

MARK NEWBIE.

THIS man was an Englishman, a resident of the city of London, and a tallow chandler. He was a member of a Friends' Meeting, whose house of worship was in a street of that city, called "Barbican." Some of the antiquarians say that it derived its name as follows :

"Barbican is a street near Smithfield, London.¹ The Barbican, originally a Roman watch tower, lay little north of this street ; it was an appendage to most fortified places, and from it the street took its name." Another says : "Barbican is a good, broad street, well inhabited by tradesmen."²

In 1681, the persecutions that were carried on towards the religious society of which he was a member, led many Friends to remove to Ireland, where the rigor of abused law was not so keenly felt, and where for several years this class of citizens enjoyed comparative peace and quiet. Among them was Mark Newbie, who disposed of his property in London, and had a temporary residence in Dublin, with a view to settling in America and making it his permanent home.

The question of removal, was, at that time, and for the reasons before stated, very gravely considered among Friends, and, in fact, with some communities had already assumed a practical shape. The movements of William Penn in this matter were watched with interest, for he had a controlling influence in the Society, and his steps therein were ready to be

¹ Smith's Antiquarian Rambles, Vol. 2, 170, &c.

² Murry's Hand Book, 31.

followed. His opinions soon became known, and these influenced others accordingly. In this movement Mark Newbie saw an opportunity to assist in carrying out his previously settled purpose, for, in the same year, he joined with William Bates and a few others, to make the adventure which ended in their settlement at Newton.³ The history of this has been well related by Thomas Sharp; it combines the reasons, facts and incidents thereof, better than any other account given, or that could be gathered at this late day. There are many reasons for supposing that Mark Newbie was a man of considerable estate, and, although he lived but a short time after his arrival, yet he became the owner of several tracts of land, and had valuable personal property. The situation of his house in the settlement (which was an humble and unpretending habitation,) is a question of more than ordinary interest to antiquarians, and to all such as care to preserve the history of the times in which lived these brave men, who planted the seed of civil and religious liberty now enjoyed by the millions occupying the soil.⁴

Upon an old map left by Thomas Sharp, designed to show the several tracts of land owned by Robert Turner, within the bounds of Newton township, this faithful historian has marked the position of several houses, as they were placed the year after the arrival of the settlers, and after their separation. This map fixes it near the north side of the main, or middle branch of Newton creek, opposite to where William Bates had placed his cabin, a short distance below the old grave yard, but above the late residence of Samuel C. Champion, deceased. Upon consulting a later map made by Friend Sharp, in 1700, much change may be seen as to the situation of the dwellings of the inhabitants; but the house designated as Mark Newbie's has the same position as on the first paper showing its locality. At the last date, Stephen Newbie owned that part of his father's land extending from the main branch to fork branch, and occupied the old homestead; while his brother Edward had erected buildings upon the part of the paternal estate that lay

³ Lib. A, 98, Gloucester Records.

⁴ File T, O. S. G.

north of the last named stream, and there lived. This division of the original property of Mark Newbie has been the cause of some doubt as to the true position of his residence, but the comparing of the two maps aforesaid places it beyond cavil.

In one of the accounts of this colony left by Thomas Sharp, in his quaint manner he says: "And immediately there was a meeting set up and kept at the house of Mark Newbie, and in a short time it grew and increased, unto which William Cooper and family that lived at the Point resorted." This clearly proves not only where the house was situated, but also that within its walls was established the first Friend's Meeting in Gloucester county, and, after Salem and Burlington, the first in West New Jersey. In this dwelling, built of logs, with the earth for a floor and a bark roof for a ceiling, were the doctrines of a revealed religion first proclaimed upon our shores by those who had left their homes and friends, to enjoy this privilege that was denied them there.

The lapse of time has swept away from us every appreciation of this privilege, for no attempt has since been made to abridge the rights of citizens in the enjoyment of religious opinions. No change of government or political excitement, for the last one hundred and ninety years, (save the abortive attempt by Lord Cornbury,) has sought to infringe this fundamental principle, so plainly and broadly laid down in the concessions and agreements of 1676. In this building assembled the families, in all not more than twenty persons, (attended, perhaps, by a few friendly Indians, who must have observed the similarity of these silent sittings to their own dignified and quiet assemblages,) who had come to take up their abode in the wilderness, and build for themselves and their posterity a government free from intolerance and persecution.

Who among them, no matter how enlarged their views or speculative their notions, could foresee the nation which was to rise out of such imperfect beginnings? That the latent powers embodied in their simple form of government should spread to the limits of a continent, and be the pride of a free and independent people? That these elements, based in justice and founded in right, would be the centre whence would

radiate civil and religious liberty, to be enjoyed and appreciated by all who should come within its influence?

This was the initial point whence originated the many religious communities according to the order of Friends that are known in various parts of the country, some of which have gone to decay, and to the present generation are unknown.

Mark Newbie was also the founder of the first bank in the State of New Jersey, having a charter granted to him by the Legislature,—the words of the act running in this wise :

“And for the more convenient Payment of small Sums, be it enacted, by the Authority aforesaid, that *Mark Newbie's* half-pence called Patrick's half-pence shall, from and after the said Eighteenth Instant, pass for half-pence Current pay of this Province; *provided*, he, the said *Mark*, give sufficient Security to the Speaker of the House, for the use of the General Assembly from Time to Time being. That he, the said *Mark*, his Executors and Administrators, shall and will change the said half-pence for pay Equivalent upon demand; *and provided also*, that no Person or Persons be hereby obliged to take more than *five shillings* in one Payment.”⁵

This law was passed at the session of May, 1682, and doubtless went into effect as soon as the said Mark had entered the proper security as required under the act.

The history of this bank may be readily followed through the records of those days, and enough gathered to show its beginning, progress and end. As security to the people of the Province, and as required by law, Mark Newbie conveyed to Samuel Jennings and Thomas Budd, as commissioners, a tract of land in Newton township containing three hundred acres, located by the said Mark.

When a settlement was made between the administratrix and the commissioners, a deficiency of thirty pounds was discovered in the banking operations, which was, however, made good out of his personal estate, thus releasing the land before named. By request of the widow, Hannah, Samuel Jennings and

⁵ Leaming & Spicer's Laws.

Thomas Budd conveyed the same to Thomas Holmes, William Bates and Thomas Jenney in trust for Edward Newbie, the second son of Mark, in 1685; "but, if Edward die before he attain his majority, then to his brother and sister, Stephen and Rachel."⁶

Edward, however, lived to become the owner in fee, and by his will gave said land to his two sons, Nathan and Gabriel. Nathan died single and intestate, and his estate was merged into that of his brother Gabriel, who devised the same to his son John.⁷

On March 14th, 1764, John Newbie conveyed all the unsold parts of said tract to Isaac Cooper, in whose name and family the larger portion remains to this day.

The deficiency before named was doubtless caused by the death of the banker, the time being too short for him to perfect his arrangements in relation thereto. Had he lived, its usefulness might have been much enlarged, accommodating the community around him, and proving a profitable and commendable enterprise.

This half-penny was a copper coin struck by the Roman Catholics after the massacre in Ireland in 1641, and was generally known as St. Patrick's half-penny; it had the legend FLOREAT REX on the obverse, and on the reverse, ECCE GREX.⁸ In 1680, half-pence and farthings were coined by royal authority, with the national symbol (the harp) and the date.⁹ The worth of the half-penny was about one cent of our currency, but, on account of the unsettled standard of values, varied from that according to circumstances.

Struck without the authority of law, and, perhaps, only to commemorate some event in the history of that unfortunate people, this coin never obtained circulation in the old country. Through the foresight of Mark Newbie, it was bought in quantities at a slight discount, brought to West New Jersey, and made to answer the wants of the settlers, which wants were recognized by the Legislature in the act before named, and it answered their purposes for several years.

⁶ Lib. B, 126.

⁷ Lib. Y, 78.

⁸ Humphrey on Coins, Vol. 2, 511.

⁹ Vol. 2, 686.

In these latter days this coin is not in circulation, and can only be found in the cabinets of those that are curious in such matters, and fond of studying the progress of artistic mechanism in this particular line. Numismatics has, for many years, attracted the attention of persons of taste and leisure, by whom large sums of money have been paid for rare specimens of coin. Their interest and enthusiasm has done much to develop the progress of art through the various ages of the world as connected with civilization, with the advance of commerce and the spread of the human race.

As a legal tender among the colonists, the act made a strange provision, if the value was as before stated; for, by that act, no person was required to receive more than a certain number of pieces toward the discharge of a debt. As a matter of convenience, this part of the law was perhaps a nullity, since the settling of accounts and all other ordinary money transactions would necessitate the use of various amounts.

¹⁰Previously to the passage of the act regulating the value of Mark Newbie's money, the Legislature established the standard of Old England shillings and New England shillings, and also in 1693, did the same thing in regard to the Spanish coin, which by that time had come to be in circulation. For many years after the first settlements in New Jersey, there was much trouble among the people concerning the standard value of the various coins as established in the several Provinces. The colonial government attempted to remove this trouble, but it seems to have utterly failed. Paper money, the first of which was issued in New Jersey in 1709, had a double value, that in East Jersey, regulated by the worth of a guinea in New York, and that in West Jersey controlled by the worth of a guinea in Pennsylvania, thus leading to confusion and loss among the inhabitants.

The chapter styled "Currency of New Jersey," attached by Judge Elmer to his history of Cumberland county, is interesting and instructive, being an exhaustive dissertation upon that subject, and showing great labor and research.

It is not to be supposed that Mark Newbie had any authority under the law, to make this coin for the purpose of keeping

up the circulation, and to enlarge his credit, whereby to get gain and establish his name as a successful financier ; but he was careful to keep the amount circulated within proper bounds, for the very cogent reason that part of his estate was pledged, to make good any short-coming in this regard. Without these restraints, the influence of the church of which he was a member, and the watchful care of those around him to prevent a hazard of his credit, made him what in these days would be called a careful banker, too slow to make money and altogether behind the age.

In this connection the historian of the banking system of America, in his researches to discover where it originated, will fall upon the act of the Legislature of New Jersey, of 1682, and at once seek to discover where this institution was situated, how constructed, what its success, and what its end.

The action of the Legislature showed the foresight of our law-makers, even at that early day, in securing the people against imposition or fraud, and proves that they had a correct view of banking privileges, when they required a specie basis with real-estate security. To emulate this in these latter days would have saved much loss that has fallen upon innocent persons, and would have prevented the scandal now surrounding this class of corporations.

Within the same township, therefore, on the same spot, and in the same building, originated the first religious denomination according to the order of Friends in Old Gloucester county, as well as the first banking corporation in New Jersey,—*perhaps, in America.*

If the early associations of the settlement of a neighborhood have any interest ; if the wide spread good of any institution, be it religious, political or financial, can be felt in a community and traced to its beginning, be that beginning ever so humble and unpretending ; such associations, such incidents, and such history deserve some record, so that those who make inquiry hereafter, may not consider *this* an ungrateful generation.

“ Here, the dawn of reason broke
Upon the trampled rights of man ;
And here a moral era woke—
The brightest—since the world began.”

The selection of Mark Newbie's house in which to hold the first meetings of Friends, shows him to have been a leading man in the church, and one who had much influence in matters ecclesiastical. In the political affairs of the colony he took a prominent part, and filled several positions of trust and responsibility.¹¹ At the May term, in 1682, of the Legislature, he appeared as a member, and was selected by the Governor as one of his council. He was made one of the commissioners for the dividing of land, and one of the committee of ways and means to raise money for the use of the government, at the same time. The amount of money assessed upon the third tenth for that year, which consisted of what is now Gloucester, Atlantic and Camden counties, was *forty shillings*, a sum of money that contrasts strangely enough with the large amounts paid for taxes by the people in the same territory at the present time.

At the September session of the same year, he again appeared and sat as one of the Governor's council, and participated in the making of many important laws, and was again appointed one of the commissioners to divide land.

In this year, the question whether the Proprietors had the right of government seems to have been mooted; a question of serious import to the purchasers of the soil, and one which they considered as involving their success as a colony, and materially affecting their privileges in religious toleration.¹² It assumed such a shape that a committee was appointed to draft a number of queries touching the question, to be submitted to the home government, and to Edward Byllynge, in order to know whether any difficulty in this regard really existed. Mark Newbie was one of the persons selected to discharge this important duty, but he died many years before the question was settled.

In the proceedings of the May term, 1683, the minutes say that Thomas Olive was appointed as one of the Governor's Council, "in place of Mark Newbie, Dead," thus showing that he deceased between the two terms of the Legislature; and this corresponds with many of the records relating to his real estate.

¹¹ Leaming & Spicer's Laws.

¹² Leaming & Spicer's Laws.

He died intestate, but no steps were taken to settle his estate until the 4th of the 7th month, 1684, when administration was granted to his widow, who proceeded with the appraisement, which amounted to one hundred and eighty pounds together with a large real estate.¹³

So far as can be discovered, his family consisted of two sons and two daughters, all of whom were born before the parents' settlement here.¹⁴ They were Rachel, who married Isaac Decou, in 1695; Stephen, who married Elizabeth Wood, in 1703; Edward, who married Hannah Chew, in 1706; and Elizabeth, who married John Hugg, in 1714.

Hannah, the widow of Mark Newbie, married James Atkinson in 1685. After this marriage it is probable that meetings continued to be held at the house in which Mark had deceased; as the records refer to several marriages that were consummated there. It does not appear there were any children by this marriage.

Stephen and Elizabeth Newbie had but two children,¹⁵—Mark who died single, in 1735, and Hannah, who married Joseph Thackara.¹⁶ Stephen deceased in 1706.¹⁷

Edward and Hannah Newbie's children were Nathan,¹⁸ Gabriel, Rachel, and a child unborn at the time of Edward's death in 1715.¹⁹ Nathan died single; Gabriel married and deceased, leaving one child, John.²⁰

It will, therefore, be seen that, after two generations, the family name was confined to one person, perhaps the last in this region of country. Hereabout, the blood may be traced through the Huggs and the Thackaras, although in some lines with trouble and doubt.

Among the children of Joseph and Hannah Thackara²¹ were two sons, Stephen and Benjamin.²² Stephen deceased in 1767, having lived on part of the original estate.²³ He had three sons, Joseph, Thomas and James, and perhaps other children.

¹³ Gloucester files 1683.

¹⁴ Lib. Bt, 126.

¹⁵ Lib. Y, 78. Lib. No. 1, 169.

¹⁶ Lib. No. 4, 129.

¹⁷ Lib. No. 1, 169.

¹⁸ Lib. Y, 78.

¹⁹ Lib. No. 2, 104.

²⁰ Lib. Y, 78.

²¹ Lib. No. 11, 106.

²² Lib. No. 4, 129.

²³ Lib. W, 22, O. S. G.

Benjamin owned and lived on that part of the property lately held by Samuel C. Champion, and there he died in 1785. His wife Mary and twelve children survived him. They were Isaac, Abigail, Ann; Hannah, who married Joseph Jones; Mary, who married Joseph Elfreth; Mark; Margaret, who married John Tuft; Benjamin, who married Hannah Horner; William; Rachel, who married Francis Bilderback; Jacob; and Elizabeth, who married Abraham Reeves.²⁴

Persons of this and other branches of the family settled in Salem and Cumberland counties, but among them the name of Newbie has never been known. The fatality that seems to have attended the Huggs, has left but little opportunity to follow the line in that direction, yet full access to the papers of the family might develop the whole connection of the descent to the present day.

The tracing of genealogies, or the knowledge of families, has not yet, in this country, become an attractive feature in its history; and the meagre scraps that happen to be gathered already can only be hoped to make the beginning of a more careful and successful research. Labor under endless discouragements, is the only means of attaining the proper end in this regard; and, until better compensated, it will not enter a field where profit is so seldom known to follow. As, among the descendants of Mark Newbie, there are many with whom the name has become extinct; so, in others, it has spread so rapidly that quite as much trouble attends the arrangement of the one as the other; a difficulty seldom appreciated and never repaid.

²⁴ Lib. No. 17, 461.