

A Genealogy and History of the Meeker family in America

By John V. Meeker

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Preface by Transcriber The following is a transcription of a hand-written document composed by John Valentine Meeker (1824-1910). A very few changes in spelling and punctuation have been made for clarity being careful not to change the meaning of the text. Some words were indistinguishable and have been enclosed in brackets. A copy of the original document was furnished by Mrs. Charles Hood, Historian, The Ezra Meeker Historical Society.

Begin Transcription:

A Genealogy and History of the Meeker family in America, especially of my connection with the family. This history is written for the especial use and benefit of my children and grandchildren. (signed)--J. V. Meeker

There are two seemingly conflicting accounts of the first appearance of the family in the American Colonies, but I am convinced that the difference is not so real as seems at first though. As I have sifted it out the family consisting of an elderly man and three grown sons by the name of Meeker arrived in Salem from Essex, England in 1630, that in 1637 the family removed to Boston, that in 1638 they removed to and settled in Hartford. Here the father died about the year 1660, two of the brothers removed to and settled in New Jersey at or near Elizabeth.

From that date for nearly on hundred years the history is rather meager save and except of one Goodman Meeker and his son Benjamin Meeker. I herewith copy a statement accompanying a picture I possess of a house called "Ye Old Meeker Homestead Built about 1676.

"Copy"

*On the 28th of October 1664, a band of hardy colonists from Long Island and the New Haven Colonies purchased from the Indians, after securing the consent of Gov. Richard Nichols of New York, a large tract of land lying westward of Staten Island, which they at once occupied and were known as "The Associates".*

*After over a year of peaceful possession Philip Carteret under grand made to Sire George Carteret and Lord Berkley, inspected and approved by Gov. Nichols, Carteret perceiving the strength of the Associates and acknowledging their right of purchase from the Indians, made and agreement with them and landed.*

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*He and his followers were known as "The Proprietors" and all went merrily for a while. An agreement was made between the Proprietors and the Associates that no one was to occupy any land in their jurisdiction unless by consent of the council.*

*In 1671 on Richard Michel, a follower of Carteret, having won his favor was given by Carteret, without consent of the Council, a plot of land, and proceeded to fence it in and erect a house upon it.*

*At a town meeting held the same year it was agreed by major vote that Michel should not be allowed to occupy said premises. He (Michel) ignoring the action of the meeting, and acting under the advice of Carteret, refused to comply with their demand; where upon a party of Associates led by Mr. Meeker (Jersey's first constable) tore down the house and fences.*

*For this action they were proclaimed by Carteret "As mutineers and as enemies to the Government" and charges were accordingly preferred and by means of packed jury, sustained. All of Goodman Meeker's property was confiscated.*

*Meeker's old neighbors, residing in Elizabeth and Newark, acknowledging his efforts in their behalf, gave to him as a compensation the land on which the house was erected about 1676. It was built by his son Benjamin Meeker, who came with him from the New Haven Colony where he was born. This records the first stroke for freedom and home rule attempted in New Jersey.*

One hundred years later the house was used as an underground station for the Continental Soldiers who escaped from the Prison Ships at Wallabout. I was informed many years ago that the house was originally built of stone but the picture shows wooden outside finish probably added to cover rough walls.

The house at this writing (November 1909) is still standing and in good repair, but I am informed by recent letters that it will probably soon be taken down. This seems a pity as it has endured so long (233 years) and so many memories cluster around it.

From and after this really historic event, nothing of importance in the family record appears until the beginning of the Revolutionary Struggle in 1776. It was then that Timothy Meeker was a direct descendant of Goodman Meeker. I do not know but am certain he was a descendant of one of the brothers making the early settlement in New Jersey.

A narrative given me many years ago by Jonas Meeker, whom I knew well in my younger days said that Timothy Meeker and thirteen sons entered the Continental Army and were in active service during the entire seven years struggle (Jonas was Timothy's grandson) and hence I have great confidence in his story.

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There are ancient records in the Government archives, which make honorable mention of Timothy Meeker and members of his family. One of the sons (of Timothy) Joseph was Colonel (some acts say Captain) in the Continental Army. Timothy was an officer, but I do not know his rank.

One of Timothy's sons (David Meeker) was remarkable for his immense strength being as strong as two or three ordinary men.

To avoid confusion I will here note that there were three Timothy Meekers. 1st Timothy Meeker of whom I have been writing, 2nd Timothy Meeker, Son of Timothy first and 3rd Timothy Meeker, Son of Timothy second. I note this for the reason that I have had some trouble in getting the matter untangled.

One of the sons of Timothy 1st (John Meeker) was my direct ancestor. John was married twice: his first wife being the mother of Jonas and Abram and I believe Usual. His second wife was Rachel Force. She was the mother of Benjamin and Manning and one daughter Rachel. [Five] children were all born in New Jersey.

Manning Meeker (my grandfather) married Hannah Thompson. Her parents were Scotch thought coming to New Jersey [at] quite an early period. I have often heard her relate some scalp raising stories about wild creatures in New Jersey. They were married in New Jersey probably in 1803. They were the parents of four children: three sons and one daughter. They were Jacob Redding, Asa, Rachel and Usual H. Asa and Rachel died in childhood.

My father, Jacob R. Meeker was born at or near Elizabeth, New Jersey on 28th day of December 1804. About the year 1807, Manning Meeker with his family removed to and settled at Ithaca, New York. Here the family remained until after the death of Manning Meeker, which occurred in 1818 or 1819.

About the year 1820, my grandmother and little family including my father who was then sixteen years old removed to South Western Ohio.

In 1823, Jacob R Meeker was married to Phoebe Shaw Baker, daughter of John and Janett Baker (nee Janet Hand). John Baker, my maternal grandfather was born of English and Welsh parentage: his father being English and his mother Welsh. Her family name was [Rachael] Valentine. It is from her that I got the Valentine in my name.

John Baker was born and reared in New Jersey. At 16 years of age he was indentured for five years to learn the tailor trade. As soon as his indenture expired he having received his usual \$100.00 money, which was the usual stipend in those days, went to Maryland to acquire land for a farm. After securing his land and making a home he returned to New Jersey to marry his sweetheart -- Miss Janett Hand. Immediately after their marriage the pair started on their honeymoon trip to Maryland: she with her few belongings on horseback while the newly

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wedded husband trudged by her side on foot. In their Maryland home my mother Phoebe S. Baker was born on the 10th day of July 1801.

In 1804 John Baker with his family removed to Butler County, Ohio making the journey by land across the mountains through Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh. Here he embarked [upon] a flat boat and floated down the current [---] Ohio river to the then village of Cincinnati [---] to his home 25 miles distant in Butler County, Ohio where he reached an advanced age.

My mother received but a limited education but being passionately fond of reading became well informed and progressive for the times in which she lived. She laid down her mortal life while attempting to cross the plains for the Pacific Coast and in 1854 she was a victim of that dread disease of the Plains and Cholera which strewed the trail to Oregon with so many graves all or nearly all unmarked and unknown, shall I say forgotten.

Jacob R. Meeker married for his second wife Mrs. Nancy Burr by whom he [left] two children. He died on the 30th day of October 1869 and was laid to rest in American Lake Cemetery in Pierce County, Washington. He was a remarkable

[-----but] his life seemed a continuous struggle with adverse conditions. Shrewd and dishonest men were at all times ready to take undue advantage of his honesty and large heartedness but he left a name unsullied by a single dishonorable act during his checkered life.

Jacob and Phoebe Meeker had children as follows:

1st John Valentine Meeker born near Monroe in Butler County, Ohio on the 13th day of July 1824;

2nd Oliver Perry Meeker born in Monroe in Butler County, Ohio on the 23rd day of July 1828.

3rd Ezra Morgan Meeker born in Huntsville in Butler County, Ohio on the 29th day of December 1830;

4th Hannah Jane Meeker born in Lockland in Hamilton County, Ohio on the -- day of January 1836;

5th Usual Clark Meeker born in Lockland in Hamilton County, Ohio on the 2nd day of March 1838.

Of John V. Meeker as before noted I was born on the 13th day of July 1824 near the village of Monroe in Butler Co. Ohio. The house in which I was born was a very humble log cabin standing near the bank of a little brook called Cold Run. I presume it was so named for the reason that the water never ran in the brook except in winter when of course the water would be cold. In summer the water ceased to flow leaving here and there small ponds, which were fine places for breeding Bullfrogs and "skeeters". The bullfrogs rendered the nights hideous by their persistent bellowing sounding much like the bellowing of a furious bull: hence probably their name

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and the "skeeters" were worse than the frogs because they had the habit of getting so close with their [fangs] and never failing to present their bill. Believing that description of the bullfrog may be interesting I will attempt the rather difficult task. It is a goggle-eyed creature two or three times the size of our common frog. I have seen specimens measuring four inches across the back and when stretched full length would measure twelve to fifteen inches long. Their legs were long enough to give a frog eater a good mouthful of most delicious meat if his taste ran that way. One of these creatures (I mean the frog) if held by the forearm and switched with a light twig would whimper and cry like a little child and was pitiful to hear.

My first experience at school was when I was barely four years old. A crusty old man named Williams was teaching in Monroe where we then lived. My mother sent me one morning to school of which I was very proud. About the middle of the forenoon I asked permission to go home (about 100 feet away) to get something to eat. This was denied me and I began crying and he began whipping. This was continued until the noon hour. I then and there graduated from the school carrying my diploma in the shape of stripes on my back and shoulders. That ended my school days for two years.

I think my mother taught me to read at home although I do not remember it for the next school I attended when six years old. I well remember that I stood in the class and read from the ("Introduction" to the English Reader") without trouble. The "Introduction" was equivalent to what has since been known as the 3rd Reader. I was probably restless and mischievous for I recall that I received many cuffs and floggings. But the desire to learn was upon me and I bore it with what patience I as boy could muster. I look back with wonder at the brutality then common in our schools. The smallest offense was the signal for a brutal flogging with a hickory gad with a heavy ferule in the palm of the hand. I once had the skin knocked off every knuckle of my right hand with one blow of a heavy ferule in the hands of the teacher and he a preacher in a so called Christian Church, Bah! Can you wonder that I am an infidel so called?

End Transcription

Transcriber: Leroy K. Meeker - 49 Kenvil Avenue Succasunna, N. J. 07876 (Morris County, NJ)

Source: The Ezra Meeker Historical Society - Mrs. Charles Hood, Historian

New transcription made by L. Carle, from digital copy of [document](#) accessed at Ancestry.com 11 Feb 2019.