

JOHN SHIVERS.

JOHN SHIVERS appears to have been the first of the name in this neighborhood. He probably came as a servant with some of the first emigrants, and was consequently not named among the lists of passengers; this class of persons being numbered to the individual who entered them as emigrants, a system which secured to each one a certain amount of land upon his arrival. Very many young men who had some estate, and were proficient as mechanics, chose to come out in this way, and, soon after their arrival, acquired more property, and had better positions than those whom they were pledged to serve. Mechanics, in particular, were in great demand, and, if economical, in a few years became classed among the wealthiest of the inhabitants. The subject of this sketch was called a butcher, which occupation he, no doubt, followed at home; but, when he came here and settled in an unbroken forest, with but few families about him, "his occupation was gone." Apart from Philadelphia, there was, within his reach, no collection of dwellings that could be called a town, where he could ply his calling; but, perhaps, with the energy characteristic of these pioneers, he traveled twice each week in his boat to the embryo city, and supplied its people with their meat fresh from the knife. The demand was small, and his means of supply were equally so, for people at that day had no appliances for raising and fattening cattle, except in giving them the range of the woods.

In fact this was so done, as, for many years after the beginning of the colony a law was in force requiring all persons to mark their cattle, and report their mark to the clerk of the county, so that the same might be recorded. An examination of the old books of minutes of the counties will show this; in many instances the mark is illustrated by a fac-simile copy, without any other description than the name of the person who reported it. The similarity of these evidences of ownership often led to disputes and litigation, in which much more money and time were wasted than the cause of the trouble was worth; yet, as is frequently the case at the present day, those who were fierce in the defence of their real or supposed rights, did not stop to inquire whether such a course of policy "would pay."

In 1692, John Shivers purchased a tract of land of Mordecai Howell, in Waterford township, which was bounded on the south side by Cooper's creek and partly by a stream branching therefrom, whereon Mordecai had erected, or was about to erect, a mill;¹ for, in the next year, John Wright, an adjoining owner, released to him the privilege of flooding the meadow for the use of the same. On this tract John Shivers erected a dwelling, and remained until his death.² He deceased intestate in 1716, his widow Sarah having been appointed administratrix.³ He was a man of considerable estate, and owned other lands than the tract here named; among which was one-half of two hundred acres that he had bought of Anthony Sturgiss in 1699, lying in Newton township, fronting on Cooper's creek, and nearly opposite his homestead place.⁴ This tract he held in common with Henry Johnson; but at what time it passed out of the family, and who were the subsequent owners, are matters of no interest in this connection.⁵

In 1720, Sarah Shivers, the widow of John, purchased of John Wright before named, the adjoining tract of land which lay between the homestead and Cooper's creek, and which he had, in 1693, bought of Mordecai Howell.⁶ This purchase extended the Shivers estate down and along the east side of the pond raised by Howell for the use of his mill, the remains of

¹ Lib. G3, 8.

² Lib G3, 513.

³ Gloucester Files, 1721.

⁴ Lib. GG, 297.

⁵ Lib. G3, 345.

⁶ Lib. A, 170.

the dam of which can yet be seen. This was one of the first saw mills erected in Gloucester county, and, if in use at this date, with the primitive forest close around it, as in 1693, it would prove a useful and valuable institution. The site, however, was not a desirable one, being subject to the flow of high tides from the creek, which would frequently check the speed of the wheel; for this reason it was abandoned many years since.

The dwelling on the farm now owned by Richard Shivers in Delaware township is, perhaps, the spot whereon John Shivers erected his first house; and portions of the present building may have been used in the first. His dying intestate leaves some doubt as to the number of his children, their names, and marriages, yet they are judged to have been the following: Samuel, who married Mary Deacon; John, who married Mary Clement; Mary, who married Thomas Bates; Hannah, who married John Matlack; and Josiah, who married Ann Bates.

In 1720, Samuel purchased two hundred acres of Francis Collins, adjoining the homestead property on the north,⁷ and, the next year, he conveyed his interest in his father's estate to his brother John, who remained on the old farm, and in whose descendants parts of the same remain to the present day, and in all probability will so remain for many years to come.⁸ Samuel settled in Newton township on the property which his father purchased of Anthony Sturgiss in 1699, for, in 1724, he acted as one of the surveyors of highways of that township, as appears by Thomas Sharp's record of the same.

During the life of the second John, the house in which he lived was by him kept as a tavern, standing, as it did, close by the north side of the ferry road leading out of Evesham, and other parts of Burlington county, towards Philadelphia. This was no doubt a favorite stopping place for the market people, where the price of poultry, eggs and butter could be discussed, so that such as were on their way to sell, might know how to deal with their keen and wary customers. There is no tradition, however, that a Jerseyman ever came off second

⁷ Lib. T5, Woodbury.

⁸ Lib. GG, 297.

best in a bargain, or that he left the market without the worth of his commodities. The quiet, unassuming manner of these folks was sometimes taken for ignorance, and those who considered themselves sharp in trade, only discovered their error when they found the advantage was on the wrong side. The natives of this State are known throughout our land as shrewd dealers,—a trait that may have come down to us from our Quaker ancestors, sharpened by long practice, and deeply instilled by continued example.

Afterwards Samuel removed to Greenwich township, Gloucester county, where he became a prominent citizen, and a wealthy man. He deceased in 1771.⁹ Part of his real estate consisted of "Raccoon island," situated at the mouth of the creek of the same name, in Gloucester county, which he purchased of James Lowns in 1747.¹⁰

A part of this island he leased on the first day of April, 1769, to William Kay for ninety-nine years, which term carried the possession of the estate beyond several generations of his descendants, and rendered it questionable in some instances upon whom the remainders actually fell. This lease was based upon a rental of eighty pounds per annum, and the payment made a lien upon the estate. At that date, and for many years after, the only means of procuring hay and pasture was by improved meadow lands; which rendered the marshes fronting on the tidal streams of West Jersey valuable for such purposes; and the records show that these marshes or flats were sought after, and located at an early date. This lease is, perhaps, the only one in this region that covered so much time, and involved so much valuable real estate. The devise of this was to three of his daughters, involving the fee as well as the rent; one-fourth was given to Sarah Tatem; one-fourth was given to Martha Booy, and two-fourths were given to Anna Sydonia Shinn, who, perhaps, all enjoyed the income of rent during their lives; but the lapse of years was too great for them to say to whom the possession and fee of the land at the end of the lease would come. Subsequently, the estate passed entirely

⁹ Lib. No. 15, 158.

¹⁰ Lib. IK, 423.

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out of the family, and some years since other owners had secured the title. The abolishing of the ancient limitations as touching real estate in New Jersey, allows many new owners to this kind of property in the course of one hundred years. Thrift, prudence and economy, are the only guarantees to the long keeping of land in any particular line under the present laws, and a disregard of these often makes room for enterprise and improvement where old fogyism might reign forever.

John Shivers having but two sons, the name is even at this time limited to few families; this circumstance often occurs, although the blood of the ancestors may be found in the veins of many, distributed there by the female descendants, who, upon marriage, lose their names, and, after two or three removes, almost lose their genealogical identity.