

WILLIAM ALBERTSON.

THE name of Albertson, or Albertsen, as it is sometimes written, may be found among those of the earliest Dutch emigrants to New Amsterdam, who came here to barter with the natives for furs and the few other commodities which they had among them for trade.¹ As early as in 1650, the records of births and baptisms in New York, indicate that Albert Albertson had a child baptized in the church of that place, and that others of this name had the same rite administered to their offspring. Other records of that date show this family to have had several representatives in the colony, some of whom were men of considerable estate and influence.

At this period a few small dwellings of the humblest character stood close around the fort at the outlet of Hudson river, where the Hollanders had a small garrison for protection against the natives, and where also were collected the articles of exchange that made the little commercial trade about that spot.

It was at the time when each Dutchman had his farm or bowery, somewhere within the busiest part of the present city of New York, and drove his cow to pasture along the tortuous paths leading to his lot; some of which same paths are now among the most crowded thoroughfares of the metropolis of America. It was in the good old times of sour-kroust and wild tobacco, when a promising cabbage patch and a small quantity of smoked herring, rendered each inhabitant happy for the

¹ Manual of Common Council, N. Y., 740, Library N. Y. His. Soc.

coming year at least ; and these were the days when the ancestors of the Knickerbockers sought the Battery to enjoy a quiet smoke, and to listen to the merriment of the negroes at Communipaw.

As the town enlarged, the family in question also increased, and their names may be found in various relations as time went on. True to their native blood, litigations and difficulties grew out of their stubbornness; and the court minutes show how tenaciously any supposable right was adhered to, and how often these troubles ended in a law-suit. The Dutch settlements upon the Delaware would naturally be the cause of more or less intercourse with those upon the Hudson river; and persons and families can be traced from the one to the other, they, doubtless, changing their abodes to improve their condition and advance their estate.

In 1656, Hans Albertson purchased a patent for a tract of land at Fort Casimir, on South (Delaware) river, whereon he settled.² In 1672, Derick Albertson had built a mill near the same river, one-half of which was claimed by William Toms. This claim had to be settled by a suit at law.³ This was previous to the establishment of any court on South river, and, as a consequence, the parties were forced to appear before their High Mightinesses at New York, taking thereto all their witnesses and proofs at much expense, a practice yet characteristic to the last degree. By this it may be seen that members of this family found their way to the colony on South river, and made permanent settlements; yet there can be no question of their nativity, or of their arrival on the shores of America.

In the progress of events William Penn became the owner of the territory of Pennsylvania, which included all the Dutch and Swedish settlements on the west side of the Delaware river. The doctrine of ethics, laid down by him as the basis of his government, destroyed very much of the litigious element that formerly existed, and produced a new state of things among the inhabitants. Quarrels and disputes that previously had ended in court, were now disposed of in a manner much less conspicuous, and more satisfactory to those interested.

² Dutch Manuscripts, 383.

³ Dutch Manuscripts, 350, Library N. Y. His. Soc.

Differences of opinion that often led to estrangements between families and among neighbors, were settled within the quiet precincts of the church, where the outside world was prevented from meddling, and where good advice and restraining influence prevailed.

Gradual, yet positive and well defined, was the progress of the teachings of Quakerism among the older settlers; and its footsteps may be discovered from time to time, until the new dispensation pervaded the communities within its bounds, and but slight traces of the old order of things could be seen.

On May 2d, 1682, William Albertson located a tract of land in Newton township, between the south and the middle branch of the creek that bears that name, and settled thereon.⁴ It does not appear whence he came, but the probability is that he was of Dutch extraction, as before named, and that his parents were among the Hollanders of New York. The house which he built—no doubt, a small one—stood by the middle branch, and nearly fronting the little settlement called Newton; but in a few years it entirely disappeared. He was a married man with a family when he came there; shortly after he removed to Byberry, Pennsylvania, and gave the possession of the estate to his son William. This occurred before 1692, for, in that year, he purchased a tract of land in the town bounds of Gloucester, the deed for which names him as then a resident of the place above mentioned.⁵

Upon the setting apart of a lot of land at Newton whereon to build a meeting house, he was one of the persons who accepted the trust therefor, and no doubt took an active part in the erection of that place of worship.⁷ This trust was continued until 1708, when other and younger men were called to occupy the same position.

He made several locations and purchases of land, while a resident here; but his removal so soon from this neighborhood leaves but little of his history among us, yet, so far as his record goes, he was a person much respected in his day and generation. In 1685, he was returned as a member of the

⁴ Lib. T, 355, O. S. G.
⁵ Lib. G3, 141.

⁶ Lib. S6, 405, O. S. G.
⁷ Sharp's Book, 50, O. S. G.

Colonial Legislature; he also held other minor county and township offices during his settlement here.⁸

His children were William, who married Esther Willis, daughter of Henry and Mary, of Westberry, Long Island, N. Y., in 1695;⁹ Abraham, who married Hannah Medcalf;¹⁰ Rebecca, who married Joseph Satterthwaite; Ann, who married Walter Forrest¹¹ and John Kaighn; Cassandra, who married Jarvis Stockdale; Benjamin, who married ———; and Josiah, who married Ann Austin of Evesham, Burlington county, N. J.

At the time of his decease, he resided at Poquesin, in Bucks county, Pennsylvania, where he owned grain and saw mills, and considerable other property. He died soon after the execution of his will (1709), survived by his widow Hannah, and by all his children except Ann.¹²

To his son William, in the year 1698, he deeded the homestead property, whereon he remained until his decease in 1720.¹³ This was a valuable estate, and he improved it by enlarging and banking the meadow attached to the property, which, at that time, was the only soil from which hay and pasture were derived. The artificial grasses now used upon the upland, had not then attracted the attention of agriculturists, for which reason the meadow and marsh lands along the streams commanded much the higher price, and were considered as a necessary appendage to every farm. The meadow land on each of the branches of Newton creek, was, no doubt, the attraction that brought the settlers first to this place, and was, in fact, the only means they had for sustaining their cattle.

To avoid expense and to secure the land from the overflow of the tide, William Albertson placed a dam across the south branch, and reclaimed much of the marsh above the same. In this dam there were tide gates, the construction and utility of which need not be explained here.¹⁴ These were kept in use until the dyke was put across the mouth of the creek, at the river, in 1786, when all the improvements on the several

⁸ Leaming & Spicer's Laws.

⁹ Friends' Records, Long Island.

¹⁰ License Book, 25. Lib. No. 7, Salem Records, 156.

¹¹ Lib. No. 6, Salem Records, 32.

¹² Philadelphia Records. Lib. M, 75, O. S. G.

¹³ Lib. A, 104. Lib. G3, 139. Lib. No. 2, 139.

¹⁴ Albertson Papers.

tributaries of the same were abandoned. The utility of this manner of making meadow, in a sanitary point of view, is very questionable; the miasma arising from the stagnant water and from exposed vegetable matter, incident to the system, is unavoidable; it spreads disease through the entire neighborhood, and very much lessens the value of property within its baneful influence.

The owner erected a substantial brick house, which, at the time it was built, ranked among the best in this section; but, when compared with the present system of architecture, it appears insignificant enough. This house still stands, and shows at a glance the many years that have passed away since its erection.

In front of and at a short distance from it, may be seen the ditch and bank that surrounded the park for deer, which covered many acres of land and extended to the south branch of the creek. On the bank stood a high and substantial fence, that effectually prevented the game from escaping when once within its bounds; and there the owner and his invited friends could find excellent sport at any season of the year.

Connected also with the place was a race course, where the speed of the pretentious horses in the neighborhood could be tested, and where, doubtless, the conceit was often taken out of various owners and backers, who resorted thither to fleece a jockey disguised as a greenhorn.

All these prove not only that the owner was a man of wealth, but also that, in its enjoyment, the drift of his inclination brought around him a class of associates that had similar tastes.

William Albertson was an active man in the affairs of the colony, and, besides holding other positions of public trust, was returned as a member of the Assembly in 1685.¹⁵ He was for several years a member of the council of proprietors, and at a time when men of the best judgment were called upon to act in that capacity.¹⁶ In the affairs of the township his name is often seen, which shows that he looked after the interests of his neighbors as well as the enjoyments of his own estate.

¹⁵ Leaming & Spicer's Laws.

¹⁶ Minutes of Council, O. S. G.

He died in 1720, leaving a widow and the following named children: John; Abraham, who married Sarah Dennis; William, Jane, Mary and Esther.¹⁷

Part of this estate descended under the name of William Albertson through four generations to a daughter Sarah, the only child of the last William, who married David Henry, in whose name a portion of the same still remains; thus continuing part of the original property in the line of blood for nearly two hundred years; one of the rare occurrences of lineal inheritance touching landed property in New Jersey.¹⁸

Abraham settled on the tract of land which his father purchased of Andrew Robeson in 1692, situated in the town bounds of Gloucester and on the south branch of Newton creek, which his father conveyed to him in 1698.¹⁹

He died in 1739, leaving the following named family:²⁰ Isaac; Jacob, who married Patience Chew; Abraham, who deceased without children; Ephraim, who married Kesiah Chew; Joseph, who married Rose Hampton; Aaron, who married Elizabeth Albertson; Levi, who married Kesiah Roberts; Jonathan; Rebecca, who married ————; Beverly, and ————, who married Richard Chew.²¹

The estate, as held by the father in 1757, belonged to four of the sons, Jacob, Joseph, Isaac and Ephraim, among whose descendants parts of it were held for many years, but at this writing it has passed out of the name and blood.

Of Rebecca, who married Joseph Satterthwaite, nothing is known; as families after two or three generations are apt to forget the maiden name of their maternal ancestors, and it is probable that all traces of her as the daughter of William Albertson have been lost.

Ann, the wife of Walter Forrest, settled with her husband in Salem county as early as in 1686. They were married at Newton meeting, according to the order of Friends, to which they adhered as long as they lived. Her husband, in connection with his brothers Francis and John, purchased a large tract of land in that county, in 1678, on Salem creek, of

¹⁷ Lib. No. 2, 139.

¹⁸ Lib. T, 355, O. S. G.

¹⁹ Sharp's Book, Lib. S6, 405, O. S. G.

²⁰ Lib. No. 5, 136.

²¹ Family Papers.

John Fenwick, and there they erected a corn mill, called the "Brothers' Forrest," perhaps the first of the kind in Fenwick colony.²² In the same year, they purchased other lands of John Fenwick, and afterwards became the owners of adjoining tracts.

At the time of the first purchase they were residents of Burlington, and doubtless came over among the first emigrants. When Walter Forrest died in 1692, he was a resident of Byberry, Pennsylvania, where he had some estate.²³ There was no issue by this marriage.²⁴ About two years after his death the widow married John Kaighn, who was a carpenter and resided at Byberry, where it may be supposed the marriage took place.²⁵ They soon after removed to Newton township, and settled on a tract of land which he had purchased of Robert Turner, fronting on the Delaware river.²⁶ At this place she died, leaving one child, Ann, who died in 1715, unmarried, thus ending this branch of the family in the second generation.²⁷

By the will of his father, dated December 17th, 1709, recorded in Pennsylvania, Josiah Albertson received a tract of land in Gloucester township, bounded on the south side by Otter branch, and thereon he settled and cleared a farm.²⁸ In 1727, he married Ann, a daughter of Francis Austin, of Evesham, Burlington county, N. J. Her father was one of the first settlers in that neighborhood; and many of this name are still to be found thereabout. There the first habitation of Josiah and Ann was built, on the land given him by his father, at a short distance south of the old Salem road, where he both plied his calling of shoemaker, and at the same time removed the timber from the soil.

He enlarged the breadth of his acres by purchase and location until his possessions were double those left him by his father. In 1743, he built a large and substantial brick house, perhaps on the site of his log cabin; part of which is now standing and is occupied by his lineal descendant, Chalkley Albertson, who owns much of the original estate. Whether

²² Lib. B, 16. Salem Deeds.

²³ Salem Wills, A, 69.

²⁴ Salem Wills, No. 5, 98.

²⁵ Salem Deeds, No. 6, 32.

²⁶ Lib. G3, 127.

²⁷ Lib. No. 2, 162.

²⁸ Lib. M1, 75, O. S. G.

Josiah continued his business of making shoes, tradition does not reveal, but the chances are that his farming interests and lumber operations consumed all his time, and that the business of his youth was soon forgotten.²⁹

The children of Josiah and Ann Albertson were eight daughters and one son; Hannah, who married Jacob Clement; Mary; Cassandra, who married Jacob Ellis and Jacob Burrough; Patience, who married Isaac Ballinger; Elizabeth; Josiah, who married Eleanor Tomlinson and Judith Boggs; Sarah, who married Samuel Webster; Katurah, who married Isaac Townsend, and Ann, who married Ebenezer Hopkins and Jacob Jennings.³⁰ These daughters were remarkable for their healthy look and comely appearance. In their attendance at meeting, they rode on horseback, presenting quite a cavalcade when several were together.

Their attractive appearance abroad and substantial qualities at home, made them desirable wives for those of the same religious denomination in search of such, and the records show that such qualifications were understood and appreciated; none of those that arrived at suitable age were left as "single sisters."

In the collateral branches of this part of the Albertsons, it may be seen how many families can trace their lineage to them; and how widely spread may become the connections of a particular stock, when the families are numerous and change their names, localities and associations.

²⁹ Lib. T, 310, O. S. G.

³⁰ Family Papers.