

## JOHN HILLMAN.

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JOHN HILLMAN was an husbandman, and the first plantation upon which he lived and which he owned, he purchased of Francis Collins in 1697.<sup>1</sup> It contained one hundred and seventy acres of land, and was situated in Gloucester township (now Centre), adjoining the estate of John Gill, part of which is now owned by William Chapman. Like most of the early settlers, he selected a light sandy soil whereon to clear his farm; this made that operation of much less trouble, and the tilling of it much less laborious. In 1697, agriculture had made but little progress, and had it not been for the timber, then so plenty, which our ancestors worked and sold, the wants of the people would have been but poorly supplied. The leading crops were corn and rye, which followed each other in continued succession, until the return would hardly pay for the seed, and then another piece of land would be cleared and used in like manner, with the same results. Everything was in the most primitive condition, not only the manner of farming, but also the implements wherewith to work. . Wooden ploughs, brush harrows, straw collars and grapevine gearing, may be thought to be an overdrawn picture of the farming implements of the early settlers in this region, and one which strikes the farmers of the present day with surprise. Yet these, and still more limited, were the means of the people to eke out a livelihood in the wilderness of New Jersey. With no shelter for

<sup>1</sup> Lib. C, 15.

their cattle, no protection for their crops when gathered, and with the rudest of cabins for themselves, their condition can scarcely be appreciated at this day by us, with our many improvements and comforts of every description.

John Hillman's farm lay on both sides of the present road from Haddonfield to Snow Hill; and his house stood near the present residence of William Chapman. Attached thereto was a portion of meadow land, from which were obtained pasture for his cattle during the summer, and hay to keep them alive through the winter. The "old Egg Harbor road" passed near his house, which was in after years kept as a tavern, although not noted as a place of resort. At a short distance south of this place the old road "forked;" the branch was called the Salem road, and crossed Timber creek at or near Clement's bridge.

In 1720, John Hillman, by deed of gift, conveyed this tract of land to his son John, anticipating his will in that particular. The will bore date in 1707, but was not proved until 1729, soon after the decease of the testator. The inventory of his personal property amounted to one hundred and ninety-two pounds.<sup>2</sup> His children appear to have been two sons and two daughters, Daniel, John, Ann and Abigail. Margaret, his widow, also survived him.

After the death of his father, John Hillman sold the homestead; but, by subsequent conveyances, it became the property of Joseph Hillman (a son of the second John), who lived there a short time, and, in 1760, sold the same to Daniel Scull, of Egg Harbor. In a few years after, it became part of the estate of John Gill, who devised a portion of it to his daughter Mary Roberts, during her natural life, and the remainder to her son, John Roberts; the latter sold his share many years before his death. For more than one hundred years the real estate upon which the first John Hillman settled, has been out of the name; it is now partly covered with the town of Snow Hill, and is divided among many owners.

In 1745, John Hillman (the second), who married Abigail, a daughter of Joseph Bates, a resident of that section,<sup>3</sup> pur-

<sup>2</sup> Gloucester Files, 1731.

<sup>3</sup> Lib. No. 3, 432.

chased about five hundred acres of land from Thomas Atkinson. This tract lay near the White Horse tavern, and extended from the south branch of Cooper's creek to the north branch of Timber creek.<sup>4</sup> To this land he removed, and built the house where now resides Hinchman Lippincott, whose farm is part of the original tract. Six years after this purchase, he bought at the sale of John Mickle, sheriff of Gloucester county, one hundred acres adjoining, as the property of Meam Southwick.<sup>5</sup> Included in the first purchase was a saw mill on Timber creek, which was owned by Thomas Webster, Thomas Atkinson, and Meam Southwick, and probably stood upon the site of the grain mill now the property of Ephraim Tomlinson.

These lands were located by Abraham Porter, in 1714, '15 and '16, who settled thereon, having his house near the south side of Cooper's creek, on the farm now owned by Josiah Jenkins, where he, in all probability, kept "bachelor's hall"<sup>6</sup> Of this person there does not appear to be any tradition or history among the people who now own and occupy his estate, nor can he be traced with any certainty through the record beyond his day and generation. It is evident that he was not a Quaker, as he was appointed captain in the military department of the province in 1722,<sup>7</sup> while William Burnett was governor, during the reign of George I of England; he was afterwards promoted to the rank of major.<sup>8</sup> The little military spirit that had been developed among the people at that early day, in a neighborhood where the Quaker element overshadowed every other, would make it supposable that but few soldiers could be found thereabout. It is possible, however, that Capt. Porter did command a company of volunteers of the county of Gloucester, about one hundred and fifty years ago, and acted as the escort of the Governor of the province in his "circuit" from one part of the State to another, to hold the assizes for the crown.

These visits of the governor to the lower counties of the State were quite an event; for, holding their commissions by appointment for the crown, they are exceedingly punctilious

<sup>4</sup> Lib. K, 85.

<sup>5</sup> Lib. K, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Basse's Book, 195.

<sup>7</sup> Lib. AAA, 182.

<sup>8</sup> Lib. AAA, 187.

and exacting in showing their authority, and, to that extent, made themselves obnoxious to our plain and matter-of-fact ancestors. The conduct of Captain Porter must have pleased those who held the reins of government, for he was soon promoted to the rank of major, which position he could not have obtained, unless he had been recommended to the king by those whose prerogative it was to fill all such appointments.

Abraham Porter did not live many years thereafter, as his will bears date 1729. It is a curious document, and discloses that he was a single man, or, if married, had no children.<sup>9</sup> He gave to the churches at Philadelphia, Burlington and Salem, each ten pounds; to the minister at Raccoon, five pounds, and to the meetings at Haddonfield and Salem, five pounds, each. The estate upon which he resided, consisted of some twelve hundred acres, and he, no doubt, had a valuable personal property. Why he should have lived alone so far from the settled neighborhood, and in a place that was some distance from the nearest road, and that one but little traveled, is an inquiry that can not be answered at this late day. After his death, his executors sold the land, and nothing appears to indicate that any of the family have been in that region since. Although a military man and holding his commission from the king, yet he had regard to the advancement of religion and morality in West New Jersey,—a trait that commends his memory to the respect of all, and one well worthy of emulation.

John Hillman lived on this tract of land many years, and, like many others, worked the timber that stood thereon into lumber and cord wood, hauling the same to Chew's Landing on Timber creek, whence it went by water to Philadelphia, to be sold. As his sons grew to be men, they likewise settled within the bounds of his surveys, and made farms for themselves, each of which was surrounded by the primitive forest.

In this, as in some other families, a few favorite names have been adhered to, names which, being attached to two or three living at the same time, mystify the genealogy when examined through a lapse of one hundred years. From this cause a generation is sometimes left out or added; this error it is often impossible to correct.

<sup>9</sup> Lib. No. 3, 94.

As before stated, John Hillman had two sons, Daniel and John, and, probably, a son Joseph. Daniel deceased in 1754, leaving his wife Elizabeth surviving him, and four sons, John, Daniel, James and Joseph.<sup>10</sup> John deceased in 1764, leaving his wife Elizabeth surviving him, and five sons, Joab, Josiah, Daniel, James and John.<sup>11</sup> Joseph died in 1768, his wife Drusilla, his sons, Daniel, Samuel, and a daughter, Letitia, surviving him.<sup>12</sup> By this it will be seen that each son had a son Daniel, and two of the sons had, each, a son John. One of these Daniels married Abigail Nicholson, and one of these Johns married Hannah Nicholson, both daughters of Samuel Nicholson, who lived in Waterford township, near the river Delaware. The difficulties of tracing a genealogy like this are at once apparent, and unless the family records are correctly and continuously kept, such difficulties cannot be overcome.

In 1745, John and Daniel Hillman purchased of Timothy Matlack a lot of land in Haddonfield, on the northwest side of the street, where the Methodist church now stands, extending to John Gill's line. Part of this became the property of John Shivers in 1758, although a portion remained in the family for many years after.

As an evidence of the little interest taken in agriculture during the first hundred and fifty years of the settlement of this part of New Jersey, it is worthy of notice that the lands of John Hillman, lying on the south side of Cooper's creek, and the lands of the sons of William Matlack, which lay on the north side of the same stream, were underlaid with green sand-marl, the fertilizing properties of which are now so well understood. The existence of this peculiar deposit must have been known to the dwellers in that region of country, for no well could be dug, or excavation made, in which it would not appear; and yet there is no evidence that this material has been used upon the soil until within the last forty years. These estates taken together and, as originally held, extending from the north branch of Timber creek on the south, to the north branch of Cooper's creek on the north, covered very much

<sup>10</sup> Lib. No. 8, 367.

<sup>11</sup> Lib. No. 12, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Lib. No. 12, 496.

of the green sand-marl belt in this region of country,—a deposit which has made it one of the best agricultural districts in the State of New Jersey. Strange as this disregard for a fertilizer so convenient and abundant may seem, it is, nevertheless, true; and it can only be accounted for by the little value of farmers' produce, and the consequent lack of interest in seeking out any means to increase their crops or improve the soil. Commerce and manufacturing had not been sufficiently developed to consume the excess that might have been thus produced; therefore no inducements existed, either to increase the breadth of cleared land, or to advance the fertility of that already in use. \*

New York and Philadelphia, in that day, made but little demand upon the country for their supplies, while the ashes arising from the consumption of wood, and the debris that collected in the street, were considered worthless, and given to such as would remove them out of reach. The diminutive barns and corn-cribs of the farmers of one hundred years ago would compare strangely with the capacious buildings that now stand upon the same land, filled to their utmost extent with the crops raised upon the same soil.

Within the memory of the older people of the present day, the section of country in question was covered with timber, interspersed with a few half cultivated farms, to which the Gloucester hunting-club looked for the best sport in their manly and exhilarating pastime. The thick underwood growing from the rich soil made the best of cover for game; and no little skill was necessary to drive Reynard forth, the securing of whose brush was the object of the chase. The young men of the neighborhood joined with the club in these hunts, and showed as much horsemanship and daring as those better equipped and more accustomed. Among these was Jonas Cattell, whose knowledge of wood-craft and wonderful endurance made him ever welcome. So much was he liked, that the historian of the club secured his full length portrait, and made it a part of his book.

*"Delightful scene!*

*When all around is gay—men, horses, dogs;  
And in each smiling countenance appear  
Fresh blooming health, and universal joy."*

Daniel Hillman settled on a tract of one hundred acres given to him by his father in his will, which he had purchased of William Sharp, the locator in 1701; and here Daniel erected a house and cleared his farm.<sup>13</sup> This was situated in what was then Gloucester township, as distinguished from Gloucester town, but is now the township of Centre; it is partly included in the farm of Zophar C. Howell. His dwelling stood near the present farm house on the Howell estate, and, perhaps, was a substantial log cabin, with clay floor and stick chimney. Daniel gradually extended his estate towards the south, while it adjoined the lands of the Clarks on the west, and those of the Albertsons on the east, which are now owned by the heirs of Joseph Davis, deceased, and others in that region.<sup>14</sup>

The Salem road that branched from the Egg Harbor road near the residence of his father, as before named, passed through his land toward Clement's bridge and South Jersey. This road was undoubtedly an Indian trail, and, consequently, was used by our ancestors in traveling through the province, several years before the Legislature established the king's highway; which, although more direct, was objectionable by reason of the many ferries to be passed on the route, found at every stream, where, at the present day, good and substantial bridges supply their places. Perhaps before Daniel, some one of the aborigines had cleared a few acres, upon which the female part of his family could raise their corn and pumpkins, while the head of the house and his able-bodied sons spent their time in hunting and fishing. All representations of Indian life prove that the women performed the drudgery and labor, while the men led a life of idleness and ease. These small spots of land, free from timber, were sought after by the first settlers, and were purchased from the Indians, as they facilitated farming operations, and saved much labor and expense.

In 1754, Daniel Hillman died, and, by his will, gave this tract of land to his four sons, James, John, Daniel and Joseph, who held it for several years in common, and, doubtless, built dwellings for themselves on various parts of it.<sup>15</sup> In 1784, Jacob

<sup>13</sup> Lib. D, 50. Basse's Book, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Lib. M, 76. Lib. U, 65. Lib. T, 338, O. S. G.

<sup>15</sup> Lib. No. 8, 367.

Jennings became the owner of Joseph Hillman's portion, and, the next year, re-surveyed the same.<sup>16</sup> This included most of the one hundred acres located by William Sharp, and here stood the first dwelling of his father. In 1786, a re-survey was made of other parts of the said land; after which it was sold, and none of the present generation of descendants have any estate therein.<sup>17</sup> James had died before this, and his property was represented by John Gill and his widow, then the wife of Joseph Garwood, as executors thereof.

Samuel and Seth Hillman, sons of the third John, settled on land in Deptford township, Gloucester county, on Almonessing branch; which estate came to them from their grandfather, Daniel, who had purchased of John Ashbrook.<sup>18</sup> This family has now spread itself through nearly all the states of the Union and, directly and collaterally, has a very extensive relationship. Of Daniel Hillman, there is one act worthy of notice, which proves that he was a man of foresight and good judgment, anticipating his wants and those of his children, as farmers. In 1726, in connection with Joseph Lowe, he located the first tract of cedar swamp on Great Egg Harbor river, below where Berlin (Long-a-coming) now stands.<sup>19</sup> It lay south of Blue Anchor, where tradition says that the Indian trail crossed the swamp,—the only trail known to have existed for many years. On the east side stood an Indian wigwam, where travelers were entertained before the white man came, and where a lodging place was kept for such as were going from one part of the State to the other. It is well known that, at Shamong in Burlington county, and at Tuckahoe in Cape May county, resided two powerful tribes of this peculiar people, who, being upon friendly terms, kept up a constant interchange of visits. In going from the one place to the other, they crossed at the point above named, where may yet be seen the remains of a rude bridge. The pathway through the swamp was narrow, crossing an island in its course, but generally going in a straight line. Its position is well defined, as the owners of timber now use it for a wagon road, thus turning to practical purposes the

<sup>16</sup> Lib. T, 338, O. S. G.

<sup>17</sup> Lib. U, 327, O. S. G.

<sup>18</sup> Lib. U, 383, O. S. G.

<sup>19</sup> Lib. M, 77, O. S. G.

path in which, in olden times, traveled the kings and queens of the aborigines of our land. In going eastward, the trail passed near where Blue Anchor tavern now stands, and where the Indian trail going from the ocean to the Delaware river was intersected, a circumstance which, in all probability, gave rise to this once public place. Near the swamp may yet be seen the spot upon which stood the house of entertainment in which some Indian landlord dispensed cheer to all the passers by, and that without license, restraint or fear of law.

This accounts for Daniel Hillman's selecting his tract of swamp at that place, while larger and more valuable timber stood in profusion, above and below the same. For some reason, this trail was abandoned, and another made about two miles lower down the river, where formerly stood the old Inskeep saw-mill. When the mill was first erected, has passed beyond the memory of man; but, in 1762, when John Inskeep made the survey where stood the building, he put a post as the commencement-corner by the east side of the river, "and where a ford crosseth the same." This was the Indian path going between the points before spoken of, as changed from the old track, and was used by them so long as any remained at both settlements. Here they generally made a resting place for the night, always camping in the open air, without regard to the season, and never remaining after the sun rose in the morning. David Beebe, lately deceased, whose father resided at that place, distinctly remembered that small companies of these people were wont to stop there for the night, and that the females visited the house during the evening.