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New Aberdeen;

or

THE SCOTCH SETTLEMENT

of

MONMOUTH COUNTY,

New Jersey.

By JAMES STYDEN, A. M.,

Esquire-at-Law

NEWARK: J. J. JOHNSON, PRINTER.
1890.

FIFTY CENTS A COPY.



JOHN BOYD MONUMENT.
Unveiled Thursday, June 14, 1900, at the Old
Scots' Burying Ground, Wickatunk, N. J.



New Aberdeen,

OR

The Scotch Settlement

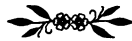
OF

Monmouth County,

New Jersey.

By JAMES STEEN, A. M.,

COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW.



MATAWAN, N. J.
JOURNAL STEAM PRINT.
1899.

Shrewsbury, at house of John Hamton. Robert Ray seems to have been a carpenter, and in 1688 purchased land from John Kaighn. Janet Rhea lies in the Rhea graveyard on the D. D. Denise farm one mile west of Freehold, and her tombstone gives the date of her death January 15, 1761, aged about 93. Her husband Robert died January 18, 1720. She was therefore about 15 when she arrived with her father, and can hardly be considered a "Scotch Covenantant." (See H. G. Smith's "The 'Old Scots' Church," page 49).

James Reed seems not to have been a Quaker like his brother John. He and Peter Watson were together until their service had expired. The fifty acre farm they were on near Amboy is still to be identified. The title passed to Thomas Gordon November 25, 1699. We have seen that Watson sought to have ministers from Scotland come to East Jersey and James Reed was probably like minded. Andrew Reed was another brother, and James had sons, John and Samuel, and many of his descendants were connected with "old Tennent."

Peter Watson not only had his house lot in Matawan, or New Aberdeen, but he also had a large plantation adjoining it. While as yet he was "Peter Watson of Amboy Perth, planter," John Reid of Hortensie conveyed to him November 10, 1688, in consideration of the conveyance of a tract called "The Great Fly" to said Reid by said Watson, the following:

"That certain peice of land at a place called Gravel Brook beginning at the corner of Sir John Gordon's land and Gravel Brook fourteen chains below where a small run comes into said brook; thence west-south-west thirty-five chains; thence north sixty chains; thence East to Gravel Brook; thence up the brook to the beginning, bounded South by Sir John Gordon, East by Gravel Brook, West unsurveyed. Then in 1715 (May 3) John Johnston, Esq., sold Peter Watson 400 acres adjoining to the plantation of said Watson, "yeoman," where he now dwells. In 1715 he also purchased land from William Hoge, of Freehold, a Scotch covenantant, from whom a worthy line of Pres-

byterian ministers in the Southern Presbyterian Church are descended.

We have seen that William Hoge was one of the grand jurors in 1700. Upon the sale of his property he removed to Delaware, thence to Cedar Creek in Opeckon, Virginia. His son, John Hoge, graduated at Princeton College in 1748, was licensed October 10th, 1753, and ordained 1755, and settled at Cedar Creek (Opeckon) Virginia, in the Church, the site of which had been given by his father.

Another of our New Aberdeen settlers was William Ronald (sometimes confused with Reynolds). He was here as early as 1688, for in that year he executed the following instrument, which we give in full, for the reason that it includes others of the first settlers:

"Know all men by these presents that wee, Andrew Burnett, William Ronald, John Baird, John Webster, James Melvin (Melbin), John Nesmith, John Hebron (Hepburn), John Molison, Alexander Scott and his wife, Andrew Hamton and his wife, Peter Watson, his wife and children, all of the province of East New Jersey for and in consideration of a certain sum of money by us in hand already received of Robert Barclay of Ury in the Kingdom of Scotland at and before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge and ourselves therewith fully satisfied, contented, and thereof and from and of and from every part and parcel thereof doe freely and clearly acquit and discharge the said Robert Barclay, his heirs, executors and administrators forever by these presents have aliened, granted, bargained, sold, assigned and sett over all our Right title, interest, claim and demand whatsoever of the headlands granted to us by the proprietors of the said province to have and to hold the said headlands unto the said Robert Barclay, his heirs and assigns forever, and the only proper use, benefit and behoof of him the said Robert Barclay, his heirs and assigns forever. In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and affixed our seals the tenth day of May, 1688.
Andrew Burnett, John Hepburn,

John Mollisone, Andrew Hamton,
 James Melvine, John Baird,
 Peter Watson, William Ronal, W.
 R. his mark,
 John Nesmith, John Webster, J. W.
 his mark.

William Ronald signed his will May 14, 1709, by his mark. It was proved the same year and names his wife Helen, who was executrix, and sons John, William and James, and four daughters, Euphame, Janet, Helen and Sophia, to each of whom he gave ten pounds. The witnesses to the will were: William Clarke, Charles Gordon, John Bard, William Hay and William Laing. The son, John Ronald, purchased land in 1712 of Richard Salter on Doctor's Creek, near Allentown. It was probably the first William Ronald (Ronno) who joined with John Craig, Walter Ker and Patrick Inlay in December, 1705, in asking to have the Scots meeting house registered.

The first name in the Proprietors grant for the town site of New Aberdeen (now Matawan) is that of John Johnstone. Doctor Johnstone has generally been considered as a citizen of Amboy and for a time was a resident of that city, and died there September 6th, 1732, in the 71st year of his age. Still he was very intimately concerned in the Scotch settlement of Monmouth. He was the son of John Johnstone of Ochiltree, Scotland, who had been listed by the government in May, 1684, as a fugitive having been in arms against the Crown. An elder brother, James Johnstone, came in 1684 and settled in what was then Monmouth County and called the place Spottiswoode, having lived in Spottiswoode, Scotland, for some time. James was largely instrumental in his brother John's coming to East Jersey. He wrote on December 12th, 1684, saying, among other things, this concerning the religious condition of the Province:

"The old inhabitants are a most careless, infregal People; their profession are most part *Protestants*, few *Quakers*, some *Anabaptists*, it is most desired there may be some Ministers sent us over, they would have considerable Benefices and good Estates; and since it would be a

matter of great Piety, I nope ye will be instrumental to advise some over to us. * * * What I most earnestly desire of you, for the encouragement of this Plantation, is you would be Instrumental to send us over some Ministers, who I dare engage shall afterwards ever be thankfull, and I oblidged to be your ever affectionate Brotler,

JAMES JOHNSTONE."

James had nine persons with him upon his arrival and claimed head lands for that number. He laid out and cleared the highway between Amboy and Crosswicks. He died in 1698. His brother John was a druggist in Edinburgh and was born in 1661. He was unmarried when he was designated in "Scots Model of the Government of East Jersey" as one of the persons to whom application might be made for passage on the "Henry & Francis." His place of business was at the sign of the "The Unicorn" in Edinburgh. It may have been the persuasion of his brother, more possibly that of the daughter of George Scot, the projector of the voyage, that induced John Johnstone, the druggist, to embark September 5th, 1685, at Leith. The disastrous voyage is familiar to all students of Scotch history. Scot (Laird of Pitlochrie), his wife, her sister-in-law, Lady Aithernie and her children died. Scot's daughter, Eupham, was left an orphan and not only so, but her uncle and aunt, William and Eupham Rigg, also died, leaving their property to their neice. John Johnstone and Eupham Scott were married April 18th, 1686. It is but just to say that the strictures of Wodrow upon Dr. Johnstone, so completely refuted by Whitehead (contributions to E. J. History), need to be taken *cum grano salis*.

Large quantities of land had been granted Dr. Johnstone's father-in-law and his daughter petitioned for her inheritance. This was granted and her husband was put in possession of a large tract of land in Monmouth County not far from the New Aberdeen. The patent some time after (June 9th, 1701), gives the name of the tract as "Scotchchesterburg." In all Dr. Johnstone had patented to him 30.511 acres. He was not a passenger of neces-

sity, but was one of the few voluntary emigrants. Still it is quite possible that, owing to his family relations, he was ill at ease in Scotland. A Miss Hume came over in the vessel with Johnstone. Whether her father and mother (who was Johnstone's sister) were of those who perished on the voyage, we do not know, but she became the wife of William Hoge named above as the ancestor of the long line of Southern Presbyterian clergymen, Doctor Johnstone, possibly by reason of his having been a druggist in Edinburgh, almost immediately entered upon the practice of medicine, at first in New York, but ere long he removed, not to Amboy as is sometimes taken for granted, but to Monmouth County. The latter part of his life he undoubtedly spent in Amboy. For thirteen years he was a member of the Provincial Assembly and for ten of them Speaker. He was one of the Commissioners in 1719-20 for settling the boundary between New York and New Jersey. He held numerous offices.

Another Scotchman with whom he was brought in touch was David Jamison, one of the "Sweet singers." The latter was erratic in the beginning of his religious career and banished in 1685, and on his arrival was bound to Mr. Lockhart of Woodbridge, who assigned the indenture to Mr. Clarke of New York. After having served his time he became a lawyer and in 1710 Governor Hunter made him Chief Justice of New Jersey. He it was that defended Rev. Francis Makemie in 1707 when arrested in New York for preaching without a license, and their mutual friend, Dr. John Johnstone of Scotchsterburg, Monmouth County, New Jersey, who went bail for the arrested minister, and Dr. Johnstone's oldest son (born May 7th, 1691, died 1732), John cemented the friendship between the families by marrying the daughter of Chief Justice David Jamison and settling near his father's country seat in Monmouth. Upon Dr. Johnstone's death the Philadelphia *Weekly Mercury* had this notice of him:

"Perth Amboy, Sept. 19, 1732.—On the 6th inst. died here in the 71st year of his age Doctor John Johnstone, very much

lamented by all who knew him and to the inexpressible loss of the poor who were always his particular care."

Dr. Johnstone had six sons, John, Andrew, William, James, George and Lewis—William and James died in childhood—and seven daughters, only two of whom were married. A large and respected posterity in Monmouth County and elsewhere are in the line of the "Edinburgh Druggist." Doctor Johnstone was an important member of the little Presbyterian Community. His lands joined those of Peter Watson and the marriage is recorded in old Tennent, May 17, 1750, of Michael Johnston and Euphenia Watson. It is by no means to be wondered at that Dr. Johnstone, whose name is the first in the survey and return for the Scotch settlement of New Aberdeen, should also be the first named in the deed for the site of "Old Tennent" (Symmes' Old Tennent, page 109). He was at times a member of the Provincial Council in New York and in 1716 seems to have been Mayor of that city. He had great influence with Governor Hunter, who was charged with having espoused the Scotch or Country party.

Governor Robert Hunter was a native of Scotland and in youth was apprenticed to an Apothecary and may have been acquainted with Dr. Johnstone before coming in 1709 to the Province as its Governor. Dr. Johnstone may have been instrumental in having Makemie's advocate made Chief Justice by the Governor.

When George Keith returned to Monmouth in the orders of the Church of England as a missionary of the S. P. G., he records that on January 9th, 1704, he preached to a considerable auditory at the house of Dr. Johnstone in the "Nethersinks," *i. e.*, Navesinks, from Ps. 119, verses 5, 113.

Doctor Johnstone was also residing in Monmouth about 1710 when he was "second Judge" of the Monmouth Courts, Lewis Morris being the "first" or Presiding Judge, although both were represented by opponents as living in New York, and doubtless much of their time was spent in the city. Dr. Johnstone was not only prominent in the politics of the two provinces, but the trials and persecu-

tions of his own family and of his father-in-law's (Laird of Pitlockie) must have intensified his zeal and devotion to the kirk, and we have no doubt that when in New York City he was to be found with his compatriots in the Presbyterian Meeting, where Makemie preached, and with them laid the foundations of the First Church of New York, as well as of Tenement in New Jersey.

No history of the Scotch settlement of Monmouth could be written that left out the remarkable career of Rev. George Keith. Born in 1638 in Aberdeen, Scotland, of Presbyterian parentage, George Keith had the advantages of a "splendid education" as well in the National schools as at the University of Aberdeen, where he had his degree of Master of Arts. Of wonderful mental endowment and fine personal appearance, he had a confidence or self-reliance that was admired by friends, but stigmatized by adversaries as conceit and vain glory. He came back to his friends in Aberdeen in 1664 from the south of Scotland in Presbyterian orders and soon after adopted the principles of the Quakers, which involved him in persecution and imprisonments. As a Quaker missionary he visited Holland in 1677 in company with Robert Barclay, William Penn and others of prominence in the sect, while two years before he and Barclay had disputed in defence of Quaker doctrines with the scholars of the University of Aberdeen. About this time he also wrote a number of able treatises in vindication and explanation of their form of belief, and with Penn, George Whiting and Stephen Crisp argued with the Baptists of London. In 1682 he was appointed to take charge of a Quaker school at Edmonton, where he was persecuted for preaching and teaching without a license and refusing to take the required oath, was imprisoned. The next year (1683) he taught school at Theobalds, where he had as a pupil a son of his collaborer, Robert Barclay. In 1684 he removed to London, where he was imprisoned for five months in Newgate for nonconformity. At this time the "Proprietors of East Jersey" were mainly if not all Quakers and Robert Barclay was

the Governor. Thus it was by no means surprising that Keith should be drawn towards New Jersey.

Besides, Governor Barclay, as we have seen, had been associated with Keith, had like him been originally a Presbyterian, but unlike him had gone into the Quaker through the Roman Catholic communion. Fantastic theories were abundant and it was no unusual thing for profound scholars and able statesmen to imbibe the most curious doctrines and notions. Governor Barclay himself in 1672 in obedience to a fancied command walked the streets of Aberdeen in "sackcloth and ashes."

Keith imbibed, largely from the writings of Van Helmont, some strange speculative opinions. He embraced the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. He held that the Mosaic narrative was wholly allegorical and also believed some curious notions respecting Adam and Eve. He was appointed to the post of Surveyor General of East Jersey, where he arrived in 1685 with large supplies and six servants, for whom he claimed and was allowed the usual "head lands." He was an especially fine surveyor and mathematician, a fact not infrequently overlooked in view of his comet like theological career.

On the 5th of March, 1685, Charles Gordon wrote from Amboy that George Keith had brought with him three weeks before "Mathematicks" and "Benjamin Clark a library of books to sell." Although appointed July 31, 1684, it was not till April 9th, 1685, that he presented himself to the "Council of Proprietors" in Amboy, but the office being already inconveniently filled it was not till June 12th that it was declared vacant and Mr. Keith authorized to qualify.

He lived for a time in Amboy, but in 1687, the year in which he ran the division line between East and West Jersey, still known as "Keith's line," he removed to what is now Freehold Township, residing as nearly as can now be ascertained a short distance to the southwest of the present town of Freehold.

In 1689, however, he removed to Philadelphia from "Freehold," of which settle-

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