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SAMUEL SPICER.

SAMUEL SPICER was a son of Thomas and Michal Spicer, and was born in New England, prior to 1640. In 1685, he (Samuel) purchased of Samuel Cole, part of his tract of five hundred acres, situated on the north side of the mouth of Cooper's creek, and fronting on the Delaware river, in Waterford, now Stockton township, Camden county.¹ The deed of conveyance says that he then lived at Gravesend, on Long Island; whence came himself, his wife Esther, and three children, the next year, and settled thereon. Esther was a daughter of John and Mary Tilton of Gravesend; but they were married at Oyster Bay, Long Island, the 21st of the third month, 1665.²

Gravesend is one of the towns or townships of King's county, New York; it has an ancient historical record running back to 1640, about which time a few English Quakers came from Massachusetts and joined a number of others who were direct from England. It is situated in the southwestern part of the Island, fronting on the sea, where the "Narrows" open into the Atlantic ocean. Like many other towns of that date, it originated in the persecution of Friends, of whom some had previously settled in America, where intolerance was as vindictive and overbearing as at home; and some had come to seek an asylum free from such evils, in which religious opinions could be developed and enjoyed. Among those who came from Massa-

¹ Lib A, 44. Lib. G2, 111.

² Friends' Records, Long Island.

chusetts was the lady Deborah Moody, a woman of rank, education and wealth, who entertained opinions in common with the followers of George Fox, and who had become an object of disfavor and ill-treatment among the Puritans of the Bay State.

The patent for the town was obtained from Governor Kieft, in 1645, and among the patentees was the name of the female hereinbefore named, who appears to have been a person of decided opinions; this ultimately led her into difficulty with the elders of the church, and caused her to be expelled therefrom, after which she removed to Long Island. The immediate cause of her excommunication was her assertion that "infant baptism was no ordinance of God," which, together with her adherence to the doctrines of George Fox, made her obnoxious to the rulers of the province of Massachusetts.

Thomas Spicer was one of this little colony, and was the head of a family, for, in 1656, among the freeholders of the town, may be found the names of Samuel Spicer, Jacob Spicer and Thomas Spicer, who were probably his sons, having then grown to manhood and there settled. That Samuel Spicer, the person who bought the land of Samuel Cole in 1685, was a member of this family, there can be no doubt; and, if the records of Friends made at that date were accessible, the family could be traced beyond the sea.³⁻⁴⁻⁵

Tradition says that Samuel Spicer purchased his land one year before he came to settle on the same, from which it may be inferred that he had been in this region, examining the various localities, or perchance on a religious visit among the few who had taken up their residence here, and whose religious notions agreed with his own. Henry Wood, who had purchased a part of the same tract, was already a resident, around whom a few emigrants had made their homes, generally choosing the land fronting on Cooper's creek in preference to that upon the river; which land had been, however, located and somewhat improved before his coming. As the land was occupied, and the inhabitants increased, facilities for travel became necessary, and various means were used to accommodate the public, the first of which

³ Lib. A, 44. ⁴ Lib. G1, 111. ⁵ Lib. B1, 66.

appear to have been "ferries," across the smaller streams at various points, to avoid the necessity of fording at places near their source, which would have added much to the distance between certain towns and more thickly inhabited sections.

Burlington county, about the present city of Burlington, had filled up with people more rapidly than any other part of West Jersey; and, as land travel had begun between these parts and the embryo city of Philadelphia, Samuel Spicer soon found that his plantation lay in the most direct route between the two points, and that a ferry over Cooper's creek was needed to maintain this line of travel. Such ferry he established, which was situated near the site of the present bridge, and was always known as "Spicer's ferry". It consisted simply of a flat-boat, sufficiently large, whereon to stand a few horses or cattle, moved by ropes on each shore, and only used when some one wished to go over, provided the ferrymen were in good humor and the pay large enough to compensate for their labor; the demands of the public, or the wishes of travelers, being a secondary consideration.

This ferry was maintained until 1747, when a new straight road was laid from Burlington to Cooper's ferries, and a bridge was erected in its stead.⁶ This was a draw bridge, and proves that considerable trade was carried on along Cooper's creek by means of vessels transporting wood and lumber to Philadelphia, which trade had its claims as well as those who traveled by land. The manner in which the funds were to be raised to build this bridge, as provided in the law, is worthy of notice, and shows that the purpose of the Legislature was to make such of the inhabitants pay for its erection as were most to be accommodated therewith. In the act, the commissioners were directed to receive voluntary contributions for six months, and then to assess the remainder of the cost on the inhabitants of all the townships of the county of Burlington except the townships of Nottingham and Egg Harbor, and upon the inhabitants of that part of Waterford township in Gloucester county which extended from the river to the Salem road, and upon Cooper's ferries.⁷ This shows how sparse were the settlements in Burlington and

⁶ Lib. G2, 110.

⁷ Laws of 1747.

Gloucester counties at that day, and what part of the territory was to be accommodated by a bridge in the place of a ferry.

Samuel Spicer took a leading part in the religious and political affairs of the colony, and his name may be found in many matters of public interest whereby the development of the country was to be advanced. In religious matters he was a consistent and faithful member of his profession. For a long time meetings of public worship were held at his house; these were continued after his death by his widow, who was also an active member in the same denomination. In 1687, he was appointed one of the judges of the several courts of Gloucester county; he also filled other offices of minor importance. His will was executed in 1692, in which year he probably died.⁸

Esther Spicer, his widow, remained upon the homestead estate, entertaining many Friends, and extending her hospitality to the large circle of acquaintances that surrounded her. On the 24th day of the Seventh month, 1703, she was killed by lightning in her own house, together with Esther Saxby, her servant, and Richard Thackara, son of Thomas, he being about eleven years of age. This event is still preserved among the traditions of the family. The sudden death of this person, at that season of the year, necessitated an early burial. The funeral occurred the night after her decease, the family and friends going in boats down Cooper's creek to the river, and by the river to Newton creek, and thence to the Newton graveyard, the place of interment. Each boat being provided with torches, the scene upon the water must have been picturesque indeed. To the colonists it was a sad spectacle, when they saw one so much esteemed among them being borne to her last resting place. To the Indians, it was a grand and impressive sight. Arasapha, the king, and others of his people attended the solemn procession in their canoes, thus showing their respect for one, the cause of whose death struck them with awe and reverence. The deep, dark forest that stood close down to the shores of the streams almost rejected the light, as it came from the burning brands of pine carried in the boats; and, as they passed under the thick foliage, a shadow was scarcely reflected from the water. The

⁸ Gloucester Files of 1692.

colonists in their plain and unassuming apparel, the aborigines clad in gaudy and significant robes, and the negro slaves (as oarsmen) with their almost nude bodies, must have presented, from the shore, a rare and striking picture. Here—all undesignated—was the funeral of a Friend, in which ostentation and display are always avoided, made one of the grandest pageants that the fancy could imagine, a fertile subject for the pencil of the artist, and one well deserving an effort to portray its beauty.

She left a will and disposed of her estate, which together with that of her deceased husband, as retained by her, passed at that time to their children. The last will of each of them may be found on file in the office of secretary of state at Trenton; these prove them to have been persons of education, and of considerable property.⁹ Their children were born at Gravesend, where the names and ages of each may be found entered in the books of the Friends' Meeting of that place.¹⁰ They were as follows: Abraham, born 1666; Jacob, born 1668, who married Judith ———; Mary, born 1671, who married Jeremiah Bates; Martha, born 1676, who married Joseph Brown and Thomas Chalkley; Sarah, born 1677, who married Daniel Cooper; Abigail, born 1683, who married Daniel Stanton; Thomas, born ———, who married Abigail Davenport; and Samuel, born ———, who married ———.

The old graveyard, which is on the land settled by Henry Wood, where many of the Spicers were buried, is still in existence, and some degree of care has been given to it by the descendants of the family. It is on the farm now owned by Lemuel Horner, near the site of the Camden city water works. As in many similar instances, the rule of Friends was observed, and no memorials were placed at the graves of the first settlers of the soil,—a source of unceasing regret with such as care to know the resting place of their ancestors. It is particularly unfortunate for those in search of old things, as much valuable information is often obtained from this source, which, but for this, would be entirely lost.

Samuel Spicer, in his will, gave his son Jacob one hundred and fifty acres attached to the homestead, bounded by the river

⁹ Gloucester Files, 1702.

¹⁰ Lib. G3, 257. Proceedings of N. J. His. Society, Vol. 1x, 02.

Delaware and Cooper's creek; and to his other sons, Samuel and Thomas, one hundred and seventy-five acres each. Samuel died a minor, and his portion of land passed to his brother Jacob. Subsequently, in 1728, Jacob and Thomas made an exchange of land by which Jacob's amount of acres was increased to two hundred and sixty, and Thomas's, whose plantation fronted the creek, had somewhat less within its boundaries. Thomas remained on this property, and died in 1759, leaving a will.¹¹ His children were as follows: Jacob, who married Mary Lippincott; Thomas, who married Rebecca Day; and Samuel, who married Abigail Willard and Sarah Potter. From this branch of the family, came those of the collateral issue, who retain the blood in these parts, although the name has disappeared for many years.

In the year 1711, Jacob and Thomas made a division of some other portion of their landed estate;¹² and, in the same year, Jacob sold parts of his share of the paternal property to Samuel Burrough and other persons.¹³

Jacob removed to Cape May county, where he settled as early as 1691. He was a member of the Legislature from 1709 to 1723, and surrogate of that county from the last named year to 1741, and for many years one of the judges of the court. He was born in 1668, and deceased in 1741.¹⁴ The reading of the minutes of the proceedings of the legislature during the time in which he sat as a member, discloses many curious things. One of the troubles was the difficulty of keeping a quorum present to do business; and the sergeant-at-arms was always busy in hunting for absentees. In 1716, this officer went to Gloucester, Salem and Cape May counties in search of delinquents. It was, at that day, a toilsome and difficult journey, even under more propitious circumstances. These representatives heard of his coming, and, suspecting the purpose of his visit, started for Burlington by another road than that usually traveled. Striking their trail, he pursued them with his warrant of arrest nearly to Gloucester, where, again to avoid him, they betook themselves to the water, and crossed the river into Pennsylvania. Here the sergeant-at-arms was completely at fault, and no remedy was

¹¹ Lib. No. 9, 306.

¹² Lib. A, 45.

¹³ Lib. A, 205.

¹⁴ Lib. No. 4, 318.

left to him but to report to the speaker of assembly. Some of them appeared in a few days and were reprimanded; but Jacob Spicer returned home, and writs were issued for a new election in Cape May county. This did not cure the difficulty, for Jacob was again elected, and still neglected to appear as the representative from that county. Another warrant was issued, and the officer on this occasion, found him sick in bed. Not to be cheated, the sergeant required the honorable member to proceed to Burlington with him, and appear at the bar of the house, according to the requirements of authority in him vested. Jacob pleaded indisposition, and was released until he recovered; at which time he explained his absence, and was allowed to take his seat as a member.

His son, Jacob Spicer, deserves a more particular notice. He was born in 1716, and became a member of the Legislature in 1744; which station he occupied for a period of twenty-one years, first in connection with Henry Young, and afterwards, until his death, with Aaron Leaming. He bore a prominent part in the proceedings and business of the house, and was appointed, in connection with Aaron Leaming, to revise the laws of the State; and "Leaming and Spicer's" collection, the result of their labors, is well known at this day as a faithful exposition of the statutes. He was a man of exemplary habits, of strong and vigorous imagination, and strictly faithful in his business relations with his fellow men.

He married Judith, daughter of Humphrey Hughes, who died in 1747, and afterwards married Deborah Leaming, widow of Christopher Leaming, in 1752.¹⁵ The marriage agreement entered into with the last named female, shows much sound sense and discriminating judgment. In 1756, he purchased the interest of the West Jersey Society in the county of Cape May, constituting what has since been known as the 'Vacant Right.'¹⁶ In 1762, he made his will of thirty-nine pages, the most voluminous and elaborate testamentary document on record in this State.¹⁷ He died in 1765, and was interred in the family burial ground at Cold Spring,—a spot now overgrown with large forest timber.¹⁸

¹⁵ Maurice Beasley's Memo.

¹⁶ Lib. A, 154.

¹⁷ Lib. X, 440 to 461.

¹⁸ Lib. B2, 549.

He kept a diary for many years, in which he not only recorded remarkable events, but also entered in detail the cost of his household and the profits of his business. Strictly honest in all his dealings, plain and decided in all his opinions, prompt and exact in all his agreements, he had, as he deserved, the confidence and regard of his neighbors through all the years of his business life, and served his constituents faithfully as their representative until his death. Many extracts from his diary have been published by the Historical Society of New Jersey, which evince the peculiarities of the man, his views of duty toward himself, and toward those with whom he had intercourse.