

NOTES OF THE MEEKER FAMILY IN NEW JERSEY

Written and Copied by Benjamin A. Meeker

(Circa 1871-72)

William Meeker (the name in the Elizabethtown records is sometimes spelled Meacker, Meaker, Mecar) was from New Haven, Ct.- from which I judge that he was a native of the mother country as New Haven was settled by emigrants from England in 1638. He there took the oath of fidelity July 1, 1644 and was propounded Oct 7, 1646 to be loader to the mill for a twelve month [period] to go in all seasons except unreasonable weather.

His house lot contained six acres bound [on the north] by Henry Norris, [on the west] by the highway, [on the south] by his son Joseph, [and on the east] by the swamp. He had also thirteen acres of upland bounded by his son Benjamin, Robt Bond and Joseph Osborne; also forty five acres of upland by Henry Lyon bounded by his son Benjamin and Robt Bond; also seventy five acres of upland bounded by Henr Thompson, a small brook and a swamp; also twelve acres of meadow on the south side of Bound Creek and two and a half acres on Elizabethtown Creek; in all one hundred fifty two acres.

Differences began to arise between the Governor, Philip Carteret, and the people. The loyal party was composed of his friends and dependents and those belonging to the Church of England, but was greatly inferior [in numbers] to the opposition who were the emigrants from New England. The governor had determined to make Richard Michel, a faithful servant, a freeholder, and had granted him a portion of the public land without asking the consent of the Associates, who resolved at a public meeting June 10 1671 that Richard Michel should not enjoy the lot given him by the governor. William Meeker became the leader in the rebellion which followed. On the night of June 19, 1671 Goodman Meeker, assisted by his eldest son Joseph and several others, tore down the fence and dwelling of Michel.

The governor was powerless to withstand the rebellion. William Meeker, the chief actor in the drama, was chosen constable instead of William Crane and received a confirmation from the governor Oct 13, 1671.

The proprietary government having regained its authority, Meeker and his associates were brought to trial June 24, 1673 and found guilty, Meeker being condemned to forfeit his estate to William Pardon. He was afterwards reimbursed by the people of Elizabethtown and Newark, at least in part, for his losses.

His sons Joseph and Benjamin were also numbered among the Associates. Joseph had a house lot containing six acres bounded [on the north] by his father, [on the south] by his brother Benjamin, [on the east] by Robert Van Quillin and [on the west] by a highway. He had also five acres bounded by Joseph Barry, a small brook, a fresh meadow, and a highway that goes with the meadow; also forty five acres to Master Bond bounded by Henry Lyon, Robert Bond, Henry Morris and John Woodruff; also twelve acres on the west side of the plain bounded by Moses Thompson, Isaac Whitehead, Sen Moses Hopkins and the mill creek; in all 98 acres.

Benjamin had a house lot containing five acres bounded [on the west] by a highway, [on the east] by Geo Norris and Henry Lyon, [on the north] by his brother Joseph, and [on the south] by unsurveyed land. He had also twenty four acres upland bounded by Joseph Osborne, Robert Bond and a run. Also sixty acres of upland bounded Robert Bond and Henry Lyon and Isaac Whitehead son; also

sixty six acres of upland bounded [by] Henry Thompson, two small brooks and a swamp; in all one hundred fifty five acres. He was one of the town constables in 1711. Joseph kept a country store and Benjamin was a carpenter while both were planters. Joseph Meeker was also a sheriff of Essex County a few years after 1709-10.

Copies of letters received from
J. R. Burnett in Feb 17, 1872

Addressed is Samuel Meeker
and recopied by B. A. Meeker, son of William S. Meeker

Yours received some days since, but my school duties left me no time to answer it till today. I will with pleasure give you what information I have respecting the Meeker family. Several intermarriages with my own caused me to pay some attention to the Meeker genealogy, but my information is still very imperfect. I shall be obliged if you will supply the deficiencies on my account - especially in your own branch of the family - of which I have nothing.

You are probably aware that William Meeker was one of the first settlers of Elizabethtown. In 1672 he was constable of the town, taking part in some resistance by the townspeople to the proprietary government. He was heavily fined, and a subscription was opened for his benefit in Newark, the people of which sympathized with those of Elizabeth. You may find a full account the matter in some articles headed, I think, "Procedure in 1673" which appeared in the Newark Sunday Advertiser shortly after the publication of Dr. Stearns' "The History of The First Church of Newark." In one of those articles mention is made of William Meeker's eldest, young Joe Meeker, a youth of twenty. I presume Dr. Stearns got this information from old affidavits filed in the office of the proprietors in Perth Amboy. Perhaps Mr. S. H. Congar can tell you. William Meeker probably came from New England. It is my impression (my memory is not clear on that point and I can't now find notes) that Savage's Genealogical Dictionary mentions him at New Haven, and that there is no other of the name of Meeker (so far as my observation goes) among the early settlers of this country.

The Elizabethtown Records show the names of William Meeker, Joseph Meeker and Benjamin as "Associates for whom 100 acres [has been set aside] in 1699. For William, I think, this was the second division. An agreement on the town book dated 1729 bears the signature among many others of Daniel Meeker and John Meeker. I am inclined to think the former a son of Joseph and the latter of William, but may be sons of Joseph. Perhaps my reason for thinking John a son of William is a tradition that the Meeker family was descendent from three brothers. I feel sure however, I have seen the name of John Meeker annexed to a protest of the Elizabethtown people against the proprietors in "Leaming and Spicers" collection of documents you will find in the Historical Library not far from 1693. My notes are in some confusion consequent on my removal here and I cannot readily find them all. It is curious that the first list 80 associates of Elizabethtown mentions only Joseph Meeker. Benjamin Meeker appears in the second list 1699. Perhaps the surveys in the name of William Meeker in 1699 were 'only on his right' that is for his sons. Those for Joseph and Benjamin being for their own rights. Joseph Meeker was a member of the first recorded grand jury of Essex County Feb 10, 1700 and a few years later was high sheriff of the county.

I made considerable search at Trenton and failed to find any record of his will or letters of administration, but it is possible that the Rev. Mr. Hatfield was more successful. It was announced after the appearance of his history of Elizabethtown that he was collecting materials for a genealogy of the first settlers, and I know that he had access to some old records which I have never seen.

Have you seen "Snell's Book of Genealogies" that says that Joseph Meeker was probably the father of Robert Meeker, Stephan Meeker and David Meeker who were brothers, and all settled in or near Elizabethtown? He adds that Robert Meeker had sons James, Robert, Stephan and David. I will presently show that the will of John Meeker names his sons Robert, James and David. This is a tradition and not provable. Snell goes on to give the descendants of James Meeker - in which he is probably reliable.

Isaiah, son of James came up to survey New Providence in 1775, died 1814 "Aged 73." This marks his birth [at] 1741. One of his sons was Jonathan Meeker who died not far from 1852, and whose will gave rise to so much litigation nearly a score of years ago. For the rest of this family of Isaiah Meeker I refer you to Littell's book published in 1852.

I saw at Trenton the will of Benjamin Meeker recorded 1705. He names his wife, Elizabeth, sons William, Benjamin, David, Samuel, Thomas and Joseph. The will of William Meeker of Newark (township) was recorded or dated Nov 1741. He names his wife, Hannah, sons Jonathan and Isaac, grandson David, son of David lately dead, Abigail, widow of David, granddaughter Hannah. The will of Benjamin 1751 names five children: Benjamin, Samuel, Phoebe, wife of Nehemiah, Ludlow, Esther, wife of Stephan Thomas, Sarah, wife of Isaac Woodruff, wife Phebe. I suppose that Benjamin Meeker who is buried at Springfield "Died 1813, aged 67" is of this family. Next [to] him is buried Elizabeth, wife of Samuel Meeker, died 1832, 50th year. I have not found anything respecting the other sons of the first Benjamin.

I learn from headstones in the First Church Yard, Elizabeth, that Phebe, wife of the second Benjamin, died 1757 in her 75th year; their son, Samuel, 1757 in his 41st year. Perhaps the Benjamin at Springfield who was born 1746 was the son of Samuel. Daniel Meeker, who I suppose to have been son of the first Joseph, died Oct 1, 1757 in his 77th year (buried in First Church, Elizabeth) making his birth 1680 when Joseph was about twenty eight years old as we were told he was [aged twenty in 1672]. I have not found any will. His wife, Rachel, died June 22, 1760 [in her] 77th year. Stephan Meeker's will was recorded 1749. If a brother of Daniel above, he must have been much younger for he makes provision for an expected child by his wife, Mary. (He may have been a son of Daniel). He names sons Stephan and Obediah, daughters Elizabeth, Sarah, Mary, Phebe and Rhoda. I suppose Captain Obediah Meeker, died 1820 in his 90th year, was the same named in this will. Near him [is] Michael Meeker who died 1755 in his 35th year - probably his uncle. Mary, wife of Michael Meeker and daughter of John and Mary Ogden died 1757 in her 30th year.

There may be other Meekers that I did not see as I had not time to make a thorough search as I very seldom could go to Elizabethtown. I will mention that Snell says that James Meeker, brother of Isaiah and son of James, was the

father of the late James F. Meeker, merchant of Elizabethtown whose son, James F. Meeker, is a lawyer and of Stephan J. Meeker who I think was a Jackson member of the legislature about forty years ago. The first James Meeker, says Littel, was the son of Robert whom he supposed to be the son of Joseph the first. But there is on record the will of John Meeker dated Feb 1, 1730 naming his sons Robert and James, his grandson John, the only son of his son John. (The will of John Jr. dated Dec previous shows that this John 3rd was a posthumous child - born a little before his grandfather's death), his three granddaughters by his son John viz. Sarah Griffins, Rhebecah Whitehead and Hannah Talmadge, his daughter, Eunice Meeker, his son David yet underage. To have three granddaughters married one must suppose this John quite an old man - old enough probably to be the youngest son of the first William.

This will of John Meeker seems to establish that the Robert, James and David Meeker of or near Elizabethtown were sons not of Joseph, but of John. Still, I don't feel positive that John was not a son of Joseph. If Joseph had a son as early as 1673 or 1675, that would be the age one could assign to John, making him 56 or 58 at his death. If a younger son of William the first, he would be probably a few years older. I have seen an old deed from David Meeker conveying lands at Connecticut Farms to his son Michael, and, as Michael had a brother John, I think it very probable this was the David above - youngst son of the first John, for it was in those days very common for a man to give his father's name to one of his sons.

This Michael Meeker, I was informed by one of his descendents, left sons Aaron and Moses and several daughters, the eldest of whom was Sarah, wife of Isaac Townley (of the Townley family from Elizabethtown, my near neighbor when a boy), and the youngest, Catherine, wife of Daniel Baldwin of Cheapside (S. W. part of Livingston). If you wish further information concerning this family, apply to Mrs. Julia Johnson, Court St. Newark, wife of Henry Johnson, next door to my brother-in-law, C. N. Jennings. She (Julia) is one of ten children of Isaac and Sally Townley.

John Meeker, the brother of Michael, married Patience Wade and settled in Livingston. He died before my recollection. He must have been born not far from 1780. His son, Nathaniel Wade Meeker, hatter, was living in Newark not long since - very old - may be yet alive. John's daughter Dorotha married Charles Jennings. Their two sons, David Meeker Jennings and Charles H. Jennings married my two oldest sisters, Rachel and Phebe. If you wish to know more of this family, my brother-in-law, C. H. Jennings, corner of Court and Church Streets. or his wife, my sister, Phebe. Phebe can tell you more about them. David Meeker Jennings died at Morristown. His daughter, my niece Rachel Frances, married John _____ Meeker of a different line of Meekers. They live adjoining my farm at Livingston.

Timothy Meeker was one of the first settlers of Livingston. His father's name I could never learn, but I have no doubt he, Timothy, was a son of [one of] the seven sons of Benjamin Meeker. He died in 1798 aged about ninety; some of his descendents say more. My grandfather (Deacon Abner Ball), of whom he was a neighbor, told me once that Timothy had had three wives and eighteen children, but on the list given me by his grandson, the late Enoch Edwards, Desire Meeker was the first wife of Rev. Moses Edwards who had a large family. Enoch Edwards'

daughter was the wife of Samuel Burnett, my brother. Desire avers [that] Hannah married Captain John Edwards, brother of Rev. Moses. This [Enoch Edwards list] only embraces sixteen children. I conclude the other two died young.

The first wife [of old Timothy was] a Pierson of South Orange [who] died (by her headstone) Jan 10, 1737-8 in her 19th year. His second wife was a Munn, aunt to Judge Aaron Munn. Her children were Joseph and Sarah. The third wife was a Cory. Her children were sons Jonas, Timothy Jr, John, William, Amos Wms., Cory, David, Jonathan Wms, Isaac (the youngest), [and] daughters Hannah, Polly ([who] died young), Abigail, Desire, Phoebe.

Joseph, the first [son of old Timothy], married Molly Smith, a sister of Walter Smith of Springfield. [They] had Caleb, Enoch, Elisha, Joseph, Aaron, Keziah, Rachel.

Sarah, [old Timothy's second child], married Isaac Smith, a brother of Walter. And Molly had Stephan, Caleb, William, Walter, Joseph Smith besides daughters.

Jonas married Sarah Osborne and died before his son, also named Jonas, was born.

Timothy Jr. married Sarah Parcel. He lived to more than eighty and his widow to ninety or more. Their children were eight: Jeptha, Bethuel, Diadema, Jonathan, Stephan, Luther, Calvin and Zadoc. I think this last is yet living at the age of eighty or more. I saw him three or four years ago. He must have been twenty years or more younger than Jeptha. Jeptha married Abigail Allen and had Silas - [He] went to Ohio. _____ was a major of militia, married Polly Teed, aunt to Sheriff Teed. He died 1831, aged thirty and left two sons, one gone far west. The other is John _____ Meeker before he entered the calvary [sic]. His equipments were purchased by Ephriam Littell of a New England trooper consisting of a cap and pistols, sword etc., and said by Littell to have been taken from a dragoon who belonged to Burgoyne's Army. His service in the Horse was often in parties detached in small parties on _____ duty in different sections of country. James Doty recalls the same facts, and, tho he does not recollect service with Elmer, yet both might have served at the same time in different places and on different duty. Elmer recollects distinctly the following persons, fellow soldiers in the calvary, Thomas Osborn, John Wilcox, Nathan Beall, John Walmer, Jonathan Townly, Benjamin Beall, Isaac Halsey, Nathan Cramer, Saul Parsons, James Halsey, Daniel Halsey, besides his officers. These were his neighbors, but they are all dead, and he does not know a survivor of the troop who recollect him, neither Stansbery Doty nor Denman, although he believes they all belonged to the same company years ago.

William was the grandfather of Josephine and Andrew McKent of Livingston. Jonathan died 1816. He was twice married. His two sons by the last wife (the elder one went to Ohio and one, Peter, [was] in the War of 1812). Jonathan Morris, whose youngest son, Walter Meeker, is the only Meeker yet living on any of the old Meeker homesteads in Livingston, [is the father of] my niece, Hannah M. Burnett and Cornelius S. Meeker; see margin page.

David died 1832, aged about seventy two. His son Elias was the father of Elias of Livingston and Jeremiah of South Orange. David's daughter Hannah married her cousin Samuel, son of Isaac.

This David Meeker was, in his best days, a famous prize fighter. I have often heard that one memorable cold day (about 1816 I think) he, for a small wager, walked stark naked from the tavern in Livingston to the next house - about a furlong or more. Some humane person ran after him with a coat, but he threw it off.

You enquire concerning the records of the Meekers in the Revolution. All I know is that the descendents of old Timothy Meeker used to boast that he was in the Battle of Springfield with ten sons and four sons-in-law. Timothy Jr. who lived on the west side of Second Mountain in those days, now in the north part of Millburn, used to boast that he had the honor one day of entertaining at dinner a party of officers who proved to be General Washington and his staff shortly after the battle of Connecticut Farms or Springfield.

I understand Cornelius S. Meeker, youngest son of Jonathan, served nearly through the late Civil War. He was desperately wounded in one of the battles of the Wilderness (?) under Grant. He recovered with the loss of an eye.

Samuel, son of Isaac the youngest son of old Timothy, is yet living. Two of his sons, Enoch Meeker and Samuel Harry [Harvey] Meeker are living near the line between Livingston and Millburn.

Truly yours, J. R. Burnett

George Townley, witness for I Doty Recollects Mr. Doty on service in Cavalry under **Captain Saml Meeker**. Remember him at Springfield at the time when General Washington was at the house of Rev. Mr. VanArsdale. The troop paraded there and Mr. Doty was present doing duty as one of the troop. Has seen him with the troop and all others before named in troop at various times and places. Townley was then in militia on duty, and often fell in with Meeker's troop. Jacob Potter knows Mr. Doty belonged to Meeker's horse in time of war and did duty at Springfield, Elizabethtown, the point farms and Rahway In service. Paraded in uniform with troop. Has lived neighbors with Doty from childhood. Knew of his breaking off from foot and joining the horse.

In foot both belonged to Wood's Co. and did duty with rest of militia in that Co. before joining horse. Doty belonged to the horse until the close of war. Has known him ever since. James Doty is cousin to Joseph knew him whilst belonging to Capt. Wood's Co. 1776. Knew him on duty at Elizabethtown & the point in 1776. Knew him to join Meeker's cavalry. Knew him to parade with the troop when on service and when in smaller squads 2 & 2 or express carrying dispatches. Knew him on duty most at Elizabethtown & Woodbridge. Ichabod Clarn he says was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and knew recompense. and knows that he belonged to the light horse calvary [sic] and frequently saw him out on duty. That he served under three Capts: Saml. Meeker, Chris Marsh & Obadiah Meeker.

Sept 15, 1835. Nathan Elmer amends his declaration. He says his service at Springfield [three illegible words] in 1780 was in the foot. His whole service was about 4 years, 2 yrs in foot and 2 in the horse. He has remembrance of Capt Chris Marsh but thinks that Saml Meeker commanded when he joined. The facts are

probably thus. He was 16 years of age in Nov 1779. Had no duty till then. He was first ordered to do duty by Timothy Crane, and did duty in Wood's Co. Thinks he was in the foot nearly two years before he entered the calvary [sic]. He must then have entered the calvary [sic] service in 1781 when old Meeker and not Saml commanded the troop. He thinks the whole of his service in foot must have been before he joined the horse and that he left the troop only at the end of the war. The service in his amended declaration. Stated as performed on foot after his calvary [sic] duty was all done.

Susan Meeker, widow of Caleb Meeker, claims pension for his service in Revolution. He served as a volunteer 2 yrs (by enlistment). Joseph Meeker was his Capt.; Other officers not known; married before the end of War. Robt. Young on the Canada expedition as a fifer in Capt. Joseph Meeker's Co. Col. Wind's regt. Joseph Meeker was father of Caleb Meeker, and after the war moved from Springfield to Morris County near to Saccosany. _____ knew Caleb after his return from Canada. In militia service at Morristown, Elizabethtown, Springfield, Amboy, second river Hubbletown and Rahway. Robt. Pierson knew Meeker when he went to Canada as a fifer in his father's Co. Was gone _____; saw him on his return; often heard him tell of his tour in Canada. Mrs. Meeker's father was a Skinner; Lived at Springfield; was a great sufferer by the burning. She was married by Mr. Van Arsdale in June, the year not recollected. It was after the war.

During the year 77 & 78 & 79 Capt. Meeker's Co. was stationed at Rahway at Ferrell's Tavern watching the enemy.

Henry Williams' examination April 22, 1834 in respect to 5 mos. service in Craig's Co. The entire coast from Elizabethtown point to Amboy was a frontier - separated from the enemy then on Staten Island only by the sound - a narrow strip of water and easy to be crossed at all times. The enemy then in possession of New York and the Island; part of the time also of Amboy and New Brunswick. Col. Jacques had command of the militia in the district, viz. in and around Rahway. He authorised, as I then understand, a company of five month men to be raised expressly for a defence of the frontier from Elizabethtown point and Tremblys point about four to five miles. This was our ground and we mounted guard regularly at Elizabethtown point, at Deharis point or Halsteads point, Morris Mills and Tremblys point and occasionally between. Elizabethtown was our regular station, and every night we mounted guard at those places. Our station at Elizabethtown was, part of the time, near the wooden bridge. Most of the time our provisions were issued by one Woodruff. We entered on this duty in the summer, the latter part of June or fore part of July, and our term expired about the last of November. During this time, or before my time was out, our company was called out to prevent the rescue of a Tory or Refugee of the name of Long who had been guilty of taking and carrying off leading Whigs. During the winter before, he came over with a party of twelve or fifteen men from Staten Island, surrounded my father's house, took my oldest brother John and carried [him] off to the enemy. Would not allow him to put on his great coat; took him to New York in the sugar house. He took and carried off six or seven others about that time, James Lambert, Caleb Potter, John Harris and three others. The enemy [was] then in Elizabethtown and Rahway. They kept these men at Rahway till they collected seven, and then took them all together to the sugar house.

My brother John and two others made their escape the summer following and got back to their friends. This same Long had been a schoolmaster in Rahway, an Englishman, and knew all the people around there, who were Whigs and who Tories. He came over again in the fall as a spy who was taken prisoner by stratagem in Nichol's barn near Rahway, tried by a court martial in which Col. Jacques presided. [He was] sentenced to be hanged, and was hanged at Kinsey's bar, not far from Rahway at the corner of the road.

It was so near the enemy [that] it was thought they might attempt his rescue, and our company was ordered on this duty whilst the sentence was enforced. A few nights afterward some Whigs willing to sport with Long's body dug it up at night and placed it on its feet against the door of another Tory, an Englishman, Richard Cozen, with a milk pail over the head. It was cold, and the body froze stiff, and upon opening the door in the morning, Long's body fell into the room. This was intended as a warning to Cozen. The gallows was by the corner of his garden, and distant not more than four or five rods from his (Cozen's) windows. Ellis Thorp was compelled to be hangman. Long had enticed him to carry letters for him to different characters in the neighborhood.

The five months service was faithfully performed.

Although the foregoing has no reference to the Meeker family, I have inserted it for the purpose of showing that my ancestor, Captain Sam Meeker, had no part in the transaction. There was a tradition in the family that he was the officer who ordered the execution which was said to have been conducted under circumstances of great brutality. I am happy to prove by this testimony of an eye witness that this was not true.

E. A. Meeker