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PIONEER PLANTERS OF PISCATAWAY, N.J., DURING THE  
FIRST HALF CENTURY OF THEIR SETTLEMENT, 1666-1716.

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The Piscataway (N.J.) planters settled there for peace and quiet and relief from all kinds of contentions. They had endured their share of inconvenience in New England from the severities of court justice and the intolerance of the Established Church order. Piscataway was from the first a plantation of pious people -- establishing permanent homes in this new and unsettled township, where they might enjoy the liberty of the gospel and the free exercise of their own spiritual convictions.

One liberal inducement held out from the beginning for inciting emigration to East Jersey was contained in a paragraph of the "Agreements" of 1664-5 and published throughout New England: "No person qualified as a freeman shall be in any ways molested or called in 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."

This early settlement and the neighboring town of Woodbridge were made chiefly from this one motive of enjoying soul liberty. For the following ten years emigration from the New England provinces and from Long Island to the township of Piscataway and other parts of East Jersey was encouraged mainly by repeated assurances from the public authorities of individual freedom, both in religious matters and civil concerns. Besides these guaranteed personal privileges there were generous temporal inducements in the shape of grants of land offered to newcomers.

The title to all the land in East Jersey was vested at this time in two English gentlemen, by deed from James, Duke of York, who had himself received it, with other vast territory adjacent, from his brother, King Charles II., by royal patent dated March 12, 1664.

The deed from the Duke conveyed, at first, the whole of New Jersey to Sir George Carteret and Lord John Berkeley, who, as joint owners, promulgated the noted "Articles and Agreements," just referred to, through their representative, Governor Philip Carteret. By subsequent division of the province in 1676, East Jersey became entirely the possession of Sir George. He, in turn, or the representatives of his estate, in 1682, disposed of his share to William Penn and a syndicate of eleven others, mostly Quakers, as will be further mentioned.

The original pioneers to take up land in Piscataway, under the generous terms of "The Concessions and Agreements of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Jersey," were: Hugh Dunn, John Martin, Hopewell Hull, and Charles Gilman.

They came in 1666 from the most northeasterly settlements in New England, on the border line between what is now the States of Maine and New Hampshire. Their Woodbridge (N.J.) friends, from Newbury, Mass., a short time before, had bought, for £80, from the "Elizabethtown Grant," of 1664-5, a large tract lying between the Rahway and Raritan Rivers. This Woodbridge deed was dated December 11, 1666. Just a week thereafter, December 18, 1666, one-third of the purchase was conveyed to the four persons above named, who called the place "New Piscataqua," at first, in memory of the district they came from in New England. By an endorsement made on the deed, May 11, 1668, there had been "joined to them in the meantime, to be their associates, John Gilman, Benjamin Hull, Robert Dennis, and John Smith," all from neighboring localities in the most remote Eastern provinces.

As a provision in the deed specified the speedy settlement of two townships, no delay must be had in fulfilling this agreement, and others were invited to take up farms within their boundaries. These few (8) Piscataway planters were soon followed by other friends and acquaintances from New England, viz.:

Francis Drake,  
John Drake,  
George Drake,  
John Langstaff,  
Samuel Walker,

Nicholas Bonham,  
John Smalley,  
Benajah Dunham,  
Jeffrey Manning,  
John Fitz Randolph,

Jos. Fitz Randolph,  
Thomas Fitz Randolph,  
Benj. Fitz Randolph,  
And their mother, Elizabeth

and possibly a few others, mostly wives and children. But the *required* number of actual settlers up to this time, 1670-1, had not yet purchased land and made such improvements as were specified in the grant to the original patentees. The Governor, however, waived all legal objections on the promise of renewed efforts to enlarge the population and develop the territory.

Before a half dozen more winters had passed, the neighborhood was familiar with the following names (1675-1680), as recent purchasers:

Henry Greenland,  
Samuel Doty,  
William Sutton,  
Nicholas Mundy,  
Daniel Hendricks,  
Vincent Runyon,  
George Jewell,

Timothy Carle,  
James Godfrey,  
John Mollison,  
Jediah Higgins,  
James Giles,  
Edward Slater,  
Andrew Wooden,  
René Pyatt.

Jabez Hendricks,  
Daniel Lippington,  
Simon Brindley,  
George Winfield,  
Michael Simmons,  
Thomas Farnsworth,  
Richard Higgins,

Up to this period, A.D. 1680, nearly all the settlers had come from plantations in New England colonies, or from Long Island. About the end of the second decade of settlement (1685-6) there began to be a decided increase in foreign population direct from the Old World.

Under the date of April 16, 1681, the trustees of the estate of Sir George Carteret (one of the late Lords Proprietors and at this time owner of the province) made a proposal in England for the sale of East Jersey for the small sum of four or five thousand pounds sterling. Failing to obtain a customer by private application, the territory was offered at public auction in London to the highest bidder. William Penn and eleven associates, as previously stated, purchased the title and government for £3,400, and a deed was given them February 1st and 2nd, 1682. It was following this change of ownership that the marked increase of immigration from the Old World above alluded to was noticeable mostly by representatives and servants of the new owners. The additional impetus to immigration, imparted by this change of proprietorship, was beneficial in more ways than simply increase of population. Within a few months twelve others became equal owners in the soil, making of a company twenty-four land holders composed of a strange mingling of professions, religions, and politics. But they immediately gave assurance that the same liberal terms formerly granted would be assiduously maintained, as well as the unrestricted rights of all settlers in matters of church.

The names of the new owners of East Jersey, most of whom remained in their European homes, were the following, besides William Penn:

James, Earl of Perth.

John Drummond, his brother, the Earl of Milfort.

Robert Barclay, a famous Quaker Controversialist, and his brother David Barclay.

Thomas Rudyard, a noted lawyer of London.

Richard Mew and Thomas Hart, both merchants of Middlesexshire.

Edward Byllinge, a gentleman from same shire who sold out to David Cox.

Robert West, a London barrister.

Thomas Cooper, Jno. Heywood, who conveyed his interest to John Burnet.

Hugh Hartshorn, Clement Plumstead, Gawen Lawrie, William Gibson, Thomas Barker and James Brain, all merchants and well-to-do gentlemen of London.

Thomas Warne and Robert Turner, business men of Dublin.

Robert Gordon, of Clunie, who soon transferred his share to Gawen Lawrie, Deputy Governor.

Samuel Groom, surveyor-general, whose portion was shortly passed over to William Dockwra.

Ambrose Rigg, of Surrey, and Arent Sonmans, a Hollander by birth, whose son Peter, inheriting his estate and coming to New Jersey, became the largest owner of any one of the proprietors.

The Quakers being in the majority among those recent purchasers, at once became possessors of a kingdom nearly all their own. Their migration by thousands to the shores of the Jerseys, especially to the southwestern sections; their occupation of the soil for immediate and permanent improvement; and their management of government affairs for a short time following, became one of the most notable events in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Under their peaceful dispensation for a few years the province greatly improved in commercial and agricultural advancement, as well as in its civil government.

This contented state of affairs lasted less than ten years, when the government became at loose ends and very little increase followed from new comers. The number of proprietors had become so largely extended every year by sales of their rights that, with their varied nationality and diversity of religious as well as political views, it was rendered impossible to secure unanimity in the councils of the province. Finally a crisis came in 1702, when the government of East Jersey was voluntarily surrendered by the proprietors and people into the hands of the Crown. Subsequent history proved the wisdom of this course in the rapid development of the country under a Colonial management.

At the time of the transfer of East Jersey to the twenty-four proprietors in 1682 the population of Piscataway was estimated at about four hundred, occupying the town lots and outlying plantations on both sides of the Raritan River, embracing some forty thousand acres.

Prominent among the other citizens and freeholders of Piscataway at a date just previous to the close of the Proprietary period (1702), were the following property owners and residents, many of whom were sons of pioneer planters, whose names are indicated in italics, as far as known by the writer:

Alexander Adams,	<i>Mathew Giles,</i>	William Olden,
<i>Hezekiah Bonham,</i>	Benj. Griffith,	<i>Jacob Pyatt,</i>
Daniel Blackford,	<i>Benjamin Hull, Jr.</i>	John Pound,
Daniel Brinson,	Thomas Higgins	Joshua Perine,
Peter Billiou,	<i>Gersham Hull,</i>	<i>Thomas Pyatt,</i>
Thomas Blackshaw,	John Horner,	Jno. Pridmore,
Samuel Blackford,	<i>Samuel Hull,</i>	John Royce,
Thomas Bartlet,	John Harrison,	<i>John Runyon,</i>
John Clawson,	Benjamin James,	<i>Vincent Runyon, Jr.</i>
Thomas Cawood,	Benjamin Jones,	<i>Peter Runyon,</i>
Benjamin Clarke,	<i>John Langstaff,</i>	Walter Robinson,
William Clawson,	Thos. Lowry,	<i>William Runyon,</i>
<i>Samual Drake,</i>	William Laing,	<i>Joseph Smalley,</i>
<i>Francis Drake, Jr.</i>	John Laing, Jr.	<i>Isaac Smalley,</i>
<i>Hugh Dunn, Jr.</i>	Thomas Lawrence,	<i>John Smalley, Jr.</i>
<i>Joseph Dunn,</i>	Cornelius Longfield,	Richard Stockton,
<i>Edmund Dunham,</i>	<i>John Manning,</i>	John Seward,
<i>John Drake, Jr.</i>	<i>Joseph Manning,</i>	<i>Joseph Sutton,</i>
<i>Joseph Drake,</i>	<i>James Manning,</i>	<i>Richard Smith,</i>
<i>Samuel Dunn,</i>	<i>Benj. Manning,</i>	<i>Richard Sutton,</i>
<i>John Doty,</i>	<i>John Martin, Jr.,</i>	<i>Isaac Walker,</i>
John Field,	<i>Benj. Martin,</i>	William Wright,
<i>John Gilman,</i>	<i>Jonathon Martin,</i>	<i>Peter Worden,</i>

Hendrick Garretson,  
Rehoboth Gannet,  
Thomas Gordon,  
Thomas Grubs,

*Joseph Martin,*  
*Nicholas Mundy, Jr.*  
Daniel McDaniel,  
David Mudie,

Thomas Webster,  
*Francis Walker,*  
Robert Wright,  
Joseph Worth.

These constituted the heads of families composing the community owning farms or living within the township of Piscataway, as described in laws of 1693, under the Proprietary Government.

Many of the earliest settlers had died before the beginning of the Colonial epoch, 1702. Among those who originally settled the wilderness and whose dates of death are known to the writer may be mentioned --

Banajah Dunham,	died	1680	Jeffrey Manning,	died	1693
Daniel Hendricks,	"	1683	Hugh Dunn, Sr.	"	1694
Nicholas Bonham,	"	1684	Henry Greenland	"	1694
Francis Drake, Sr.,	"	1687	Daniel Lippington,	"	1694
John Martin, Sr.,	"	1687	David Mudie,	"	1695
Simon Brindley,	"	1688	John Laing,	"	1697
Benjamin Clarke,	"	1689	Thomas Pyatt,	"	1700
John Pound,	"	1690	Thomas Higgins,	"	1702
James Giles,	"	1690	John Martin, Jr.,	"	1703
Richard Worth,	"	1691	Samuel Walker,	"	1704
Charles Gilman,	"	1692	René Pyatt,	"	1705
Hopewell Hull,	"	1693	John Langstaff,	"	1707

Soon after the opening of the eighteenth century, and within the period of the semi-centennial of their earliest settlement in Piscataway, the following additional families had taken up their residence in the township: their surnames were --

Alger, Bishop, Boice, Brokaw, Bowne, Blackwell, Bebout, Clarkson, Coriell, Campbell, Cumming, Chandler, Davis, Dayton, Horner, Hand, Holton, Ford, Larforge, Lenox, Lee, Lupardus, Merell, Macpherson, Noble, Poillon, Thorn, Thickstun, Thomas, Thompson, Trotter, Titsworth, Wilson, Wolf, Stelle.

These are the names of most of the early settlers of Piscataway during the first half century (1666-1716) who, with their wives, laid the foundations of society and assisted in establishing its political, social, and religious reputation. These are they who cleared the forests, tilled the soil, built their homes, and peopled the township with men and women who lived and wrought after them, and dying, have left a posterity to take up the work and continue it in the strength of the God of their fathers. Thus "one generation passeth away and another generation cometh."