

MAIDENHEAD

The Early Days

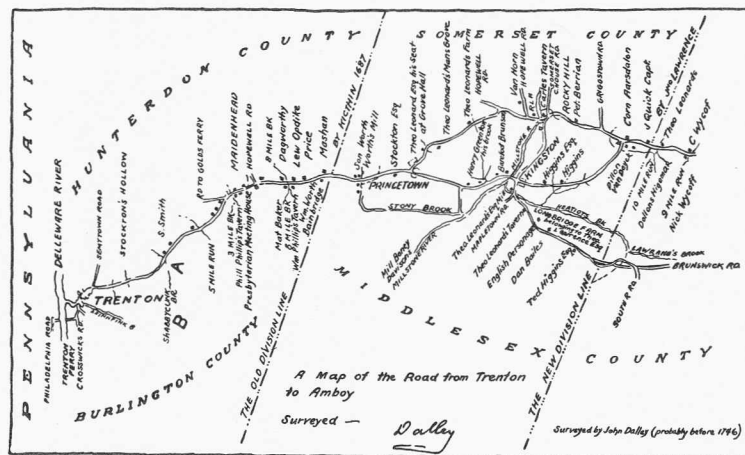
by
Helen A. Titus

When the English in 1664 had taken New Netherland from the Dutch, that portion of land bounded in general by the Hudson River, Atlantic Ocean, Delaware River and Delaware Bay was conveyed to James, Duke of York by his brother King Charles II. The new colony was called "Nova Caesaria" or New Jersey to honor the Isle of Jersey (off the coast of England) where the Duke of York had found refuge from the forces of Cromwell. Sir George Carteret, a friend of the Duke who was in residence on the Isle, offered comfort and support to his Royal friend during the trying days of the war. To show his gratitude the Duke presented Carteret with a part of the Colony of New Jersey. That part lay to the east and became known as East Jersey. Another Royal associate, Lord Berkeley received that section which lay to the west, designated as West Jersey.

It is the 300th anniversary of the Royal Patent for "Nova Caesaria" to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret in 1664, that we, in New Jersey, are celebrating in 1964 as New Jersey's Tercentenary.

In order to define the boundaries between East and West Jersey an imaginary dividing line (running north and south) was established in 1676 extending from the upper reaches of the Delaware on the north to Egg Harbor on the south. This was known as the Province Line. It was surveyed again in 1687 and was at times called the "Old Division Line" 1676-1687 by Keith or Kitchin. To the early settlers of the Jerseys this line was important for it became a cultural line of sorts marking the boundry between the west, where the people leaned toward the Quaker culture and Philadelphia, and the east where the ways of New York and New England were followed.

A blue and white historic marker erected by the State identifies the Keith-Kitchin line. It can be seen on the Lawrenceville Road at a spot where Lawrence and Princeton Townships meet. That line still forms the eastern boundry of Lawrence Township.



The Maidenhead area about 1745 adapted from the Dalley map owned by the New Jersey Highway Department

To understand the historical significance of Lawrence Township we must think back to the year 1685 when Dr. Daniel Cox of London bought from the Proprietors that part of West Jersey which is now included in the Townships of Lawrence, Ewing, Hopewell and a large part of present day Trenton. The combined acreage of this entire area was about 45,000 acres. Two early land agents, Jeremiah Bass and Thomas Revell, worked diligently to promote land sales in West Jersey for Dr. Cox. Many of their contacts were made on Long Island among emigrants from England, France, Scotland and Holland. By 1690 many early settlers in New England had become dissatisfied with conditions there and so they too came to Long Island and later to the Jerseys.

Prior to 1695 three transient settlers purchased Maidenhead lands from Dr. Cox. They included Richard Ridgeway, who purchased 600 acres in 1690, as did Thomas Green. Mary Davis also bought 300 acres here about 1690. These lands lay east of what later became the village of Maidenhead (now Lawrenceville) and were considered to be choice acreage for farming and pasture. However, the original owners did not remain long in this area. Their early departure may have been due to the widespread land disputes with Dr. Cox.

In 1694, just as West Jersey was being opened up for settlement, two cousins, Ralph Hunt and Theophilus Phillips migrated westward from Long Island, travelling along the Old Indian Trail (now Lawrenceville Road) which led from the fording place in the Raritan River (now New Brunswick) to the Falls of the Delaware (now Trenton). Why they left their homes to travel thither we do not know. It is reasonable to assume that crowded conditions and political pressures hampered them in their homeland, while open spaces and freedom beckoned to them on these shores.



NEW JERSEY TERCENTENARY

1664-1964

The kinsmen decided to take joining tracts of land at a place later designated as Maidenhead and still later as Lawrenceville. Both tracts had frontage on the King's Highway (now Lawrenceville Road). The plots were separated by a narrow lane which later became Cold Soil Road. The Phillips tract lay to the east of the lane while Hunt's lay to the west. Both tracts lay above the road. However, during the same year (1694) each pioneer purchased portions of land below the road extending southward to the meadows.

It is not difficult to understand why these two pioneers, far from their homeland, decided to settle on adjacent plantations in a new country which was then a wilderness full of uncertainties and dangers.

By 1703 many pioneer families, most of them coming from Long Island, took up plantations in the Maidenhead tract. Some of the names of the pioneer settlers in addition to Hunt and Phillips were John Bainbridge, Samuel Hunt, Joshua Anderson, John Brearley, Benjamin Hardin, Johannes Lawrenson Opdyke, Jasper Smith, Hezekiah Boham, Thomas Runion, Henry Mershon, Jonathan Davis, Phillip Phillips, Benjamin Maple, William Akers, Richard Roselle, Henry Bell, Peter Hoff, John Boris, William Green, Isaac Reeder, Edward Hunt, Joell Jones, Joseph Reeder, John Hart, James Price, Elnathan Davis, Thomas Winder, Robert Lanning and Joseph Sackett.

On February 20, 1697 the Colonial Supreme Court in Burlington decreed that "The inhabitants north of Assunpink Creek in West Jersey are authorized to form a township named Maidenhead." The next year (1698) the people of Maidenhead received a British Land Grant, a town lot of 100 acres, in the vicinity of the old stone quarry off what is now Carter Road. This site was to have been used as lands for a school, church and cemetery. So far as is known, however, none of these proposed projects ever materialized on this particular plot of ground. Perhaps even at that early time there may have been a feeling among these pioneers that church property should be quite independent of the state.



Courtesy of Rev. H. Dana Fearon III
Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville — Founded 1698

In 1710 Ralph Hunt and Benjamin Hardin, residents of Maidenhead, deeded to several grantees (for ten shillings) the tract of land on which the Lawrenceville Presbyterian Church now stands. The original tract was about 214 by 107 feet. As time passed, many substantial additions were made to the original plot. It is not definitely known just when the first Meeting House was erected, but it is known that John Hart, one of New Jersey's signers of the Declaration of Independence, was baptized there in 1713. The organization of the church, however, dates from 1698, the date of the original land grant. The front portion of the present church building was erected in 1764.

In 1807 the Maidenhead Presbyterian Church secured, as its first full time minister, the Rev. Isaac V. Brown. He served the church until the close of the year 1828. It was through his efforts that an Academy was established in 1810. This school later became The Lawrenceville School. The Rev. Brown lived in the old Phillips-White property (recently razed) which stood at the corner of Main Street and Craven Lane, just below the Lodge. It was during Dr. Brown's tenure, in 1816, that the name Maidenhead was changed to Lawrenceville in honor of Captain James Lawrence, one of the Naval Heroes of the War of 1812.

Miss Titus a vice chairman of our Tercentenary Committee is a native Lawrentonian. She is a descendant of John Titus one of the founders of the Maidenhead (Lawrenceville) Presbyterian Church. She has been associated with Lawrence Public Schools for forty years as a teacher.

One of a series of "Lawrenciana" monographs prepared by

The Lawrence Tercentenary Committee
Lawrence Municipal Building
2207 Lawrence Road
Trenton, N. J.



1664-1964

For Three Centuries — People, Purpose, Progress

Founded 1697

