<sup>17</sup> The amount accrued was not stated, but from the annual subscriptions to other schools, it would appear to have been around fifty pounds.

At the July, August, and October 1699 meetings of the Society, Bridges reported on the school in Whitechapel. At the first meeting, the sum of money subscribed was reportedly twenty-one pounds, ten shillings, and by August over forty pounds. In October the school had been given a gift of forty pounds annually and a house was being readied for the school.<sup>18</sup>

Bridges served as agent for other charity schools in Hungerford Market, in Cripplegate, and in Greenwich. By November of 1699, he and another agent, a Mr. Skeat,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 32, 34, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 34, 36, 40.

reported that:

...the following Schools are perfected and sett up, vizt the School in Wapping, in White Chappell, at Poplar, St. Martins, Cripplegate, Shadwell, Shore-ditch, St. Margarett's, Westminster, and the new Chappel near Tuttle-Fields, Aldgate, Bishop's Gate, St. George's Southwark, and that the two Schools at Westminster, and those at Aldgate and Wapping were erected before the foundation of this Society.<sup>19</sup>

Bridges was or had been actively working with at least six of these schools.

At the meeting in November 1699 Bridges was ordered to give the Society "...a list of such persons of quality in the severall Parishes where Schools are erected as are fitt to for promoting the same."<sup>20</sup> No record of this list has been found. He continued to report back on the various schools including others in St. Clements, St. Katharines, and Aldersgate Parishes (February 1699/1700). In August 1700 Bridges first reported on a school outside of London. From Lancashire he wrote the Society for recommendations to clergy and members of the Society to help him. The secretary of the Society, thereupon, wrote the Bishop of Chester "...to request his Lordship's countenance to him" Then in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 46.

1706 Bridges began a tour of "...all corporation towns of the West of England."<sup>21</sup>

On August 11, 1709, Bridges wrote to the Society from "Silso, Northamptonshire."<sup>22</sup> Apparently the clerk of the Society made the mistake of placing Silso, which is in Bedfordshire about sixteen miles southeast of Bridges's home, in Northamptonshire. However, Bridges was working at this time in the vicinity of his family's home, but his permanent residence was in London.

In April and June 1710 he was in London where he continued his charity school work.<sup>23</sup> By August he was again in the provinces where he reported from Chichester in Sussex. He had visited corresponding members of the Society at Romney (a Mr. D'Effray), at Mayfield (a Mr. Sawyer), and at Lewes in Sussex (a Mr. Springate). From

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<sup>21</sup> General Minutes 1 - August 8, 1700 and General Minutes 1- 1706, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, England (hereafter S.P.C.K.), referred to in letters of Arthur Barker, S.P.C.K., to the author, October 22, 1968, and December 16, 1968.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Bridges to Henry Newman, Silso, August 11, 1709, Abstract Letter Book 1/1 - 1688, S.P.C.K., referred to in Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Bridges to Henry Newman, London, April 6, 1710, Abstract Letter Book 1/2 - 2046, S.P.C.K., referred to in Ibid.

Chichester he proposed to travel to Dorchester in Dorsetshire and gave that as a forwarding address for some books to be sent him by the Society.<sup>24</sup> When next he wrote the Society in October, he was in Sarum or Salisbury in Wiltshire. He had received his books and he was returning to London by way of Northamptonshire which was not between Sarum and London but northwest of London.<sup>25</sup> No doubt he was taking time to visit his family there.

In 1711 and 1712 Bridges was again working in London taking time in 1712 to tour the southwestern part of England-- Cornwall, Devonshire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire. He returned to London by October 1712. In February of the next year he was still in London, but was much concerned about the financial condition of the school at Launceston in Cornwall.<sup>26</sup> After this date no mention of Bridges is in the

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<sup>24</sup>Charles Bridges to Henry Newman, Chichester, August 27, 1710, Abstract Letter Book 1/2 - 2235, S.P.C.K., referred to in Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Charles Bridges to Henry Newman, Sarum (Salisbury), October 5, 1710, Abstract Letter Book 1/2 - 2325, S.P.C.K., referred to in Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Charles Bridges to Henry Newman, London, October 25, 1711, Abstract Letter Book 1/3 - 2832 and February 21, 1712, Abstract Letter Book 1/3 - 2982, S.P.C.K., referred to in Ibid.

records of the Society until 1732 when he expressed a desire to go to Georgia.

Bridges was extremely busy between 1699 and 1713 with his activities as an agent. At the meeting on the 6th of January 1700/1, Bridges informed the Society that the business of the schools was a heavy load for the agents and expressed hope that the Society would lessen this burden somewhat. The Society ordered that an assistant for the agents be allowed; his salary would be discussed at the next meeting. On the 13th of January, however, no mention was made of the assistant's salary. Instead the Society resolved that "...the Reverend Mr. Cohan be the Inspector of all the Charity Schools in and about London, and that his Sallary be £20 per annum." Before the next meeting, on the 3rd of February, there must have been much comment by the agents on this action, as it was ordered at this meeting that the "...sum of £20 a year (to be paid quarterly) be paid to the Agents, by them to be disposed of for the Encouragement of the Charity Schools according to their discretion." Thus additional funds for the schools were allotted and an inspector for all the charity schools appointed. More discussion occurred throughout the next months--the essence being that the agents felt overworked and sought help which

seemingly did not come.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Bridges must not have had much time for other work.

Bridges was not only an active participant in the charity school movement, but also a contributor to theories of methodology and organization. In 1699 he prepared a paper entitled "Methods for Management of Free Schools," but a copy has not been found. According to the minutes of the Society it was "...read, debated, and corrected and ordered by the Society to be forthwith printed." It was also ordered that the paper should be sent to Bridges as soon as it was printed.<sup>28</sup> Such a discourse would be interesting to compare with his letter written from Virginia

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<sup>27</sup>General Minutes 1 - January 6, 1700/1701; January 13, 1700/1701; February 3, 1700/1701; March 12, 1700/1701; and March 26, 1701, referred to in letter of Arthur Barker to the author, November 11, 1968.

<sup>28</sup>Allen and McClure, Two Hundred Years, 36. "Bridges, W. Methods and Management of Free Schools, 1699." is cited in the bibliography of M. G. Jones, The Charity School Movement. If this work is the same as that referred to in the minutes of the Society, then the Mr. Bridges mentioned in the minutes must be W. Bridges. I wrote the S.P.C.K. on this problem and discovered that much research has been done in an attempt to identify or to locate this work but to no avail. Apparently M. G. Jones "...did not distinguish in her bibliography between sources which she handled and used and those which she had read about only or heard tell of." Bridges' work is never quoted in the book and thus the bibliographical reference may have been hearsay and thus not reliable. Arthur Barker checked the minutes of 1699 to see whether Jones had misread "W" for Mr., but he feels that this was not possible. He does not know the

in 1735 to the Bishop of London giving his plan for Christian instruction for Negroes there.<sup>29</sup>

What further work Bridges did for the charity schools or for the Society is not known. He must have left this work, though, as he does not appear after 1712/13 in the Society's records. Moreover, as he was a painter by profession when he came to Virginia, it seems evident that he left his charitable work to pursue art.

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answer to this problem, but as M. G. Jones seems unreliable as a source in this concern, it is unlikely that Bridges' first initial was "W". At no other place in the minutes is there a reference to a W. Bridges or a William Bridges or any other Bridges whose given name began with "W". (Letter from Arthur Barker, S.P.C.K., to the author, December 16, 1968)

<sup>29</sup>Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40. CW Microfilm.

## CHAPTER II

### PAINTER, 1713-1735

Charles Bridges was a fairly competent artist when he came to Virginia in 1735. He must have had some formal training in England. Stylistically, he could have been a student of Sir Godfrey Kneller, or of one of his associates. According to Byrd family tradition, not substantiated by fact, it was in Kneller's studio that Colonel William Byrd first met Bridges.<sup>1</sup> If this tradition is true, the meeting most probably occurred between 1715 and 1723. Kneller was in England from 1675 until his death in 1723. Byrd was in England frequently from 1684 until 1723. Until 1699 Bridges' activities are not known. It could have been prior to 1699

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<sup>1</sup>William Byrd (1674-1744) of Westover, Virginia, was born in Virginia, but spent considerable time from 1684 until 1723 in England. Henry Wilder Foote wrote that Byrd "...is said by Byrd family tradition to have become acquainted with Bridges in Kneller's studio, presumably when Byrd's portrait was painted by Kneller around 1704." (Foote, "Charles Bridges," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LX (1952), 8.) As pointed out in the preceding chapter, Bridges was extremely active in the charity school movement from 1699 until 1713 and thus probably did not meet Byrd around 1704.

that Bridges met Byrd and that he studied art. It seems strange that he should have left this field for almost fifteen years only to return to it later. It is likely that Bridges seriously began his studies after 1713 and most probably under Kneller.

As Kneller died in 1723, it is also likely that Bridges then worked under Charles Jervas, who, not in name, but in responsibility, followed Kneller as court painter.<sup>2</sup> Indeed one English art historian, Sir Gyles Isham, wrote the author that Bridges' style was "quite unlike Kneller's" and since Bridges was an intimate of non-jurors "...he would have nothing in common with the Whig, Kneller...."<sup>3</sup> In all

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Jervas (ca. 1675-1739) was born in Ireland and spent a year in London around 1694/5 studying under Kneller before finally coming to England for good in 1709. After Kneller's death in 1723, he was appointed principal painter to George I. In 1713 he taught painting to the poet Alexander Pope. (Michael Bryan, Dictionary of Painters and Engravers (n.p., 1816). New edition, rev. and enl. under supervision of George C. Williamson (Port Washington, N.Y., 1964), III, 112; John Denison Champlin, Jr. and Charles C. Perkins, eds., Cyclopedia of Painters and Painting (New York, 1887), II, 342; Ellis Waterhouse, Painting in Britain 1530-1790 (London, 1962), 101-102; and Dictionary of National Biography, XXIX, 354-355.)

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Sir Gyles Isham, Bart., Lamport Hall, Northampton, England, to the author, December 16, 1968. Isham's conclusion was drawn from Bridges' involvement in the charity school movement which drew many non-jurors who could no longer retain their charges. A non-juror was one who would not swear allegiance to King George I because of a belief that James II and his heirs were the rightful rulers of England. Bridges' only known English portraits were of the Reverend Thomas Baker, a non-juror.

probability Bridges studied or painted under both men-- first Kneller and then Jervas.

Few records exist of Bridges' work in England. His only known work is a portrait of the Reverend Thomas Baker, now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England.<sup>4</sup> Four copies and several mezzotints of this portrait are known. Baker was a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, until 1716/17. At that time, as a non-juror, he was forced to give up his fellowship, but remained at the college. The rest of his life was devoted to historical and religious research and writing. Robert Masters, Baker's biographer, wrote prior to 1784 that Baker's portrait:

...was purchased out of Lord Oxford's Collection, by Dr. Rawlinson, and placed by him in the Picture Gallery at Oxford. Charles Bridges, pinxit memoriter, and Mezzotinto Print was done by J. Simon. And Mr. Virtue on going to Cambridge, had been privately engaged to draw by stealth, the Portrait

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<sup>4</sup>The following is the description of the Bridges portrait of Baker in the Catalogue of Oxford Portraits: "THOMAS BAKER (Charles Bridges) B. 1656; Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, 1680-1717; ejected as a nonjuror, but allowed to continue to reside; an antiquary, historian of his College; benefactor to it and to his University; d. 1740. Bust, facing the spectator, the head slightly to l.; clean-shaven face, brown wig; small bands; black gown; painted in an oval spandrel; inscribed above to l. with the name of the subject, to r. D. D. RICH. RAWLINSON LL.D. Canvas 30 x 25 in. [243]" (R. Lane Poole, Catalogue of Oxford Portraits (Oxford, 1911), I, 96-97.)

of old Mr. Tho. Baker, of St. John's then an eminent Antiquary....<sup>5</sup>

No date is mentioned, but as Baker is referred to as "old Mr. Tho. Baker," Masters implied that the drawing and portrait were made when Baker was advanced in age, probably in the late 1720's or early 1730's. Assuredly, it was after 1717 that the print was made because the inscription read "Reverend Thomas Baker, Late Fellow of St. John's College...."

The original drawing by George Vertue is now owned by Mr. Wilmarth Lewis of Farmington, Connecticut.<sup>6</sup> It was done for Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford. From all indications, Bridges used this drawing for his portrait-- thus the inscription on the print "pinxit memoriter." He probably also knew Baker, but there is no record of Baker's having sat for a portrait. The original portrait was acquired for twelve pounds, ten shillings by Dr. Richard Rawlinson when Lord Oxford's possessions were sold in 1742.

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<sup>5</sup>Robert Masters, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. Thomas Baker, B.D. of St. John's College in Cambridge, From the Papers of Dr. Zachary Grey, with a Catalogue of his Ms. Collections (Cambridge, 1784), 106. Masters cites as his reference "Walpole's Life of Vertue, p. 259."

<sup>6</sup>Letter from Sir Gyles Isham to the author, December 16, 1968 and letter from Mr. Wilmarth S. Lewis, The Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, Connecticut, to the author, April 7, 1969.

REV. THOMAS BAKER

D. D.  
Rich:  
Rawlinson LL



Portrait of the Reverend Thomas Baker, by Charles Bridges,  
Bodleian Library, Oxford, England.

Rawlinson then gave the portrait to Oxford University in 1745.<sup>7</sup>

J. Chaloner Smith in his British Mezzotinto Portraits Described mentioned a mezzotint of the Baker portrait engraved by Jean Simon. He cited the inscription of the engraving as follows:

The Reverend Mr Thomas Baker, S.T.B. Late Fellow of St. John's Colledge, in Cambridge. Cars Bridges pinxit memoriter. I Simon fec. Printed & Sold by Thos Bakewell in Fleet Street.<sup>8</sup>

Two states of the print were listed: one without an inscription, now at the British Museum, and a second with the above inscription which has not been found.

The four known copies of the Baker portrait are one at the Society of Antiquaries, London, England, and three at St. John's College, Cambridge, England. Sir George Scharf in 1865 in his Catalogue of Pictures Belonging to the Society of Antiquaries stated that their portrait was either the original or a duplicate, and was used for Simon's engraving.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Maurice W. Brockwell, "An English Painter in Virginia," The Connoisseur, CXIX (1947), 129; Poole, Catalogue of Oxford Portraits, I, 97.

<sup>8</sup>John Chaloner Smith, British Mezzotinto Portraits Described (London, 1880), III, 1068-1069.

<sup>9</sup>Letter from J. H. Hopkins, Librarian, Society of Antiquaries of London, London, England, to the author, November 14, 1968. Brockwell wrote that "Scharf, in his

Possibly Bridges painted more than one portrait of Baker, but it is certain that he painted the one at Oxford.

Sometime before 1730 Charles Bridges wrote Richard Roach, fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, about plates of hymns and illustrations possibly for one of Roach's works.<sup>10</sup> The letter was undated and read:

Sir

I have herewith sent you the plate & the words desired, and would pray you to direct the printer in your neighbourhood to putt this plate to this Hundred papers of my Christ & a and Jack shall bring money when he comes for them to morrow. Mr. Jacobi

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Catalogue of Pictures belonging to the Society of Antiquaries in 1865, held that their canvas (No. LIII) represented Baker wearing a clergyman's wig, and was the original, or at least a small duplicate, being 20 3/4 by 18 1/2 in...." (Brockwell; "An English Painter," The Connoisseur, CXIX (1947), 129.) Concerning the portraits at St. John's College, Cambridge, Brockwell referred to Alexander Freeman's catalogue of their portraits. Freeman claimed that one of their portraits was the original and was used for the engraving. (Ibid.) A. C. Crook, Junior Bursar, St. John's College, Cambridge, England, wrote the author on April 18, 1969 that they have "...three portraits of Thomas Baker, and, according to experts in Cambridge, they are all copies of an original portrait painted by Charles Bridges. The original portrait, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford...."

<sup>10</sup> Richard Roach (1662-1730) divine, studied at St. John's College, Oxford, from 1681 to 1699 and became rector of St. Augustine's, Hackney, in 1690 and remained as such until his death in 1730. He edited an eight-volume work of Jeremiah White and published in London in 1725 The Great Crisis..., a work preparatory to his eight-volume work entitled The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant..., published in London in 1728. Dictionary of National Biography, XLVIII, 338.

desires you & I to give him a meeting at Mr. Rasi-  
dells the Musick Shop without Temple barr to morrow  
evening between 7 & 8 about the Hymns, which he prays  
you would bring a Specimen of each plate printed off  
with you I am

Sir

Your Humble Servant

Chas: Bridges

Monday  
morn<sup>11</sup>

With the exception of the Baker portraits and the Roach  
letter, there is no record of the art of Bridges in  
England.

On January 4, 1732/33, Bridges wrote Henry Newman<sup>12</sup>  
from Seaton, near Uppingham, in Rutland, not far from  
Northamptonshire, that he found "...strong inclination  
in himself to go to Georgia and should soon come to a  
Resolution if he was once satisfied in some questions  
proposed in his letter, and he should be much obliged

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Bridges to Richard Roach, no date, Rawlinson  
Papers, D. 832, f. 45, Department of Western Manuscripts,  
Bodleian Library, Oxford, England. Copy, Colonial Williams-  
burg Research Department, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Newman (1670-1743) was born in Massachusetts  
but went to London in 1703. In 1708 he became secretary  
of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge which posi-  
tion he held until his death. He was very interested in  
charity schools and also in the settlement of Georgia.  
For a biography of Newman see Leonard W. Cowie, Henry Newman:  
An American in London 1708-1743 (London, 1956). Dictionary  
of American Biography, XIII, 463-464.

to Mr. Newman if he would answer them."<sup>13</sup> Newman's reply has not been found, but it is known that he was greatly interested in transporting persecuted Protestant Salzburgers to Georgia. Bridges must have known of his interest and thought Newman would be interested in his proposed trip. Bridges did not go to Georgia but apparently changed his plans and arrived in Virginia from England in 1735.

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Bridges to Henry Newman, Seaton, January 4, 1732/33, Abstract Letter Book 1/16 - 12018, S.P.C.K., referred to in letters from Arthur Barker to the author, October 22, 1968 and December 16, 1968.

### CHAPTER III

#### VIRGINIA, 1735--ca. 1744

Charles Bridges arrived in Virginia in May of 1735 and went first to Williamsburg. During that year and the next, he visited Westover, the home of Colonel William Byrd, not far from Williamsburg. From there he traveled to Spotsylvania County where he visited Colonel Alexander Spotswood at his home at Germanna. He returned to Williamsburg in the spring of 1736. In 1737 he rented a house in Williamsburg. By February of 1738 he was living in Hanover County, but continued to travel around the colony.

His arrival in Virginia was referred to by Lieutenant-Governor William Gooch in a letter to his brother, the Reverend Thomas Gooch, in England on May 26.<sup>1</sup> The latter

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<sup>1</sup>William Gooch (1681-1751) was lieutenant-governor of Virginia from September 1727 until August 1749. He was in Virginia during this time except from October 1740 until July 1741 when he was absent on a military expedition to South America. Thomas Gooch (1674-1754) was an elder brother of William Gooch. In 1735 he was a canon of Canterbury and the master of Caius College, Cambridge. In October 1738 he became the Bishop of Norwich. In January 1747/48 he became the Bishop of Ely. Dictionary of American Biography, VII, 373-375 and Dictionary of National Biography, XXII, 109-110.

had written a letter of introduction for the painter. As a result, the governor was more than gracious to Bridges and his children who accompanied him. A son and daughters were mentioned. He had already lent them his coach and wagon to get their baggage. Gooch thought it looked a "...little odd for a Governour to shew so much favour to a Painter...." He had entertained the family at dinner several times since their arrival, and because of his brother's recommendation, he had extended his hospitality to Bridges. He promised "...as soon as he's settled that he shall shew the Country his Art, by drawing my Picture." Gooch then assured his brother that he would "...continue to do him all the Service..." in his power.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Lieutenant-Governor William Gooch to his brother Thomas Gooch in England, Williamsburg, May 26, 1735, in the possession of Sir Robert E. S. Gooch, Benacre Hall, Suffolk, England. CW Microfilm - Letters of Governor William Gooch, Virginia, 1727-1751, to his brother Thomas. In this letter Gooch also referred to a letter of introduction brought by a Captain Compton. Captain James Compton of H.M.S. Seahorse arrived in Virginia (Potomac River) on May 9, 1735 and wrote from the York River on June 1, 1735. Captain James Compton to the Secretary of the Admiralty, York River, June 1, 1735, Admiralty 1/1599, Public Record Office. CW Microfilm. A check of the Admiralty records revealed that no Charles Bridges was a passenger on H.M.S. Seahorse--precluding the idea that Bridges might have come to Virginia with Captain Compton. Letter from Lt. Col. M. E. S. Laws, Kent, England, to the author, October 10, 1968.

Bridges was fortunate to have this influential connection in Virginia.

No mention was made by the governor of Bridges' former charitable work in England, but the Reverend Thomas Gooch must have known of Bridges' earlier philanthropic endeavors. Possibly Thomas Gooch did not write his brother about this as it had been over twenty years since Bridges had worked with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Assuredly, when Bridges came to Virginia, he was making his living by painting.

Bridges arrived with a letter of introduction from the Right Reverend Edmund Gibson, Lord Bishop of London, addressed to Commissary James Blair.<sup>3</sup> In July Blair wrote the Bishop that he had received this letter and had found Bridges to be "...a very honest good man..." Blair gave assurance that Bridges would receive all the help and encouragement he could give him.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Edmund Gibson (1669-1743) was educated at Queen's College, Oxford, and was Bishop of London from 1720 until his death. He was also a noted antiquarian. James Blair (1655-1743) first came to Virginia in 1685 as a missionary. In 1689 he was appointed commissary by Dr. Henry Compton, Bishop of London, and retained this the highest ecclesiastical post in Virginia until his death. Dictionary of National Biography, XXI, 274-275, and Dictionary of American Biography, II, 335-337.

<sup>4</sup> James Blair to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, July 7,

Interestingly enough, Bridges' two known letters of introduction came from prominent clergymen in England and not from painters. More than likely he had become acquainted with them through his charitable work. Bridges may have been earning his living by painting when he came to Virginia, but his interest in the plight of unfortunates continued as revealed in his letter to the Bishop of London written in October of 1735. He thanked him for his letter of introduction to Blair. He also referred to the Bishop's pastoral letter of 1727 concerning the need for owners of slaves in the colonies to educate them in Christian principles. Bridges then disclosed his interest in the lack of Christian education for the Negro in Virginia and proposed a plan for instruction.<sup>5</sup> It is this solution, discussed more fully in the next chapter, which gives an insight into his personality.

In December of 1735 Bridges was still in Williamsburg. On the twenty-third he witnessed the will of Sir John Randolph, a distinguished inhabitant of Williamsburg. Perhaps,

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1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 13, f. 170. CW Microfilm.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40. CW Microfilm.

Bridges was doing portraits of Randolph or of members of his family, but none are known to exist today. Randolph's will was not probated until April 23, 1737 when Bridges again witnessed it.<sup>6</sup>

Bridges must have left Williamsburg shortly after December 23 because on December 30 Colonel William Byrd wrote a letter of introduction for him to Colonel Alexander Spotswood.<sup>7</sup> Byrd described the painter as "...a man, of a Good Family, but either by the Frowns of Fortune, or his own mismanagment, is obliged to seek his Bread, a little of the latest in a Strange Land." He then urged Spotswood to use Bridges if he wanted portraits done. The artist had already drawn Byrd's children and those of

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<sup>6</sup>"Copy of Will of Sir John Randolph," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXXVI (1928), 376-381. The will was proved in the General Court in Williamsburg. The copy is from the General Court records after they were removed to Richmond. These records were destroyed when the General Court House was burned in 1865. This copy, according to the editor, came from the collection of Mrs. Mary Randolph Kent. The College of William and Mary has portraits of Sir John and Susannah Randolph painted in the late nineteenth century by E. C. Bruce from unknown miniatures.

<sup>7</sup>Alexander Spotswood (1676-1740) was lieutenant-governor of Virginia from June 23, 1710 until September 27, 1722. From 1724 until 1730 he was in England. In 1730 he returned to Virginia where he lived at Germanna in Spotsylvania County. He died in 1740 as he was preparing to embark on a military expedition to South America. At his death Gooch assumed command of the expedition. Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, 467-469.

others in the neighborhood. Byrd described him as not having "...the Masterly Hand of a Lilly, or a Kneller, yet, had he lived so long ago, as when places were given to the most Deserving, he might have pretended to be serjeant Painter of Virginia...."<sup>8</sup>

Bridges remained with Spotswood for a time. While there he may have painted portraits of Spotswood, his family and his neighbors. Indeed, there are two portraits of Spotswood that have been attributed to Bridges. By summer Bridges was again in Williamsburg. On July 11 a letter was sent to him in Williamsburg by the Bishop of London, but the letter did not leave England until September 11. Unfortunately the letter has not been found.<sup>9</sup>

That summer tragedy struck Bridges' family. His daughter Mary died. According to the Bruton Parish Register she was buried on August 24. Following her

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<sup>8</sup> "Letters of the Byrd Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXXVI (1928), 211-212. Peter Lely (1618-1680) became court painter after he came to England from the Netherlands in 1641. He was knighted in 1679 and was predominant in English art from his arrival until his death. Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) arrived in England around 1675 from Germany and achieved immediate success. He became court painter at the death of Lely.

<sup>9</sup> Register of letters of the Court of Plantations, Bishop of London, and Henry Newman to Bishop Gibson, September 22, 1736, in Miscellaneous Papers on Church Matters in Virginia, 1675-1776, Fulham Papers Miscellaneous, ff. 125-126. CW Microfilm.

father's name in the register was " ..Lim[ ] ." <sup>10</sup> No doubt this illegible word was limner thereby denoting Bridges' occupation.

The only known residence of Bridges while in Williamsburg was Greenhill, the house owned by the estate of Richard King. He rented this property from December 25, 1736 until December 25, 1737. Henry Hacker of Williamsburg agreed in July 1738 to collect one year's rent for the estate of Richard King from Charles Bridges "...in the county of Hanover...." <sup>11</sup>

As early as February 1738 Bridges was living in Hanover. He entered the following notice in the Virginia Gazette:

Whereas one Box, mark'd C.B. about 4 Feet square and 14 Inches deep; and one other Box, mark'd C.B. about 5 Feet long, 1 Foot wide, and 1 Foot deep, were brought by Capt. Bolling, from England,

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<sup>10</sup>List of Burials in Bruton Parish Register 1662-1797, deposited at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. CW Microfilm.

<sup>11</sup>Greenhill, on lots 319-328, is no longer standing. It was in the block now bounded by Prince George, Henry, Scotland, and Nassau Streets. Jones Papers, 1649-1880, vol. IV, Library of Congress. CW Microfilm. In the article on "The Jones Papers" Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXVI (1918), 239, is found reference to an "AGREEMENT OF JOHN HAWKER, July 11, 1738, to receive of Mr. Charles Bridges, of Hanover County one years rent for a house in Williamsburg." As such an agreement in the name of John Hawker is not in the Jones Papers, the editor evidently misread the agreement of Henry Hacker.

last Year, for the Subscriber, living in Hanover County, and cannot be heard of by him: These are to request the Favour of the Person who has them in Possession, to give Notice to him, or to the Printer hereof, where they are, and they shall be handsomely satisfy'd for their Trouble, by

Charles Bridges<sup>12</sup>

As few Hanover County records exist, it is impossible to determine where Bridges lived. He must have spent some time there prior to February of 1738 because he had an account with Thomas Partridge, a Hanover merchant, for the year 1737. A Captain Holland paid Partridge one pound, thirteen shillings, ten pence farthing in behalf of Bridges for the year 1737.<sup>13</sup>

In the letter books of Francis Jerdone, a merchant trading in Hanover County, there are included the accounts of a tailor, Michael Smith, who made coats for Bridges and his son. He entered the transaction on June 30, 1738.<sup>14</sup> Then on September 19, 1738, Bridges purchased two hundred six-penny nails from an itinerant merchant in Hanover County whose accounts were found at Frederick Hall Plantation in

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<sup>12</sup>Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), February 10, 1738, p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas Partridge Account Book, 1734-1745, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>14</sup>Account and Letter Book of Francis Jerdone, 1736-1737; 1738-1744, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. CW Microfilm.

Louisa County, the county which borders Hanover County to the west.<sup>15</sup>

Bridges again wrote the Bishop of London in October of 1738 from Hanover. In his letter Bridges commented on his progress with his plan for instructing Negroes. He was still trying to get Blair interested and wrote that the "...Comissary & I grow in years, And the world hangs heavy on us." He went on to say that he had visited Blair from time to time, most probably in Williamsburg, but had found him asleep or inattentive.<sup>16</sup>

In January of 1739/1740 Michael Smith entered the following transaction for Bridges in his account book:

January 6

...		
Mr. Bridges cutting out a		
coat your Son	..	1..
...		
Mr. Bridges making a great		
Coat 7/ thread & Oznabg. 1/	..	8.. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Frederick Hall Plantation Books, Group A, vol. 2, Ledger B, 1738-1741, 58, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. CW Microfilm.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Hanover, October 19, 1738, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 47, CW Microfilm.

<sup>17</sup> Account and Letter Book of Francis Jerdone, 1736-1737; 1733-1744, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. CW Microfilm.

According to this account, Bridges' son was still living with or near his father in Hanover in January 1739/1740.

Sometime between October 16, 1737 and February 25, 1739 Bridges wrote the following in the guest book of the Fairfax family at Belvoir, the home of William Fairfax in Prince William County:

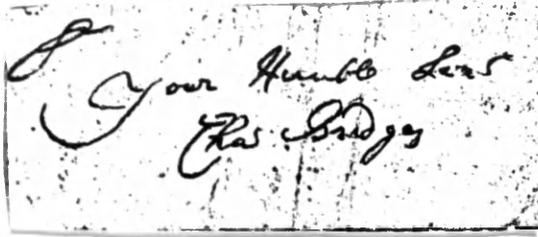
Si Deus est Animus  
Sit pura mente colendus  
Car. Bridges<sup>18</sup>

The exact date of his visit is not known. Until recently the Belvoir entry was the only known example of the signature of Charles Bridges. Copies of both his letters to the Bishop of London as well as his letter to Richard Roach, all previously cited, are signed. The Belvoir signature, thought to be that of the artist, resembles closely the signatures in the other Bridges letters. And too, the inscription,

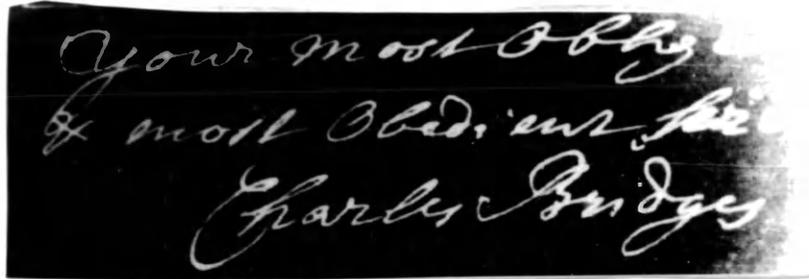
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<sup>18</sup>Footnote, "Charles Bridges," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LX (1952), 13. "From the familiarly designated 'Belvoir House Guest Book.' This book is a copy of Thoresby's Deatus Leodiensis: or the Topography of the Ancient and Populous Town and Parish of Leeds And Parts Adjacent in the West-Riding of the County of York... London ...MDCCLXV. Blank pages preceding the frontispiece, with additional sheets inserted were used as a sort of guest book in which visitors to 'Belvoir' the seat of William Fairfax, in Prince William County, wrote their names. The book was used in later years for the same purpose, by Fairfax Harrison at his home 'Belvoir' in Fauquier County. This notable book is now on deposit with the Virginia Historical Society by courtesy of Mrs. Charles Baird and Mrs. Gerhard Dieke." (Ibid., 18.)

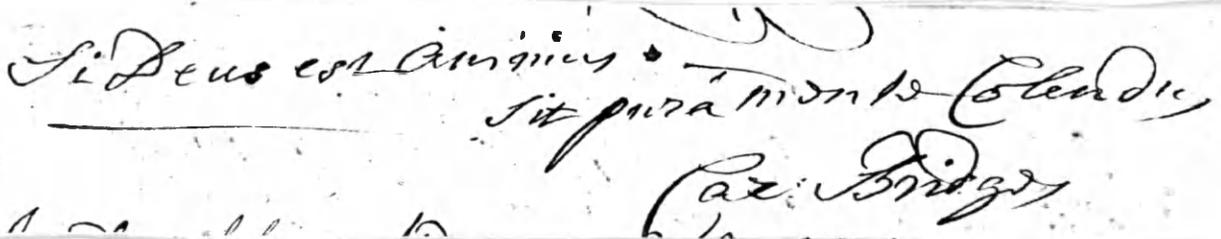
SIGNATURES OF CHARLES BRIDGES



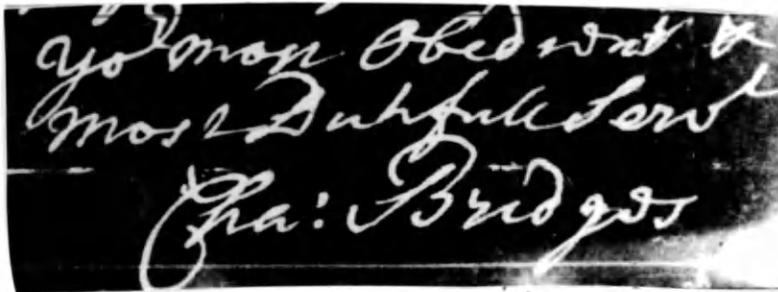
BEFORE 1730: Charles Bridges to Richard Roach, no date, Rawlinson Papers, D. 832, f. 45, Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford, England.



1735: Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40.



BETWEEN 1737 AND 1739: "Belvoir House Guest Book," Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. Foote, "Charles Bridges," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LX (1952), 13.



1738: Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Hanover, October 19, 1738, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 47.

freely translated as 'If God is Spirit he should be worshipped with a pure mind' is not out of character for a man so concerned with Christian instruction for Negroes and with charity schools.<sup>19</sup>

In May of 1739 Bridges was again trading with the unknown merchant whose accounts were found at Frederick Hall Plantation. On May 12 he purchased sugar, brown linen, thimbles, scissors, nuts, and nails--a purchase totaling twenty-two shillings, three pence.<sup>20</sup> At that time Bridges must have been in Hanover, but by August he was in the vicinity of Westover. On August 27 he dined with Byrd and left following the repast. Colonel Byrd referred to him in his diary as "old Bridges." Byrd was sixty-five, but Bridges was older at sixty-nine.<sup>21</sup>

Then in November Bridges was back in Hanover. On November 10 he bought cloth and buckles from the unknown merchant and in December, a bag of salt. The total of his

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick Hall Plantation Books, Group A, vol. 2, Ledger B, 1738-1741, 58, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. CW Microfilm.

<sup>21</sup>Maude H. Woodfin and Marion Tinsling, eds., Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1733-1741 (Richmond, 1942), 8-9.

transactions to December 30, 1739, was two pounds, seventeen shillings, and six pence. This account was not settled in full until 1741.<sup>22</sup>

On April 11, 1740 at the Court held for Caroline County, which borders Hanover to the north, it was ordered that "...Mr. Charles Bridges be paid at the laying of the next County-levie, for the Kings Arms for the use of this County after the same rate he hath been paid by other County Courts."<sup>23</sup> No other records of Bridges' having painted the King's Arms for other counties have been found. Apparently, though, he had painted arms before and thus the Caroline County officials requested him to do theirs. In November one thousand pounds of tobacco were designated by Caroline County to be "...sold for money to pay Charles Bridges for drawing the King's Arms for the use of this County Court."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick Hall Plantation Books, Group A, vol. 2, Ledger B, 1738-1741, 58; Group B, vol. 4, 1740-1741, merchandise ledger, 45; and Group B, vol. 5, 1742-1744, merchandise ledger, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. CW Microfilm.

<sup>23</sup> Order Book, Caroline County, 1732-1740, 595, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1741-1746, 15.

During the summer of 1740 Bridges again visited Colonel Byrd at Westover according to the following entry in Byrd's diary:

[1740] [July]

23. ...I wrote English and read Latin till dinner, when old Bridges came and dined with us and I ate cold roast beef. After dinner he went away and I read more English....<sup>25</sup>

Where Bridges was living is not certain. Surely he must have been staying or living near Westover as he left after eating. However, Bridges' daughter was still living in Hanover because on July 22 she purchased a leghorn hat from the unknown merchant and paid for it with cash.<sup>26</sup> This account is the only reference to Bridges' second daughter and it is not known whether she stayed in Virginia or returned to England with her father.

The remaining four years of Bridges' stay in Virginia are not well-documented, but he did bring a case before the Charles City County Court. He also had accounts with the merchant Francis Jerdone in Hanover. At the August 1741

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<sup>25</sup> Woodfin and Tinning, Another Secret Diary, 68.

<sup>26</sup> Frederick Hall Plantation Books, Group B, vol. 1, Contra, Day Book, 1739-1741, 33, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, CW Microfilm.

session of the Charles City County Court, the case of "Charles Bridges against James Clarke" was dismissed because neither appeared.<sup>27</sup> At the February 1741/1742 court, however, the following judgment was made on the case:

On the petition of Charles Bridges against James Clarke for three pounds Seventeen Shillings & Six pence Current money Due on a promissory Note, a Certificate of the oath of the petitioner to the Justness thereof being Endorsed thereon It is ordered the Defendant pay the petitioner the above Sum with Costs & 7/6 for an attorneys fee....<sup>28</sup>

Clarke must have been a resident of Charles City County and Bridges must have been there for the court session in February 1741/1742.

In the account book of Francis Jerdone, 1743-1745, there is the following entry which is the last known account of Bridges in Virginia:

Hanover County 1743  
 Sundries Dr To Ballance, being a list of  
 Debts due to the Cargo belonging to Neill  
 Buchanan Esqr in London 1st October  
 ...  
 F 71 Bridges Charles 7.. ..11 1/2

Folio 71 read as follows:

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<sup>27</sup>Order Book, Charles City County, 1737-1751, 173, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia. CW Microfilm.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 193.

1743	Charles Bridges	Dr	1743/4	Contra
Octr 1	To Ballance from		March 1	By Captain
	Leger N A	7..		Richard
		..11 1/2		Clough
				6..10..
			1744	
			Novem 10	By Ballance
				carried to
				his debit
				in a new
				accempt
				10..11 1/2 <sup>2</sup>
				7.. ..11 1/2 <sup>2</sup>

Evidently, Bridges was still in Virginia in October 1743, but possibly he left by March 1743/1744 when Captain Clough paid six pounds, ten shillings against his account. It is also possible that Bridges paid the remaining ten shillings, eleven pence halfpenny when he returned to England.

For one his age, Bridges led an interesting and active life in Virginia. Though only here for about nine years he was acquainted with the governor and an ex-governor. He visited Colonel Byrd at Westover several times and painted his children. He traveled to Belvoir to visit the Fairfax family and to Caroline County to paint the King's Arms for the County Court.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, when facts about his stay in Virginia were revealed, he was believed

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<sup>29</sup> Account Book of Francis Jerdone, 1743-1745, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. CW Microfilm.

to have painted a vast number of portraits. He must have painted many of them, because Byrd indicated in his letter to Spotswood that painting was his sole means of support. This assumption cannot be proved because no signed portrait has been found.

By far the most interesting aspect of his stay in Virginia was his concern for the Negroes as revealed in his letters to the Bishop of London. This facet of his life in Virginia follows.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION FOR NEGROES

Charles Bridges' interest in the plight of unfortunates did not end as he grew older. In Virginia he found a situation of servitude that demanded attention. His work with the charity schools in England sought to free children from the servitude of poverty. In Virginia slavery was the basis of the economy and therefore impregnable. Man's condition in servitude, however, could be improved. Bridges' former work gave him a valuable insight into the problems of Negroes in Virginia.

He was not the first to realize that the Negroes in America were being deprived of spiritual guidance though living in a Christian land. In 1727 the Bishop of London sent a pastoral letter addressed "To the Masters and Mistresses of Families in the English Plantations abroad; Exhorting them to Encourage and Promote the Instruction of their Negroes in the Christian Faith."<sup>1</sup> In this letter

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<sup>1</sup>[Rt. Revd. Edmund Gibson], Two Letters of the Lord Bishop of London... (London, 1729). CW Microfilm.

the Bishop presented logical arguments for the necessity of exposing Negroes to Christian doctrines. Despite language and cultural differences, it was still the duty of all Christians to educate the Negroes in Christian principles. Such instruction, the Bishop argued, would not make the slaves more desirous of freedom. Rather, it would make them want to labor harder in their respective callings. And, too, baptism did not change their status as civil property. After urging the individual owners to do their share, he wrote the ministers and missionaries in the colonies to do their part.

Virginia, and other colonies, where the plantation was the basic economic unit, found it impossible to depend upon the local clergy for Christian instruction of Negroes because the parishes were large and the plantations scattered. Ideally, the Bishop advocated a plan proposed by the Society for Propagating the Gospel whereby individuals, whose sole avocation would be the instruction of the Negroes, would be sent to the colonies. Unfortunately, the Society lacked funds for this project.<sup>2</sup> Bishop Gibson thereupon turned to the masters of the slaves. Charles Bridges, though not working for the Society for Propagating the Gospel and not

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6-8.

a master, desired to play a larger part in this worthy design.

Enthusiastically, in October 1735, he wrote the Bishop that he had talked with many in the colony since his arrival and had found interest in instruction. Therefore, he was sending the Bishop his plan.<sup>3</sup> He was not the first to answer the Bishop's call. In June of 1729 Commissary Blair wrote the Bishop that his pastoral letter had had a good effect and that several masters had already begun to instruct their Negroes. According to Blair, the Negroes were anxious to be instructed and to be baptized. He doubted the sincerity of many of the converts as "...the far greater part of them little mind the serious part, only are in hopes that they shall meet with so much the more respect, and that some time or other Christianity will help them to their freedom." He hoped their contact with the church, regardless of motive, would "...infuse into them some better principles than they have had."<sup>4</sup>

The following year Blair again wrote the Bishop that a large number of Negroes had received instruction in the

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<sup>3</sup>Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40. CW Microfilm.

<sup>4</sup>James Blair to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, June 23, 1729, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 109. CW Microfilm.

Catechism, Lord's Prayer, Apostle's Creed, and the Ten Commandments. The Negroes had subsequently been baptized. Many even attended church regularly. He wrote that some in Virginia believed instruction and baptism made the Negroes prouder and inspired them with thoughts of freedom but he took this "...to be rather a common prejudice than anything else."<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, hopes of freedom after baptism persisted. In 1730 Virginia was threatened with a slave rebellion instigated by rumors that the former Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Spotswood was returning to Virginia with orders from the King that baptized Negroes would be freed. The disturbance was small and centered around Williamsburg and the lower peninsula. Indeed it was more a gathering of Negroes which could have developed into something larger had not the authorities interfered. The Pennsylvania Gazette ran an account of this trouble in December 1730, and reported that five of the leaders had been seized. The report continued:

Sept. 19. The Account in our last of the Insurrection of the Negroes in Virginia, is confirmed by other Letters; and Capt. Willis of the Amity, as he was coming from thence, discovered a Negro who had hid

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<sup>5</sup> James Blair to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, July 20, 1730, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 13, f. 131. CW Microfilm.

himself in his Ship, and being examined how he came on Board, said, he was going Ambassador from the Negroes to his Majesty King George. However, his Excellency was turned ashore, and whipt thro' every County to the Place from whence he came.<sup>6</sup>

The following year Blair wrote Bishop Gibson that the disturbance was over. It had occurred because of the rumor concerning Spotswood and not as a direct result of Christian instruction. According to Blair "...notwithstanding all the precaution we Ministers took to assure them that Baptism altered nothing as to their Servitude, or other temporal circumstances; yet they were willing to feed themselves with a secret fancy that it did, and that the King designed that all Christians should be made free." Consequently, the Negroes apparently came in greater numbers to be baptized. When nothing came of baptism, the Negroes "...grew angry and saucy, and met in the night in great numbers, and talked of rising; and in some places of choosing their leaders." However, the authorities, with the use of night patrols, succeeded in restoring peace. In May of 1731 Blair felt safe in writing that "...now all is very quiet; as indeed there is a general quietness and Contentment in the Country."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), December 8, 1730, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>7</sup>James Blair to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg May 14, 1731, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 110. CW Microfilm.

Lieutenant-Governor Gooch also wrote the Bishop concerning the trouble. He had no idea how the rumor began. Where there had occurred mass meetings of Negroes, as in Norfolk and Princess Anne, the leaders were captured by the militia. Four agitators were executed. Gooch had ordered the militia to carry their arms to Church "...lest, the same mutinous Spirit returning, they should be seized by these poor Wretches..." but he had stopped this practice after a reasonably safe time. Apparently, the Bishop had written Gooch about the treatment of Negroes in Virginia by their masters because Gooch wrote:

What your Lordship observes is of some masters very true, they use their Negros no better than their Cattle. And I can see no help for it: tho' far the greater number, having kind masters, live much better than our poor labouring men in England.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the so-called better conditions of the Negro in Virginia, there was still much that needed to be done. Assuredly, slavery aided the colony of Virginia, and the other colonies, as well as England; however, economic necessity for many meant less than their being human. Negroes were human beings and though their function in Virginia society was labor and though they were in civil servitude, there

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<sup>8</sup> William Gooch to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, May 28, 1731, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 111. CW Microfilm.

was no reason to deprive them of the Christian religion. Some today would argue at the validity of proselytizing, but in the eighteenth century, the Church of England recognized a duty to carry Christianity to the English colonies. Thus no attempts were made to encourage the barbaric rituals of the Negroes. These rituals constituted their religion, but were alien to the white society of their masters. Instead the English sought to teach them the principles of their religion which were at times incomprehensible to the Negro in much the same way as the Negro's rituals were strange to the English.

Charles Bridges was one Englishman who recognized that the Negro was lacking what he believed to be necessary Christian instruction. He hoped the Bishop of London would encourage Lieutenant-Governor Gooch, Commissary Blair, and merchants in Virginia to back his plan.<sup>9</sup> His plan followed many of the suggestions presented by the Bishop in 1727 as well as many of the organizational facets of the charity schools.

The Bishop in 1727 had pointed out that since Sunday was a day of rest for man and beast, it was an ideal day for

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40. CW Microfilm.



instructing Negroes.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Bridges wrote that Sunday was "...generally allow'd these poor Slaves as a day of Liberty to do many things for themselves & for spending that time for their own advantage."<sup>11</sup> What better advantage was there than to instruct them in the basics of Anglican theology?

To aid the Negroes, Bridges proposed that the first Sunday afternoon in every month would be set aside for catechizing. To finance this undertaking, individuals within the various parishes would subscribe what they could.<sup>12</sup> Thus as with the charity schools, local financial help was necessary to further Bridges' plan. As with the charity schools, also, business meetings would be held possibly every third Sunday or other day of their choosing to "...Consult about managing & promoting this good design & for keeping Accounts of money received & applying it to the uses intended."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [Gibson], Two Letters, 18-19. CW Microfilm.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40. CW Microfilm.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Bridges also saw the necessity of simplifying sermons for the Negroes and proposed that proper means be made "...to Engage the Reverend Minister or Ministers Employ'd on these Occasions to preach on Such Subjects & Catechize in Such a plain affecting way..."<sup>14</sup> Bishop Gibson had discussed the language problem and had offered some solutions in 1727. When Negroes were brought over as adults, it was necessary to teach English to one or more of them and then teach them the essentials of Christianity. They in turn would teach the others in their own dialect.<sup>15</sup> Language differences and comprehension levels of the Negroes were problems. By calling for simplified sermons, Bridges was taking into account the possibility that the Negroes might not understand the regular sermons.

In accordance with the proposal of the Society for Propagating the Gospel as presented by the Bishop, Bridges proposed that a master or catechist be chosen "...whose whole business shall be to receive & Encourage all the Negroes & their Children that come of themselves or are Sent by their owners... Such a proposal was only possible with sufficient funds. Finally, if such catechists or masters were designated, they

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> [Gibson], Two Letters, 15-17. CW Microfilm.

should be "...upon the Sect at reasonable hours to attend those that come to be Instructed at the times they can be spared...."<sup>16</sup> He did not specify whether these catechists would be one to a parish, a county, or perhaps a group of plantations. More than likely, he meant for his plan to be tried first at Williamsburg.

Bridges did not doubt that he would see the progress of his plan because he felt the Bishop could influence the clergy in Williamsburg, in Virginia, and in Maryland. He wrote, too, that he wished he "...had Sought for a Character when I had the opportunity, that might more effectually have helped to promote it." Bridges' statement suggests that he was not a clergyman, but wished he were, in order to help see his plan carried to a successful end. His only design in his plan was "...the good of human Nature...."<sup>17</sup>

Three years later Bridges again wrote the Bishop for more help in promoting his plan. What little good he had already done would be greatly enhanced if the Bishop would encourage the governor and commissary to call for subscriptions. He wrote that "...all that can be done in this

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 20, 1735, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 40. CW Microfilm.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

affair without your Charitable Efforts will to my great Concern I fear come to Nothing." He continued that his advanced age as well as that of the Commissary made it difficult for them to do more. Indeed he stated that "...the Commissary & I grow in years, and the world hangs heavy upon us." At times he had approached the Commissary only to find him asleep. He ended his letter:

Would to God your powerfull voice would sound it in our ears to get up and be doing a little more Good, this Good work while there is time and opportunity, which would incite us to be thankfull to your Goodness for so great a blessing and especially to me.<sup>18</sup>

Discouraged, no doubt, at the lack of interest in his plan, he perhaps gave up. No other letters or papers have been found referring to Bridges' plan or a similar plan.

Truly, though, his proposal would have aided not only the Negro, but also the ministers and masters. Had they joined together, they possibly could have placed the responsibility for Christian instruction of the Negroes on special catechists or masters. Financially, they were able, but for many reasons, some of which have already been mentioned, it seemed simpler to most owners to do what they

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Bridges to Bishop Gibson, Williamsburg, October 19, 1738, Bishop of London Correspondence - Fulham Palace Papers, 15, f. 47. CW Microfilm.

could on their own plantations when they could.<sup>19</sup> Generally, the Negro would have been helped by such organized instruction as proposed by Bridges, but it would take more than the interest of an itinerant portrait painter to stir the conscience of slave owners.

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<sup>19</sup> See Winthrop D. Jordan, White over Black (Chapel Hill, 1968), 179-215, for a discussion of why slave owners did not take care of the spiritual makeup of their slaves.

## CHAPTER V

ENGLAND, ca. 1744-1747

Charles Bridges returned to England around 1744. He was about seventy-four years of age. Little is known of the remaining years of his life except that he was in Suffolk in 1746 and that he died in 1747 and was buried in Northamptonshire. At such an advanced age, he no doubt lived a quiet life. He may have continued to paint.

Sometime during the year 1746 he visited Thomas Martin, a lawyer and antiquarian, at his home, Palgrave, in Suffolk. The antiquarian George Vertue included the following address for Bridges in his memorandum address book:

For Mr. Charles Bridges to Tho Martin at  
Palgrave in Suffolk near Dis in Norfolk.

The exact date of the entry is not known, but on a page near that of the address are the dates May 10 and May 20, 1746.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Thorne, "Note on Charles Bridges, the Painter," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. ser., VIII (1951), 243. Mr. Thorne notes that the memorandum book is in the British

On December 18, 1747 Charles Bridges was buried at Warkton, the next parish to Barton Seagrave in Northamptonshire. At the time of his death he was seventy-seven.<sup>2</sup>

Until further research can be undertaken in England, there is little more that can be revealed about Bridges' life. Sensitivity to the world around him is characteristic of an artist. Bridges was well aware of the hardships of those less fortunate than he and strove to remedy the plight of these unfortunates. Thus he should be remembered not only as a painter but also an humanitarian.

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Museum, London, England, MS. 23095. According to the biographical sketch of Thomas Martin in the Dictionary of National Biography, Martin lived at Palgrave, Suffolk. Mr. Thorne gives his address according to another entry in Vertue's book as "Tho. Martin at Diss in Norfolk or Thetford." Martin no doubt visited or traveled around Suffolk and Norfolk, but his home was Palgrave and it was there that Bridges visited in 1746. Dictionary of National Biography, XXXVI, 297-298. For a biographical sketch of George Vertue (1684-1756) see Ibid., LVIII, 285-286.

<sup>2</sup> E. I. Longden, Bridges Family Pedigree, #1, Northampton Record Office, Delapre Abbey, Northampton, England. Copy, Colonial Williamsburg Research Department, Williamsburg, Virginia.

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VITA

Susanne Hening Neale

Born in Roanoke, Virginia, April 9, 1944. Graduated from The Collegiate Schools, Richmond, Virginia, June, 1962. A.B., Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Lynchburg, Virginia, June, 1966.

Attended graduate school at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, September, 1966-June, 1967 as an M.A. candidate in Early American History and presently employed by Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. as a research assistant.