

BENJAMIN HULL (1639-1713) AND RACHEL YORKE

**By
Jay G. Hull**

Hull Family History, Chandler Farm Press, Wilder, Vermont (1985)

Benjamin Hull, son of Joseph and Agnes Hull, was baptized on March 22, 1639 at Weymouth, Massachusetts by Rev. Mr. Hobart [1]. According to existing records, he was their second child born in the New World. Although not much is known about his early life, he must have traveled almost continually until his father settled in York, Maine when he was four. According to existing records, he had three brothers, three sisters, two half-brothers, and two half-sisters. Benjamin was thirteen when his father left for England.

In 1659, at the age of twenty, Benjamin had a grant for a considerable tract of land southwest of Lamphrey Falls, the Lamphrey River being in what are now Rockingham and Strafford Counties, New Hampshire. He therefore moved to that area of the country and from 1659 to 1669 he paid taxes at Oyster River, now known as Durham, New Hampshire. It was during this time that he met Rachel Yorke of Dover, New Hampshire and they were married in 1668.

Rachel was the daughter of Richard and Elizabeth Yorke and was one of at least six children (the others being John, Benjamin, Samuel, Elizabeth, and Grace)[2]. Richard Yorke arrived in America around 1640 and settled in the Dover area, not far from where Benjamin later owned land [3]. He would appear to have been a son of Richard York of England [4], possibly descended from the Yorkshire family which included Thomas Yorke (bailiff of the city of York, 1346) and Sir Richard York Yorke (Sherriff and Lord Mayor, 1465-1466)[5]. His wife Elizabeth was possibly the daughter of George Branson (Bronson) who was killed by a bull in June, 1657 [6]. Richard Yorke died in 1672.

For eight years following their marriage, Benjamin and Rachel Hull lived at or near Dover, then known as Coheco, in the heart of Piscataqua country. The relationship between settlers in this area and the neighboring Indian tribes had been peaceful for nearly forty years [7]. Many of the Indians had actually converted to Christianity and been taught to read both their own language and English. The majority, however, remained "wild" and by 1675 these latter were beginning to feel badly crowded by the steady advance of the English frontier. Three unconverted tribes, the Nipmuck of Massachusetts, the Narragansett of Narragansett Bay, and the Wapanoag of western Plymouth Colony felt particularly squeezed. The chief of the latter, Metacom (called King Philip by the English) was evidently planning to do something about the encroaching settlements when his secretary, Sassamon, tipped off the Plymouth Colony Governor. Philip was arrested and fined; Sassamon was murdered by Indians; the murderers were arrested, tried, found guilty by a jury that included Indians, and hanged; and two weeks later war broke out on June 24, 1675 with an Indian attack on Swansea, a frontier settlement on Narragansett Bay.

Massachusetts Bay Colony came to Plymouth's assistance and the New England Confederation declared war, bringing Connecticut Colony into the fight. Philip in the meantime spurred other tribes to action and by the fall of 1675 the westernmost settlements of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies had been wiped out. In addition, two colonial forces sent to punish the Indians had been badly mauled.

Benjamin Hull joined the cavalry at the commencement of the war, serving as a Captain in Robert Mason's troop of horse [8]. There was little that the colonial army could do, however; the Indians were dead shots and were well supplied with muskets, bullets, and powder. In addition, they were waging total war while the British had to plow, sow, reap, and feed their animals. As the Indians rubbed out one village after another, each community wanted to take the defensive and send no more striking forces into the woods where they were apt to be slaughtered by an ambush.

New England presented a very grim picture in 1675-1676. The Indians, approaching stealthily through the surrounding forest, would burn and plunder every dwelling, barn, or mill, and kill or mutilate all livestock that they would not use, while the men and women in the garrison houses where the villagers gathered for defense took potshots at them. The air was filled with terror-inspiring warwhoops and the shrieks of tortured animals and people. This went on until the Indians retired, glutted with food and plunder, or the garrison was relieved by a troop of horse such as Benjamin's or a troop of infantry.

No outside help reached New England. Governor Andros of New York even took advantage of the situation by trying to annex a slice of Connecticut; Governor Berkeley of Virginia refused to sell corn to Boston vessels; and King Charles II sent neither men nor money. Several factors, however, saved New England: first, the Indians were not united and several tribes fought for the colonials acting as scouts and tacticians; second, the Indians had no leadership while the colonies had able governors; and finally, the confederation rightly decided to mount a crucial offensive in the fall of 1675.

An army of over 1000 officers and men under Governor Winslow was transported by sea to a devastated settlement on Narragansett Bay. Winter closed in early that year and on November 19 the army marched through snow guided by a friendly Indian to a "hideous swamp" in the present township of South Kingston, Rhode Island. There some 3000 Narragansett Indians were entrenched behind a triple palisade and blockhouses. In the early afternoon the colonials formed an entrance through a breach. Murderous gunfire flung back their first onslaught, killing five company commanders, but the rest pressed in and all afternoon there was desperate fighting. No quarter was given on either side: the Indian wigwams were set on fire and about two-thirds of the enemy were killed or burned to death; the rest escaped. As light faded over this grim scene and snow began to fall, Winslow gave orders to fall back and the weary survivors filed off through the woods, carrying their wounded comrades. They reached the bay at two in the morning, having marched 36 miles and fought savagely for three hours in the space of a single day.

This was the decisive battle of the war and effectively ended fighting in the south. Although it is doubtful that Benjamin Hull himself participated in this particular battle, the fighting in Maine and New Hampshire was just as savage. In Maine, the Abnaki forced the evacuation of every colonial settlement (including the Hull family settlement near Dover) and the war ended only in the spring of 1678. In Maine, too, the Indians retained their land and strength, and as allies of the French fought against the English in later colonial wars. It is understandable, then, that on March 22, 1678, Benjamin Hull deeded his land at Dover to one John Rand, collected his family (he and Rachel had four daughters and a son by then), and moved nearly 275 miles south to Piscataqua (Piscataway) in Middlesex County, New Jersey [9]. The move proved wise: both York, Maine and Dover, New Hampshire were wiped out twice more before 1750 in Indian raids.

While he moved in 1678, Benjamin had actually purchased the land in New Jersey nearly ten years earlier in what appears to have been either an investment or a favor to his brother Hopewell. Thus, in 1666, Hopewell Hull, along with John Martin, Charles Gilman, and Hugh Dun, had made his way westward along an Indian path that stretched from Elizabethtown point to the Delaware River [10]. Here they had reached an attractive spot on the high levels bordering the Raritan River, where a few log huts had already been erected on the site of an old Naraticong Indian village. Being pleased with what they saw, Hopewell and his friends bought a large tract of the land from the "Elizabethtown Grant" for 80 pounds [11]. A week later, on December 18, 1666, one-third of this land was conveyed to Hopewell and his friends, making them the original pioneers of eastern New Jersey [12]. To this point between the Rahway and Raritan Rivers they brought their own and numerous other families from Piscataqua, Maine (then a part of Massachusetts). Benjamin Hull, along with three others, bought into this deed on May 11, 1668 [13].

While Benjamin most likely bought the land for investment purposes, many of the original planters were attracted by its offer of religious freedom [14]. The title to all the land in East Jersey was vested in Sir George Carteret and Lord John Berkely by deed from James, Duke of York, who had himself received it with other vast territories from his brother King Charles II by royal patent dated March 12, 1664. Carteret and Berkely, hoping to quickly populate the land, stipulated in one paragraph of the "Concessions and Agreements of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Jersey" that: "No person qualified as a freeman shall be any ways molested or called into question for any difference in opinion and practice in matters of religious concernment; but all such persons may, from time to time, freely and fully enjoy their judgments and consciences in matters of religion." Given their father's numerous problems with the religious authorities in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies, both Benjamin and Hopewell could not have helped noticing these generous terms.

On arriving in Piscataway, Benjamin Hull was granted a license to keep a tavern. A copy of this license appears below [15]:

BEN HULL'S LYCENCE TO KEEPE AN ORDINARY
BY PHILLIP CARTERET, ESQ., GOVERNOR & JE

These are to permit and Lycence Benjamin Hull of New Piscataway to keepe an Ordinary or public victualing hous within the said towne For the entertainment of strangers and passengers and to sell and retaile all manner of Drinks and Strong Liqrs to, all Psons In Genll, provided that he keeps good orders in his hous, observe the Laws and orders -- made or to be made concerning the selling of strong Liquers to the Indians and that he does not Exceed the prices Limited by the Laws Upon Victualls and Drink, and also to provide sett accomodations For strangers and passengers, hereby prohibiting all manner of persons whatsoever within the said towne to sell or retaile any manner of Liquers to be drunk or spint in their houses without any Lycence, Upon the penalty of paying by way of fine the sum of Fifty shillings for Every such default, excepting the said Benjamin Hull, which said Lycence Is to continue for one whole Yeare from ye first day of this Instant month of Stembr unless there be any just occasion Given to the Contrary and to be by him continued yearely with my Consent by ye Secretary. Given under my hand and Seale of the province the 2nd of Anno, 1678.

The tavern business was carried on continuously under the Hull name for nearly two hundred years [16]. In fact, George Washington stayed at the tavern during the Revolutionary War and a military skirmish in which several British soldiers were killed took place just outside its walls [17]. In addition to being a tavern-keeper, Benjamin Hull also served in several positions of the city government. He served on both grand juries and petty juries and as a Judge (1683); he was Clerk of the County Courts (1682-1683); and he helped to survey the new settlements of Piscataway and Woodbridge [18]. He was also active for "Liberties and Privileges in chusing assemblymen and having officers appointed to the good liking of the people" (1703); he was a subscriber to the noted Cornbury fund; and in January, 1693, with Captain Francis Drake, Thomas Fitz Randolph, Isaac Smalley, and Edward Slater, all related by blood or marriage, he became a "Select Man" for Piscataway [19].

Being a tavern-keeper, however, Benjamin also occasionally found himself on the wrong side of the law. These problems were mostly related to his apparently permissive attitude towards games being played on the premises [20]. In 1686 he was indicted for "gaming." In 1694 he was "presented by ye Grand Jury for having gameing, at cards & Boule & Pins at his house." In the same year he was also indicted for keeping a "disorderly house."

A passage from "The Story of an Old Farm or Life in New Jersey in the Eighteenth Century" by Andrew D. Mellick, Jr. (1889) portrays the village of Piscataway during this period from the point of view of a traveler coming down the New York to Pennsylvania "Kings Highway:"

And now we find him mounting his waiting horse ready to proceed on his journey: on crossing by the ferry scow, his route lies in a southeasterly direction along the "Kings Highway;" a ride of less than two miles brings our traveller on the main street of the old village of Piscataway, flanked by lofty trees. Those of us who are familiar with the time-stained houses, old-fashioned gardens and aged churchyards of this early settlement know it to be now a far less important place than when in the heyday of youth, a half-century and more before the date of [this traveler's] visit.

In those good old colony times its men still loved the King, and met at Hull's tavern to drink his health in long draughts of fiery Madeira, or in modicums of more potent West India Rum. His most gracious majesty's governor, council, and burgesses have more than once met in this ancient burgh. On such occasions these roadways, which now seem sunk in the torpor of ages of sleep, were enlivened by very important gentlemen wearing gold-laced cocked hats and full-bottomed wigs, and arrayed in broad-skirted scarlet coats, satin short-clothes, silk hose and burnished knee and shoe buckles; who, while exchanging greetings and pinches of snuff, discussed the best interests of the colony. There were then social aspects and picturesque environments to the society of this old neighborhood that exist now but in musty traditions, and in occasional notes to be found in the town records. (p. 193-194).

The building of Hull's tavern stood opposite the present St. James Episcopal Church on the north side of Woodbridge Avenue, where there is now the residence of the Episcopal Rector [21]. It was a "good, large Stone-House" situated "half a mile above the Raritan Landing in 1679" with Doctor Greenland, John Langstaff, and John Smalley as neighbors [22]. By 1686, Benjamin had acquired 498 acres composed of orchards, meadows, and wooded land in and around Piscataway and Woodbridge. He was the largest landowner in the area for a number of years and was taxed at the rate of ten pounds annually [23]. He evidently got along well with his neighbors: even the Indian Cowaukeen professed a "great affection" for Benjamin and his son "Bennie" [24]. Of course, he wasn't on good terms with all of his neighbors -- in 1686 he sued Anne Pane for stealing three gallons of molasses [25].

As for the settlement itself, New Piscataway grew chiefly by virtue of its offer of religious freedom. During its early years, and even for several years after Benjamin arrived, the immigrants were for the most part escaping the restrictions of New York and New England [26]. By 1682 the population stood around 400, occupying some 40,000 acres. Yet this was all to change. On April 16, 1681, Sir George Carteret (one of the late Lords Proprietors and at this time owner of the province) made a proposition in England for the sale of East Jersey for the small sum of five thousand pounds sterling. When this private offer failed, the territory was offered in London to the highest bidder. William Penn and eleven associates purchased the title and government for 3,400 pounds sterling and received a deed on February 1st and 2nd, 1682. Following this change of ownership, immigration from the Old World markedly increased.

The immediate result was highly beneficial for the settlement. The Quakers were in the majority of the new immigrants and under their peaceful guidance the province greatly improved in commerce and agriculture as well as civil government. (We must imagine that the tavern business was booming.) In addition, the new landowners gave assurances that the same liberal terms formerly granted by Carteret and Berkeley would be maintained as well as unrestricted religious freedom. Yet this contented state of affairs lasted less than ten years. Thus, by the end of the 1690's the number of proprietors had become so large that, with their varied nationality and diversity of religious as well as political views, it was impossible to achieve unanimity in the councils of the province. This state of affairs was complicated by the fact that there were now two New Jerseys: East and West. The consequence was a bad confusion of

land titles that was not straightened out until the 1750's. Finally, a political crisis came in 1702 and East New Jersey (of which Piscataway was a part) was voluntarily surrendered by the proprietors and people into the hands of the Crown, to be subsequently united with West Jersey to form the Royal Province of New Jersey.

After arriving in New Jersey, Benjamin and Rachel continued to have children, but unfortunately many of them died in childhood. In addition, Hopewell Hull died in 1693 at the age of 57; and Joseph Hull, Benjamin's eldest son, left New Jersey for Maryland sometime in the mid-1690's. Benjamin himself lived out his life in Piscataway and remained well-off until his death in 1713. Thus, the records show numerous transfers of land to and from him [27] and as an example of the style of living to which he was accustomed there exists in the D.A.R. Hall in Washington, D.C. (California Room) a simple but elegant grandfather clock reputed to have been his [28].

REFERENCE NOTES

1. All information reported in paragraphs one and two can be found in C. H. Weygant, Hull Family in America, 1913.
2. Orra E. Monnette, First Settlers of Piscataway and Woodbridge, Vols. 1-7, Leroy Carmen Press: Los Angeles, 1930-1935, p. 442.
3. Ibid.
4. Frederick A. Virkus (Ed.), The Compendium of American Genealogy, Vol. 4, Virkus Co.: Chicago, 1930. p.299.
5. Orra E. Monnette, The Hull Family in America -- New Jersey Branch. Old Northwest Genealogical Quarterly, 1910, 13, 26-35.
6. Ibid. p.31.
7. This section was paraphrased from an account of King Philip's War in Samuel E. Morrison, The Oxford History of the American People, Vol. 1, Mentor Books: New York. Pp. 156-161.
8. Weygant, 1913.
9. Ibid.
10. Monnette, 1930-1935, p. 72.
11. O. B. Leonard, Pioneer Planters of Piscataway, During the first half of their settlement, 1666-1716. New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, 1898, 29, 38-42.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. All information in this paragraph is from Leonard, 1898.
15. Liber 3 of Deeds, p. 149. Records at Trenton, New Jersey.
16. Weygant, 1913.
17. Monnette, 1930-1935, p. 1020.
18. Ibid, Pp. 538, 880.
19. Monnette, 1910, p. 33.
20. All references in Monnette, 1930-1935, Pp. 537-538.
21. Ibid., p. 1020.
22. Ibid., p. 1023, 610.
23. Ibid., p. 71, 985.
24. Ibid., p. 610.
25. Ibid., p. 537.
26. The following two paragraphs are based on Leonard, 1898, Pp. 38-42.
27. The paragraph to this point is based on information in Weygant, 1913.
28. Bunce, The Hull-Stevenson and Allied Lines, 1952.

SOURCE NOTESFrom Bunce:

"Was baptized March 22, 1639 at Weymouth, Mass. In 1668 he married Rachel Yorke of Dover, New Hampshire. He died in 1713. He was a captain in King Phillip's War and was always known as "Captain Benjamin." They lived in New Hampshire and New Jersey. In the D.A.R. Hall in Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., in the California Room is the old Hull Grandfather Clock, said to have belonged to Captain Benjamin."

From Weygant (Pp. 245-255):

"Capt. Benjamin Hull (1639-1713) of Oyster River (Durham) and Dover, N.H. and Piscataqua, New Jersey, son of Rev. Joseph and his wife Agnes was married about the year 1668 to Rachel Yorke.

"He was baptized at Hingham, Mass. Mar. 22, 1639 by Rev. Mr. Hobart. In 1659 he had a grant for a considerable tract of land southwest of Lamphrey Falls, and from 1659 to 1669 paid taxes at Oyster River. At the commencement of the Indian Wars he was a member of Capt. Robert Mason's troop of horse, and was subsequently commissioned captain. For several years previous to 1676 he lived at or near Cocheco (Dover), in the heart of the Piscataqua country. On Mar. 22, 1678, he deeded his land at Dover to one John Rand, and removed to Piscataqua, Middlesex, New Jersey, where he had previously purchased 498 acres of land. In the year last named he was granted a license to keep a tavern in said New Piscataqua. It is said that the business of hotel keeping then established by him was carried on continuously under the Hull name for nearly two hundred years. The records show numerous transfers of land to and from him."

From First Settlers of Piscataway and Woodbridge by Orra Eugene Monnette, Los Angeles: Leroy Carmen Press, Vol. 2, p. 235:

RICHARD YORKE was the old patriarch of this family, who died in 1672, when he was accredited to Dover, New Hampshire, in the Piscataqua country. He sent some of his children, so to speak, into New Jersey to become FIRST SETTLERS there, and his will gives the best suggestions of inter-relationship, (State Papers, N.H. Batchelor, Vol. XXXI, Probate Recs., Vol. I, 1635-1717, p. 134). His wife, ELIZABETH...., was apparently the living, but he names his son, JOHN YORKE, "that I now live with"; daughter, ELIZABETH CARL (wife of TIMOTHY CARLE, alias CARTIE -- O.E.M.); daughter, GRACE YORKE; to "my sonne, SAMUELL YORKE," to "my daughter RATCHELL HALLE," (wife of CAPTAIN BENJAMIN HULL of PISCATAWAY; to "my sonne, BENGEMAN YORKE," and referring to a tract of land, "being neare the second falle of Lample river adjoyning unto that which wase late y JOHN MARTAINES lott"; unto my tow grandchildren, RICHARD YORKE and BENGIEMAN YORKE," etc. His widow, ELIZABETH, subsequently married WILLIAM GRAVES."

From the Boston Evening Transcript, November 4, 1908

1. STEELE ... A will of Benjamin Steele is of record at Trenton, N.J., April 20, 1758, mentions wife Lydia, sons Benjamin and Isaac, children of son John, daughter Rachel Fitzrandolph and daughter Susannah, wife of Joseph Hull (another authority claims his wife to have been Mary Drake). Recent searches have disclosed that a Phoebe Stelle also married a Joseph Hull who died in Sussex County, New Jersey, leaving a will, 1768, and naming among others his son Stelle Hull.

2. HULL. The Hull Family Association, through Colonel C. H. Weygant of Newburgh, N.Y., is publishing a Hull genealogy, including descendents of Rev. Joseph Hull and his four brothers, immigrants to New England. Searches in England recently uncovered the ancestral line there. Those interested are urged to send data and cooperate with Colonel Weygant. Rev. Joseph Hull had a son Joseph, born in 1622. Evidence is accumulating that the latter had, among others, these sons: Hopewell, Benjamin, and Samuel, who were part of the little band who left Piscataway, N.H., in 1688 with the Martins, Drakes, Dunhams, Durms, et al., and settled in New Jersey, establishing "Piscataway," Middlesex County, there. A Gershom Hull was living there in 1707. Any information supplementing this in any way desired.

4. DRAKE. Benjamin Hull, immigrant to Piscataway, Middlesex County, N.J. from Piscataway, N.H., in 1668, married Sarah Drake, either in New Hampshire or New Jersey about that date. She was of the Drake family emigrating at the same time. George Drake, Captain Francis Drake, and John Drake were in Piscataway in 1690. (Whitehead's contributions to East New Jersey History) George was deputy to the General Assembly in 1684, 1685, 1686, 1687, and 1692. John Drake the same in 1693. The latter was a minister in 1714, having preached there as early as 1689. He died in 1739 and the same authority gives him three wives, by whom he had: Isaac, Abraham, Francis, John, Benjamin, Samuel, Sarah, and Rebecca.

Records at Trenton, N.J., show inventory, Sept. 29, 1687, Captain Francis Drake of Piscataway, and papers show son George, daughter Elizabeth Dun, son John and Benjamin Hull. Also will Nov. 8, 1709, of George Drake, Piscataway, mentions wife Mary and children, Andrew, Jonathon, David, George, Elizabeth, Susannah, and Mary.

Chamber's Early Germans of New Jersey attempts to give the Drake ancestry. Robert Drake, born in Devonshire, England, 1580; died Jan. 14, 1668; from Exeter, to Hampton, N.H., 1650; selectman, 1654; will,