

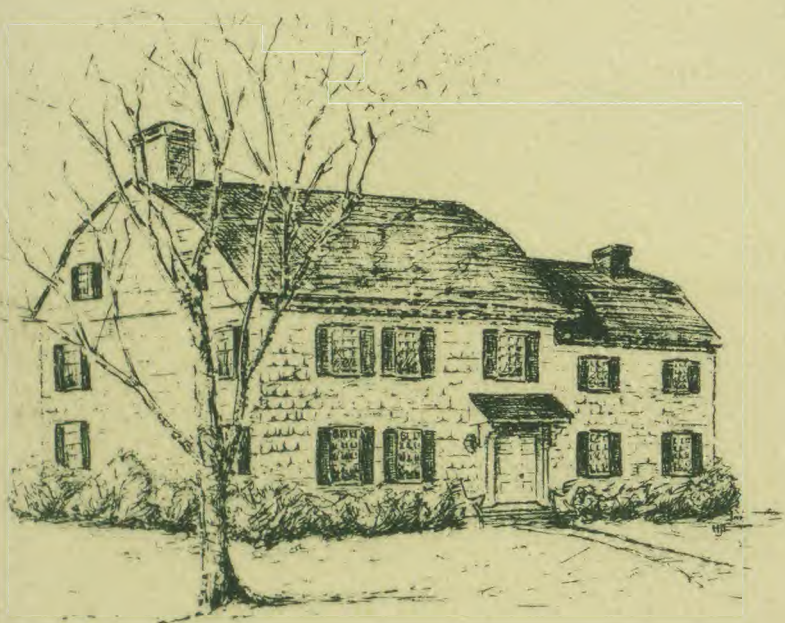
MATAWAN ABERDEEN

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# *The Burrowes Mansion of Matawan, New Jersey:*

and Notations on the History  
of  
Monmouth County



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by Mary Lou Koegler

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by Mary Lou Koegler


Edited By — F. Howard Lloyd Jr.

Crow Quill & Ink

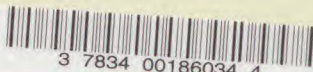
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Ancestor Charts by John Blahota

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FEBRUARY 1978  
MATAWAN, NEW JERSEY  
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Under the Auspices  
of  
The Historic Sites Commission,  
Matawan Borough

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Garrett J. McKeen

Charles W. Mandeville - 1977

Cynthia Marshall - 1977

Charles H. Detwiller, Jr.,  
Consulting Architect



*"The house is my love."*

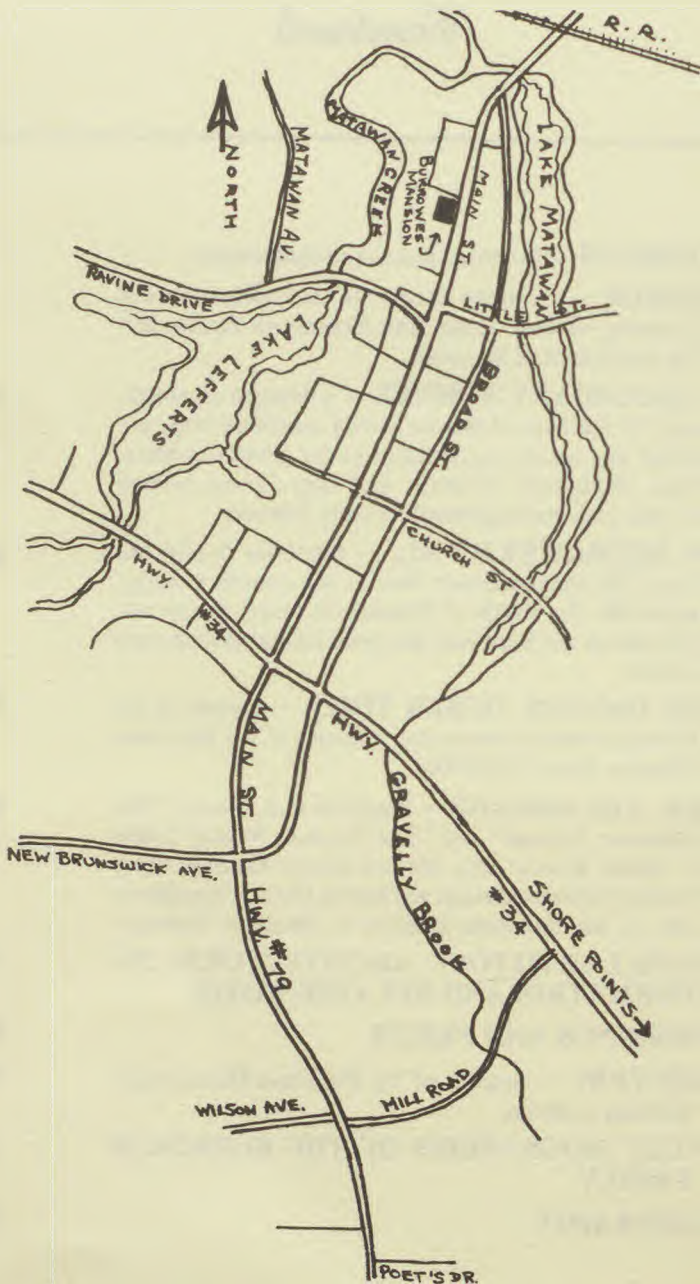
Mildred Brown Herrick





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## *Footprints*

*S*ome time ago I realized that, although there are many things in which I am intensely interested, I am most excited by people. This book is a story about people, the house with which they were involved, and the times in which they lived.

The book is also a tribute to the many fine people with whom I came in contact during my search for the Burrowes Mansion. They made the research, study, correspondence, interviews, and field trips absorbing and, in some cases, wondrous experiences on which, in another era, I could have dined out for years. Despite my own dedication to the book, I could not possibly have done it without their help and support. I cannot enumerate each person's particular part in this work. I will have to rely on the fact that each of them knows the extent of my appreciation for their assistance, generosity, and kindness.

There are, however, some people who are so much a part of this work that I must share any credit for it with them. I am most indebted and grateful to Helene Enterline for her meticulous editing of my first draft, her suggestions for improving or correcting text, her charming and appropriate illustrations, and her patience. I am thankful to Stevenson M. Enterline who also listened and advised, read, encouraged, and made many valuable suggestions. Stockton H. Hopkins, who will in my mind forever be "Corn King" Burrowes (the role he played to such perfection in the 1976 Bicentennial skirmish reenactment), poured over maps with me, boosted my morale, and provided me with data acquired through study and an intimate knowledge of every nook and hidey-hole in the Mansion. I am delighted with the fact that the Bowne and Burrowes family trees were done by my designer brother, John Blahota, who applied his usual high standards to their execution. F. Howard Lloyd's superb job of proofreading the finished manuscript is deeply appreciated. It was through Dr. Ross Roby that I acquired the exciting new information on the Burrowes family, particularly John Burrowes Jr. In attempting to express my thanks it seems appropriate to quote from a letter

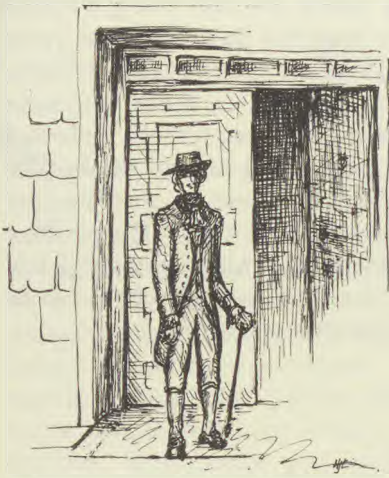
written by the younger Burrowes and extend to Dr. Roby "my most sincere wishes for a continuance of fortune's smiles in your every wish." My thanks to Lillian G. Burry, chairperson, and the members of the Historic Sites Commission of Matawan Borough for giving me the opportunity to investigate the Mansion's history and trusting me to record it. They made all my experiences possible. Last, but far from least, I thank my family and my parents for putting up with an intense year of me and my project. I'm sure they felt, many times, that we would all be consumed by it, but they continued to offer support.

This has been a very personal work for me in many ways. I treasure the votes of confidence. Even the cautioning voices, the skeptical statements were valuable: they made me run that much faster. Therefore, I dedicate this book to those who believed, and to those who did not; and, most particularly, to two people whose modesty I will respect by terming them "Nainsook" and "The General."

My acknowledgments and sincere thanks, also, to: Carol M. Caldwell; Mrs. Edwin H. Dominick; Elsalyn P. Drucker, Librarian, Monmouth County Historical Association, Freehold; Mrs. Vernon A. Ellison; Mrs. Howard A. Henderson; Mrs. Ralph W. Herrick; Karl Kabelac, Assistant Librarian, Dept. of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Archives, the University of Rochester Library, New York; Mrs. Peter J. Koelsch; Noreen LaPlante, New Jersey Press Association, New Brunswick; Dolores McKeough, Director, and the staff of the Matawan Joint Free Public Library; Cynthia Marshall; Mary M. Nickels, president, and the members of the Matawan Historical Society; S. Travers Neidlinger; Miss Helen S. Pitman; Geraldine Brown Sentell; Ralph S. Treadway; Mrs. Evelyn Williams; and the many others who made up for the fact that I never found a closet of my own.

Mary Lou Koegler  
Matawan, New Jersey  
June 22, 1977





*I*t is 12:02 p.m., Saturday, June 26, 1976. A slim man of aristocratic bearing emerges from the front door of the handsome, white shingled house at 94 Main Street, Matawan. He is wearing a lime-green brocaded coat with silver buttons, a finely woven white shirt with lace jabot, an apricot colored raw silk vest, pearl gray satin breeches, shoes with cut silver buckles, and a tricornered hat atop his queued and powdered wig. He carries a silver headed cane on which he casually leans as he stands on the

porch and surveys the crowd of people lining both sides of the street before him and for as far as he can see as he looks from right to left.

"Good afternoon," he says conversationally. "My name is John Burrowes and I am most happy you could be here today. This is my home. It has seen many happy times — and some unhappy occasions as well. Mrs. Burrowes and I have often sat and reminisced about our lives here in this house which many call the Burrowes Mansion, but which we refer to as our beloved enchanted castle..."

The eighteenth century figure continued to address the suddenly and unusually quiet gathering before him; telling them of the house, his family, and the reasons for an intense battle which erupted only minutes after the stately figure reentered his home to great applause and scattered murmurings of the word "ghost." People blinked in the sunlight; dazed, but unwilling to alter the mood which the man had created and which the continuing action of the ensuing thirty minutes sustained. As colonials and British fought in the street, the crowd cheered and booed and joined wholeheartedly in the drama. For drama it was. A Revolutionary War battle which took place at the Burrowes Mansion in 1778 was being reenacted as part of the Borough and Township of Matawan's Bicentennial celebration. History had come alive for a brief time.

History and drama. The Burrowes Mansion embodies both.

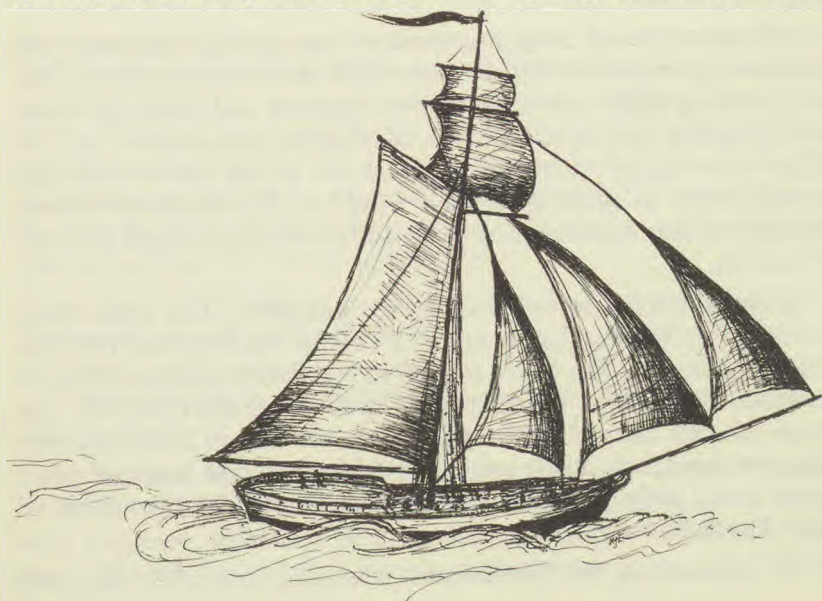
Indeed, the history of the Mansion may be viewed as a play in several acts, the final scenes of which are still being written. The house has stood for over two hundred and fifty-four years and is rich and alive with history. If, as many people believe, houses do absorb something of the essences of those who have lived in them, then the Burrowes Mansion is supremely endowed with character; for many persons, prominent as well as obscure, have inhabited the house at 94 Main Street since its construction in 1723. These men and women lived. They were influenced by and had great influence on the times in which they lived and have left a legacy in the form of the Burrowes Mansion. Let us examine this inheritance. Let us raise the curtain.



## *Backdrop*

A small party of men in an open sloop has traveled quietly across Raritan Bay from Long Island to the shores of what will later be named New Jersey. They spend the better part of two weeks exploring the Raritan River, the creeks between there and Sandy Hook, and go ashore periodically to assess the relative merits of the land. Liking what they have seen, they purchase lands around Navesink from the Indian chiefs Popomora and his brother, Mishacoing, and legalize the transaction with a deed. Several months later, some of the original group of explorers with new associates buy additional property from Chief Taplawappanmund, leader of another Indian group. The seeds for the growth of Monmouth County have been sown.

The purchasers of land were English settlers, primarily from Long Island, who had originally come to the new world in search of religious freedom. In 1664 they were living under the authority of the Dutch, whom the British wished to depose from power. To this effect, King Charles II gave his brother James, Duke of



York, a royal patent for land between Maine and the Delaware River on March 12, 1664. Shortly afterward, four English ships with several hundred men set out to attack the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam under the leadership of Colonel Richard Nicolls, who was also empowered to act as governor following the takeover.

Some of the English in the area gained advance knowledge of the king's plans and began purchasing land from the Indians well before Nicolls arrived. By the time the British had seized New Amsterdam, renamed it New York, and established new rule, the English settlers who had purchased Indian lands in what was to become New Jersey were petitioning Governor Nicolls for what would be known as the Monmouth Patent of Land, or the Great Grant. This document legalized the real estate transaction, which included present Monmouth and Ocean counties plus sections of Mercer and Middlesex counties, between the settlers and the Indians.

The grant further guaranteed that the patentees were freed from paying taxes for seven years, permitted to choose village sites, create small claims courts, institute laws and a constitution, and worship freely. The only stipulation was that one hundred families would have to establish farms in the designated location within a three-year period. Only four of the original twelve patentees settled in the area; the remaining purchasers sold their rights to others.

The promise of religious freedom was perhaps the most important aspect of moving to a new land. Many of the settlers living in Long Island and parts of New England had come to America thinking they would be free of religious persecution, only to find it springing up among their fellows in the new world. The opportunity of moving to what would be the territory of New Jersey meant another chance to fulfill the old dreams of total freedom.

Events were not to proceed so smoothly. For even while Nicolls was issuing the Monmouth Patent, the Duke of York decided to convey the lands named in the Patent to two of his favorites, Sir George Carteret and John, Lord Berkeley. By the time Nicolls learned of the gift, it was too late to avoid the conflict over property rights which would last for one hundred years and would only be ended, but never resolved, by the advent of the Revolutionary War.

In superseding the Nicolls grant, the only concession Berkeley



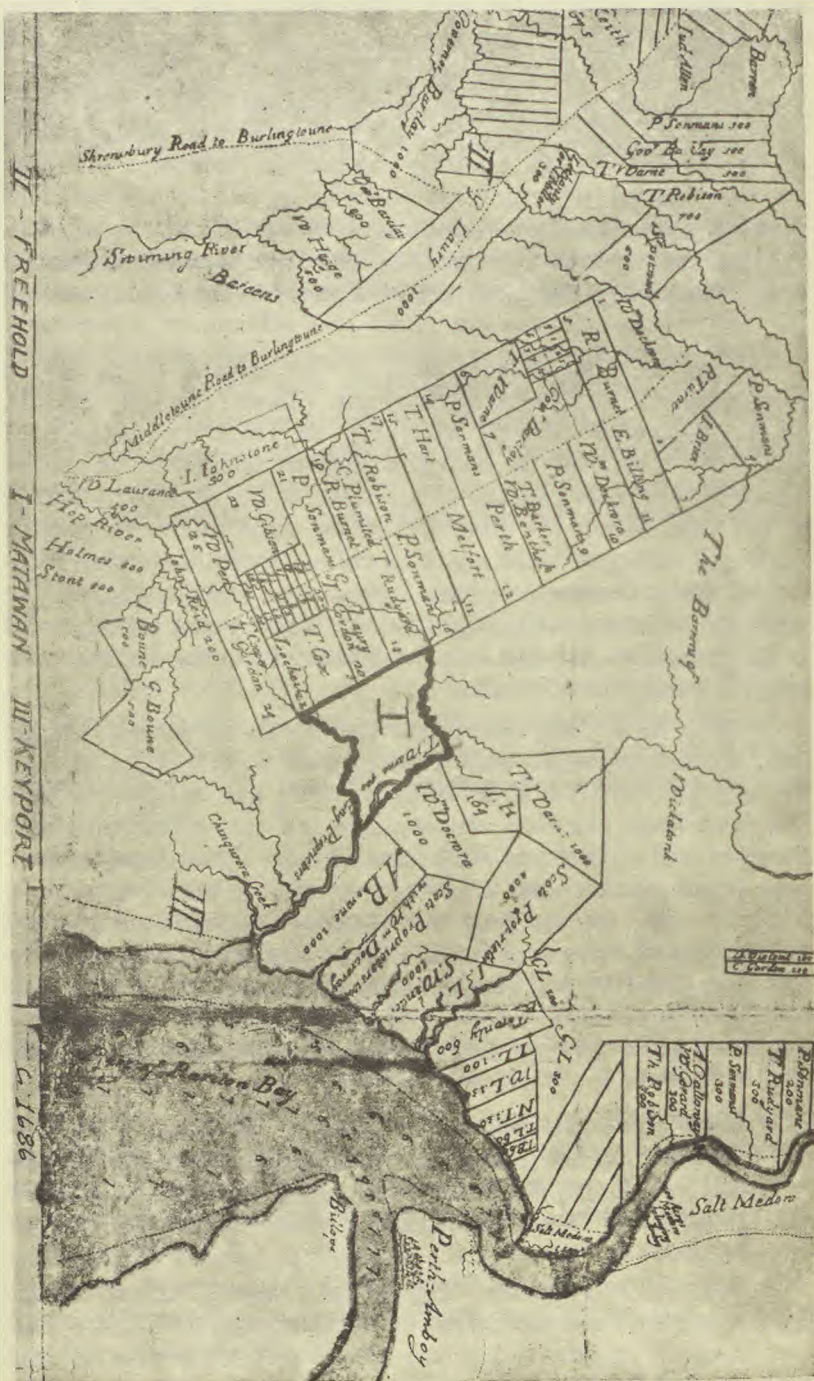
and Carteret made to the purchasers was to give each of them five hundred acres of land in compensation for their losses. But quit rents rather than taxes would be owed on all properties; and payments would be collected relatively soon after the establishment of farms rather than after a seven-year period. Additionally, the inhabitants of the territory, including Middletown as this area was named, were ordered to swear an oath of allegiance to the king. The settlers refused to acknowledge the new edict, stating that they owned their lands outright and would not become virtual tenants to the king and his representatives in this country.

The pioneers stubbornly held to the original terms of the Nicolls patent and created farms and villages, elected officials, and established a General Assembly. In 1668 the residents of Middletown refused to take the oath of allegiance or accede totally to the laws enacted at a session of the Assembly earlier in the year. When the first quit rents came due in November 1670 and attempts were made to collect them, the entire province of Nova Caesarea, or New Jersey, went into an uproar. The residents of some settlements rioted, destroyed property, and attacked officers of the law. In Middletown, the citizens also held firm and refused to pay.

In 1673 New York reverted to Dutch rule for several months until the English again took control with no effect on the land struggle. In 1674 Lord Berkeley sold his half interest in New Jersey to John Fenwick; and in 1676 the area was divided into the provinces of East and West Jersey by the Quintipartite Deed. East Jersey remained in the hands of Carteret until his death in 1680. In 1682 the territory was auctioned to William Penn and eleven English associates for £3,400 by Carteret's heirs and executors in order to pay the deceased nobleman's debts. Penn and company were joined by twelve others, and together they formed the Board of Twenty-Four Proprietors who continued to demand quit rents from the Jersey inhabitants.

In March 1683 the name "Monmouth," which had been used for years, was officially given to the county, whose population was over one thousand at the time. 1683 was also the year in which the first Scots emigrants reached Staten Island on the ship "Exchange."

In September 1685 the "Henry and Francis," under George Scot, Laird of Pitlochrie, sailed from Edinburgh with more than two hundred emigrants heading for New Jersey. Pitlochrie had been granted land in East Jersey and was bound for that place





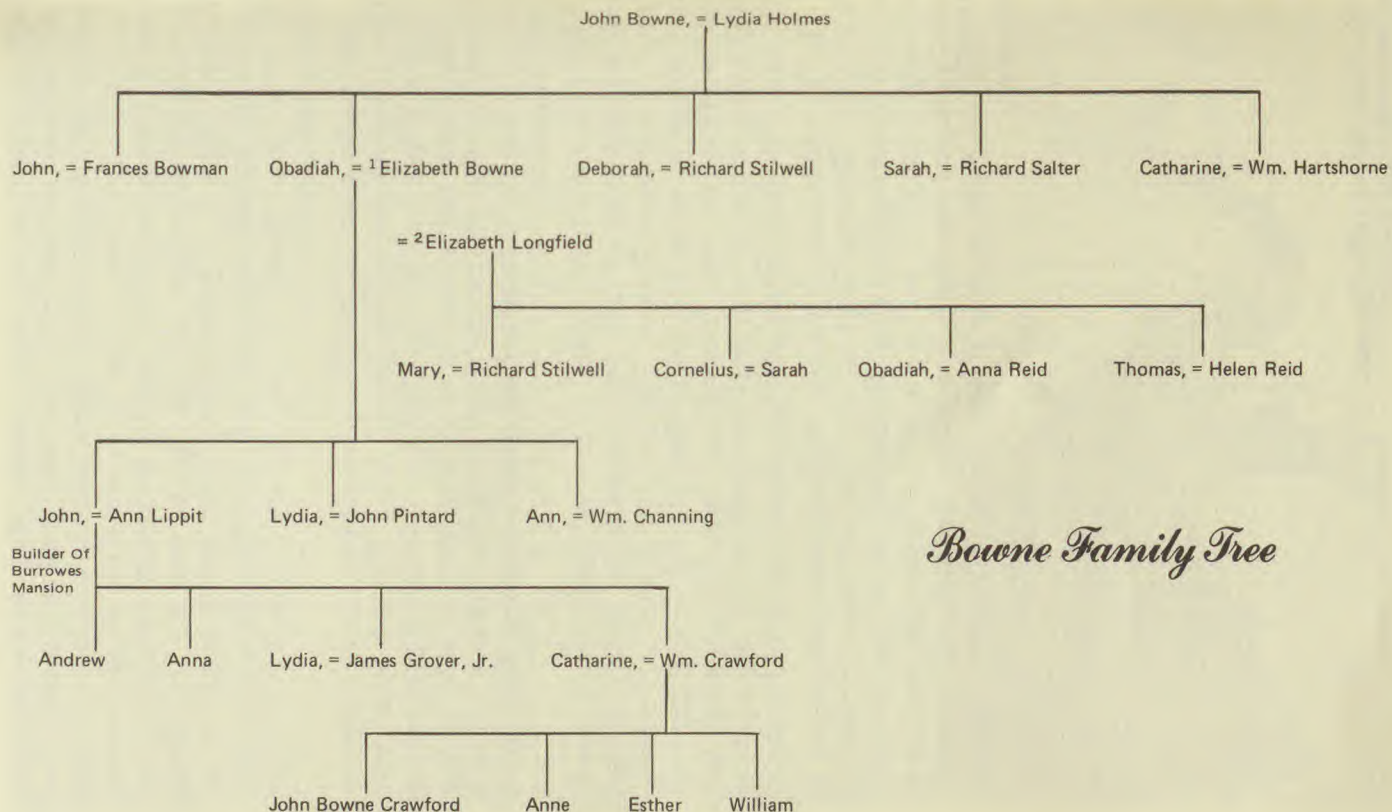
with his family and his sister's family. Many of his passengers were religious prisoners who were indentured to him and whose services, by authority of the crown, were to be utilized in helping to settle East Jersey. Great numbers of the voyagers, debilitated by long imprisonment, quickly became ill with fever which ran rampant throughout the ship. By the time the "Henry and Francis" docked at Perth Amboy after fifteen weeks at sea, about sixty persons were dead, including Pitlochrie and his wife. His death was a blessing to many, for those indentured to him became free men.

Eventually, many of these Scots traveled to the area between Matawan Creek and Gravelly Brook, called "Warne's Neck" after Stephen Warne (and his son, Thomas), to whom the proprietors of East Jersey had granted four hundred acres of land on September 30, 1686. Prior to the Warne grant, the territory had been known by the Indian names of Mittevang, Mittovang, Nachenkine or Nashonakime.

Between 1687-1689 a group of Scottish emigrants purchased one hundred acres of land from Warne in the Mount Pleasant area, now known as Freneau. The lots were divided into twenty-four parcels of equal size; each forty feet and nine inches wide by four thousand, eight hundred feet long. This afforded each land owner access to both Matawan Creek and the main road in the area. The Scots renamed their settlement New Aberdeen.

As the village grew, it became the most important seaport in the vicinity. Matawan Creek was, in those early days, twelve feet deep on the average; and all of Middletown, which was, as noted, very large, brought its produce to New Aberdeen for dispatch to New York and elsewhere. Eventually, the town was renamed Middletown Point because it was the area's primary point of shipping.

*John Reid's Map of 1686. First map  
of area of Matawan, Keyport.*



## *Bowne Family Tree*



## *The Legendary Bownes*

Few, if any, men were more prominent in the founding of the large territory known as Middletown than Captain John Bowne. He was among those first explorers and purchasers of Indian lands around Neversink (Navesink). Bowne, John Tilton, Jr., Richard Stout, William Goulding, Samuel Spicer, James Grover, Richard Gibbons, Nathaniel Sylvester, William Reape, Walter Clark, Nicholas Davis and Obadiah Holmes were the original Monmouth patentees. James Hubbard, a member of the first expedition, was not included in the land grant.

The name Bowne (also spelled Bown, Boun, Bound, Bounde, Bownd, and Bon) comes from the Cornish British and means ready, active, nimble; and so these hardy people proved to be. There were several branches of the Bowne family in America in the 1600's, the members of which all came from England in search of religious freedom, a quest which was not to be easily satisfied.

The Bownes variously espoused both the Quaker and Baptist religions. They, and others of their faiths, met with such opposition to their modes of worship and were so appalled at the lack of tolerance coupled with what they saw as licentiousness on the part of their neighbors, that they were moved to write a letter of complaint to the king of England. The document became known as The Flushing Remonstrance and is sad to read in light of the fact that those who came to America seeking a place where they could worship as they chose were not, after all, free to do so without censure or interference from their fellows who had also, ironically, come to the new land for basically the same purpose. The issue of religious differences, even among those who had once shared a common dream, was an ugly specter which rose soon after the settlement of New England and Long Island. It followed the Bownes and others to Middletown, where their beliefs would again be cruelly maligned and held against them in the political struggle over land rights in New Jersey.

The founder of the Bowne family pertinent to this narrative

was William Bowne, who settled in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1631, was granted land there, and was admitted as a freeman on May 17, 1635. Bowne thereafter moved to Gravesend, Long Island, where he served as an assistant justice in 1651 and a magistrate from 1655-62.

William Bowne was the father of five children: John Bowne, who was a leading figure in acquiring the Monmouth Patent of land, and an eminent and respected politician throughout his life; James, another Monmouth settler who eventually married Mary Stout, daughter of the famous Penelope Van Princis and Richard Stout; Andrew, a sea captain, merchant, politician, and deputy governor of New Jersey in 1701; Philip, of whom nothing is noted; and an unnamed daughter who married a Mr. Mott and bore one son, Gershom, who, after his mother's early death, was reared by his uncle, John Bowne.

John Bowne I was born in England circa 1630 and brought to America by his father. He grew to be an even-tempered young man who farmed and participated in civic activities as did most other men of the period. On September 20, 1647, John Bowne applied for and was granted a planter's lot in Gravesend, Long Island. Under the Dutch rule of the time, land was granted to any man able to bear arms, a condition primarily based on the applicant's avowal that he was at least sixteen year of age.

John Bowne married Lydia Holmes some time in the early 1660's. Lydia was the daughter of another prominent family for whom Holmdel, New Jersey, would someday be named. Their children were John, Jr., born April 1, 1664; Obadiah, born July 18, 1666; Deborah, born January 26, 1668; Sarah, born November 1669 or 1670; and Catharine, who was the first wife of William Hartshorne, a son of John Bowne's longtime friend Richard Hartshorne, another of the first settlers of Middletown. In addition to rearing his own children, John Bowne I undertook the responsibility of caring for his motherless nephew Gershom, treating the boy as if he were another son.

In 1663-64 Bowne and a party of other men explored the territory of what would be coastal East Jersey in search of new lands on which to live in the freedom they had sought for so long. They subsequently purchased property from the Indians and petitioned the English Governor Nicolls, who had recently captured New Amsterdam from the Dutch, to sanction the transaction with a deed. Nicolls issued the Monmouth Patent in good faith and total ignorance of the fact that the property in question had been given to Sir George Carteret and John, Lord



Berkeley.

The original patent essentially stated that John Bowne and the other patentees had legally purchased lands on which they were free to settle. The agreement further stated that the patentees could establish their own government and houses of worship and that no taxes would be levied for seven years. The major stipulation was that the lands granted be settled by one hundred families within three years, approximately 1665-68.

The patentees had already begun the process of pioneering their new lands when Berkeley and Carteret informed them their patent was invalid. Bowne and the other Middletown families refused to accept the edict and thereby became embroiled in a property dispute that extended beyond all of their lifetimes. Adhering to the terms of the original patent and ignoring the clamorings for quit rents by Berkeley and Carteret, the Bownes and their associates went about the task of building new lives on their new lands.

John Bowne I settled on a large farm in present-day Leonardo, building a small house which was added to through the years (1665-1696). The John Bowne house is still standing at Leonard and Bowne Avenues, and was listed with the New Jersey Registry of Historic Sites in February 1977.

The primary occupations of the settlers were farming and raising livestock. Potential confusion as to the ownership of a certain domestic animal was avoided by having each owner devise and record an earmark, which served the same purpose as the familiar cattle brand. John Bowne I recorded his earmark in the Middletown town book on January 4, 1668. He noted a "crop on the off eare and a slitt in the crop and another under the crop of the fore part of the same eare."<sup>1</sup>



Captain John Bowne took the duties of settling Middletown seriously and became one of the most prominent statesmen of the day. He worked to formulate laws in Middletown and fought to resolve the conflict over land between the Monmouth patent-

<sup>1</sup>John E. Stilwell, *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany*, Vol. II, New York, 1906, p. 154.

ees and the English crown.

In the late 1660's, Bowne was appointed guardian of Shoal Harbor and oversaw vessels navigating those waters which extended from Sandy Hook to the Raritan River. John Bowne I was a justice of the peace in 1671-73 and from 1679-81; an elected deputy representing Middletown in the General Assembly in 1675, 1677, 1680-83; and Speaker of the House during the last four years of his term of office in the Assembly. Further, Bowne was a member of a small claims court in 1675; he was commissioned president of the court for Middletown and Shrewsbury in March 1677; he was judge of the court of common rights in 1682 and 1683; and he was commissioned major of the Middletown troops in 1683, the same year that Monmouth County — named after Monmouthshire, England, by the detested royal governor of the time, Colonel Lewis Morris — was officially formed as one of the four original counties of the Province of East Jersey.

In addition to having a reputation as a kind man and an honest politician, Captain John Bowne I bears the distinction of having been an ancestor of Abraham Lincoln. One of Captain John Bowne's granddaughters married Mordecai Lincoln. Their oldest son, John, eventually married a second time and fathered, among other children, Abraham Lincoln, who was destined to be the sixteenth president of the United States.

Captain John Bowne had originally been granted lots twenty-eight and twenty-nine in a division of property in Middletown under the Monmouth Patent. He received further grants of land from the East Jersey proprietors, and continued to purchase additional acreage from Indians and settlers. By the late seventeenth century, John Bowne, his brother, Andrew, and John Bowne's sons, John, Jr. and Obadiah, were all politically prominent and among the largest landowners in Monmouth County. In 1683 their combined real estate holdings totaled almost ten thousand acres throughout the area. Bowne land nearly surrounded what would become Middletown Point.

Despite political problems, Monmouth County grew rapidly because of men like the Bownes who saw great potential in its rich farmlands, meadows and waters. Richard Hartshorne, one of the earliest settlers and an old friend of John Bowne, was moved to write most favorably of the area, stating in part that

As for the temperature of the air, it is wonderfully suited to the humours of mankind; the wind and



weather rarely holding in one point, or one kind, for ten days together. It is a rare thing for a vessel to be wind-bound for a week together, the wind seldom holding in one point more than forty-eight hours; and in a short time we have wet and dry, warm and cold weather, which changes we often desire in England, and look for before they come.<sup>2</sup>

The illustrious Captain John Bowne died in 1684 at the age of fifty-four. In his will be requested that his property be divided as follows:

Lydia Holmes Bowne, widow, to receive the homestead with all buildings and improvements, money, one-third of the plantation called Westfield, which in its entirety included all of present day Cliffwood, and a later grant of five hundred acres of land near Matawan Creek.

John Bowne, Jr., the older son, to receive the five hundred acre plantation called Neichaios or Niceas, which encompassed the land on which the town of Keyport now stands, plus other property.

Captain Obadiah Bowne, second son of John Bowne I, to receive money and various lands, primarily two-thirds of the Westfield (Cliffwood) plantation, the remaining one-third of which he was to inherit at his mother's death.

Gershom Mott, the nephew reared as a son by John Bowne I, to receive two hundred and fifty acres at a place called Shupakameck somewhere near the original Middletown Village.

The Bowne daughters to receive money.

The Bownes added to the lands which they had inherited from Captain John Bowne and the properties they had already owned by purchasing still more real estate for some time after Captain Bowne's death. Lydia Holmes Bowne and her older son, John, Jr. jointly invested in land as late as 1693.

Although Captain John Bowne was a powerful and influential man, his manner was kindly and seemingly more suitable to his role of the first, albeit unordained, minister of Middletown than to his political and business activities. His older son and namesake, John Bowne, Jr. was of a more tempestuous, impetuous disposition which was emphasized and perhaps paralleled by the

<sup>2</sup>Franklin Ellis, *A History of Monmouth County, New Jersey*, R. T. Peck & Co., Philadelphia, 1885, p. 6.

times in which he lived and served the Middletown settlements.

John Bowne, Jr., born April 1, 1664, was already en route to becoming a well known merchant and real estate salesman at the time of his father's death in 1684. John, Jr.'s wealth increased with inheritances of land at Niceas (Keyport), one thousand acres in Middletown, and five hundred acres in Manasquan. His status increased with an appointment as one of the commissioners to lay out roads in the area in 1686 and with his election as High Sheriff of Monmouth County in 1687.

On December 26, 1692, John Bowne, Jr. married Frances Bowman of Burlington. The union did not yield children but, apparently, begat problems; for, inconsistent though it is with the fact that she was a member of the Society of Friends, Frances Bowman Bowne was a spendthrift.

Young Captain Bowne confided his domestic problems to his cousin, Gershom Mott, one day during a boat trip from Clark's Point to Matawan Gorge by saying, according to notes left by Mott and maintained in the Cherry Hall Papers of the Mott Family, now held by the Monmouth County Historical Association, Freehold, N. J., that "...I have had more trouble about my wife than of all ye world besides for she is Such an Imprudent woman that if she had all my Estate she would waste it in a little time."

Despite personal problems, or perhaps because of them, John Bowne, Jr. became increasingly active politically — as a member of the House of Deputies in 1693 and as the duly commissioned Receiver General for the proprietors of East Jersey in 1701. In 1704 John Bowne, Jr., his brother, Obadiah, and their brother-in-law, Richard Salter (or Saltar), husband of the Bownes' sister, Sarah, were all elected to the General Assembly.

By 1707 tension in the colonies was severe due to the continued controversy between proprietors and early settlers over property rights and to the fact that increasing numbers of Scots were settling in the area and being elected to public office, thus becoming, in the eyes of the original English settlers, usurpers of power.

To make matters worse, Bowne, his brother and brother-in-law had not been reelected to the Assembly and were thus without legal authority to alter existing conditions. The frustration of the situation caused volatile John Bowne to take decisive, if dangerous and questionable, action. Backed by his brother and Salter, plus a majority of Monmouth County settlers, John Bowne, Jr. collected money for a fund which was to be presented



to Lord Cornbury, the decadent and corrupt head of the Assembly. In return for the money, which was — no matter how noble the motive — a bribe, Cornbury promised to dissolve and dismiss the existing Assembly and establish a new one, to which the Bownes and Salter would be readmitted.

Cornbury complied with the bargain and, at the next Assembly, John and Obadiah Bowne and Richard Salter were reelected representatives of East Jersey. All seemed to go well, with everyone in ostensible accord, until later in the year when the Assembly reconvened and John Bowne, Jr. found himself faced with charges of bribery and treasonous conduct.

Bowne had returned to the Assembly accompanied by representatives from different areas of East Jersey who jealously opposed him because of his considerable influence over Jersey politics. These men began delving into the reasons for the abrupt dismissal of the first Assembly in the hope of implicating John Bowne. They were encouraged and augmented by the crafty Lewis Morris, who headed the Committee of Grievance to which Bowne's detractors brought their complaint. Morris was delighted with the circumstances. He had been an enemy of Bowne's for years, being at odds with him over politics, religion, and personal ambition.

Morris appointed himself the head of a Board of Inquiry which he organized to investigate Bowne, who was charged, generally, with having raised funds for personal gain under the guise of using the money for public welfare. Bowne was denied the opportunity of reading the entire list of charges, and he was unable to contact Salter or any other responsible colleague to provide supportive testimony in defense of the Cornbury fundraising.

Bowne ultimately refused to dignify the charges against him with any comment, feeling that his public record and personal integrity spoke for him. It was his only defense. Those who had willingly contributed to the fund when it seemed to be the only way for the Middletown settlers to begin achieving freedom from political harassment denied participation and declined to come forward and testify in Bowne's behalf during the trial.

Much of the money pledged by these persons had been paid into the fund out of Bowne's own pocket. He trusted those who wrote promissory notes to fulfill their obligations and was shocked when they not only refused to pay him but also denied any complicity. Bowne was unable to prove that the IOUs he held pertained to the Cornbury affair; and, lacking evidence to the

contrary, he was found guilty of bribery and expelled from the Assembly in 1707. Bowne returned home greatly in debt and powerless to collect any of the money promised to him.

On July 21, 1714, John Bowne, Jr. sold one hundred and forty acres of the Niceas (Keyport) property inherited from his father to the brothers Thomas and Michael Kearny for £150 English money. The purchase included livestock, farm implements, canoes, a house, a grist mill, a boiling mill, and, possibly, some slaves. The Kearny's named their plantation "Key Grove" in honor of their former home in Ireland, and gradually purchased additional lands ultimately totaling one thousand acres. The original handwritten, signed, and wax-sealed bill of sale between John Bowne, Jr. and the Kearny brothers is framed and hanging in the Burrowes Mansion. It is highly possible that Bowne sold the land in financial desperation,<sup>3</sup> for his fortune, as well as his reputation, had suffered greatly as a result of the Cornbury scandal and he was heavily in debt at the time of his death on March 13, 1716.

In Bowne's will, his wife, Frances, received £400; and several friends and relatives received gifts of land and goods. The remainder of the estate was left to John's brother, Obadiah, and his brother-in-law, Richard Salter, who also were executors of the will. An inventory of John Bowne's estate in 1717 included some houseware, 143¼ ounces of plate, and large numbers of mortgages, bonds, and debts to be settled, largely as a result of the lack of capital following the monumental outlay of money during the Cornbury controversy.

Unlike his volatile and controversial brother, John, Obadiah Bowne had the quiet, even disposition of their father, the first Captain John Bowne of Monmouth Patent fame. Obadiah Bowne was born in Gravesend, Long Island, on July 18, 1666, and came to Middletown as a child. He temperately followed the path taken by other male members of his celebrated family and made

<sup>3</sup>The question still exists in some minds as to whether the Burrowes Mansion was built by John Bowne, Jr. or his nephew, John Bowne (hereafter referred to as John Bowne III to avoid confusion). Some persons believe the sale of the land from John Bowne, Jr. to the Kearny brothers enabled the former to finance the building of the house which stands at 94 Main Street. However, Stilwell and other historians have stated that, based on their research, the Mansion was built by John Bowne in or around 1723. The John Bowne thus referred to would have to be John Bowne III, as John Bowne, Jr. died in 1716. Stilwell further states that the John Bowne who built the house in Middletown Point modeled his structure on the home built by his father, Obadiah, in Holmdel. This would clearly designate the builder of the Mansion to be John Bowne III, a conclusion which must be adhered to until such time as irrefutably contradictory evidence comes to light.



his own mark in business and real estate dealings. He became active in public service about 1695 at age twenty-nine. In 1697 Obadiah Bowne was a tax assessor and a commissioner to lay out roads. In 1701 he was suggested for the deputy governorship of East Jersey (the position went to his uncle, Captain Andrew Bowne) and was a member of the General Assembly in 1703, 1704, and 1707. His real estate transactions and his minor involvement with his brother, John, in the Cornbury affair are perhaps the two most prominent aspects of his public life.

As for his private life, Obadiah Bowne married his first cousin, Elizabeth Bowne, in the late 1600's. Elizabeth was the daughter of Obadiah's uncle, Captain Andrew Bowne. At the time of her marriage to Obadiah, she was the widow of a merchant named Haynes (or Haines).

Obadiah and Elizabeth Bowne had three children: Lydia, no birthdate, who married John Pintard, a New York merchant, and for whom there is no record of children; Ann, also no birthdate, who married another New York merchant, William Channing, and had at least two daughters, Ann and Elizabeth; and John Bowne, born May 29, 1700, who eventually built the Burrowes Mansion and whose life will be taken up in more detail later in this account.

Obadiah Bowne's wife, Elizabeth, probably died prior to 1707, the year in which her father, Andrew, died; as she is not mentioned in his will. Instead, Captain Andrew Bowne — former mariner, merchant, landowner, judge, justice, and deputy governor of East Jersey in 1701 — bequeathed the one thousand thirty-eight acres which comprised "all his plantation, called Mattawan, unto the children of his daughter Elizabeth, namely John Bowne and...Lydia and Ann Bowne, equally..."<sup>4</sup> Andrew Bowne left other property, including a house (still standing) and farm on the present site of Route 36 and Avenue D, Leonardo. His nephew and son-in-law, Obadiah Bowne, was named executor of the will. Obadiah's son, John, ultimately purchased parts of his sisters' shares of their inheritance, resulting in his being prime holder of title to the Mattawan farm.

In 1701, early during his first marriage, Obadiah Bowne had built a splendid house in present-day Holmdel in the vicinity of Bell Laboratories, on the site of a former Indian village. The house was opulent with Dutch-style cupboards, numerous fireplaces, doors painted with pastoral scenes, large high rooms, and

<sup>4</sup>Stilwell, *Vol. III*, pp. 49-50.



a magnificent stairway. It was to this established household that the widower, Obadiah, brought his second wife, Elizabeth Longfield of Raritan, probably after 1710. It is an interesting coincidence that both of Obadiah's wives were named Elizabeth.

Obadiah Bowne fathered four children by his second wife. Their three sons, Cornelius, Thomas and Obadiah, Jr., all became mariners, married and had children. Their daughter, Mary, married Dr. Richard Stilwell, by whom she had one daughter.

In the year 1720, Obadiah Bowne was living in Holmdel. His oldest son, John, the only male issue of Obadiah's first marriage, was engaged in business as a builder and real estate salesman and was emerging as a politician in his own right.

John Bowne III, as he will be referred to hereafter for clarity, was twenty years old in 1720, the year in which it is believed he may have begun to build the house now known as the Burrowes Mansion. Young John decided to construct a smaller replica of his father's Holmdel residence on the Mattawan plantation which he had inherited from his grandfather, Andrew Bowne, while still a minor. It is said to have taken Bowne three years to complete the house. Thus, the date of construction is stated as being 1723, and is so recorded by several noted historians.

It is possible that John Bowne III lived in the house, and just as possible he built the residence on speculation or commission, as is believed by at least one authority. The historian and writer William S. Hornor contended that young Bowne built the house for David Lyell, a former Scots goldsmith who came to America in April 1697 shortly after becoming one of the East Jersey proprietors.

Lyell was a member of Her Majesty's Council from 1711-26 and lived much of the time in his permanent home in Perth Amboy. However, he also owned property elsewhere, and, as was the custom of many of his contemporaries, lived part of the year in one home and the remainder of the year in another.

The theory that Bowne built the Matawan house for Lyell is given some support by the fact that after Lyell's death in 1725 or 1726 his widow, the former Catherine Lorraine, advertised land for sale along a navigable creek at Middletown Point at about the spot where the Burrowes Mansion stands. The advertisement appeared in local newspapers periodically until circa 1737-1742, when John Stanley, a sea captain, merchant and miller, purchased the widow Lyell's property. However, since there is no deed information regarding this transaction in Burrowes

Mansion papers, it is possible the Lyell property had originally belonged to John Bowne, Jr. instead of to his nephew, John Bowne III. It is known that John, Jr. also owned property on both sides of Matawan Creek and it may have been from him or his estate that Lyell purchased his Middletown Point residence.

Although it is not known for certain at this time whether or not John Bowne III ever lived in the house he built, he did record his father's cattle earmark at Mattawan on January 13, 1723, and again on December 14, 1726. This proves that, regardless of whether he was himself in residence in Middletown Point, the plantation on which he built the dwelling was being worked.

Captain Obadiah Bowne, John's father, died at his Holmdel farm on April 19, 1726, aged fifty-nine years. He left all of his property, much of which he inherited from his brother John, Jr. at the time of John's death in 1716, to his four sons, of whom only John was over twenty-one at the time. Each of Obadiah's daughters received cash, although a codicil stated that if money were needed to pay off any debts, the daughters were to receive land instead. Personal belongings to be divided among the heirs included:

Five pictures in oyl colours...a carbine, 2 pairs of pistols, 24 grown cattle, 20 young cattle, 100 sheep, 16 horses, a large Bible, a large Concordance, Heylin's Cosmography, History of the Council of Trent, Second and third Institutes (of the Civil Law), 10 negroes, 2 old wiggs.<sup>5</sup>

The executors of the estate were Obadiah Bowne's oldest son, John, and two of the deceased's friends, Garrat (Garret) Schenck and Daniel Hendrickson, Esq., who also fulfilled the obligation to pay, according to Obadiah's will, forty shillings a year for fifteen years to Obadiah Bowne's slave W..." in consideration of his Fidelity, Diligence and Care of Me During My Illness."<sup>6</sup>

Indisputedly, John Bowne III was a wealthy man at the time of his father's death. At the age of twenty-six John held title to property in Middletown Point and neighboring areas and was the controlling heir of the family farm in Holmdel. Some historians state that he took over the Holmdel house as early as 1726, the year of his father's death, and continued to make the family

<sup>5</sup>William S. Hornor, *This Old Monmouth of Ours*, Moreau Brothers Publishers, Freehold, New Jersey, 1932, p. 326.

<sup>6</sup>*Monmouth County Wills 1695-1728, Book B, 1-396*, Trenton State Library, Archives and History Room, Trenton, N.J., p. 301.



homestead his main residence until his own death at that location in May 1774.

Records prove that John Bowne III received sole title to the six hundred and thirty-two acre Holmdel plantation in 1747 by deeds from his three stepbrothers, Cornelius, Thomas, and Obadiah, Jr., in exchange for five hundred and thirteen acres of land in Middletown Point, which is probably the property the younger men had mortgaged to their older brother at an earlier date.

John Bowne's three stepbrothers appear to have been quite different from him. They all became mariners, lived away from the Middletown area for at least part of their lives, and, so far as is known, never sought nor were elected to public office.

Cornelius Bowne and his wife, Sarah, had three sons named, repetitively and somewhat confusingly, Cornelius, Thomas and Obadiah. The family lived in Philadelphia, and Cornelius, Sr. died in 1762.

Thomas Bowne lived in New York for a time. He married Helen Reid.

Obadiah Bowne, Jr., like his brother, Cornelius, also lived in Philadelphia for some years. He married Anna Reid of Freehold on December 12, 1749. Anna was the older sister of Thomas Bowne's wife, Helen. The couple had nine children, two of whom died young. On March 14, 1764, just two months after the death of his ninth child, a boy who lived only one day, Obadiah died in Middletown Point.

It is worthwhile to digress and examine the circumstances which befell Obadiah Bowne's family after his death for several reasons. Primarily, the situation provides a classic, if mind-boggling, example of the complex relationships created by the common practice of repeated intermarriage between first cousins and/or the same few neighboring families. These intricate associations were taken for granted at the time and, as a result, legal transactions were often casual, with property frequently being passed from one person to another without formal contract because of the solidarity of kinship. The use of the same given names from generation to generation without qualification also often provides difficulty in determining which individual is being referred to in a narrative or document and accounts for errors in historical research. In the following instance, for example, three Obadiah Bownes and three Anna Bownes are cited, with the tangle of names and events brought sharply into focus by a domestic crisis which occurred several years after Obadiah



Bowne, Jr. died.

Obadiah's widow, Anna, had continued living in Middletown Point with her family on a portion of the plantation once owned by her deceased husband's great uncle, Captain Andrew Bowne. She remarried about 1769, unwisely choosing as her second husband a fortune hunter named Paul Vandervoort who ardently courted the wealthy widow and promised to care for her seven children as if they were his own.

Once married, however, Paul Vandervoort, encouraged by his father, attempted to gain control of the entire estate of the former widow Bowne. Anna had already deeded some property to Vandervoort but refused to sign anything more over to him when she realized what a scoundrel her husband was. Paul then became abusive and tightfisted with money, refusing to clothe or educate his stepchildren. He finally stripped the house of furnishings, left the premises, and posted a letter in a local newspaper claiming he would not be responsible for any debts incurred by his wife.

James Kearny, John Provost (or Provoost), and Coonradt Hendricks wrote a retaliatory letter to the same newspaper exposing Vandervoort as a villain and supporting his wife. It was natural for them to do so as they were poor Anna Vandervoort's friends and neighbors, and two of them were related to her through marriage as follows:

Anna Reid Bowne Vandervoort was the daughter of the distinguished surveyor, John Reid. As previously stated, her first marriage was to Obadiah Bowne, Jr., whose brother, Thomas, had married Anna's sister, Helen.

Another Reid girl, Mary, had first married William Hartshorne, a relative of Richard Hartshorne, who was one of the original settlers of Middletown and who was friendly with the first Captain John Bowne. At the time of her sister's marital difficulty, Mary Reid Hartshorne was married to her second husband, Thomas Kearny, who was part owner of Key Grove Plantation (Keyport), which was purchased from John Bowne, Jr. in 1714.

Thomas Kearny's brother, James, the other owner of Key Grove, was one of the signers of the letter defending Anna Vandervoort. At the time, James Kearny was married to another of Anna's sisters, Margaret. After Margaret's death, James married the widow Agnes Watson Freneau, (mother of Philip Freneau, "The Poet of the Revolution," who was connected to the Burrowes family by marriage). Agnes Watson was related to Captain John Watson, first husband of Hope Taylor Burrowes, mistress





of the Burrowes Mansion from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. (See following chapter).

It is further interesting to note that Anna Bowne Vandervoort's oldest son, Captain John Bowne of Whale Creek (in present Aberdeen Township), eventually married Johanna Provost, a daughter of John Provost who also signed the letter denouncing Paul Vandervoort.

Another of Anna Bowne Vandervoort's children, again named Anna Bowne, also married a Provost — John's son, James.

Finally, Anna's second son, Obadiah Bowne III, married Elizabeth Van Dyke and fathered, among other children, yet another Anna Bowne who married Edward Kearny, the last proprietor of Keyport.

By the time John Bowne III acquired sole title to his father's Holmdel property in 1747, he was a prominent figure in Monmouth County. About 1730-31, he married Ann (Anny) Lippit, born November 29, 1702. They had four children. Twin girls, Anna and Lydia were born on October 25, 1732. Anna died on September 16, 1738, aged five years, ten months, twenty-two days, and is buried near her parents in the old Presbyterian cemetery along Kings Highway, Middletown. Her twin, Lydia, matured and married James Grover, Jr. on November 29, 1752. No children were born of the union and Lydia Bowne Grover died circa 1774.

An only son, Andrew, was born on Sunday, May 26, 1734.

Catherine Bowne, who was born at five a.m. on Friday, March 12, 1736, married William Crawford on December 7, 1756. Their four children were Anne, Esther, William, and John Bowne Crawford.

John Bowne III was commissioned a Monmouth County judge in 1741-42 and named a commissioner in the supreme court of the province at about the same time. He continued to deal in real estate and in 1769, although there is at present no deed available to support tradition, John Bowne III is supposed to have sold the house he built in Middletown Point to John Burrowes.

John Bowne had drawn his will on April 28, 1748 and added the final codicil in 1762. He asked to be buried as near to his mother as possible, and he left his property, personal goods, and money to his wife, his three children and their heirs. He stated that if his wife remarried, her executive power would revert to the other executors. Further, that if the widow remarried, she

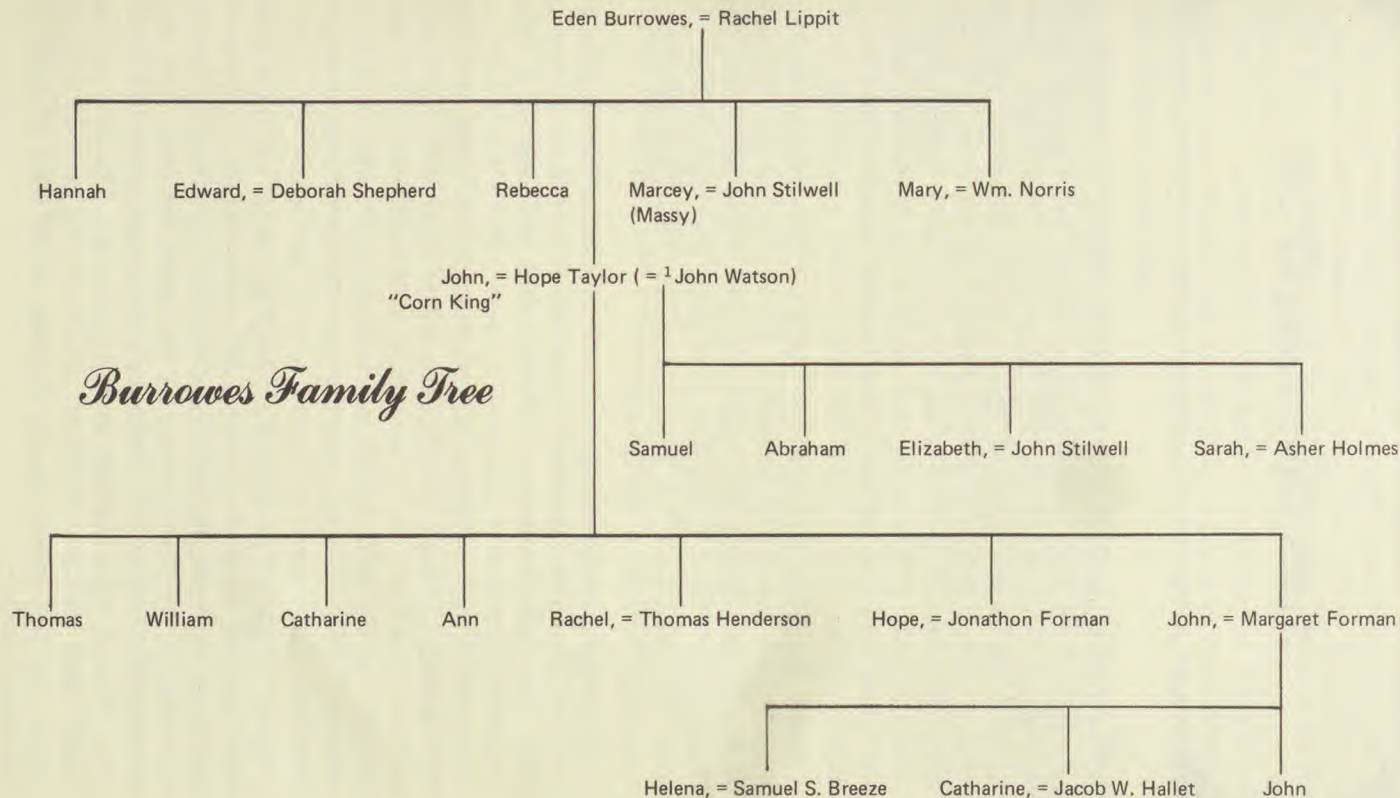


was to get the "best bed and furniture" plus £50, which would deny any further claim she might make on the estate. Another notation stated that if the children of the marriage reached the age of twenty-one and Ann Bowne was still a widow, she was to have half of the estate for so long as she remained unmarried.<sup>7</sup> John Bowne died in 1774 at the age of seventy-four years, five months, and seven days. Ann Lippit Bowne died in 1793 at the age of ninety-one. She was still John's widow.

When John Bowne died, his only son, Andrew, received the Holmdel property plus the bulk of other real estate holdings. When Andrew died unmarried in 1785, he left the family home and property to his mother, Ann, and to his sister Catherine's children. It was at that time that the plantation became known as Crawfords' Corners. The name has remained in use since then and is now officially applied to the stretch of blacktop between Red Hill Road and Holmdel Road near Bell Laboratories in Holmdel, which is marked by street signs bearing the legend "Crawfords Corner – Everett Road." There is no similar memorial to the name of Obadiah Bowne. Even the fine house which he built in 1701 is gone – destroyed by fire in the early part of the nineteenth century.

The Bowne name continues to be a familiar and prominent one. In the mid-1930's C. LeRoy Bowne was mayor of Keyport. His daughter, Mrs. Hazel Bowne Swanson of Matawan, was given a plaque in remembrance of her family's contribution to Matawan's growth at a ceremony held at the Burrowes Mansion at 2 p.m. Saturday, November 13, 1976. His Royal Highness Prince James Edward of the Royal House of Stuart represented the Scots heritage of Matawan and gave the plaque to Mrs. Swanson on behalf of himself, the Bicentennial Commission of the Matawans, and the Matawan Historical Society. Many persons thought the ceremony was an appropriate tribute to the Bownes and others like them who laid the foundations on which towns such as Matawan were built.

<sup>7</sup>*Monmouth County Wills 1771-1777, Book L. 4185-4578*, Trenton State Library, Archives and History Room, Trenton, N.J., pp. 4243-48.





## *John Burrowes Et Al.*

The first Burrowes came to America during the seventeenth century for the same reason so many others fled England during that period — to escape religious persecution. The family, whose name is also spelled Burrows, Burris, Burros, Bowrows, and Burroughs, settled primarily in Long Island. It was from there that Eden Burrowes emigrated to Monmouth County in the very late 1600's or early 1700's along with many of his neighbors, who all saw great potential in the fertile land of what would become New Jersey.

Eden Burrowes and his wife, Rachel Lippit (whose relative, Ann Lippit, married John Bowne III, builder of the Burrowes Mansion), established their plantation on Chapel Hill Road, near Middletown Village. It was here that John, the older of their two sons, was born in 1718. Four daughters, birthdates indefinite, comprised the rest of the family.

Although farming was the main occupation of the Monmouth settlers, most men also held public office at some time during their lives. Laws in the new communities springing up in Monmouth County were established very early, and it was incumbent on the relatively few male citizens to take their turns at serving the locality through civic affairs. Eden Burrowes had been a juryman, constable, and court officer of Middletown by the time he died in 1731 at the age of forty-four. His two male heirs, John and Edward, were only thirteen and eleven years of age at the time.

Little is known of John Burrowes' life from the time of his birth until he reached maturity. At some point during his growing years, however, he must have decided that farming was not his vocation, for, by the time he was in his twenties, John Burrowes was established as a merchant in partnership with Captain John Watson, who was also from Middletown. The two men operated from Middletown Point, which was the primary shipping center for the entire county because of its ideal location on Matawan Creek.

The Creek was large enough to easily accommodate the sea-going vessels which regularly sailed up its length as far as the present Buttonwood Manor on Rt. 34 in Matawan, back to Raritan Bay, in and out of the custom house waters at Perth Amboy, and to and from ports ranging from Boston to Barbados. Farmers for miles around would travel to the Point with their wagonloads of produce, which merchants like Burrowes would buy and seamen like Watson would ship.

Burrowes' associate, John Watson, acquired his love of the sea from his father, Abraham, and Abraham's brother, John, who were experienced ships' captains. Abraham Watson sailed his sloops "John and Samuel," "Happy Margaret," and "Mary" on regular runs between Perth Amboy and Newport, Rhode Island, from at least 1723 to 1734. Young John Watson apprenticed with his father in 1733-34.<sup>8</sup>

In 1737 Captain John Watson, Middletown, married the socially prominent, sixteen-year-old Hope Taylor, born 1721, also of Middletown. Young Mrs. Watson, the daughter of John Taylor, was the granddaughter of Edward Taylor and Richard Hartshorne, two highly respected men who were among the earliest settlers of Monmouth County. The couple had four children. They were Samuel, born 1738, died in infancy; Sarah, born 1740; Elizabeth, born 1744; and Abraham, born 1747.

Through the years of the marriage, Watson continued to sail his ships on their established routes to New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, with occasional voyages to Barbados, which could then be reached in approximately three weeks' time. Hope Watson kept busy with home and children. In addition, for an unknown length of time at an undesignated location, she apparently kept an inn.

An old document states that "at a Term of the Court of Sessions and Pleas, held at Freehold, July 23, 1745, 'John Watson's wife Hope and...(other names) on their petitions allowed to be Public House Keepers.'<sup>9</sup> No one would have considered it unusual or unseemly for a person of Hope Watson's background and social position to maintain an inn. Many outstanding and respected men and women of the time engaged in the same business, since, from the 1600's until the Revolution, tav-

<sup>8</sup>Stilwell, *Vol. 5*, p. 249.

<sup>9</sup>Hornor, p. 244.



ern keeping was regarded as "an honored means of livelihood."<sup>10</sup>

John Watson died in 1747 or 1748, presumably at sea. On December 2, 1749, John Burrowes married his former partner's widow in Trenton. Each listed place of residence as Middletown, which could refer to either the area or the village.

It is evident that the Burrowes family was residing in Middletown Point in 1755 and probably had been for many years, for in March of that year, an advertisement regarding a house for rent in Middletown Point appeared in at least two newspapers. The ad describes the merits of the building and property, highlighting the fact that everything has "good Conveniences for a Gentleman or Store Keeper," and "...whoever has a Mind to enter on the said, its to be Let from this Day, by John Burrows, living near the said House."<sup>11</sup>

During the first fourteen years of their marriage, John and Hope Burrowes had seven children. They were Thomas, born and died September 1750, aged five days; Rachel, born September 1751; John, Jr., born October 29, 1753 (according to the D.A.R. Patriot Index); Catharine, born 1758, died January 1777; and Hope, born December 26, 1759. Two other children, William, born 1762, and Anna, born 1764, each died at the age of two. Thus, John Burrowes, Jr. (supposedly born lame, some sources specify a clubfoot) was always referred to as an only son.

In 1765, apparently well settled in Middletown Point, John Burrowes, Sr. deeded his share of his father's estate in Middletown to his younger brother, Edward, who was living on the property.

In 1767, Abraham Watson, Hope Burrowes' son by her first marriage, died at the age of twenty. A letter supposedly written by Mrs. Burrowes on the anniversary of Abraham's death, refers to her heartbreak and the fact that her son died "at the house of his master, in New York."<sup>12</sup> Some authorities believe the word "master" refers to a ship's master or captain and that young Abraham had been a sailor like his father and the grandfather for whom he was named.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*New Jersey Archives, First Series, Vol. XIX, Newspaper Extracts, Vol. III, 1751-1755*, ed. by William Nelson, The Press Printing and Publishing Co., 269 Main Street, Paterson, N.J., 1897, p. 476.

<sup>12</sup>Stilwell, p. 250.

John Burrowes continued to prosper in his business, as well as in his real estate dealings and other endeavors, such as acting as subscription agent for "The New Jersey Gazette." Somewhere along the way he acquired a store and a new partner.

The store was stocked with a wide variety of supplies including wheat, nails, wine, a large assortment of fabrics and sewing aids, etc. Original handwritten itemized receipts, signed by either Hope, Rachel or John Burrowes, Sr., detailing some of the sales between 1761-69 and in 1773, may be found among the Mott Family Cherry Hall Papers.

Burrowes' new partner was Samuel Forman, another wealthy merchant who owned mills, sloops, and a store in Middletown Point. Forman, his wife, the former Helena Denyse, and their nine children lived at the corner of what is now Ravine Drive and Wyckoff Street on Matawan Creek. Their home, which is still standing, was a social center for the village; their winter sleighing parties on the hill outside the house were especially popular.<sup>13</sup>

By 1769, John Burrowes, Sr. was in comfortable circumstances. He had a family and a thriving trade. The mills were increasingly busy and shipping was good. The docks that lined Matawan Creek and those clustered at the foot of the present Dock Street testified to this fact. What better place for a prosperous businessman to live than on the beautiful bustling waterway which was so important to his livelihood? Even though John Burrowes had been living in Middletown Point from at least 1755 and had been keeping store there well before his marriage in 1749, it is believed that it was not until the year 1769 that he purchased from John Bowne III the house which the latter had built in 1723. No record of the deed or transaction has been found thus far; therefore, the time of purchase is arbitrary and may have taken place at a much earlier date. The theory has also been put forth that Burrowes acquired the property through his marriage to Hope Watson, although this, too, is speculative in the absence of deed information.

While the details of property acquisition are not definitely known at this point, it is evident that life in the Mansion after the Burroweses took occupancy was elegant and happy. Hope Burrowes was considered to be a refined and gracious hostess and a loving wife and mother. She often accompanied her husband as he rode behind the slave-driven wagonloads of produce from the

<sup>13</sup>Mrs. Edwin H. Dominick, interviewed by Mary Lou Koegler, Meadow Lakes, Hightstown, N.J., November 19, 1976, 1 p.m.



storehouses to the docks and waiting ships. Burrowes' warehouses and one of the mills were probably located on the site of present Lake Matawan, with a dam at the point where Matawan and Gravelly Creeks join. This is approximately where the Lake Matawan dam at Broad and Main Streets is now. The mill pond extended up Gravelly Creek perhaps as far as Mill Road in Freneau. Other mills, some of which may also have been owned by Burrowes, were located on tributaries to Matawan Creek and, in some cases, on the Creek proper. One of the many docks along the Creek was built down the hill behind the Mansion.

The income from Burrowes' enterprises enabled the family to enjoy horses and carriages, jewels and fine clothing, wines and liquors shipped from New York, and the best food. There were dozens of slaves to attend the house and the mills, and there was a governess, Mrs. Sarah Falck, for the younger children at one time. It is no wonder Mrs. Burrowes referred to her home as the "Inchanted Castle."<sup>14</sup> Even though the term was a fashionable one used by genteel people to describe other fine homes of the period, the name seemed particularly suited to the Burrowes Mansion.

Judging by his letters, John Burrowes also felt the special ambience of his house. He wrote frequently to Mrs. Burrowes while away on business, describing events around him, but always mentioning how much he missed his family and home. In one letter to his "dear wife" from New York he states that "every time I sail away from you — even for a short time — I find my thoughts directed to my Jersey home and loved one."<sup>15</sup>

In 1772, John Burrowes once again advertised property for sale in Middletown Point. The item is noteworthy because the real estate in question could very well have been the Burrowes Mansion. If John Burrowes was attempting to sell his own house, business, and lands, we are left with the question of why he would wish to do so since he was prospering in Middletown Point at the time and was, judging from his letters, very happy in his home. One can only read the following notice which appeared in "The New York Gazette" and "The Weekly Mercury" on February 10, 1772, and search for a conclusion:

To be sold, or Let, And entered on immediately, A

<sup>14</sup>W. Jay Mills, *Historic Houses of New Jersey*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia and London, 1902, p. 178.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, p. 182.

Very good grist-mill, together with about 70 acres of land, lying on Mattawan Creek, within about half a mile of Middle-Town Point, in East New-Jersey; the said mills consists of two pairs of stones, and three bolting boxes, all which go by water, which makes it extreemly easy to tend the mills; an extraordinary and large mill-house, well calculated for taking in large quantities of grain. The said mills, mill-house, mill-dam, and flood-gates, were all lately put in new and good repair. There is on said land two dwelling houses, one of which is large and convenient, with a good, large and convenient shop added to it, suitable for a trader, as the place and situation is well calculated for that business; there is also a barn and sundry other out-houses on said land. The quality of the land, as follows, viz. About 45 acres of wood land, about 7 acres of salt meadow, the remainder clear'd land, on part of which is a good young bearing orchard of about 60 apple trees, all grafts, also some peach and plumb trees. It is a noted place for conveniency to fowling, fishing, oystering, clamming, &c, as the land lays on both sides of the creek; and further, the boats that frequently follow coasting between Middle-Town Point and New-York, can go up the creek within a few rods of the mill. For further particulars, and conditions of sale, enquire of Mr. John Burrows, at Middle-Town Point, or Nathaniel Marston, merchant, in New-York, who will agree on reasonable terms, and give an indisputable title for the same.<sup>16</sup>

Was John Burrowes the realtor for someone else? Was he successful in selling the property described for this other person? These are questions for which there are, at present, no answers. However, if Burrowes was advertising his own holdings, then he either could not find a buyer or he changed his mind, for the family continued to live and work in Middletown Point.

In 1774, the Burrowes' store was robbed and John Burrowes utilized the newspapers to advertise his plight. "The New Jersey Gazette" ran the following on September 14, 1774:

Stolen out of the store of Mr. John Burrowes, of Middletown Point, on Friday night the 9th instant, the

<sup>16</sup>*New Jersey Archives, First Series, Vol. XXVIII, Newspaper Extracts, Vol. IX, 1772-1773*, ed. by the late William Nelson, Paterson, N.J.: The Call Printing and Publishing Co., 1916, pp. 50-51.



following goods, besides sundry others not mentioned, viz. One piece rich black satin, one piece black peelong, one piece  $3/4$  wide black mode, one piece of yard wide ditto, one piece of  $7/8$  wide white ditto, one piece of black spotted peelong, two remnants blue ditto, one piece black sarsanet, one piece white ditto, one remnant pink ditto, one piece green lutestring, nine or ten crossbar'd Kenting handkerchiefs, three dozen plain striped border'd ditto, one dozen flowered ditto ditto, two or three yards flowered lawn, fine, three yards broad striped muslin, two remnants narrow striped ditto, two ditto plain 6-4 wide, one piece yard wide shear'd ditto, nine or ten crossbar'd red and white cotton handkerchiefs, fine, one or two spotted ditto, ditto, three pieces yard wide fine Irish linen, two pieces striped Kenting, for aprons, one remnant spotted ditto, three pieces fine Callicoes, not cut, eleven pieces coarse ditto, some of them full pieces, others part pieces, one piece blue and white spotted handkerchiefs, six pair cypher'd sleeve-buttons, set in silver, one piece minionet, and about seven pounds in cash.

It is hoped that all persons will do their endeavor to discover the robbers. Ten pounds reward will be given to any person for apprehending the robber or robbers, to be paid on conviction, and the tenth part of the goods recovered, by Henry Remsen in New-York, or by the subscriber at Middletown-Point.

John Burrowes<sup>17</sup>

It is not known whether John Burrowes recovered his stolen merchandise, but his advertisement is interesting to read in full as an insight of the types of goods popular at the time and the type of merchant who would keep so meticulous an inventory of his stock.

(Brigands abounded in that period, as they have throughout history, and Middletown Point obviously had its share of them. There is a record of a counterfeiter who set up business in town in 1773 in conjunction with cohorts in Perth Amboy who all passed themselves off as silversmiths while actually making bogus coins. They, unlike John Burrowes' thieves, are known to have

<sup>17</sup>*New Jersey Archives, First Series, Vol. XXIX, Newspaper Extracts, Vol. X, 1773-1774*, ed. by the late William Nelson, Paterson, N.J.: The Call Printing and Publishing Co., 1917, pp. 480-81.

been apprehended.)

Thievery was the least of worries for John Burrowes or anyone else by 1775. In that year, after a decade of attempts on the part of the colonies to free themselves from British taxation and domination, war broke out in Lexington and Concord. The Revolution had officially begun.

In 1776, the fighting came to New Jersey, and Monmouth County began preparing itself for war in earnest. By the time the first serious confrontation between organized Tories and the Monmouth Militia took place in February 1777, state and local colonial armies had been formed. The British-sympathizing New Jersey Royal Volunteers, the local auxiliary unit to the Board of Associated Loyalists on Staten Island, were ensconced at their base on Sandy Hook under the command of General Cortlandt (Courtland) Skinner. The Volunteers became known as "Greens" or "Skinner's Greens" because of the color of their uniforms and the name of their leader, a lawyer who had been the Royal Attorney General of New Jersey when he was commissioned by General Howe, head of the British forces, to raise an army at the Hook.

Skinner, a wealthy and politically powerful man of Scots heritage, had been educated in Perth Amboy, had married a Kearny, and was strongly tied by relationship and finance to the Perth Amboy Group of merchants, lawyers, and realtors who comprised the most influential organization of its kind in New Jersey. Skinner, like his associates, was politically conservative and unfailingly loyal to England.

Most of the men who enlisted with Skinner did so out of true belief in Britain's sovereignty. These honorable men were often confused with the Pine Robbers or Refugees who also used the Hook or nearby Black Point (Sea Bright-Rumson) as their base. The Refugees were criminals, runaway slaves, and indentured men who used the unsettled period of the Revolution to loot and murder for their own ends. The Refugees usually operated on their own but frequently joined Skinner in his attacks on colonials. It was this wanton group who gave those fighting nobly for their loyalties to the crown a bad name. Indeed, there are those who believe Skinner became little better than the Refugees whose services he employed, for, despite his intelligence and refined background, Cortlandt Skinner was a cunning and increasingly ruthless adversary. He exceeded all bounds of decency when he lavishly and publicly praised the savage murder of a colonial clergyman.



The intense loyalty to England felt by many residents of Monmouth was countered by the equal devotion to the American cause held by many others in the area, including John Burrowes, Sr. He, his son, and sons-in-law were among the most outstanding patriots in the county. As we shall see, the year 1778 was a critical one for the Burrowes family, Monmouth County, and the entire Revolutionary War in the north. In order to obtain a clear picture of people and events, it is necessary to focus on the lives of the two Burrowes men and their closest relatives as they were in 1778 and, in some cases, afterward.

At the beginning of the Revolution, John Burrowes, Sr. was dealing primarily in the corn that filled his warehouses. When corn became a staple of the war, Burrowes became the major supplier. His prosperity earned him the nickname "Corn King Burrowes" and gave those who already disliked him for his politics reason to envy him. The enemy hated Burrowes because he had permitted the first militia in the area to train in his front yard, and he allowed his mill pond to be used as one of the hiding places for the Middletown Point whaleboat navy which continually harassed British shipping in Raritan Bay. This navy, one of three in the area, was comprised of three to six boats, each twenty-four to thirty feet long, double ended, propelled by leather-muffled oars manned by tightly disciplined, experienced seamen armed with boat hooks, grapnels and hand or duck guns. When not in use, the boats were tucked away along Matawan Creek and its tributaries. At least one vessel was always kept at the head of Burrowes' pond.

John Burrowes, Jr. was a captain in General David Forman's Regiment of the Continental Army in 1778. Forman had been nicknamed "Black David" to distinguish him from his cousin, Sheriff David Forman, and young Burrowes, who worked very closely with the general, was called "Black David's Devil" by those who hated them both. John Burrowes married Margaret Forman, a daughter of his father's partner and a cousin to his commanding officer, probably between 1776-78. Early in the war, young Captain Burrowes and Jonathan Forman, his wife's brother, who had left Princeton College to join the army, organized and trained a company of soldiers in the front yard of the Burrowes Mansion. Tradition has it that the Mansion was also the point of departure for the "six months' soldiers" (so named because half a year was to have been their period of enlistment) who marched away from Middletown Point to the tune of "Duncan Darie" on their way to join Washington's Continental Army.

General David Forman became one of the foremost figures of the Revolution in Monmouth County. He was a great friend of General George Washington and the mastermind of a coastal network for spying on British shipping and for reporting movements to the Congress in Philadelphia.

Asher Holmes was born in Holmdel on a plantation called Scotschester. He married Sarah Watson, one of John Burrowes' stepdaughters, in 1771. Holmes had given up farming and surveying to join the war and by 1778 he was a colonel of the county militia and state troops. In 1779 Colonel Holmes would erect three beacons on specified strategic locations by order of Brigadier General Nathaniel Heard. The signal towers were made of roughly-trimmed young trees stacked log cabin style about thirty feet high. The ones built by Holmes on Monmouth Hill, Middletown Hill, and Mount Pleasant were part of a network of twenty-three beacons in New Jersey. They were to be lighted if the enemy invaded Monmouth. The blazing fires would be the signals for the local militias to assemble. (A replica of a beacon was erected in 1976 by The Pleasant Valley Preservation Society in a field by Rt. 520 off Rt. 34 near the Pleasant Valley Inn.) Holmes was a Monmouth County sheriff after the Revolution as well as a member of the governor's council, a position comparable to that of a state senator.



Widower John Stilwell, a farmer, married Elizabeth Watson, the other of John Burrowes' two stepdaughters, in 1764. Stilwell served as a quartermaster in General Forman's First Regiment of the Monmouth Militia and later manned the principal observation point in Forman's spy system. The site was Garrets Hill, near Stilwell's home, which stood about two hundred feet high and was a distance of a mile or two from the shore in the present town of Leonardo (Leonardsville). A horse and teenaged rider, usually Stilwell's son, stood ready near the watchman at all times



to deliver messages regarding enemy activity to local espionage headquarters in a nearby inn which was the home of Major Thomas Seabrook. From the inn (called "The Spy House" by the British),<sup>18</sup> another teenaged rider — frequently General Forman's nephew, Billy — would carry Stilwell's communications to the Burrowes Mansion, which is also said to have served as a point of operations in Forman's network. At this juncture, adult horsemen stationed at twenty-mile intervals would assume the mission of relaying the report of English naval activity to Washington's headquarters and to the Congress in Philadelphia. John Stilwell's military services and the prominent location of his home made him a continual target of Tory attack. During the war, in which he at some time also served as a government agent dealing in the sale of forfeited estates, Stilwell's home and farm buildings were burned and his livestock stolen. General Forman gave the destitute family one of the houses he owned until such time as they could rebuild.

Thomas Henderson, a former doctor of great prominence in the area, married Rachel Burrowes in 1778. Stories passed down about Rachel indicate she was a lively and precocious child who was often bored by frequent churchgoing. Supposedly, she was told on one occasion that if her behavior did not improve, she would not be permitted to attend church with adults thereafter. When Rachel left the church that day, she is said to have turned around, curtsied, and called, depending on the source, either "Good-bye, Mr. Tennent Church, good-bye," or "Good-bye, Cousin Meeting House. I never expect to see you again."<sup>19</sup> The adult Rachel's husband was a lieutenant colonel in Forman's brigade in 1778 and was, according to legend, the horseman who informed General Washington of Lee's retreat at the Battle of Monmouth. Henderson became a Monmouth County judge after the war.

Hope Burrowes married Jonathan Forman (born April 1758),

<sup>18</sup>The Spy House in Port Monmouth is still standing. It is now the Shoal Harbor Marine Museum or the Whitlock-Seabrook-Wilson Homestead, as it is known in its official registration as a historic site. Thomas Whitlock built the first of the three structures which comprise the museum in December 1663 and the second in 1679 after his marriage to widow Seabrook. The third building was the home of Whitlock's stepson, Daniel Seabrook, in 1697. Thomas Whitlock held the first patent, was the first citizen, and constructed the first building in East Jersey. He held Whaling License # 7 in the Shoal Harbor settlement. (Information of accreditation: The Preservationists, Inc. from "Historic Site Register of State of N.J." and the "National Register," December 1975.)

<sup>19</sup>Stilwell, *Vol. III*, p. 144.



a cousin to Margaret Forman Burrowes. Jonathan Forman served with the Monmouth Militia throughout the Revolution. He and Hope, whose admirers reportedly called her “the Goddess Diana,”<sup>20</sup> had four children. Their only son, John Burrows Forman, eventually married his first cousin, Hope Henderson, one of the seven daughters of Rachel Burrowes and Thomas Henderson.

Elinor (Eleanor) Forman, one of Margaret Burrowes’ sisters, was married to Philip Freneau. Although not a military man, Freneau fought the British with his pen, fanning the flames of independence throughout the war with his writings.

These, then, are the members of the Burrowes family as they were in 1778. They were not only involved with one another and in the struggle for daily survival, but also in the larger struggle of a new nation’s fight for independence.

By 1778, Monmouth County was deeply entrenched in the war. As the richest county in the state, located directly across from British-held New York and footed by the Tory encampment at Sandy Hook, Monmouth was a constant target for the Refugees and British troops, who repeatedly plundered the area

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid*, p. 147.



for fresh provisions and continually attacked the colonists in an effort to break their resistance.

To lessen the possibility of surprise attack, neighborhood alarm systems were established, such as the one engineered by Colonel Barnes Smock in Holmdel. Smock's home was a frequent meeting place for local patriots, who referred to the vicinity as a "hornet's nest" because the "sting" of the colonials meant death to the Tories. Smock's farm, centrally located, was the logical place for a large "four pounder" signal cannon which was fired whenever scouts brought word of enemy approach. Its report could be heard for miles.<sup>21</sup>

The Tory desire for revenge and retaliation intensified along with the war. Although the mills and ships belonging to John Burrowes had been the objects of frequent enemy attacks, none of the attempted raids had been successful. Finally, in mid-1778, the Loyalists devised a plan that worked.

The New Jersey Gazette.

Trenton, June 3. We are informed that on Wednesday morning last, a party of about seventy of the Greens from Sandy-Hook, landed near Major Kearney's, headed the mill-creek, Middletown-Point, and marched to Mr. John Burrow's, made him prisoner, burnt his mills and both his storehouses, all valuable buildings, besides a great deal of his furniture — Also took Lieut. Col. John Smock, Capt. Christopher Little, Mr. Joseph Wall, Capt. Jacob Covenhoven, and several other persons; killed — Pearce and — Van Brockle, and wounded another man mortally. Having completed these and several other barbarities, they precipitately returned the same morning to give an account of their abominable deeds to their bloody employers. A number of these gentry, we learn, were formerly inhabitants of that neighborhood.<sup>22</sup>

Margaret Forman and Captain John Burrowes are thought to have married sometime during 1776-78 in a wedding ceremony and celebration which were presumably subdued due to wartime conditions. The couple may have moved to Freehold for a short

<sup>21</sup>George C. Beekman, *Early Dutch Settlers of Monmouth County New Jersey*, Moreau Brothers Publishers, Freehold, N.J., 1901, p. 355.

<sup>22</sup>*New Jersey Archives, Second Series, Vol. II, Newspaper Extracts, Vol. II, 1778*, ed. by Francis B. Lee, The John L. Murphy Publishing Co., Printers, Trenton, N.J., 1903, p. 237.

time. Then, when the war began escalating, Burrowes moved his bride back to the Mansion where he would spend every furlough. Unfortunately, the secret visits did not go unnoticed for long.

Hope Burrowes, nee Taylor, had many relatives in Middletown who were Tories: former sheriff John Taylor; Colonel George Taylor, who had served with the Monmouth Militia but had deserted to the British; and the prominent Loyalist leader, William Taylor.<sup>23</sup> These men learned of Captain Burrowes' trips home and plotted with other Tory families to capture him, with the assistance of British troops, the next time he was in Middletown Point.

The opportunity for the Loyalists to put their plan into action arrived on Wednesday, May 27.<sup>24</sup> The Tories, having been informed by their spies that Captain Burrowes was once again on leave at the Mansion, set out by boat from Sandy Hook (some persons believe it was from Staten Island) shortly after midnight. They rowed up the coast and landed at Conasconck Point (Keansburg). The spot was chosen because, even at low tide, the water was at least four feet deep and could accommodate large boats to the extent of allowing the vessels to pull up to shore, thus enabling the soldiers to step to land rather than wade. From here the company, swelled by local Tories who fell in with the march along the way, progressed through Hazlet and on toward Middletown Point. They were seen by friends of the Burrowes family who guessed their destination and set out by a different route to warn the village of impending attack.

The colonial couriers arrived in Middletown Point slightly ahead of the Tories, who were taking a more devious path. Once alerted, members of the small local militia assembled somewhere in the center of town while other armed men joined Major Thomas Hunn's Freneau Company. Hunn and his wife, Catharine, lived in the present Minnisink Hill or Hawkins House, Mill Road, where they kept a tavern and store during and after the Revolution.

By the time the Tories (numbered at from seventy to two hundred in different accounts and probably actually somewhere

<sup>23</sup>Beekman, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup>Different accounts have set the date of the raid as June 3, June 7, and June 28, the Battle of Monmouth. Since the previously quoted newspaper article is dated June 3, one can follow through on the portion that reads "Wednesday morning last," consult a perpetual calendar, and determine that the raid on the Mansion took place on May 27, 1778.



in between) came around the head of the Burrowes mill pond at a point near the present Broad and Church Streets, they found themselves caught between two colonial fighting units. The results were annoying but not severely hindering, since Skinner's Greens and their allies greatly outnumbered the locals. The enemy sent a small fast-moving detachment ahead to capture young Burrowes while some of the remainder fought with the Middletown Point and Freneau men. The rest began burning mills, stores, and boats.

When the contingent of Tories burst into the Mansion, they were supposedly confronted by Margaret Burrowes standing on the stairway clutching a shawl over her nightdress. She defiantly asked the leader of the group what was wanted. He was apparently thrown off guard by her boldness and disdain and evasively replied that he needed her shawl to bind the wound of an injured soldier. Margaret is reputed to have clutched the garment more closely about her and replied, "You'll not get my shawl or anything else here to aid a British subject."<sup>25</sup>

Incensed by the response, one of the soldiers wrenched the shawl from her shoulders and struck her across the breast with the hilt of his sword. Leaving the injured young woman where she lay, the Greens began searching the house for Captain Burrowes, unaware that he had escaped. Burrowes had jumped out of a downstairs back window, run down the steep bank behind the house, (traditionally) dropped a boot, swum the creek, and hidden on the other side.



The Tories ransacked the house in their hunt for Burrowes. On their way upstairs to the third floor, some of the men fired their muskets into the ceiling of the second story

landing in an attempt to frighten Burrowes into coming out of his possible attic hiding place. The musket balls remained for many years. They have since been removed by souvenir hunters,

<sup>25</sup>*Matawan 1686-1936*, The Federal Writer's Project, ed. by Alexander L. Crosby, Brown Publishing and Printing Co., Inc., Keyport, New Jersey, 1936, p. 88.

but the scars of the pellets are still in the stairway ceiling as a reminder of the raid on the house.

Not finding young Burrowes and realizing he had escaped them, the soldiers looted the house, took most of the furniture outside and burned it. Perhaps Hope Burrowes' early terming of the Mansion as the "enchanted castle" was prophetic, for, despite the destruction of furnishings and other possessions, the house remained miraculously unharmed.

Since Captain Burrowes had eluded them, the enemy took his father captive along with other prominent men previously named in the newspaper account of the raid. The Greens planned to use the men in a prisoner exchange. It is written in Burrowes family papers<sup>26</sup> that, as Corn King Burrowes was being led away by his captors, a former neighborhood workman who had turned Tory confronted Burrowes and boasted that his hands, which had helped build Burrowes' mills, had also helped destroy them. Indeed, mills, boats, storehouses and other buildings were ablaze throughout Middletown Point. It was said that the smoke could be seen for miles and the stench of burning wood, clothing, and produce lingered for days.

At this point, the Tories took their hostages and moved quickly out of town. While the local Loyalists returned to their homes and the majority of troops rowed back to Sandy Hook, one group of Greens took Burrowes, Sr. and the other captives to a prison on Staten Island, the headquarters of the Board of Associated Loyalists.

Shortly after the raid on Middletown Point, a messenger was sent to advise Colonel Thomas Henderson, Burrowes' son-in-law, of what had happened. Henderson responded by organizing a group of men and capturing one of the prominent Tories who masterminded the attack, William Taylor of Middletown. British General Henry Clinton was informed of Colonel Henderson's move and eventually exchanged the elder Burrowes for William Taylor.

Meanwhile, the whaleboat navy reorganized and retaliated in its own way. On Saturday evening, June 13, one or two boatloads of men, commanded by William Marriner and supplemented by an auxiliary force of landsmen led by Captain John

<sup>26</sup>*The Breese-Stevens-Roby Family Papers*, the Dept. of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Archives, the University of Rochester Library, Rochester, New York. (This collection is the source for subsequent references to "Burrowes family papers.")



Schenck, rowed to Flatbush with the intent of capturing the odious Tory mayor of New York City, David Matthews, to use him in a prisoner exchange. It was a dangerous trip. If the Jersey-men were not observed and attacked on the voyage across the open waters of the bay packed with British ships, they still ran the risk of death or capture when they landed, for Flatbush was well behind enemy lines.

The whaleboatmen somehow managed to reach Matthews' house without being seen. Once there, however, they learned that the mayor was out of town. Although disappointed, the men were not to be deterred. Moving quickly and stealthily on, they arrived at the home of Jacob Suydam where they freed Captain Alexander Graydon, an American prisoner of war. From there, Schenck and his company went to other homes and captured Major Montcrieffe and Mr. Theophilus Bache. The entire party returned to the boats unobserved and returned safely to Middletown Point. Montcrieffe and Bache were dispatched to American army headquarters at Morristown under guard, and by the end of July both had been exchanged for American prisoners.

This brilliant coup on the part of the whaleboatmen was due to their dedication to the colonial cause and, in large part, to the rigid discipline maintained by Marriner. It is said that on the mission to capture Matthews, one of the auxiliary troops, a landsman, became violently seasick. Marriner coldly gave the command to throw the man overboard if he made so much as another murmur. No one doubted that the captain meant exactly what he said.

While Middletown Point had been engaged in its own fight, a change in British tactics set the scene for the final, all-out, major confrontation of the war in the north: the Battle of Monmouth Court House.

The concerned English command had recalled General William Howe from Philadelphia and replaced him with Sir Henry Clinton. Howe and his men had been taking their ease for months and degenerating physically and morally. When Clinton took command of the army, he decided to withdraw from Philadelphia and travel to New York before the French, who had recently entered the war as American allies, were able to blockade the Delaware River. Clinton left Philadelphia on June 18 intending to reach New York by way of New Brunswick and Paulus Hook (Jersey City). Lord Cornwallis' division formed a rear guard and

Baron Wilhelm Von Knyphausen's division provided escort for the army, the camp followers, and a monstrous assortment of gear packed into fifteen hundred wagons.

General George Washington received word of Clinton's march and decided to leave Valley Forge and chase Clinton's army into New Jersey. The American army had spent months drilling under the direction of Baron Friedrich Von Steuben and were, for the first time during the war, capable of engaging the British and fighting well. With this knowledge, Washington began harassing Clinton's army with the intent of attacking when the opportunity arose.

Clinton yielded to the pressure of his lumbering entourage, the steamy weather, and Washington's impeding tactics and altered his course at Allentown, where he began moving toward Monmouth Court House (Freehold). He decided to halt there and commandeered the William Covenhoven home as his headquarters. (The Covenhoven house is almost identical to the Burrows Mansion.)

Washington decided to attack. He was opposed by some of his officers, and primarily by General Charles Lee, who had been against open confrontation from the time the American army left Valley Forge. Lee was a British-born mercenary of considerable military experience and poor reputation. He was suspected of Tory sympathies and had behaved treasonably in the year 1776 while a prisoner of war, writing a letter to General Howe suggesting possible strategy for the British to employ against the Americans. Uninformed, curiously, of Lee's reputation and former actions, Washington had effected a prisoner exchange in the spring of 1778 and returned Lee to his position of Major General of the Continental Army.

Since Lee was against the battle plan, Washington gave the command to General Lafayette, whereupon the envious Lee changed his mind and asked to lead the attack. Because of his position as senior officer, his request was granted. Although Lee did not share Washington's belief in the capabilities of the newly-trained American army, he wanted the opportunity of proving his own abilities which he thought superior to Washington's. Therefore, Lee accepted orders to attack Clinton's rear guard in an effort to drive a wedge between it and the main army. Washington would follow with the large body of American troops. It



was "the only time that Washington's army challenged a complete British force in open battle."<sup>27</sup>

The morning of June 28, 1778 was hot, humid, and mosquito ridden. The marshes where Clinton stood were filled from the previous night's rain. Lee finally attacked. Then he faltered, still unable or unwilling to believe that the American troops could stand against the British despite evidence that the Americans were doing well enough. He gave conflicting commands which resulted in a disorganized retreat toward Englishtown by those troops nearest him. The other soldiers were left in a state of confusion and disorder.

It was the retreating men that Washington saw first. He galloped to Lee and reprimanded him sharply. He then asked Lee if he would, along with General Anthony Wayne, regroup the men and fight. Lee answered affirmatively and threw himself into the task. The ensuing battle was one of the bloodiest and longest of the war. Casualties from wounds, sunstroke, and heat prostration (the temperature was close to one hundred degrees) were high on both sides. The lack of water made conditions almost unbearable, but the battle continued until nightfall, when Clinton took advantage of the darkness to slip away and resume his march toward Sandy Hook. No one heard the British leave. When Washington awoke on the morning of June 29, ready to renew the battle, he found the enemy to be long gone.

The Battle of Monmouth was over. While it had not been a decisive American victory, it proved the Continental Army could more than hold its own, a fact which greatly bolstered the morale of those supporting the colonial cause. Among the participants that day were John Burrowes, Jr., Asher Holmes, and Thomas Henderson, who had, individually or together, also fought in the Battles of Germantown and Princeton in 1777, as well as in so many of the seemingly constant local confrontations of the war.

Clinton, under constant harassment from Colonel Daniel Morgan and his Virginia riflemen and others, finally reached Sandy Hook only to find that it had been severed from the mainland by a storm. The beleaguered British crossed a pontoon bridge to the newly-formed island (it would remain so until 1800) on June 30. They then boarded waiting ships and arrived at New York on July 5 — at last.

<sup>27</sup>*New Jersey in the American Revolution 1763-1783, A Documentary History*, ed. by Larry R. Gerlach, New Jersey Historical Commission, Trenton, 1975, p. 307.

Back in Monmouth County, the majority of residents were involved in post-battle assessment and restoration. Of the many men and women who had fought heroically at Freehold on June 28, only the names of a relatively few luminaries and legends, such as “Molly Pitcher,” would be recorded for posterity. The casualties – which totaled over three hundred and fifty, roughly fifty of which were directly attributable to the intense heat – included General Charles Lee, who suffered the death of his career.

After the Battle of Monmouth Court House, Lee pressed Washington for a trial during which Lee believed he could prove his behavior at Monmouth was justified. Washington, having no intention of punishing Lee since he had ultimately fought bravely and well, tried to convince Lee to leave matters as they stood. As Lee persisted, Washington suggested a court of inquiry, but Lee stubbornly demanded a court martial. An exasperated Washington agreed. Lee was tried for misconduct, convicted, and sentenced to suspension from duty for a year. Rather than bear his punishment in a gallant and gentlemanly fashion, Lee launched a series of indignant letters to Washington and others which resulted in Charles Lee’s complete dismissal from service in the American army. In 1860, Lee’s letter to Howe came to light. It added the final condemning touch to the reputation of a man who could have been a brilliant military figure had he curbed his ambitions and jealousies and, further, truly believed in the loyalties which he professed.

While the Battle of Monmouth was, as stated, the last major confrontation of the Revolution in the north, Tory raids and general fighting continued in Monmouth County throughout the war. Naval warfare remained heavy, despite times when the bay between New York and New Jersey was frozen, as happened during the severe winter of 1779-80 when many suffered without adequate food and fuel. At any opportunity, Americans would oppose local British sympathizers with the knowledge that the war might still be lost politically if the strong Tory contingent in New Jersey was not quelled. The Tories, realizing the war was gradually being won by the Americans, vented their frustrations by constantly raiding farms and towns, foraging for provisions, and creating havoc wherever possible throughout the area, including Middletown Point.

Always the eventual focus of enemy eyes because of its prominence as a shipping center, the Point was again attacked around May 23, 1779. This time the fight took place at the foot of the hill near Samuel Forman’s home. The slope once renowned for



sleighting parties became the scene of bloodshed. The wounded were taken to Forman's home, which eventually became known as "The Old Hospital," probably because of its use as a refuge for those injured during the conflict.

The military records of John Burrowes, Jr. show his deep involvement with the colonial cause from 1776 onward. His endeavors from 1776-78 have already been noted. By 1779, with the rank of major, he was with Colonel Oliver Spencer's regiment of the Continental Army which, with Maxwell's Brigade, joined Major General John Sullivan's expedition against the six nations of the Iroquois. The ledger that Burrowes kept during this campaign is available in historical collections including the one at the State Library in Trenton. In 1780 Burrowes fought in both the Battle of Springfield, N. J., and the Battle of Connecticut Farms, N. J.

Part of the time, he apparently also engaged in naval attacks on British shipping. The military record of Thomas Geran of Matawan shows that, among other services, Geran enlisted in April 1780 as a sailor on the cutter of "Marque (privateer) Rebecca, Captain John Burrowes."<sup>28</sup> Burrowes, and others capturing British ships, often moored them in Matawan Creek to await disposition at the Court of Admiralty in Allentown, of which John Burrowes, Jr. was named Marshall in late 1780. In 1781, Burrowes retired from the military and by 1783 the American Revolution was officially over.

After his retirement from the army, John Burrowes, Jr. served as sheriff of Monmouth County, probably until 1785. He also resumed his activities as a merchant, the trade for which he had been trained by his father prior to the Revolution. Young Burrowes apparently took over the Middletown Point store and other mercantile businesses begun by his father. John Burrowes, Sr. died in 1785, age sixty-seven, and was buried in the old Middletown Presbyterian Church cemetery on Kings Highway.

In the name of God Amen, I John Burrowes of Middletown in the County of Monmouth and State of New Jersey being weak and low in Body but of sound and disposing Mind and Memory do make and ordain this for my Last will and Testament. First I recommend my Soul into the Hands and mercy of God and my Body to the Earth to be buried in a decent manner. And with regard to such worldly Estate as God hath

<sup>28</sup>Hornor, p. 56.

been pleased to bless me with in this Life I give devise and dispose of the same in manner and form following...<sup>29</sup>

According to Burrowes' will, his beloved wife, Hope, and two daughters, Rachel Henderson and Hope Forman, shared in the estate with his son. The latter also received the option of possessing parcels of real estate which included the house and property at Middletown Point. Further, John Burrowes, Jr. had all debts against him prior to 1781 cancelled. These debts were probably incurred in large part during the war when Major Burrowes had been paying his men's salaries and expenses out of his own pocket, run short of funds, and resorted to offers of loans from his father. The following letter would seem to explain the situation. It also sheds some light on the character of Major Burrowes and his attitude toward his family:

16 Decem<sup>r</sup> 1776

Dr Father — I Rec.'d yours of this morning by Burrowes & Return many thanks for the advice you have Given me I hope ever to have Due Regard to what you Shall Direct ∞. I Find I am under the Disagreeable Necessity of Leaving this County. I think to try to Get to our Camp for Security ∞ you wrote me you would Settle my acct with my men but it is impossible you Cannot do it ∞ Except with Burrowes, you must Give him acct Credit for mileage, Back Rations, & 3 months wages to amt of £ 8.19.10 besides the Credit he has already ∞ my kind Love & Respects to you & my tender mother & Caty & hope & I hope to See you as Soon as possible ∞ I Remain with hopes of being with you in a little time

I am your Dutifull Son  
John Burrowes

Charge the following persons in my Book to their Respective accts

Jonathan Holmes	35 Dollars	
John Bowman	20 ✓	
Andrew Mains	5 ✓	
Rulif Covenhoven	15 ✓	30

<sup>29</sup>*Monmouth County Wills 1785-1786*, B. 27, 5373-5836, Trenton State Library, Archives and History Room, Trenton, N.J., pp. 5437-5540.

<sup>30</sup>*The Breese-Stevens-Roby Family Papers*, the Dept. of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Archives, the University of Rochester Library, Rochester, New York.



It is not known who the Burrowes mentioned in the letter was, but it is interesting to contemplate what constituted "mileage" for him, or anyone, in 1776.

In his will, John Burrowes, Sr. appointed his wife, his son, and his sons-in-law, Thomas Henderson and Jonathan Forman, executors. As such, they were to pay all of the deceased's debts as soon as possible and care for his unmarried sister, Rebecka, who was probably living with the family. Rebecka and Hannah, two of the four Burrowes sisters, never married. In life and in death each of the brothers cared for one of the maiden ladies. John provided for Rebecka while his brother, Edward, bore the responsibility for Hannah. Ironically, the brothers died within one month of each other. Edward, the younger by about two years, died in August, 1785; John in September.

The years after the war were not kind to the Burrowes family. At the time of John, Sr.'s death, the business in Middletown Point was floundering. Young Major Burrowes, in partnership with a Forman relative, had attempted to regain the former trade but met with little success, since neither he nor his partner had sufficient capital with which to rebuild after the war. Further sadness lay ahead.

Less than two years after her father-in-law's demise, Margaret Forman Burrowes also died. Her tombstone in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery at New Brunswick Avenue, Matawan, gives the date of her death as July 14, 1787, and her age as twenty-eight years, eleven months, and sixteen days. It is believed that Margaret Burrowes never truly recovered from the blow she received during the raid on the Burrowes Mansion in 1778 and that she was ill much of the time thereafter. Whatever her actual condition, she bore at least two of her three children, Helena (Helen) and John Eden Burrowes III, after she sustained the injury which supposedly hastened her death. No birthdate is given for her daughter, Catharine.

With his young wife dead and his business a failure, John Burrowes decided to try his luck in the South. Before he left, he passed title in trust to fifteen acres and the Mansion to his deceased wife's uncle, former Sheriff David Forman, on March 29, 1788, by unrecorded deed. Family papers indicate that Major Burrowes left instructions to have some of his property sold and the money from the sale used toward the care and education of his children. Although it is intimated that these wishes were not carried out to the fullest, it would seem that Hope Taylor Watson

Burrowes and other members of the family continued to live in the Mansion until at least 1792 when Hope died intestate at the age of seventy-one. She was buried in Middletown next to her husband, John Burrowes, Sr., and near her former father-in-law, Abraham Watson. Her son-in-law, Jonathan Forman, was named executor and agreed to inventory her possessions, pay any bills, and present an accounting of her estate to the proper authorities.

John Burrowes is said to have written to his children (although it would seem that most of the letters were withheld from them) and to have returned home from Georgia to visit his family at least once. Apparently unaware that affairs were not entirely as they should be and feeling that the children were in good hands, he returned to the South and whatever unknown ventures or adventures he was pursuing there. (Possibly Burrowes eventually contacted former General David Forman, who moved to Maryland in 1794 to please his delicate Maryland-born wife and further his interests in land exploration and development. Forman had made money during the war by manufacturing salt and fulfilling various army contracts. He already owned land in Natchez, Mississippi in 1789 and it may be that Burrowes once again threw in his lot with his former commander.)

It is not known exactly what happened to the three Burrowes children in the next few years, although it is almost certain they were in the continued care of relatives. In 1796, at the age of fifteen, Helena Burrowes moved to Cazenovia, New York, "a frontier settlement of three years establishment,"<sup>31</sup> with her uncle, Jonathan Forman. On December 29, 1801, Helena married Samuel Sidney Breese (Breeze), who was born on September 26, 1768. His family had emigrated from Shrewsbury to New York State around the time the Formans and others from Monmouth County did so. Breese became a prominent lawyer in Cazenovia and Justice of the Peace in 1807. He attended the Constitutional Convention in 1821. He and Helena, born 1781, had four children of whom the most prominent was Sidney Breese who became a United States senator. One of the Breeses' nephews was Samuel Finley Breese Morse, the inventor of the telegraph. S. S. Breese died on October 15, 1848; Helena Burrowes Breese died in 1861.

Catharine Burrowes eventually traveled to New York where she married Jacob W. Hallet of Pultneyville, had children, and died of typhus in 1810 several days after the death of her second

<sup>31</sup>Hornor, P. 331.



son.<sup>32</sup>

John Eden Burrowes III remained in New Jersey. On July 31, 1797, he petitioned Governor Richard Howell to name his step-uncle, Asher Holmes, his legal guardian. Young John stated that he was a minor in need of someone to oversee his estate since his father had been out of the state for several years. The petition was sanctioned, and Asher and Sarah Watson Holmes continued caring for John as if he were their son.

March 1791

Dr. Sir:

Since I have been in this Country I have not had the happiness of a line from you. You may rely it would give me a very singular pleasure to hear from you often.

My friend Mr. Johnson inform'd me yourself and good family were well and that the same invisible hand still attended your undertakings. You my Dear sir have my most sincere wishes for a continuance of fortunes smiles in your every wish. As to myself, I cannot tell what I have done that has gave so great offence that fortune still persues my every undertaking with her usual frowns — but will try to do somthing with a determind resolution, to pay what debts I owe — and trust God to put a stop to the long persuit of fortunes anger. I think, Sir, I had too high an opinion of Freindship — and good nature I am sensible I had too much—*\*that, had I have serv'd my god* instead of serving my acquaintance that were only pretended freinds - It wou'd had been better for me - however it is now past and its no time to look back — You sir sometime before I left Jersey was freindly in offering to do what you could with respect to Obtaining pay from Congress for the Mills and stores that were burned. I can assure you It would be very acceptable to me at this time if such thing could be done..and did I not owe money, the payment never shou'd be asked by me altho it is a matter of right. But Sir You will agree with me that its much better for the United States to pay it than let the few persons I am Indebted to be loosers - and the same time be of service to my Family.

<sup>32</sup>Stilwell, *Vol. III*, p. 147.

I will thank you for your Opinion on the matter by first Opportunity - there is Vessels every week from New York & Philadelphia to Charleston, and a letter directed to me at this place to care of Mr. John Langstaff merchant at Charleston will come directly on - I think if the business was attempted with your assistance it might be accomplished. Please present my compliments to your good Mrs. Cownover, Mrs. E. Cownover and himself..also please tender my most sincere esteem and regard to your worthy daughter Mrs. Remsen-who I have ever had the highest freindship for-and had I the small income of a thousand a year I should attempt to offer myself to her - but if my income was much grater and was I sure of the affections Mrs. Remsen or a women of her real merrits and disposition I am sure I could be the happiest person on earth. & then could wish to live in Jersey, the most desireable place in the world - I do not write by this Conveyance to any of my Connections - I have some little thoughts of paying a Visit to Jersey if I can possibly. You Sir would be pleas'd with the Climate of this Country - as to health, I believe there is not a place more so - and the situation of our town exceedingly delightful and pleasing - and in time will be a place of large Trade - and may your freind Burrowes once more be doing somthing that he may be enabled to see his freinds again with pleasure - A malancholly accident happen'd here five days ago - a sail boat had been up the river, and on her return in the after part of the day was overset by a sudden flow of wind and only four out of Eleven was saved..our James Holmes was here on a Visit and was on board but was one of the fortunate as well as Mr. Morrel who came with Mr. Johnson from Jersey and two soldiers that belongs to this Garrison - a Coll. Weede one of the first men of the place, a Mr. Cartmell a merchant from Philadelphia, these two Gentleman have left two young widows to mourn their untimely deaths. Neither of them had been married more than Six months - four of those were men Just from the northward with a number more as settlers with their families - one (of) the four left a wife and five Children. A negro boy belonging to Coll. Weede was the other drown'd. We have no other news worthy (of) notice.-



Let me in the mean time subscribe myself with  
much esteem

Your Very Humb Serv

J. Burrowes

St. Marys

March 1791

John Cownover Esq.

\*Woolsey-

This letter written by John Burrowes Jr. to John Co(w)nover is in the collection of Breese-Stevens-Roby Family Papers, the Dept. of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Archives, the University of Rochester Library, Rochester, New York.

In 1799, John Burrowes, Jr. died. His death, like much of his life, is shrouded in legend, speculation, and misconception. Different sources have stated that Burrowes died during a duel, by drowning, or of yellow fever in either Florida, Georgia, or New Orleans. Although several historians and some Burrowes descendants have finally agreed that the Major died by drowning, some persons maintain the accident occurred in the St. John's River, Florida, while others say it took place in Georgia when Burrowes was seized with stomach cramps and drowned while bathing with a party of gentlemen in the Savannah River. This latter account, recorded in family correspondence and what appears to be drafts of memoirs, was reported to friends and relatives by Major Burrowes' body servant, who returned north with the news and then attempted to find the Burrowes children and offer himself in service to them.

While Helena and Catharine Burrowes were becoming increasingly settled in New York, their brother was living an apparently good life with the Holmes family in Monmouth County. As young John grew, so did his love for the sea. It is said that he repeatedly begged his aunt, Sallie (as her husband called her), to allow him to become a sailor. She continued to refuse, bearing in mind that both her father and stepbrother had been drowned. John reputedly coaxed by saying "O Auntie, Auntie, do let me go to sea and I will bring you the handsomest Canton Crepe shawl you ever saw." "Jack Burrowes, Jack Burrowes," she is said to have replied, "you will break my heart."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

The youth eventually had this way. John made one or two voyages and then was not heard from again. Finally, possibly around 1804, at some unnamed place, the body of a young man with "J. B." tattooed on the arm was washed ashore. The remains were thought to be those of Jack Burrowes who did, after all, break his aunt's heart.



Along Kings Highway in Middletown there is a small wooded plot partially delineated by a simple split rail fence. Formal access to the area is through a rustic red-painted frame to which is nailed a weathered board sign bearing the legend "Presbyterian Burying Ground Est. 1680" in white. In late spring and early summer the small cemetery is dotted with ladyslippers and other wild flowers which appear through the vines covering the ground. It is here that some of the members of the Burrowes family were interred. A short distance to the right of the entrance, near the front fence, stand the headstones of Hope and John Burrowes, Sr. and their children, Catharine, Anna, William, and Thomas. Behind this row of sandstone markers, some of which are still standing, is a fallen stone bearing only the initials "J. B.," as did the body of the young drowned sailor assumed to be Jack Burrowes. While it is possible the stone indicates the final resting place of the ill-fated Jack — or someone thought to be him — it is more likely that the marker is "Corn King" Burrowes' footstone. Not far from this spot are the graves of Edward Burrowes and his wife, Deborah Shepherd Burrowes.

At one end of the cemetery is a segregated area filled with Hendrickson tombstones. Here and there under the gentle hem-



locks and among the fallen trees and mutely swaying vines are other stones designating the resting places of Bownes, Leonards, Crookshanks, and others.

While nature is being allowed to have its way, the areas around the slabs are sufficiently cleared, whether by accident or intent, so that each remaining marker can be easily seen and read. It is a peaceful, timeless place which suggests to the visitor that those who are buried there are truly at rest.



By the time the three generations of men named John Eden Burrowes died, the Mansion that bears their surname had long since passed from the hands of anyone who was in any way related to the Burrowes family; for, on April 28, 1795, Sheriff David Forman and his wife, Anne, had deeded the Mansion property to John I. Holmes for £ 5,000.<sup>34</sup> The magic of the enchanted castle had given way to commerce.

<sup>34</sup>J. Mabel Brown, *The Burrowes Mansion, Matawan, Monmouth County, New Jersey*, 1938, p. 8. Data recorded Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

## *Other Owners, Other Times*

The new owner, John I. Holmes, was born in 1756 and referred to as a miller and a gentleman. He was a son of wealthy John Holmes from the Holmdel section of Middletown and the great-great-grandson of Obadiah Holmes, one of the original Middletown settlers who was a "glass man," or manufacturer of window glass.

As a merchant, Holmes would certainly have been interested in acquiring the Burrowes land to carry on his own trade as others before and after him did. It is evident by now that, from the time it was built, the house appealed to businessmen who used its location and reputation as a major shipping spot to good advantage.

Unfortunately, Holmes did not enjoy the property for long. It was seized from his estate and sold to Chrineyance (originally Krin Jans) Van Mater of Middletown Township for £ 2,013 on March 17, 1800.<sup>35</sup> He owned the house for an unspecified period of time until it was sold to William Parker of Shrewsbury Township. When Parker died intestate prior to May 3, 1825, the executors of his will, on that date, passed title to Joseph H. and Holmes Van Mater.

The Van Maters were among the early Dutch settlers of Monmouth County and were primarily engaged in farming. They lived in the Holmdel-Tinton Falls-Colts Neck vicinity and were generally highly respected individuals. One member of the family, Joseph H. Van Mater, was famous for breeding some of the finest thoroughbred race horses in the area. A Van Mater girl, Mary, married Aaron Longstreet, a subsequent purchaser of the Burrowes property.

The Van Maters had been supporters of the colonial cause during the Revolution. However, their family, like so many others during this period, were divided in their allegiances. The brothers Daniel and Hendrick Van Mater, for example, were

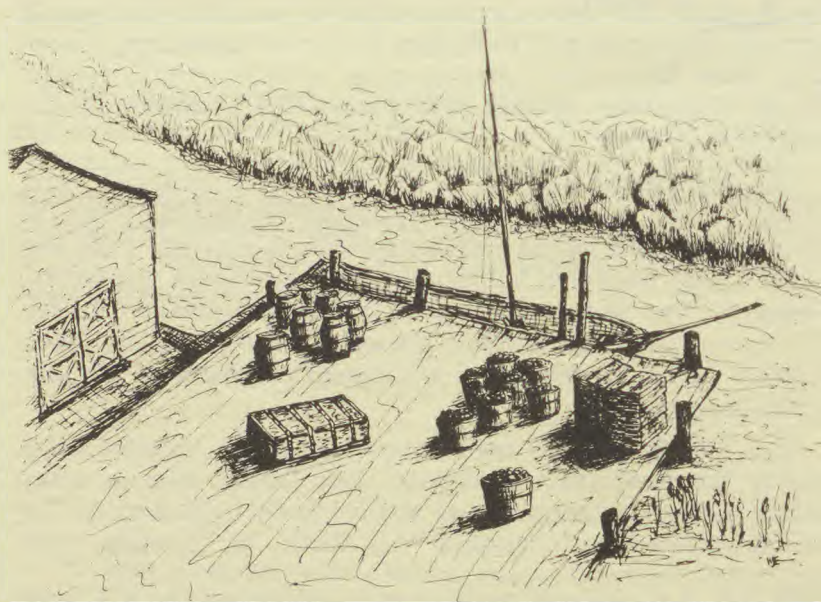
<sup>35</sup>*Ibid*, p. 8.



staunch Loyalists. At the time of the Revolution, they owned interests in several schooners plying a very profitable trade from Middletown Point. Knowing that British ships glutted the New York harbor and the Jersey coast, they probably felt strongly that England would ultimately win the war and control commerce and politics in New Jersey. With this in mind, they deemed it prudent to align themselves with the crown in order to continue their lucrative shipping ventures when the war was over. Their decision resulted in personal and financial disaster.

It is likely that none of the Van Maters lived in the Mansion for long periods of time, if at all, during their ownership, although Holmes Van Mater may have been in residence circa 1825. It is probable the Van Maters used the property as the point from which to ship their produce and further conduct their business while renting the house to others. A traditional story regarding the Mansion is that a Black clergyman once occupied the house. The man's name is not, at present, known nor has it been determined when and in what capacity he might have lived in the Burrowes house.

One of the known tenants of at least a portion of the Mansion between 1816-1826 was Dr. William G. Reynolds, originally of Pennsylvania, who became the first president of the Monmouth



Medical Society in 1816 and State Society president in 1824.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Reynolds was a bachelor of many talents. Not only was he a teacher of medicine and a highly regarded physician with a successful consulting practice, but he was also said to have been quite skilled at sewing. He once made himself a suit after being thoroughly dissatisfied with what the local tailor turned out for him. Reynolds is also credited with having created a finely constructed work box for a female patient with whom he was in love. There is no indication as to whether this gift of the hands and heart won the favors of the lady in question. All that is known is that Dr. Reynolds moved to New York around 1826, presumably still a bachelor. He is best remembered for his contributions to medicine, his terms of office in the medical societies mentioned, and for the fact that he is reputed to have had the proverbial skeleton — not in the closet — but in his back office, where it was a source of delicious terror to the neighborhood youngsters.

On January 13, 1842, Joseph H. and Holmes Van Mater divided a 21.75 acre tract in Middletown Point by deeding half to Aaron Longstreet, and a quarter each to Garret Hiers and Haddock Whitlock, all of Middletown Township. On April 1, 1846, Garret Hiers and his wife deeded their portion of the property to Jacob W. Fountain for \$4,000. On April 17, 1848, Fountain and Whitlock conveyed their holdings to Aaron Longstreet,<sup>37</sup> who thereby gained possession of the property on which the Mansion stood. (It is evident the size of the property increased and diminished during different ownerships.)

Aaron Longstreet was born in Holmdel in 1805. He married Catherine Lloyd, a Van Mater in-law, sired four children, and farmed until 1842. In that year, when he purchased part of the former Burrowes property, he moved to Matawan and began a lumber business which prospered along with other enterprises.

Sometime during this period the Mansion became "The Steam boat Hotel," as noted on Lightfoot's 1851 map of Monmouth County. While the house went through this inn phase, the upstairs bedrooms in the wing of the building were supposedly partitioned to make more rooms to accommodate a greater number of guests.

<sup>36</sup>*The Matawan Journal*, B.F.S. Brown, editor, Keyport, N.J., December 28, 1917, n.p. (last page of issue)

<sup>37</sup>Brown, p. 9.



By the early 1850's, Longstreet acquired other Middletown Point real estate. Keeping for himself a large tract adjacent to the lot on which the Burrowes Mansion stood, he sold the house, with land, to Dr. Aaron Pitman, a dentist, on April 1, 1854.<sup>38</sup> At the time of the sale the house was referred to as a tavern. Dr. Pitman would own the Mansion, or the Pitman House, as it became known, for the next forty-odd years.

Dr. and Mrs. Pitman were the parents of five children. One of their daughters, Miss Harriet (Hattie) S. Pitman, attended the Glenwood Institute on Church Street in 1868-69 and continued her education at Trenton Normal School. She was a member of the Matawan Literary Society for many years. Old Society programs show that her specialty seemed to be giving dramatic recitations for members and guests. Miss Pitman married Garrett Jones and lived in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

The other Pitman daughter, Emma, married an English professor, Claude Benjamin. Their two children were Cordelia and Park.

Will Pitman was the father of three daughters: Bertha, Grace and Etta.

Rodman Pitman had three sons to balance brother Will's family. The boys were Harold, Victor and Staunton.

Charles Pitman, who became a dentist like his father, married Miss Caroline Young of New York City. Their children were Charles, who died at the age of four, and Helen S. Pitman, presently of Rockport, Massachusetts. Miss Pitman was the college room mate of Mildred Brown Herrick. She is the only surviving member of Dr. Aaron Pitman's family.

Dr. Pitman was an active member of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Middletown Point, which had been started in December 1836 against severe opposition. It is testimony to the faith and perseverance of these earliest Matawan Methodists that they withstood the bitterness of some of the townspeople and built their first church on the present site of Stilwell's Garage for the sum of \$1,800.

The location was on Jackson Street fronting the barns of Mr. Tunis Hubbard. There had been much difficulty in securing a lot, the pioneers being obliged to take where they could get; and it was said by some in their bitterness that the location among the barns was good

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

enough. They met with much opposition and were told that this was preoccupied ground and a Methodist Church was not needed here.<sup>39</sup>

Dr. Pitman began his service with the church as a local preacher. In 1853, just when the church had acquired some apparent acceptance as well as a fine piece of property on Main Street, Dr. Pitman became ill with an unnamed ailment and was excused from his church duties.

By 1855, however, the new church on Main Street was standing and serving its people. So was Dr. Pitman. An excerpt from the early "Minutes of the Meetings of the Leaders and Stewards of the M. E. Church of Middletown Point" states that on January 1, 1855, "Bro A. Pitman called the attention of the meeting" to the fact that some of the members of the congregation had attended a shooting match. The "Preacher in charge was advised and directed to see those persons and admonish them." By 1893, Pitman was a Deacon of the church.

While not much else is known of Dr. Pitman other than that he enjoyed society and was, as shown, very stern morally, one notation has survived regarding Dr. Pitman as a professional man. Apparently, he had strong arms and hands as well as strong ideas.

Dr. Pitman, a dentist of the old school, ... was a powerful man, and when he shut down on a tooth, it came or the head was taken off the patient. In those early days the dentists were not supplied with the many tools of the trade they have today.<sup>40</sup>

On March 8, 1870, Aaron Pitman deeded the Mansion property to Alfred W. Arrowsmith who, in turn, passed title to Dr. Pitman's wife, Ann M. Pitman, in a puzzling and not clearly explained transaction. Despite this legal maneuver, the Pitmans were unable to keep their home. On October 27, 1897, 1.31 acres and the house were taken from the family and conveyed to the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York in a sheriff's sale resulting from a case in the Court of Chancery.<sup>41</sup> The Pitmans moved to Freehold and the house apparently stood empty

<sup>39</sup>*A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, compiled by A. H. Harris, Matawan, 1877, n.p.

<sup>40</sup>Charles E. Close, "Atlas of 1873 Published When Writer Was 13 Inspires History," *The Matawan Journal*, 250th Anniversary Edition, Keyport, N.J., September 10, 1936, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup>Brown, p. 10.



for some time. In 1902 the building was described as being "un-occupied and neglected" but "in a fair state of preservation."<sup>42</sup> Despite the condition of the house, someone in the town of Matawan saw its potential and purchased it on December 29, 1903. By 1904, B. F. S. Brown and his family were in residence at 94 Main Street. A new life for the Burrowes Mansion was beginning.

<sup>42</sup>Mills, p. 182.

## *Enter: The Browns*

*B*enjamin Franklin Strong Brown was born in Keyport. He was the son of Cornelius Hardenburg Brown, one of the Browns for whom Browntown, now a section of Old Bridge Township, was named. He married Jeanette Sellick, a pretty New York girl of Scottish ancestry, and settled in Matawan. The Browns had seven children named Jeanne Mabel, Charles Bradford, Herbert Franklin, Cornelius Merrill, Mildred Josephine (named for "Aunt Jo," Josephine Adelia Brown, a Keyport librarian), Geraldine, and Bernice Wymond.

In addition to being a handsome, genial, enterprising man, Benjamin Brown, called "Frank" by his wife, had a delightful sense of humor. After the birth of Bernice, a neighbor approached Mr. Brown to say, "I hear you have a new baby at your house, Mr. Brown. What's her name?" "Oh, I don't know," was the response. "Something like burnt grease..."<sup>43</sup>

Prior to moving to the Burrowes Mansion, the Brown family had occupied two other homes on Main Street across from what was then known as the Commercial Block, the area adjacent to the present Central Jersey Bank. Benjamin Brown had always been a newspaperman, primarily with "The Herald Tribune" in New York. He also dealt in real estate, was a member of the first Board of Education of Matawan graded schools, had been appointed postmaster on May 12, 1897, and was, in 1904, the editor and proprietor of "The Matawan Journal," which he had purchased from David A. Bell in 1890. The first issue of the newspaper with Brown's name on it was the one printed for February 15, 1890.

The "Journal" had been born in Matawan in July 1869 over the drug store belonging to editor Bell's brother, George. The monthly paper was originally called "The Journal and Matawan

<sup>43</sup>Mrs. Ralph W. Herrick (nee Mildred J. Brown), interviewed by Mary Lou Koegler, 94 Main Street, Matawan, N. J., 2 p.m., October 15, 1976. All personal information on Brown family life courtesy of Mrs. Herrick.



Advertiser." Its masthead depicted a two-masted steamer tossing on the waves. It was an appropriate choice for a town which was still a prominent port noted for its steamboats, schooners, and sloops. During the 1800's, Matawan was a sea captains' town with more than a dozen steamships transporting passengers and produce to and from New York City. Average fare for travelers, for example, on the famous steamship, "Monmouth," was fifty cents for a round trip ticket.

However fitting the masthead of the newspaper may have been in July 1869, Bell simplified it in December of the same year. He also altered the name of his publication at the same time and proceeded to call it "The Matawan Journal and Monthly Advertiser." The subscription rate of fifty cents per year was payable in advance. By the time Benjamin Brown purchased the paper it was a weekly, and by 1906, the year of the San Francisco earthquake, Brown also acquired "The Keyport Weekly."

Almost immediately, Brown combined the equipment of both papers and began installing more modern machinery, such as a monotype which eliminated setting type by hand. The first machine of its kind in the county, it was to be followed by increasingly sophisticated equipment needed to publish two newspapers and keep up with the general work handled by The Brown Publishing and Printing Company. During the modernization, the newspaper offices were relocated to a building on West Front Street, Keyport, which would be home base for "The Matawan Journal" and "The Keyport Weekly" until August 1973, when the papers were printed for the last time.

Meanwhile, there was a great deal of living going on at the Brown home in Matawan. With such a large family, all of the bedrooms were filled to near capacity. J. Mabel Brown had the large bedroom to the right of the stairs. She was a student at Centenary Collegiate Institute Boarding School in Hackettstown, New Jersey, and desired a large room in which to accommodate her friends when they visited. Mr. and Mrs. Brown occupied the front northeast bedroom; Bradford had the southwest corner bedroom; Herbert and Merrill were in the northwest room; and the three younger girls were ensconced in the smallest bedroom at the head of the stairs.

Mildred Brown Herrick remembers that all of the chambers were warmed by "little bitty" gas heaters, which were comforting if potentially hazardous. As a young girl, Mildred, who had graduated to her brother Bradford's room because he had left

home, warmed herself over the heater one "awfully" cold night and ignited her flannel nightgown. Luckily, she was not hurt badly and was more upset about what her thrifty mother would say about the ruined garment than about her singed condition.

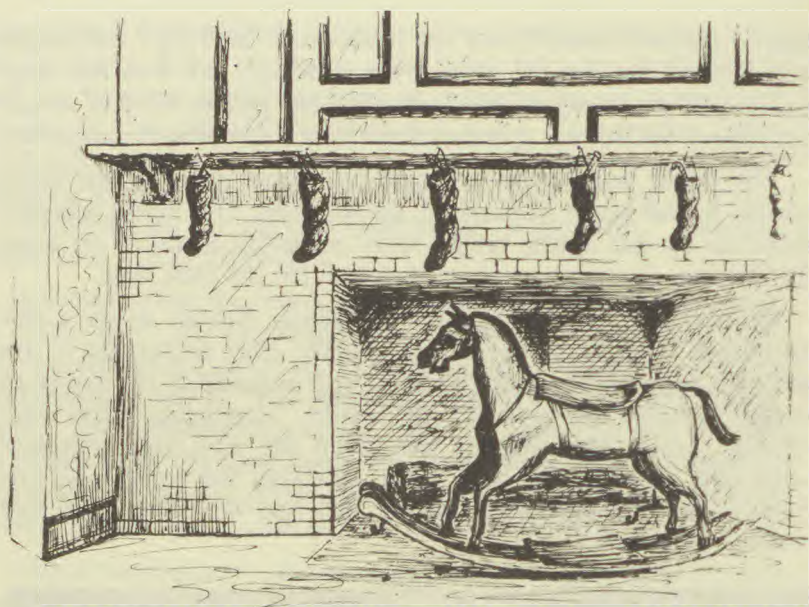
The house was further warmed by a large stove in the living room. A coal stove dominated the kitchen. The house was illuminated by gas lights, which were probably installed in early 1872 when gas was burned in Matawan for the first time.

In addition to redecorating, Benjamin Brown made a few structural changes in the house shortly after he bought it. He added a large porch along the front and one side of the house to create a recreation area for his family. Territorial rights were clearly stated. Mrs. Brown was given the west end complete with two rockers; the boys were allocated the north end furnished with a hammock; and the girls had the south end, also with a hammock.



Another alteration came about because the number of Brown children created a problem when it came to hanging up Christmas stockings. There was simply not enough mantel space to accommodate nine articles of footwear. Mr. Brown remedied this by having a mantel built over the fireplace in the back parlor where all the stockings could be hung in anticipation of Santa Claus filling them with an orange in each heel, plus nuts, candies, raisin





clusters, and a candy cane at the top. The Christmas tree, magically decorated by Santa, always stood in the front parlor.

One Christmas held only fleeting magic for little Mildred Brown. She received a note from Santa Claus saying, "I heard a noise when I was coming down the chimney so I left your present in the den." Mildred raced to that room — formerly Dr. Pitman's office — and saw a beautiful doll which was almost as big as she. The excited child grabbed it, fell, and broke the doll. The end of a present and a little girl's joy.

Christmas day at the Browns' was celebrated with their own traditions. December twenty-fifth was always announced by the clanging of a large cow bell rung by the first child downstairs (usually one of the boys) who also yelled a "Merry Christmas" to the household. This was the signal for everyone to assemble for the ritual of opening gifts, which was always done around the dining room table. Each family member, from the baby on up according to age, took his turn at undoing his presents while the others paid attention and exclaimed at each unwrapping. Considering the size of the family, this must have taken some time. It is no wonder that Mr. Brown became increasingly "frantic" for his breakfast, which he must often have felt would never arrive. It always eventually did, of course, and was well worth waiting for.

Holiday and winter breakfasts were very large, and winter morning meals invariably included fish, a favorite of Mr. Brown. He regularly ordered two firkins of salted fish sent from Gloucester, Massachusetts. Accompanying the salt mackerel or finnan haddie were creamed potatoes and corn muffins in two shapes. Summer breakfasts usually featured omelets.

Mrs. Brown prepared all meals herself. She also took care of the house and her family without any assistance other than an occasional mother's helper. She was obviously a strong, kind woman who loved her children deeply but was also a firm disciplinarian. Although Mr. Brown was the more easy-going parent, neither he nor Mrs. Brown allowed quarreling among the children and supported each other on any decisions regarding their offspring.

The children apparently did get along well and often played together. One of their favorite pastimes was going up to the attic and transforming it into a theater. The words "Show Will Be Opened at 2 p.m." were scrawled on the attic door in chalk. Then, for the admission price of two pins, the audience, largely comprised of the Brown sisters, would be treated to a play and acrobatic stunts performed by the brothers, who would emerge quite dramatically from a lower section of the attic, which was used as the dressing room for the young thespians.

Although children's parties were infrequent, Mildred Brown once gave a slumber party. In her words: "We were in high school and there were five of us. We all slept in the big bed the other way — crosswise. And one of the girls got a happy idea. We thought she'd gone to the bathroom, but pretty soon we saw something white in the window flitting in the breeze. A little bit later, a few seconds later, we saw it again and I don't know which one said, 'Oh! I guess that's the ghost!' One of the girls — the one who'd left the room — had wrapped herself in a sheet and come by. And the porch roof had a slant to it and she slipped and yelled. Luckily, she wasn't hurt. She just fell down. She had gotten out of the middle bedroom window and we had to help her back in. Then one of the other girls had hysterics and we had to slap her and get cold water for her and it was just terrible. We had started the train of thought by talking about the painted 'blood' on the second landing coming upstairs where Mrs. Burrows was supposedly injured. We had enlarged upon the story and I guess that's when the girl got her idea." So much for ghosts.

Life, of course, was not all fun and frolic. There were the



usual minor illnesses and difficulties that are part of everyday family living, as well as times of crisis. One near-tragedy occurred when young Merrill Brown was outdoors playing with a group of friends in the yard of the Cartan and Devlin Lumber Company, then located next door and to the rear of the house. As Merrill sat on a large log already positioned on the carriage, someone accidentally activated the machinery, including the circular saw.

Before Merrill could jump clear from his perch on the log, it moved sufficiently close to the whirling blade so that Merrill's leg was badly cut. A surgeon was immediately summoned from New York. To the horrified amazement of Merrill's distraught family, the doctor took time to eat a steak dinner provided by one of the Browns' neighbors before even examining Merrill and performing a much-needed operation. Merrill was ill from December until the following June and required round-the-clock nursing for much of that time. His recovery was a complete one. He walked without a limp and went on to become captain of the Williams College baseball team.



*Benj. F. S. Brown*

Through the years, B. F. S. Brown continued to be as busy as ever. In addition to running his business, he was also active in Teddy Roosevelt's presidential campaign in the area in 1912. That was the year that Roosevelt split the Republican party and ran on the Progressive "Bull Moose" ticket. By this time, the once hotly disputed and anxiously awaited railroad had been in operation through Matawan for over thirty-five years, and when Roosevelt toured New Jersey, the enterprising Brown had him stop at Matawan station to make a speech. During this time, Benjamin Brown was making his own bid for Congress, endorsed

by the "Bull Moosers." Despite everyone's zeal and hard work, neither Roosevelt nor Brown was elected. Woodrow Wilson became the twenty-eighth president of the United States in 1913.

Other Brown interests ranged from participating in the many sleigh races along Main Street, for which Mr. Brown used his own horses, to being on the building committee responsible for erecting the Keyport Free Public Library. Mr. Brown remained an active vital man until his death in 1920 when the responsibility of running the newspapers and related business fell to his oldest child.

Jeanne Mabel Brown, known throughout most of her adult life as either Miss Brown or J. Mabel, had been educated at a finishing school, Centenary Collegiate Institute Boarding School, as previously noted. She then studied fashion design and was employed by the Vogue Pattern Company when her father died. Miss Brown's career as a dress designer and fashion illustrator was hardly the preparation needed to become the head of the major publishing company in the area. Yet she undertook the task in a matter-of-fact manner, learned the newspaper business, and devoted herself to it for the next fifty-three years.

Miss Brown also found time for an amazing number of civic and business-related activities over the years. She was instrumental in the organization of The Matawan Joint Free Public Library and was president of that agency's Board of Trustees for most of the forty years (1923-1963) of her trusteeship. The children's wing of the new library building was completed in 1971 and named for Miss Brown, who was guest of honor at the addition's dedication ceremony on March 21 of that year. J. Mabel Brown was also a member of the local Park Commission and the Public Health Association, a president of the Monmouth County Historical Society, a founder and member of the Woman's Club of Matawan, the organizer of the Monmouth County Press Club (of which she was president in 1935), a Woman of the Year as designated by the Monmouth County Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and the first woman to serve as president of the Board of Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church of Matawan. She became the first female member of the New Jersey Press Association in 1921 and an honorary life member in 1960. She was also the first woman named to the Board of Directors of the Press Association. In 1969, Miss Brown was the second vice president of the Bayshore Hospital Corporation and vice president of the Affiliated Auxiliaries of the hospital.

A look at the other Brown children, of whom J. Mabel Brown, Mildred Brown Herrick, and Geraldine Brown Conover are the survivors, reveals that:

Geraldine Brown had been valedictorian of her Matawan High



School graduating class in 1914. She was a secretary for McClure-Jones, she married Frank H. Conover and had two daughters, Claire (Mrs. Arthur B. Trehwella), and Carol (Mrs. Walter Maguire).

Bernice Brown worked for the family newspapers in 1924-25, was also a secretary with McClure-Jones for nine years, and returned to the Brown Company in 1935. She married Adrian Ely Mount in 1939. Mr. Mount also worked for "The Matawan Journal" and "The Keyport Weekly" prior to the marriage. Afterward, the couple published genealogy and history in Washington, D. C. They eventually retired to California. Mrs. Mount, widow, returned to the Burrowes Mansion in early 1977 and died only one month after returning to her childhood home.

Merrill, a graduate of Williams College in Massachusetts, became a professor of chemistry and head of that department at the University of Buffalo. He, his wife, the former Natalie Elder, and two daughters, Janet and Carol (Mrs. David Miller), lived in Williamsville, New York, for many years.

C. Bradford attended Trainer's Business College and was an executive for Swift and Company. He married Matilda Conover and had a daughter, Lois (Mrs. Frank R. Valentine), and a son, C. Bradford, Jr.

Herbert was a graduate of Matawan schools (as were all the Brown children except J. Mabel) and later studied in Philadelphia. He worked with his sister in the family business until 1928, when he became publisher of "The Keyport Enterprise" and later "The Red Bank Standard." It is interesting to note that Herbert's first wife, Mildred, was a Van Mater. Their only child, Geraldine, eventually joined the staff of "The Matawan Journal" and "The Keyport Weekly" and became the associate editor. She worked in this capacity until the sale of the business in the early 1970's. Subsequently, Geraldine Brown (Mrs. Douglas) Sentell was editor of "The Suburban Weekly" for several years. Her husband was a journalist with "The Matawan Journal" and "The Keyport Weekly" for many years. Herbert's second wife was Julia Featherer. Their three children were Phyllis Jeanne (Mrs. Fred Sweeton), Myra Jeannette, and Herbert F. Brown, Jr.

Mildred Brown maintained a perfect attendance throughout her first twelve years of school. Who would guess that this integrity, when combined with a youthful romantic attachment, would result in "the one switching" ever given the engaging young Miss Brown. She had a beau named Hampton Mortimer de la Fontaine,

who was a student at the Matawan Military Academy (now an apartment building at 10 Church Street). Hampton was quite attractive and his uniform made him even more so. Mrs. Herrick remembers him as "very nice" and exclaims "Voila!" when describing him. On Sunday afternoons, Mildred and Hampton and other young ladies and gentlemen would go for walks chaperoned by a teacher from the academy. This idyll was interrupted one Sabbath by Mrs. Brown forbidding Mildred to keep her engagement.

"But, Mama," she said. "I have to go today. I've promised Hampton I will — but I won't go next week." All Mrs. Brown said, quietly, was, "You heard me." "So," continues Mrs. Herrick, "I went because I'd given my word and Papa always said we ought to keep our word. So — I went." Fate in the form of an older brother stepped in and Mildred was found out. When she returned home, her mother had a very thin switch cut from a tree in the yard. Mildred thought the switch would be too small to hurt much. Her misconception was corrected all too soon.

With adolescent romance behind her, Mildred Brown graduated from Trenton Normal School in 1912. She taught school in Keyport for five years and in New York for two years. One of the years in Keyport was spent "trying to instill some respect for their fellow man" in a class of twenty recalcitrant boys. At least two of them developed very warm feelings toward their instructor. The fondness manifested itself in the giving of gifts which were not obtained in the most upright manner. One young man was a delivery boy for a local grocer. Many baskets of food found their way to Miss Brown's doorstep in Matawan rather than to the homes of customers. Another boy selected a "very pretty enameled pin with a pearl in the center" from his mother's jewelry collection and presented it to Miss Brown. When she discussed the origin of the gift with the boy's mother, that lady insisted that the token of her son's esteem be accepted.

Miss Brown wrote the Personals column in "The Matawan Journal" for many years.

On October 1, 1921, Mildred Josephine Brown married Ralph Waldo Herrick, of East Orange, in the front parlor of the Burrowes Mansion. Her brother, Herbert, gave her in marriage. Dr. Charles H. Bruce, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Matawan, performed the ceremony. Geraldine Brown was her sister's attendant and Louis B. Gerardin was Ralph Herrick's best man.



Mr. Herrick was a construction engineer and partner with Charles Senn in the Senn-Herrick Corporation, Madison Avenue, New York. Some of the projects in which he was involved are Yankee Stadium in New York, the United Nations garage in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C., and one of the Yale University libraries in New Haven, Connecticut. The Herricks lived in East Orange until 1926 when they returned to Matawan to help care for Mrs. Brown whose eyesight was failing. After Mrs. Brown's death in 1933, the Herricks moved to a penthouse at 38th Street and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. The Mansion remained in the hands of the Brown heirs.

In 1935 J. Mabel Brown moved to 162 Broad Street in Keyport to care for her aunt, Miss Josephine Adelia Brown. Miss Brown rented the Matawan house to Mrs. Thora Thomsen of Metuchen, formerly of Keyport and Matawan. Mrs. Thomsen was more than a tenant. She was the proprietor of "The Colonial Tea House," which celebrated its grand opening on Friday, March 15, 1935. History was repeating itself. The Mansion was, once again, a public house. Even the sign on the corner of the street along the side of the Mansion was a reminder of days long gone. It bore the legend "Steamboat Lane."

"The Colonial Tea House" served luncheon and dinner, catered to private parties, and was ever ready to set up bridge tables for those enjoying this pastime. Lunches were priced from thirty-five to fifty cents; dinners ranged from fifty cents to one dollar. Patrons dined amidst antiques, and those seated in the original dining room could gaze through the windows and enjoy the lovely flower gardens, in season, in the rear of the house. The restaurant was operative for three years — and then Mildred Brown decided to come home to stay. On June 1, 1938, the heirs of Benjamin F. S. Brown conveyed the property at 94 Main Street, Matawan, to Mildred B. and Ralph Herrick. The transaction was recorded on July 6, 1938, in Book 1771 of Deeds in the Monmouth County Clerk's office.

In 1938, when the Herricks purchased the Mansion, it was one of the sixteen Monmouth County houses selected for inclusion in a Survey of American Buildings conducted by the Dept. of Interior, Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations. Material regarding the construction and basic history of the house was prepared for the project by J. Mabel Brown, who submitted the data to Washington, D. C., where it was recorded in the Library of Congress in that same year.



Mildred and Ralph Herrick owned their Main Street home for thirty-six years, during which time they saw many changes in the quiet, former sea captains' and bankers' town of Matawan. But there were memories everywhere, even in the garden. Mrs. Herrick recaptured a precious childhood incident there one day.

"I evidently had been to a funeral," she recalled. "I had seen somebody put into the ground. So I thought, 'It's about time for me to bury my doll.' I wanted to have a funeral. So I got a tin box and buried her down by the bird bath in the rose bush. Years later I was planting some flowers there and digging in the ground, and I came upon this box, which did not waken any memory. I had visions of finding gold or something very interesting and it turned out to be a poor little naked dolly that I'd played with when I was about ten years old." Memories.

In the early 1970's, Mr. and Mrs. Herrick decided to sell the Burrowes Mansion for restoration as a historical museum. By doing so, they felt that they could leave a legacy to present and future generations. On September 29, 1972 the house was registered in Washington, D. C. in the National Register of Historic Places, for which the administering agency is the New Jersey



Department of Environmental Protection. This followed registration with the Historic Sites of New Jersey. The application for registration was prepared by Daniel Bach, architect, and Dr. Richard H. Siss, then president of the Matawan Historical Society. The registrations officially designated the Burrowes Mansion a state and national historic site. As such, it entitled the Borough of Matawan, which had purchased the Mansion on April 4, 1974, to matching grants in aid from the Department of Interior, National Park Services.

The Historic Sites Commission of Matawan Borough was formed to administer the funds and oversee the renovation with the assistance of Charles H. Detwiller, Jr. as consulting restoration architect.

The Matawan Historical Society pledged its aid in raising money with which to purchase furnishings for the Mansion. The society formed a committee whose purpose was to select and recommend acquisitions as well as to seek donations of furniture, artifacts, and memorabilia for eventual use and display in the Burrowes Mansion.

By 1976, workmen were seriously engaged in the arduous task of actual restoration which included, as one of the first steps in renovation, painting the exterior of the Mansion white, not yellow, as stipulated by Mrs. Herrick in the sales agreement. The house is to remain white for as long as it stands. Why? "It's simple," said Mrs. Herrick. "I just don't like yellow. They paint a lot of old houses yellow and I like white."

The Herricks, who had been granted lifetime privileges of living in a portion of the house, began to see their dream of a historical museum slowly coming true. Ralph Waldo Herrick died in July 1976, but Mildred Brown Herrick continued living in the house which was, as she always said, her love. The magic was coming back. Long live the enchanted castle.

## *From Pillar To Post: Architectural Information And Related Notes*

*T*he Burrowes Mansion is a Georgian half house which is very similar, and in many instances identical, to the Covenhoven or Conover house in Freehold. It is quite possible that both houses were built by the same carpenter. John Bowne's original building in Middletown Point was thirty by thirty feet square. This unit consisted of the present entrance hall, the front and rear parlors, a lean-to structure in the back which may have been the original kitchen, and several bedrooms upstairs.

The foundation stones on the south portion of the Mansion are from a lowlands area of Europe. These stones were once used as ships' ballast, discarded in the vicinity, and employed in the construction of the house. The north portion's foundation is Highlands (New Jersey) sandstone. The wing of the Mansion was once a separate house which is believed to pre-date the original



*The back of the Mansion, pictured C. 1904, looks the same today.*



structure. The two buildings were probably joined in the early nineteenth century, although it is quite possible the work was done much earlier. The independent framework of the smaller dwelling is visible on the second and third floors of the Mansion.



The exterior walls of the house are of hand scalloped wooden shingles on the front, rear, and south sides. Clapboards cover the gables and north elevation. The front porch added by B. F. S. Brown in 1904 has been removed to reveal the original lines of the house. The recessed door has been returned to its original position, flush with the front walls of the house. The hood over the front door is a duplicate of the early one. The position of this small roof-type structure, identical to the one on the Clinton House, was determined from markings found above the front en-

trance. The exterior of the house is painted white with blue-green shutters.

The interior walls of the house are of plaster. Beams throughout the structure are extremely thick and heavy. Workmen installing electricity in the Mansion (which was the first house in Matawan to have this convenience) repeatedly broke their bits while drilling through the beams.

The front hallway boasts a massive arch which is a superb example of Queen Anne architecture. The decorative keystone in the center of the arch is an open book or Bible, a popular seventeenth century design which carried over into the eighteenth century. The archway, doors, and woodwork in the hall are dark brown. The walls are cream colored. All paint colors in the house

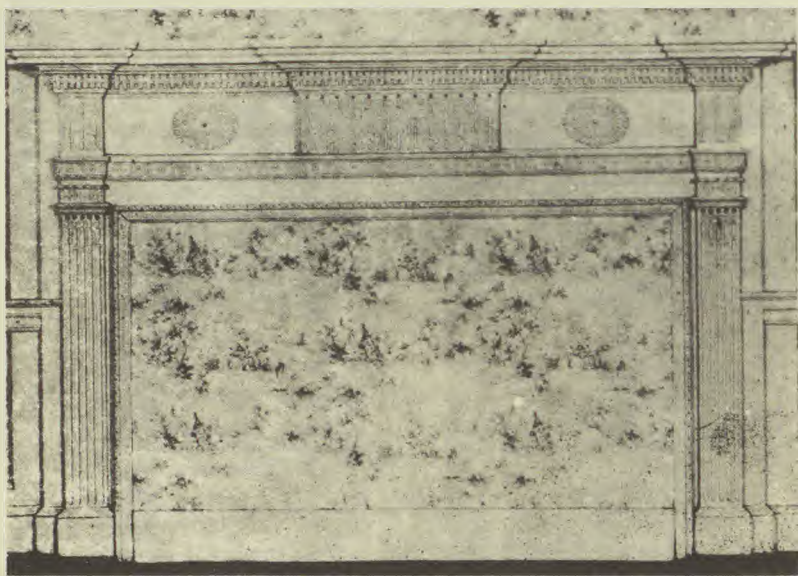




duplicate the originals. Hues were determined by carefully scraping down to the last layer of paint on each of the walls to be redone.

The fluted columns in the hall are of fine workmanship, as are the original stairs and banister. No two turnings of the stair rail are alike, indicating they were individually made by a craftsman using a hand lathe.

The front parlor is oyster white with cream colored woodwork. The fireplace mantel, although not original, is a fine example of the nineteenth century Adams style with "Walls of Troy" carving. The piece came from the Homestead Hotel, which was located down the street from the Mansion across from the present Memorial Park at Broad and Main Streets. (In its day, the Homestead was a popular place which had a park and bathing facilities along the creek behind the building.) The top board of the mantel supposedly bears a signature which is presently covered with paint. The bricks inside the fireplace are pale pink, early eighteenth century brick.



*C. 1904.*

Blue and white Delft tiles with Biblical motifs once outlined the fireplace. One tile featured the infant Jesus depicted in seventeenth century Dutch attire. This tile was a special favorite of the Brown children who affectionately called it "Baby Jesus playing cat's cradle." Most of the tiles disappeared one by one in the late

1800's, having been given as gifts to friends by a former owner of the Mansion. Fortunately, two of the tiles have been recovered. One was returned to the Herricks by one of the giftees; the other was found in upper New York State by Mr. and Mrs. Edward F. Kibble, proprietors of "The Collectors" antique shop, Matawan, who presented it to the Matawan Historical Society. The tile is framed and has a handwritten notation on the back stating that the piece came from the Burrowes Mansion, Matawan. The paper is dated 1857 and signed by Mrs. Helen Breese, a daughter of John Burrowes, Jr.

The area to the right of the fireplace was once plastered over to form a wall. This section was uncovered in 1976 to reveal the remains of a cabinet, which has been fully restored. The butterfly shelves in the cupboard were designed for more than decorative purposes. Candles were placed on the extended rounded centers to light the cupboard interior. A duplicate of this style is in the Clinton House.

The space to the left of the fireplace was converted to a window alcove at an unspecified earlier date. The arch over the alcove has been fully reproduced to match the one over the restored cupboard as an indication that, at one time, the fireplace was flanked by matching closets. Each of the arches has the familiar cartouche trim.

The rear parlor is painted oyster white with colonial or buttermilk<sup>44</sup> blue on the wooden fireplace wall, reproduced chair rails, and other woodwork. The mantelpiece added in 1904 has been removed and the early, flush, arched trim duplicated. During the reconstruction of the fireplace, the lower left hand panel over the structure was removed and the inscription "John Van Bracle built..." was found written on the back in chalk. Since this fireplace is original and identical to one in the Clinton House, it is likely that Van Bracle, a Freehold cabinet-maker, worked on both buildings. The fireplace is catercornered and supported by a Gothic arch in the basement.

The door leading from the rear parlor to the hallway retains the original knob, lock, hinges, and paneling. The two windows in the room have been altered and enlarged. This includes the window through which young Captain Burrowes purportedly fled from his would-be captors in 1778.

<sup>44</sup>Cynthia Marshall, interviewed by Carol M. Caldwell, 94 Main Street, Matawan, N. J., 1 p.m., November 15, 1976. (Other supplementary architectural notes throughout also provided by Ms. Marshall.)





*Rear parlor fireplace. Front parlor fireplace can be seen through doorway.*

The molding over this rear window and to the right of the fireplace appears to have been cut off as if something, as yet undetermined, had once been built into that area. Gouge marks in the floor perpendicular to the door from the front parlor are also unexplained to date.

The original floor boards in both parlors are exposed. A few planks in the front parlor were replaced with flooring from another eighteenth century house. The hall floor was replaced by floor boards from the attic of the Mansion's wing.

The ceiling in the library to the right of the hall has handhewn chestnut beams which were partially exposed by the shock of the Morgan Ammunition Depot explosion during World War I. The rest of the plaster covering was removed shortly thereafter. The olivewood mantel, installed during the Brown ownership, is in the Adams style and reportedly came from Elizabeth, N. J.

The most outstanding features of the dining room are the twin floor-to-ceiling china closets with their beautifully scalloped, shell-shaped, half-domed interior ceilings. Miss J. Mabel Brown had these closets built in the 1920's. She sent the best carpenter

available to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, to copy the design from a cupboard on display in the Early American Wing. The superb reproductions are in perfect keeping with the eighteenth century style of the house.

Visitors to the dining room should also note the split or seam in the floor which does not verify, but does indicate, a possible change of wall at some period. It is thought that this room may have been the original kitchen. Since there is, however, no evidence of a fireplace, other kitchen sites are still being considered, as well as the possibility that the kitchen may once have been, at a very early date, a separate building.

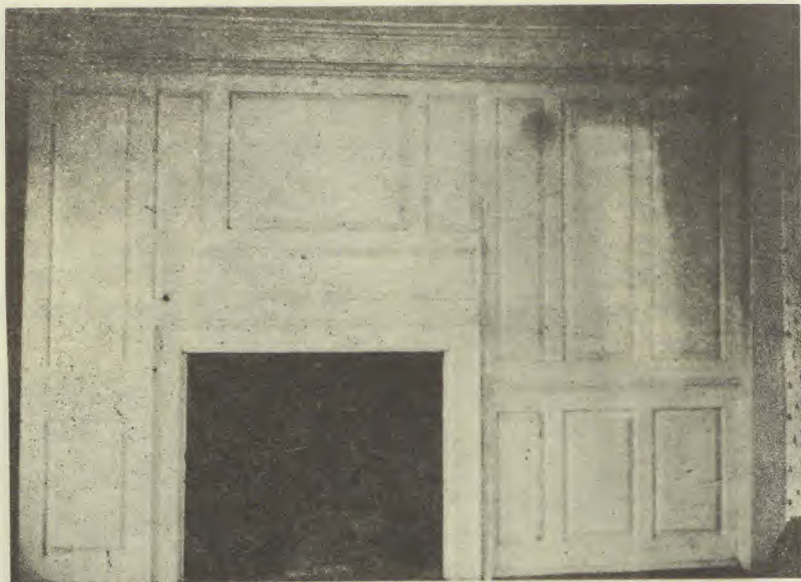


The master bedroom upstairs was originally painted a dark Windsor green. The whitewashed closet with HL hinges is completely authentic and may be the only original closet in the building.

A cast iron fire back, or reflector, in the rear of the master bedroom fireplace bears the four-line legend "W. Lyle Air Furnace New York 1769" in raised letters, and is thought to have been installed by John Burrowes, Sr. The flooring of the room is of Jersey pine.

The small rear bedroom directly over the back parlor also contains the original catercornered fireplace, again a duplicate of one in the Clinton House. The floorboards, too, are original. This room is the only one in the house with the original chair rail.

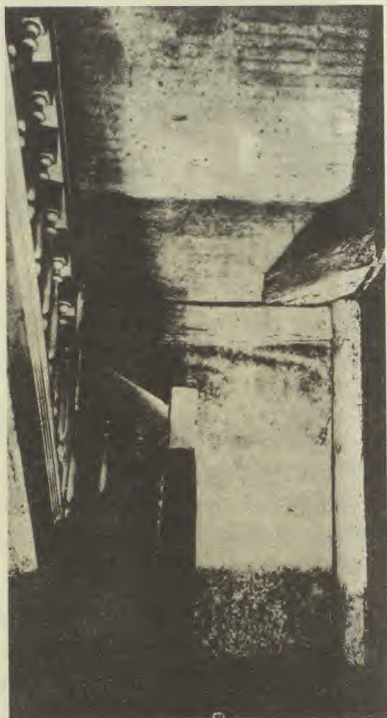




*Above, master bedroom fireplace; below, view of attic stairway ceiling.*

The attic stairs are cantilevered. The ceiling at the landing of this stairway to the third floor is peppered with holes made by Tory musket balls or scattershot during the raid on the Mansion. The musket balls have been removed by souvenir hunters as stated in a previous chapter.

The attic is partitioned into three areas. Two of the rooms were presumably servants' quarters. The entire attic flooring is random width Jersey pine secured with handmade nails. Roman numerals in sequence are scratched into some of the boards indicating that the flooring was laid out prior to installation. This was a common practice, although it is unusual to find such pains taken with an attic floor. The oak rafters are hand pegged and still solid.



The lock on the attic door, which appears to be the only one of its kind in the house, was made by the Carpenter (Bros.) Company. The emblem is very clear.

The back staircase leading to the present kitchen contains a small, ventilated storage-type area which is over the cold cellar. It is believed that the Burrowes Mansion, along with the Minniskill Hill (Hawkins) House on Mill Road, Freneau, was part of the local Underground Railroad during the Civil War and that this storage place was used to hide slaves bound for Canada. Note: Middletown Point men of the 1850's were largely sea captains and professionals who preferred continuing their businesses rather than joining the War Between the States. Thus, the town did not boast scores of blue-coated heroes for the simple reason that the custom was to hire men, often from neighboring Keyport, to go to war in place of males from Middletown Point. One of the blue-coated exceptions was from the Freneau area. He served as a medical lieutenant at the Siege of Vicksburg and later had a single-lane dirt farmroad in Aberdeen Township (formerly Matawan Township) named after him: William Henry Lloyd.



*Burrowes Mansion prior to 1904. Nothing is known about the large addition in rear. Porch and roof railings must have been removed by Mr. Brown.*



## *Furnishings And Frills*

*As* previously stated, the Matawan Historical Society is responsible for furnishing the Burrowes Mansion. While some furniture and a variety of historical memorabilia have been donated, the society has also purchased a number of very fine major pieces, primarily from the Herrick collection, some of which are described below:

A three-drawerred, rectangular topped, walnut Queen Anne dressing table made in America circa 1740.

A high scroll topped, mahogany Chippendale looking glass, scroll eared, with original glass, circa 1780.

Three walnut Queen Anne chairs with slip seats and cabriole front legs, circa 1740.

A Federal hall light with engraved pattern and bronze holder.

A walnut Queen Anne drop leaf table made in New Jersey, circa 1740.

A Chippendale (or Hepplewhite) wing chair upholstered in shaded beige and blue stripes, 1770-1790.

An American Hepplewhite card table, mahogany with inlay, circa 1790.

A 10' x 14' Chinese, indigo and beige carpet with overall design of birds, trees, and flowers.

A round-topped Chippendale candlestand, circa 1750.

A Sheraton style wing chair upholstered in beige floral brocade, circa 1810-1835.

A cherry candlestand with snake feet, circa 1740-1780.

A Queen Anne side chair with original rush seat, painted black, New York, circa 1730-1740.

A pair of Chippendale side chairs with wine damask slip seats, English, circa 1760.

Donations from Mrs. Ralph W. Herrick include:

A Victorian dresser and bed, originally purchased from Dr. Johnson of Keyport by B. F. S. Brown.

Two library bookcases, marble washstand in upstairs bathroom, and china cabinet.

A three-part, gold leaf, Empire mantel glass, circa 1830. Given in honor of Mrs. Edwin H. Dominick.

A small, three paneled bridal trunk in memory of Mrs. George (Adelaide) Miller, mother of Mr. Donald Miller, Matawan. The trunk was brought from Germany by Mr. Miller's grandmother, Mrs. Eliza Kaufer. This type of piece was traditionally made by a bride's father to contain her dowry.

*The Burrowes Mansion, 1978.*





## *Projection*

The concept behind restoring and furnishing the Burrowes Mansion is, ultimately, to transform it into a working museum.<sup>45</sup> Some day, visitors will not only be able to walk through the house and see fine architecture and beautiful, authentically decorated rooms, they will also, in essence, be able to step into the past and observe craftsmen busily weaving fabric, blowing glass, and, most particularly, making the baskets and pottery for which Matawan was once famous. Demonstrations and classes in these Early American crafts will be held periodically for those who wish to learn as well as look.

People will be able to study the documents and artifacts — especially those pertinent to and either made or used in early Matawan — which will be permanently housed in the museum. Tours of the building will be continued, with emphasis on visits from school and youth groups. The public will be encouraged to look upon the Mansion as a community cultural center in which to hold musicales, tea parties, poetry readings and other social and artistic gatherings.

In simplest terms, the Burrowes Mansion is not being restored as a charming, but static and untouchable, showcase. It is being restored to life and to the living.

<sup>45</sup>This term and others throughout this segment, plus concept: Mary M. Nickels and Mrs. Vernon A. Ellison, interviewed by Mary Lou Koegler, 94 Main Street, Matawan, N. J., 2:30 p.m., Sunday, February 27, 1977.

## *Capsule Biographies Of The Burrowes Family*

**JOHN BURROWES, SR.** (1718-September 1785) Born in Middletown. Father: Eden Burrowes (1687-1731). Mother: Rachel Lippit (relative to Ann Lippit, wife of John Bowne III, builder of Burrowes Mansion). Merchant in partnership with Captain John Watson at Middletown Point circa 1740. Married Hope Taylor Watson, widow, December 2, 1749 in Trenton. Had a store in Middletown Point, owned mills, storehouses, ships. Sold real estate. Subscription agent for "The New Jersey Gazette." In partnership with Samuel Forman after Watson's death. (Bought corn from Samuel Holmes February 6, 1760: 6 bushels @ 3/3 p. bushel.) Believed to have purchased what became known as Burrowes Mansion from John Bowne III in 1769. Dealt primarily in corn at beginning of Revolutionary War. Prosperity as major supplier of this staple earned him nickname of "Corn King" Burrowes. First militia trained in front yard of Mansion; boat from local whaleboat navy always kept at head of Burrowes mill pond. Captured in raid on Mansion, May 27, 1778; prisoner in Staten Island for several months; released in prisoner exchange. Buried Presbyterian Burying Ground, Kings Hwy., Middletown.

**HOPE BURROWES**, nee Taylor. (1721-1792) Born in Middletown. Daughter of John Taylor; granddaughter of Richard Hartshorne and Edward Taylor. Married Captain John Watson in 1737. They had four children: Samuel—1738, died in infancy; Sarah—March 21, 1740-Friday, September 11, 1830; Elizabeth—1744-1826; Abraham—1747-1767. Operated an inn and tavern circa 1745. Married John Burrowes December 2, 1749 in Trenton. They had seven children: Thomas—born and died September 1750, aged five days; Rachel—September 1751-August 22, 1840; John, Jr. October 29, 1753-1799; Catharine—1758-January 1777; Hope—December 26, 1759-May 11, 1806; William—1762-January 30, 1764; Anna—1764-April 20, 1766. Buried Presbyterian Burying Ground, Kings Hwy., Middletown.



**JOHN BURROWES, JR.** (October 29, 1753-1799) Trained as merchant. Married Margaret Forman probably 1776-78. Helped train first militia in conjunction with wife's brother, Jonathan Forman, in front yard Burrowes Mansion. Worked closely during Revolutionary War with wife's cousin, Gen. David Forman. A signer of Monmouth County Resolutions of July 19, 1774. Member of New Brunswick Convention of July 21, 1774. Capt., company of light infantry of Middletown Point, Monmouth County Militia, June 18, 1776. Capt., Col. David Forman's regiment, Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Heard's brigade of State Troops (5 mos.), June 1776. Served in regiment, State Troops, Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776. Served in regiment, State Troops, Battle of White Plains, October 28, 1776. Capt., Col. David Forman's regiment, Continental Army, January 29, 1777. Served in regiment, Continental Army, Battle of Germantown, October 4, 1777. Escaped raid on Burrowes Mansion, May 27, 1778. Served in regiment, Continental Army, Battle of Monmouth, June 28, 1778. Transferred to Col. Oliver Spencer's regiment, Continental Army, April 22, 1779. Major, Col. Spencer's regiment, Continental Army, July 22, 1779. With Maj. Gen. John Sullivan's expedition against the Iroquois Indians, 1779. Served in Battle of Connecticut Farms, N. J., June 7, 1780. Served in Battle of Springfield, N. J., June 23, 1780. Marshall, Court of Admiralty of N. J., December 12, 1780. Retired, January 1, 1781. Sheriff of Monmouth County, 1781-85. Went south after death of wife. Died by drowning in (most probably) Savannah River, Georgia.

**MARGARET FORMAN.** (September 28, 1758-September 14, 1787) Daughter of Samuel Forman (1713-1792) and Helena Denyse (Denise). Born in house on corner of Wyckoff St. and Ravine Dr. now called "Old Hospital." Brothers and sisters were: Jonathan, Denise, Samuel S., Mary, David, Helena, Caty, Elinor (Eleanor) (1763-1850), married Philip Freneau. Margaret married John Burrowes, Jr. circa 1776-78. Had three children:

Catharine (?-December 1810) married Jacob W. Hallet of Pultneyville, N. Y.; had two children, Catharine and Charles, possibly a third child. Died of typhus.

Helena (Helen) (1781-January 5, 1861) married Samuel Sidney Breese (Breeze) of New York State, formerly of Shrewsbury. Had three children: Sidney Breese, U. S. Sen-

ator; Mrs. Stevens, Oneida, N. Y.; Mrs. Matthew F. (sometimes written Mrs. Nathan F.) Graves, Syracuse, N. Y. John Eden Burrowes III (Possibly 1781-83 to 1800-1804) Sailor. Drowned.

Margaret injured in raid on Burrowes Mansion, May 27, 1778. Buried in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, New Brunswick Ave., Matawan.

**RACHEL BURROWES.** (September 1751-August 22, 1840) Daughter of John and Hope Burrowes. Married Dr. Thomas Henderson on January 2, 1778. Had seven daughters:

Mary (1779-1848) married Richard M. Green of Lawrenceville, N. Y.; five children.

Anna (1781-1843) unmarried.

Jane (1784-1804) engaged to Dr. McDowell.

Hope B. (1786-1823) married John Burrows Forman, a first cousin.

Catherine (1788-1854) married Rev. Eli F. Cooley of Trenton in 1818; two children.

Eliza (1790-1851) married Judge Cyrus Bruen of Freehold; two children.

Margaretta Matilda (1793-1853) married Rev. John G. Bergen in 1813; five children.

Rachel buried in Old Tennent Church cemetery.

**THOMAS HENDERSON.** (August 28, 1749-December 15, 1824) Doctor, began practicing medicine in Freneau, eventually moved to Freehold area. Married Mary Hendricks (1744-November 5, 1768) on September 23, 1767. She died after one year of marriage. Married Rachel Burrowes on January 2, 1778. Second Major, Col. Stewart's Battalion "Minute Men," February 15, 1776. Major, Col. Heard's Battalion, June 14, 1776. Lt.-Col., Forman's Battalion of Heard's Brigade, 1778. Brigade Major in Monmouth Militia. Also a judge, surrogate, councilor, Lt. Gov., elected to Congress but declined to serve. Buried in Old Tennent Church cemetery.

**HOPE BURROWES** (December 26, 1759-May 11, 1806) Daughter of John and Hope Burrowes. Married Jonathan Forman (April 16, 1758-January 1803), cousin to her sister-in-law, Margaret Forman Burrowes. Forman served in Monmouth



Militia; was Justice of the Peace. Had four children:

Catharine (1781- ) married Mr. Ebenezer P. Rose of Trenton.

Mary Ann, died age 26.

Eleanor, married Rev. Joseph Lynn Shafer.

John Burrows Forman (July 7, 1786-March 23, 1853) married a first cousin, Hope Henderson. Had two daughters, two sons.

**ELIZABETH WATSON.** (1744-1826) Daughter of Hope Taylor and John Watson, stepdaughter of John Burrowes, Sr. Married John Stilwell on December 4, 1764. Children:

William, married Catharine Whitlock.

Joseph, unmarried.

Mary, married Richard Applegate.

John, married Ann Cummings.

Samuel, married Elizabeth Freeman.

**JOHN STILWELL.** (December 26, 1738-September 26, 1813) Son of Joseph Stilwell and Sarah Shepherd. Farmer. Married Elizabeth Watson on December 4, 1764. Quartermaster, Gen. David Forman's First Regiment, Monmouth Militia, May 1, 1777. Principal watchman in network to spy on British shipping organized by Gen. Forman; government agent dealing in forfeited estates; Middletown judge, 1812.

**SARAH WATSON.** (12:30 a.m., March 21, 1740-Friday, September 11, 1830) Daughter of Hope Taylor and John Watson, stepdaughter of John Burrowes, Sr. Married Asher Holmes on Thursday, February 21, 1771. Four children: Sarah (February 7, 1775-April 27, 1857) married Samuel Holmes.

John Watson (September 13, 1776-July 19, 1840) Unmarried; "enormous size" (Stilwell, Vol. III, p. 345). Buried Baptist Church cemetery, Holmdel.

Catharine (September 23, 1778-July 11 or 14, 1848) Unmarried. Buried Baptist Church cemetery, Holmdel.

Huldah (October 29, 1779-April 4, 1851) Married Elias Hubbard, Esq. of Flatlands, L. I. on January 10, 1801.

**ASHER HOLMES.** (February 22, 1740-June 20 or 26, 1808) Son of Samuel Holmes and Huldah Mott. Grandson of Rev.

Obadiah Holmes. Born on plantation named "Scotschester" in Marlboro near Holmdel. Farmer, surveyor. Married Sarah Watson on Thursday, February 21, 1771. Called his wife "Sallie." Appointed member of Committee of Township of Freehold, June 6, 1774. Member of Committee of Observation and Inspection for Freehold, December 10, 1774. Sheriff, 1776. First Major, First Regiment, Monmouth Militia, November 28, 1776. Member of "sons (sons) of liberty," 1776. Col., First Regiment, Monmouth Militia, March 27, 1778. First signer of agreement to retaliate against marauding Loyalists (Association of Retaliators). Col. of Regiment of State Troops, October 9, 1779. Erected three signal beacons in area by order Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Heard, 1779. Col., Battalion of State Troops, June 7, 1780. Appointed, with Gen. David Forman, to "wait on" Gen. George Washington "with papers concerning the execution of Capt. (Joshua) Huddy," (Stilwell, Vol. III, p. 340). Present at Battles of Germantown, Princeton, Trenton, Monmouth. Commanded capture of privateer brig "Brittania" near Shoal Harbor, December 30, 1779. Capture of "Poleacre," n.d. Capture of schooner "Functur," 1783. Member of Legislative Council of N. J., 1786-88. Prior to death was in correspondence with government officials regarding appointment to office of Surveyor-General.



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