

SCOTLAND AND ITS FIRST AMERICAN COLONY

from a book (1985) of this name by Ned C. Landsman

Mr. Landsman has researched the settlement of what was first called “East Jersey.” Because his writings help us to understand that early society and its workings and records the Herriots as a part of that society he is quoted here as historical background.

Religious prosecution in Scotland occurred at about the same time that wealthy Scots had acquired lands in East Jersey that they wished to settle and develop. These owners were called Proprietors and as they sold portions of their holdings the purchasers were called “Fractioners.”

“...most of the East Jersey proprietors belonged to the Quaker or Episcopal communions and derived from the east or Northeast of Scotland; thus they belonged to the same social groups as the improvers. Religious motives were secondary among this group; many of the proprietors supported the Stuarts and thus had little reason to flee persecution during the 1680's. Their model for the economy was the society of Scotland's Northeast, where sons could acquire lairdships, where economic expansion was the order of the day. For a successful colonial venture, this proved to be a more effective combination, and the East Jersey effort quickly dwarfed its southern counterpart" (in Carolina).

“The leader among the Scottish proprietors was the Quaker Robert Barclay, laird of the Northeastern estate of Urie, cousin of the Stuarts, and author of the famous 'Apology for the True Christian Divinity...Barclay was well connected with leaders of the Quaker movement in England, and William Penn first persuaded the Scotsman to become involved in the colonization.”

“As an inducement to obtain Scottish support for East Jersey, the English proprietors appointed Barclay governor for life and granted him a free proprietary share, on the condition that he recruit four additional Scotsmen as proprietors....His efforts did not cease when he had recruited four other proprietors, and by 1684 twelve properties, or one-half of the colony's lands, were in Scottish hands. Under Barclay's direction, the Scots sold off fractions of their properties to other Scots, so that soon more than fifty Scottish 'Fractioners' owned shares of East Jersey.”

“East Jersey's Scottish proprietary group was dominated by men from Eastern Scotland, especially from the Northeast. All six of the original proprietors came from that area, and the three most active-the two Barclays and Gordon of Cluny-came from the Lowlands of the Northeast. Northeasterners, in fact, comprised a majority of the Scottish investors. More than thirty (of fifty-four) Fractioners derived from that region and another dozen or more were from the Southeast, hile only a handful came from the west of Scotland.”

EARLY HISTORY IN AMERICA

The proprietary group was led by men with Northeastern, Quaker, and even Jacobite backgrounds, but by 1685 East Jersey so dominated Scottish colonization that even a few covenanting gentlemen invested in the colony. They chose East Jersey over Carolina in part because of long-standing family ties. Most prominent among the new purchasers were Lord Neil Campbell, brother of the martyred Earl of Argyll and an associate of several proprietors from Edinburgh's mercantile community, and George Scot of Pitlochry in Fife, whose family had long been involved in colonizing ventures. Both men would be responsible for bringing many settlers, and even a few merchants and ministers, into the colony.

...very few persons from outside eastern Scotland accepted employment as indentured servants, with the exception of those who traveled with Lord Neil Campbell, one of the few Southwestern Fractioners.

David Herriott and David Campbell were two men who had accompanied Neil Campbell to East Jersey and were identified as “servants.”

Campbell's property, called Rariton River, consisted of more than 8,000 acres. According to Landsman:

“He soon settled 22 men servants and 3 boys on that property under three-year indentures and had them furnished with 'corn, cattell, and matteriall.' The indentures of those servants expired in 1688, but the following year Campbell wrote to his agent that 'all of them are under contract for Rent with us.’”

David Herriott may have been one of these; however no specific record proves it.

“At the end of his or her term of service, every East Jersey servant was entitled to twenty-five acres of head-land, and those who came with skills or a family received more.”

“...political changes had allowed the next most active fractioner, Neil Campbell, to return to Scotland from East Jersey.” (1686 or 1687).

“Although the proprietors maintained their distance from the bulk of the New Jersey population, they retained close ties to their fellow Scotsman, in part through ties of patronage, as in Southwestern Scotland. Where the first generation of proprietors often had been reluctant to promote the fortunes of Scotsman of lower station, their successors created a variety of positions to maintain their countrymen of all ranks. Thus on both the Peapack and Basking Ridge estates, the owners employed a succession of Scottish assistants, both to supervise their tenants and servants and to operate mills or mines. The prior positions of these assistants were varied: some were the sons of merchants or freeholders; a few were descended from indentured servants. They were as likely to be Presbyterians as Episcopalians, even when employed by proprietors of the latter denomination.”

EARLY HISTORY IN AMERICA

“Among the most prominent of the proprietary Assistants were the Lockharts of Woodbridge, Bedminster and Trenton, two of whom worked for Andrew Johnstone at Peapack....One of Andrew Johnstone's assistants, Alexander Lockhart, retired with an estate of 450 acres of improved land in Hunterdon County.”

“Another Peapack assistant who benefitted from his proprietary connections was David Harriot, who served as surveyor of the Peapack estate. Harriot was the second son of another David Harriot, who had come to East Jersey in 1685 as a servant to Lord Neil Campbell. The first David settled in Perth Amboy, and, following the expiration of his term of servitude, inherited a small home in the city from his wife's father. The acquisition of a home of his own did nothing to loosen Harriot's ties to his former patron, and in 1693 Harriot was elected to the assembly as a proprietary supporter.”

“Harriot's sons followed in their father's footsteps. One son inherited a farm the father had taken in Woodbridge, while two others moved westward to the Peapack area, and both worked for Andrew Johnstone. Apparently they fared quite well from their connections: when David Harriot died in 1756 he left an estate worth more than £300, and he owned a negro slave.”

This information derives from the *Journal of Andrew Johnstone*; Will of David Harriot (1756), Somerset Wills; and Will of Andrew Harriot (1734), Middlesex Wills.

“The Lockharts married, among others, the Harriots, who were also Peapack assistants, while the Harriots married into many local families, including that of Walter Ker.”

“Among the Peapack assistants, the Harriots played important roles in the Presbyterian churches in Woodbridge, Cranbury, and Lamington (near Peapack), ...”

The wills of several Scottish colonists provide evidence that Scots who moved from a town often retained symbolic ties to their earlier homes and to other family members also. Several wills contained instructions that their bodies should be brought back to the family's place of origin for burial. In the Presbyterian churchyard at Cranbury, the stone identifies John Harriot “of New York.”

EARLY HERRIOTT HISTORY IN AMERICA

Why did our forefathers leave their known land in Scotland to settle on America's shores and colonize? They came to find a new life and freedom from the monarchy under which they had been bound. As Van Doren Honeyman describes in the *Somerset New Jersey Historical Quarterly* “*The awful pictures of those days still make the heart sick and the soul faint. One cannot read about them in, for example, Walter Scot's 'Tales of a Grandfather,' without a shudder at the cruelty of mankind under the cloak of religion and civil authority.*”

And so they came -- courageous in facing the dangers of crossing an unknown sea to an unknown land determined to find a new life and freedom.

From the book by H. E. Wildes, *TWIN RIVERS: RARITAN AND THE PASSAIC*, we learn something of the circumstances of the voyage of the *Henry and Francis*, one of the ships thought to have contained our immigrant ancestor David.

“Back home in England the Restoration had jammed the jails with stubborn Scots who would not worship as the King decreed. The prisoners, all rugged Presbyterians, could not be converted; in despair, the Stuarts decreed their deportation. And the Scots were glad to go, for outside prison walls, a "killing time" was being waged when rabid Stuart partisans massacred the nonconformists.

George Scot of Pitlochry, a dour man who would not take orders that ran counter to his conscience, financed the emigration of two hundred fellow countrymen, requiring only that they work for him in America long enough to repay their 5 pound passage money. He chartered Captain Richard Hutton's 350 ton ship, HENRY AND FRANCIS, and filled it with poor men who had gone to jail for conscience' sake. In September, 1685, they sailed from Leith for Perth Amboy.

The trip was terrible, jail fever, carried by the prisoners, broke out on the crowded ship before it cleared Land's End. Those who survived the fever suffered from starvation, for the meat had spoiled and there were no vegetables. Sixty died of fever, others perished by starvation. To add to their troubles, the HENRY AND FRANCIS twice sprang leaks, requiring constant pumping during all the fifteen weeks the ship remained at sea; in the midst of all their other troubles, Captain Hutton conceived the thought of kidnapping his entire passenger list and taking them to Jamaica to be sold as servants. The Scots, not unnaturally, objected violently, but the captain swung his helm about to steer the new course and they could do little against his armed sailors. Then by the grace of God, the Scots reported, the wind veered so that the HENRY AND FRANCIS could sail in no other direction than to New Jersey. The Scots considered it a miracle.

EARLY HISTORY IN AMERICA

After they arrived in the colony, George Scott appealed for help from the citizens already well established, but those on the coast 'were most inhospitable' to ragged, dirty, half-fed and ill-appearing immigrants. A few found welcome at Campbell's Gully north of Perth Amboy; the rest headed for the interior. Most of them seeking good farm land, crossed the Raritan into Monmouth County; others plodded into the back country, to Bedminster, near Mine Mountain in Somerset where the hills reminded them of home; a few trudged northwest to what we now call Scotch Plains. Those who were luckier than the rest got to Woodbridge where the residents, Scott reported, were most kind. Woodbridge not only forwarded food and clothing to immigrants walking to that village, but also sent horses on which sufferers might ride. Few of the Scots, however went to cities; countrymen at heart, they preferred the open spaces."

We know that David Herriott came to America because of his political and religious beliefs. He refused to take the Oath of Allegiance to the King. The Privy Council offered him the choice of banishment overseas or death.

For whatever reason, David did fare better than many who were banished. Usually the assets of one being banished were seized. From the Booton report we learned that he sold two pieces of property in Edinburgh in 1697, 12 years after coming to "East Jersey."

Often times the Privy Council ordered that the men have an ear *cropt'd* and the women *marked* on the cheek with a hot iron: this to make them "identifiable" should they ever attempt to return to the Kingdom.

Perhaps David's affluence and position were factors in affecting how he was treated.

The exodus of Scots from Scotland, during this period of oppression, was at first only a few to America, but rather large numbers to Ireland. It should be noted that these people or their families who came to America later, are known as "Scotch Irish". In some ways this is a misnomer because the Scots remained Scots except in the rarest cases.

THE NEW LAND

Woodbridge and nearby Perth Amboy were home to David Herriott and his wife Hel(l)en Campbell. Little did they know that they would later be referred to as one of the First Families of New Jersey.

What was it like? You cannot help but wonder of the mixed emotions they had -- adjusting to vast areas of wilderness, and even though Woodbridge was partially settled and only a few miles from Perth Amboy, access was by a trail through the wilderness.

From the book *TWIN RIVERS: RARITAN AND THE PASSAIC*, by H. E. Wildes, we have the following description:

“Ambo Point, 1682 - Tree shaded with sweet-scented locusts, with a pleasure park along the Raritan where townfolk gathered on warm summer afternoons to enjoy the ocean breezes or the balsam-laden winds that came from Monmouth, Amboy was so pleasant that some romantic ladies nicknamed its timberland “Love Grove.”

Businessmen, gazing out upon the bay and watching the sloops and schooners that rode at anchor within a plank length of the shore, forecast that Amboy would surpass both New York and Philadelphia as a business center.” A real estate boom in 1682! The land, “bought at less than a quarter cent per acre now fetched three thousand times as much, with the threat of further increases.”

In 1683, the town was laid out into 150 ten acre lots and sold for “20 pounds, with the condition that the purchasers should each build a house 30 feet long, by 18 feet wide.” In 1684, the deputy-governor added large tracts for out-lots.

Also, in 1684, the new governor, Gawen Lawrie, had orders to “change the name from Amboy to Perth, in honor of James, Earl of Perth in Scotland, one of the twenty-four owners of East Jersey. The gentry, living in their wooden houses on the bluff, thoroughly approved of the change, but most of the working groups preferred the original name. At weekly markets and at the semi-annual fairs, held in May and October of each year, they argued hotly, at such times as they were not horse racing, cudgel fighting, gambling or rioting, that the shift was an aristocratic trick and that true Jerseymen would call the place Amboy. Eventually they compromised by using both names.”

“Lawrie's introduction of the semiannual three-day fair added greatly to the color of Perth Amboy. Breaking away from the strict Puritanism of the past, fair days were times of jubilee when license was unchecked. Under Lawrie's liberal administration, most laws were suspended; no one could, by custom, be arrested during the fair's continuance except for crimes against the crown. Thimblerrigging, drunkenness,

EARLY HISTORY IN AMERICA

swearing, and perhaps lewd behavior--all those practices punishable at other times by fines, lashings or banishment--were at such times the order of the day."

From *A HISTORY OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY* by Wall and Pickersgall, we learn that:

"The affairs of Woodbridge were managed as in New England at town meetings and in January, 1699, it became necessary to make it obligatory to attend these meetings under a penalty of nine pence for non-attendance, and upon refusal to pay the fine the delinquent was to be turned out of the meeting house. The early residents deemed it necessary to prepare against Indian attacks, and a rate was levied to provide 10 lb of powder and 20 lb of lead; the prison was ordered to be fortified by stockades of a half or whole tree of nine feet long at least, to provide a place of safety for the women and children. A ranger of the woods was appointed to prevent danger threatened by the French and Indians. The killer of wolves was allowed from 10 to 25 shillings per head."

The birth of the first white child in Woodbridge was an event that called for great celebration. Mary Compton was born November, 1667, daughter of William and Mary Compton. She married Caleb Campbell (grandson of Lord Neil Campbell) on January 1, 1696. Mary died February 15, 1735, aged 67 by church records. Her stone still stands in the Old First Presbyterian Churchyard -- one of the oldest and most interesting in New Jersey.

An interesting epitaph that appears in this church yard is found also in England on the tomb of Edward, the Black Prince, ca. 1376.

Look and see as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
As I am now so you must be
Prepare for Death and follow me

Many HERRIOTTS are buried in the Old First Presbyterian Churchyard, too many to list here, including the heads of several of the lines. And nowhere is the variant spelling of our surname more pronounced with the majority of the names spelled Harriot, with a few Harriott's, and a Herriot. Such were our roots.

Though Woodbridge was later to become the "hub" of early Herriott family history, certainly Perth Amboy was more than a "landing place" for David Herriott. For it was here, in Perth Amboy township, they first took an active role in the civil affairs of their newly adopted country.

Sadly, today not a single surname or descendant of those first settlers is known to remain in Perth Amboy, except in the cemeteries.