

JOHN CHAMPION.

AS early as in the year 1673, John Champion and Thomas Champion and their families were residents of the town of Hempstead, on Long Island, in the State of New York. Ten years after that date, the constable and overseers of the said town made a valuation of the estates of the inhabitants; but, for some reason, John Champion was not included in the list. His name, however, appears among those who were in default, and had neglected or refused to give the officers the proper information. That paper was attached to the first, and is headed as follows:

“These under-written are ye remainder of ye inhabitants of ye said towne, which, having not brought in their valuation, are guest att by ye Constable and Overseers of ye towne afore-said.”

In this the name of John Champion is seen, and his estate is “guest” to be worth one hundred pounds, sterling. The family was probably English, and was among the first that occupied that part of Long Island, where the hardy pioneers soon made themselves comfortable homes. As soon as John Fenwick had effected a landing at Salem, in 1678, and the Yorkshire and London Friends had fixed upon Burlington as the place for a town, the settlers about Long Island established direct and frequent intercourse with them, which lasted for many years thereafter.

Matthew Champion, who lived in Burlington about the year 1690, and purchased land of John Tomlinson, at Onanickon, in Springfield, the next year, does not appear to have been of this immediate family. Neither is connected with it the family of the same name which emigrated to Tuckahoe, in Cape May county—a family which was among the first settlers in that section, and which has now become numerous along the sea shore of this State.

On May 13, 1700, Henry Franklin conveyed to John Champion, of Hempstead, Queen's county, Long Island, a tract of land lying on the north side of Cooper's creek, in Waterford, (now Delaware) township, Camden county, New Jersey, to which place the said John removed.¹ This tract contained three hundred and thirty acres of land; it was the same as that which Henry Franklin had purchased of Mordecai Howell three years before, and which in that deed is described as being situated at "Livewell."² Henry Franklin was a bricklayer. He resided at Long Island at that time, but perhaps never removed to this purchase. Part of this estate is what has, for many years, been known as the "Barton" farm, and thereon stood the residence of John Champion. This was near where one of the roads crossed Cooper's creek in going from Burlington to Philadelphia, and where travelers had much trouble in crossing the stream. It is recorded in one of the minute books of Old Gloucester, that "John Champion makes great complaint of his great charge in setting people over Cooper's creek at his house; whereon ye Grand Jury propose that in case ye said John Champion will find sufficient convenience to put people over at all seasons, the said Champion may take for ferriage as follows: For two persons together, two pence per head; for one single person, three pence, and for a man and horse, five pence. To which ye bench assents."

In connection with this, Isaac Mickle says: "It will be observed that no mention is made in any of these regulations of carriages. Such refinements were not introduced generally, even in Philadelphia, until the Revolution. In West Jersey, most journeys were performed on horse-back, and the marriage

¹ Lib. G, 465.

² Lib. C, 122.

portion of the daughters of the most wealthy men consisted of a cow and a side-saddle.³ Funerals were frequently attended in boats, and the bodies of the deceased taken from Cooper's creek to the old Newton graveyard by water.

The coming of John Champion from Long Island to New Jersey may be accounted for by the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth to John Wright, a son of Richard Wright, who had purchased land of Thomas Howell, on Cooper's creek and settled there.⁴ The minutes of the Gloucester county courts of 1687, show a dispute between Richard Wright and Thomas Howell about the conveyance of this land.⁵ The verdict of the jury was in favor of Wright, and Howell was required to carry out his contract. In 1691 and in 1693, the son John increased his possession by purchases of adjoining tracts from Thomas Howell's heirs, which lands lay near to those of his father-in-law. This marriage is additional proof of the intercourse existing between the sections named, and shows that families removing from one place found easy means to preserve their intimacies with friends living at the other.

The application of John Champion for a ferry license is evidence that he came hither soon after his first purchase; and here he resided during the remainder of his life. Living, as he did, near a navigable stream, his intercourse with the city of Philadelphia was frequent, and he knew it long before sufficient of the timber had been removed to show even the direction of the streets. The bank fronting the river Delaware, being filled with caves and rude huts, where the citizens lived and where stood much of the primitive forest, must have presented a strange appearance in approaching it from New Jersey. Opposite the mouth of Cooper's creek was the most populous part of the town; and perhaps he did not live to see it enlarged beyond the limits of Shackomaxon. The many troubles through which William Penn had passed, and the difficulties which he had in regard to the sale and settlement of his lands in Pennsylvania, were a hinderance to the enlargement of the city, and prevented the rapid settlement that he had anticipated.

³ Mickle's Reminiscences of Old Gloucester, 49.

⁴ Lib. G, 24. Lib. G2, 124.

⁵ Lib. G3, 5.

In the year 1718, John Champion divided his landed estate between his sons Robert and Nathaniel, by a line running from the creek "into the woods," and made each a deed bearing the same date (April 24).⁶ His other children were Thomas and Phoebe. He died in 1727, leaving a will, and, by that, disposing of the remainder of his estate. The son Robert was made executor. He had removed to the city of Philadelphia, where he deceased soon after his father, and before the will was offered for probate.⁷ The second son Nathaniel proved the writing, and as administrator settled the estate.⁸

On September 13th, 1720, Robert Champion sold his part of the real estate given to him by his father, to Tobias Halloway, but the latter re-conveyed the same to him on the 24th day of July, 1723.⁹ At the date of the deed (1720), Robert lived on the property at Cooper's creek, and, as no female joined with him in the conveyance, he was probably unmarried at that time. Like a large majority of the settlers hereabout, he could not write his name; which inability was also the case with his father. He afterwards married, and had one child,—a son, Peter, who, in the year 1740, married Hannah Thackara, a daughter of Benjamin. She deceased, and, in 1746, he married Ann, a daughter of Simeon Ellis (the son of Simeon). By the last marriage there was one child, Joseph. Peter Champion deceased in 1748, and his widow, Ann, became the administratrix to the estate, he leaving no will.¹⁰

A short time before his death, he conveyed a piece of meadow land to John Shivers, being part of the homestead. He was therefore the owner thereof after his father's demise. In 1751, Ann, the widow, married John Stokes, and, after his demise, she married Samuel Murrell, 1761.¹¹ By each marriage she had children, thus rendering it difficult to trace the descendants of Ann Ellis, and to know the paternal line. Joseph Champion, the issue of the second marriage of Peter, married Rachel Collins, a daughter of Samuel and Rosanna (Stokes). Samuel was a blacksmith and plied his calling at Colestown, then in Waterford township. This Samuel Collins was a son

⁶ Lib. A, 165—166.

⁷ Lib. No. 2, 437.

⁸ Lib. No. 2, 441.

⁹ Lib. A, 236.

¹⁰ Lib. No. 6, 76.

¹¹ Lib. AH, 385.

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of Samuel and Abigail (Ward), who was the youngest son of Francis and Mary, the last wife of Francis, the widow of John Goslin, M. D. and daughter of Thomas Budd. Ann Ellis inherited, through the blood of her ancestors, a tract of land in Delaware township, lying on both sides of the Haddonfield and Moorestown road, now mostly owned by William M. Cooper and the heirs of Batheuel Heulings, deceased.

In 1723, Nathaniel Champion sold his lands on Cooper's creek to James Parrock, who, soon after the death of Nathaniel, conveyed the same to Mary, his widow, she remaining the owner thereof during her life and devising it to John Barton by her will.¹²⁻¹³ Nathaniel died in 1748, leaving the following children: Nathaniel, who married ————; Benjamin, who married Ann Hewitt; Thomas, who married Deborah Clark, daughter of William; Elizabeth, who married John Barton; and Sarah.¹⁴

The widow of Nathaniel remained on the estate for many years after her husband's decease. Her will bears date ———, 1772. In this paper she names her children and several of her grandchildren. She gave the farm on Cooper's creek, "where she then dwelt," to her son-in-law before named.

Thomas, the son of Nathaniel, was a tailor, and resided in Haddonfield, where some of his descendants were known to the older inhabitants now living. He probably owned the lot whereon stood the mansion built by Matthias Aspden, now the property of the heirs of Benjamin W. Blackwood, M. D., deceased. This house was one of the largest in the village, and, when erected, was more commodious and expensive than most of those around it. Upon the death of Samuel, the son of Thomas, it passed out of the name; and that branch of the family removed from the village.

John Wright, husband of the daughter Elizabeth, made his home on part of the Howell estate before John Champion purchased his land. In the grant to him by Mordecai Howell in 1693, Howell reserved the right to overflow the meadow and use the water in the stream for his corn-mill, which he built about that time. In 1702, he purchased two hundred and eight

¹² Lib. A, 166. ¹³ Lib. GG, 356.

¹⁴ Lib. No. 5, 424.

acres of Martin Jarvis, in Newton township.¹⁵ This tract lay near the mouth of Newton creek, and extended up that stream to Fork branch, and also up that on the north side for a considerable distance. It now includes several valuable farms in that part of the old township of Newton.¹⁶ The estate on Cooper's creek passed out of the name and blood many years since, even beyond the memory of the oldest inhabitant in that section. Only such as have occasion to examine the ancient deeds or records relating to the land here spoken of, will know that such owners ever there resided; and, unless some defect in the title should appear in passing through the heirs of Richard Wright and of his son John, no inquiry may ever be started in regard to their genealogy.

Richard Wright died in a few years after his coming hither, leaving a widow named Constance, and three children, John, Sarah and Hannah.¹⁷ It is remarkable that so few of the name of Champion are now living in the neighborhood of the old estate; and a few more decades may remove it entirely.

The mutation of families is an interesting and instructive study, deserving labor and attention. Some go on increasing for generations, while others fall away and altogether disappear. While one family may be found for a century where the first settlers placed it, another has been scattered, and the old homestead forgotten. Where one family adheres to the land of its forefathers with an admirable tenacity, another has no regard for ancient things, and parts with them without a regret. The laws regulating the descent of lands in New Jersey makes it of importance that a correct knowledge in this regard should be had; but, in the absence of legislative action, it must always be surrounded with trouble and doubt.

¹⁵ Hesse's Book, 38.

¹⁶ Lib. A, 111.

¹⁷ Lib. G2, 177.