

HENRY STACY.

ROBERT STACY was one of the persons who came to West New Jersey in 1678, to represent the interests of the Yorkshire owners of the land that they had taken of Edward Byllinge, in consideration of moneys which he owed them, and which he was otherwise unable to pay.¹ Joseph Helmsley and William Emley were his associates, together with Thomas Olive, Daniel Wills, John Penford and Benjamin Scott, who represented the London owners, and who also became seized of these lands from the same person and for the same reasons. Robert Stacy first settled at Burlington in discharge of his duties imposed upon him as commissioner; he here became a leading member in the Society of Friends, and took part in the political affairs of the colony. His occupation was that of a tanner; this business he did not resume until his removal to Philadelphia, which occurred a few years after his arrival; he there remained until his death.² Among his children was a son Henry, who, together with his wife Mary, came to New Jersey soon after his father, and also settled at or near Burlington. Besse, in his "Sufferings of Friends," mentions that Henry Stacy was taken, on two different occasions, from religious meetings at Cirencester, in Gloucestershire, to prison, and there detained for some time. This was in 1660 and 1662; the subject of this sketch was, doubtless, the same person.

¹ Gordon's History of New Jersey, 39.

² I. b. G₃, 128.

During his stay here he was appointed to a membership in the governor's council, a position at that day given only to persons of talent and strict integrity, and a station which was one of the most responsible and difficult to fill.³

In addition to the inducements offered by his father's coming here, he was perhaps tempted to try his fortunes in the new colony by letters sent to him from those already settled, whose representations of the country and its productions were certainly very flattering. A letter from John Cripps to Henry Stacy will show in what light New Jersey was held by those already here, in early times; and how they wrote to their friends still in England, whom they sought to induce to follow them to a country that had so many advantages. It is as follows:

“FROM BURLINGTON IN DELAWARE RIVER, }
The 26th of the Eighth Month, 1677. }

“DEAR FRIEND:—Through the mercy of God we are safely arrived at New Jersey; my wife and all mine are very well, and we have our healths rather better here than we had in England; indeed the country is so good that I do not see how it can reasonably be found fault with. As far as I perceive, all the things we heard of it in England are very true, and I wish that many people (that are in straits) in England were here. Here is good land enough lies void that would serve many thousands of families, and we think if they cannot live here they can hardly live in any place in the world; but we do not desire to persuade any to come but such as are well satisfied in their own mind. A town lot is laid out for us in Burlington, which is a convenient place for trade. It is about one hundred and fifty miles up the Delaware; the country and air seem to be very agreeable to our bodies, and we have very good stomachs to our victuals. Here is plenty of provision in the country; plenty of fish and fowl, and good venison very plentiful and much better than ours in England, for it eats not so dry, but is full of gravy like fat young beef. You that come after us need not fear the trouble that we have had, for now is land here ready divided against you come. The Indians are very loving to us, except here and

³ Leaming & Spicer's Laws.

there one, when they have gotten strong liquor in their head, which they now greatly love. But for the country, in short I like it very well, and I do believe that this river of Delaware is as good a river as most in the world. It exceeds the river Thames by many degrees.

"Here is a town laid out for twenty proprietaries, and a straight line drawn from the river side up the land which is to be the Main street, and a market place about the middle. The Yorkshire ten proprietors are to build on one side, and the London ten on the other side, and they have ordered one street to be made along the river side which is not divided with the rest, but in small lots by itself, and every one that hath any part in a propriety is to have his share in it. The town lots for every propriety will be about ten or eleven acres, which is only for a house, orchard, and gardens; and the corn and pasture grounds are to be laid off in great quantities.

"I am thy loving friend,

"JOHN CRIPPS."⁴

Many such letters as the above were written by the new comers to their friends in England and Ireland, some of which were published as circulars among the people, and aided much in the settlement of the colony. In 1698, Gabriel Thomas published a History of West New Jersey, where, as he says, he "resided about fifteen years;" it is a small book of thirty-four pages, part of which is taken up with a glossary of Indian names and translations. This curious old document was lost sight of and remained out of print for many years, until a copy was secured by Henry A. Brady, of New York city, who had the same faithfully lithographed and a few copies reprinted, most of which found their way into the various public libraries of the country. Gabriel excels all in his praises of the land and climate in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and is only equaled by some of the papers put forth by sharp land-speculators of the present day, by which many verdant folks are sadly cheated.⁵

Henry Stacy did not remain here many years; he returned with his family to England in 1683, and settled at Stepney,

⁴ Smith's History of New Jersey.

⁵ Leaming and Spicer's Laws.

near London, where he deceased in 1689.⁶ He had four children, namely: Samuel, who died young; Elizabeth, who married William Burge in 1705, and settled in Philadelphia; Mary, who married Jonathan Wilson, and resided in London;⁷ and Sarah, who married Robert Montgomery, and lived in New Jersey.⁸

In 1683, and before his departure for England, Henry Stacy made a location of four hundred and ninety acres of land in Newton township, near the head of the middle branch of Newton creek, and east of the Graysbury land.⁹ By his will all the real estate was given to his children; and, by division of the same effected in 1711, the tract of land above named became the property of Sarah, the wife of Robert Montgomery.¹⁰ About the year 1715, Robert Montgomery built a house on this tract of land, and removed thither from Monmouth county, where he had previously resided.

On April 1st, 1715, Robert Montgomery and Sarah, his wife, conveyed forty acres of land to Jonathan Bolton and Hannah, his wife, being part of the survey before spoken of. The deed is a curious document, the purpose being to secure some means by which the children of the grantors might have an opportunity for education.¹¹ Jonathan was a shoemaker, and came from Burlington county together with his wife Hannah, who appears as an important personage in the transaction. The lot conveyed adjoined Thomas Miller's and Joseph Hinchman's land, "to be laid out proportionately in one entire square tract until it amount to forty acres,—to the said Jonathan and Hannah, his wife, for ninety-nine years, if the said Jonathan and Hannah shall so long live, or either of them during their natural lives." The consideration was the "paying of one ear of Indian corn yearly; and that the said Hannah shall, at any time hereafter—as soon as the said Bolton shall get a house built fit to live in—teach or instruct, or cause to be taught or instructed, to read English and to do seamstry work, or any other act or parts of acts that she, the said Hannah, is capable to perform, or inform

⁶ Lib. AAA, 128.

⁷ Lib. CH, 80.

⁸ Lib. A, 33.

⁹ Revel's Book, 37.

¹⁰ Lib. A, 33.

¹¹ Lib. A, 90.

or direct all the children of the said Montgomery and Sarah his wife, or either of them, or their children, as it may happen, or any child belonging to their family that they shall think fit to send to learn." Whether the said Hannah possessed any qualifications to discharge the duties thus imposed, does not appear; and whether the said Jonathan was to assist in the intervals of his "making and mending," is also in obscurity; yet it may be assumed that this was the first institution of learning established in the eastermost part of Newton township; and it shows the liberality of the founder to have been applied in a commendable direction. The covenants on the part of the said Jonathan and Hannah were equally curious. They were not to put any other person in their place or stead; were not to take more than one crop of winter corn off the premises in each three years; nor to sell, *steal* or waste any timber, except for rails or fire wood. The agreement on the part of Jonathan and Hannah that they would not steal the timber, would imply that Henry and Sarah questioned their honesty, but were forced to entrust the education of their children to them by reason of the few persons suitable for such a purpose. The contracting parties appear to have understood each other in this matter, and considered it best to use plain terms, not susceptible of double meaning or controversy. On what part of the survey was laid out this proportionately square tract of land, or, on what part of the same, Jonathan and Hannah erected their seminary, no means are at hand to discover; a regret that all must feel, in view of its being the spot where commenced the intellectual development of our country, at least in this particular section. Jonathan and Hannah's house, "fit to live in," was nothing more than a log cabin, of one room. The furniture was in keeping, and the accommodation of the scholars may well be conjectured. Little patience and plenty of birch were part of the system of instruction in those days, and lessons in "reading, writing and cyphering" were frequently enforced in this way, and thus made a lasting impression upon the mind of the pupil. With the approbation of parents, the pedagogue became the terror of the rising generation in general, and of evil-doers in particular.

" Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face.
 Full well they laugh'd, with counterfeited glee,
 At all his jokes ; for many a joke had he ;
 Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
 Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd.
 Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
 The love he bore to learning was in fault.

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But past is all his fame. The very spot
 Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot."

This survey lay east of, and adjoining the Graysbury land, bounded partly by Newton creek and extending to John Haddon's estate; now owned by Rhoda Hampton, the Websters, and others. The house erected by Robert Montgomery stood near the late residence of John M. Whitall, deceased, at a short distance east of the old Philadelphia and Egg Harbor road, which then crossed Newton creek at Atmore's dam. After residing here for a few years, the owners of the land broke up their establishment, and returned to Monmouth county, leaving no one of the name within the limits of Old Newton. Of the Montgomery family, Thomas H. Montgomery, of Philadelphia, has published a valuable genealogical history, showing a commendable industry, of much credit to the author and interest to the reader.