

Chapter Nine

Illustrious Men of Pleasant Mills

It is hardly to be expected that a community so small as this should furnish many illustrious names to the pages of history, but two of its sons at least have achieved a fame that is nation wide. Mr. Joseph Fralinger, of Atlantic City, whose character as a man and citizen is of the highest and whose business reputation extends from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific, was born at Batsto in 1848. He learned the trade of glass blowing which he followed for some years. In the eighties he was widely known as a promoter of the national game and organized the once famous "August Flower Nine." He was identified with many business enterprises and a new idea in confectionery eventually placed him on the road to fame and fortune. Mr. Fralinger is everybody's friend and delights in doing good; his time and money are freely used to increase the sum of human happiness and brighten the lives of those around him. When in this vicinity he never fails to visit the cemetery of Saint Mary's, where his parents are buried and where by his expressed wish he will be laid himself when his life pilgrimage is over. By his direction the cemetery, which was showing signs of neglect, has been cleared of brush and greatly improved in appearance.

General St. Clair Mulholland, renowned on the field of war and in the councils of state, was born at Pleasant Mills, and the years of his boyhood were spent here. That he cherished a pleasant memory of those years is evidenced by the following article from his pen, which appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer, January 1st, 1906.

"Anno Domini 1850, I was living as a boy at Pleasant Mills, N. J. Residing there at that time was an old man nearly one hundred years of age. He died, if I remember right in 1852, aged 102. He was a veteran of the Revolution, a comrade of Washington, with whom he had marched and fought, and had been severely wounded at Brandywine or Germantown, I forget which. That old soldier had lived to see the great development of the Republic for which he had risked his life and poured out his blood, and in his declining years he rejoiced in the glory and splendor of his country. "Why!" he would explain, "when I fought with Washington we had only thirteen States and only three millions of people, now (1850) we have twenty-five states and twenty-five millions of citizens," and so rejoicing and glorying in the grandeur of his country he passed away.

The presence of this old veteran created and diffused throughout the community a spirit of patriotism that was remarkable, and I remember hearing the men, as they sat around the country store, conversing of the battles that the veteran loved to recall. The boys of the village would gather around the old man, listen to his talk and gaze upon him with awe and reverence, and I have a faint recollection of hearing that the bullet that made one leg much shorter than the other was still imbedded in the limb. The spirit aroused by him had its effect, and ten years afterward, when the Civil War burst upon the nation, every young man and boy in the vicinity where he lived enlisted in defense of the Union. Some of them never came back to Pleasant Mills, and sometimes I go read upon the mouldering tombstones the names of my playmates of long ago. The boys were inspired by the hero of '76, with the sentiment that made them heroes, and now 1900, the survivors of the Civil War, like him of the Revolution, greatly rejoice at the still more wonderful development of our country. In 1861, thirty-two states and thirty-two millions of people, four millions of whom were slaves, now (1906) forty-five states and seventy millions of citizens all happy and free, not a slave in the land and the flag under which they fought and poured out their blood representing the only true Republic that ever existed on earth and waving in glory and triumph, not on this continent only, but to the farthest ends of the world. Sure-

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ly, they too, like the veteran of Washington, can rejoice and now may the presence of the veterans of '61 inspire in the hearts of boys of our time sentiments of patriotism, so that if ever again danger threatens our constitution, they, like the boys of Pleasant Mills, may be quick to respond and if need be offer their lives to uphold the flag and preserve the Republic erected by veterans of '76 and saved by those of '61.

Note: The soldier referred to by General Mulholland was probably "Uncle" Joe Johnson, who served through the war for Independence. He was at Bunker Hill and it was said that he fired the first shot from the American side in that famous battle.

Chapter Ten

The Buttonwoods

The brief historic sketch would be incomplete without some reference to "Buttonwoods," oft named in song and story. This famous group of trees stands or rather stood, on the Atlantic county side near the confluence of Batsto and Atsion creeks. For two centuries they were familiar landmarks, towering above the surrounding woods and overlooking the country for miles. During the Revolution a watching station was fixed in the top of the tallest tree from which a view was obtained of all craft passing up and down the stream. "The Buttonwoods" figured prominently in an ably written poem by the late Albert Doughty, which is still unpublished. But the grand old wood kings that once were a trysting place for dusky lovers and a bower of shade for the weary hunter, have yielded to the touch of time and are crumbling away soon to mingle with the soil from which they sprang.

Presentation of Memorial Tablet

By Kate Aylesford Chapter, D. A. R.

Nov. 14th, 1914, Kate Aylesford Chapter, D. A. R., of Hammonton, placed in Pleasant Mills church a handsome bronze tablet, in memory of the Revolutionary soldiers and sailors buried in the adjacent cemetery. Among the distinguished visitors present was the State Regent and official representatives from other chapters of the order. The exercises attending the presentation were informal, but interesting and appropriate. Mrs. A. J. Rider, of Kate Aylesford Chapter, as mistress of ceremonies, performed her duty admirably. The tablet was fixed in place by Mr. Wm. Bernshouse, of Hammonton, then in his 81st year, but alert and vigorous as a man half his age. The noble gift for a patriotic sisterhood attracts much attention from visitors and is listed among the church's most precious possessions.

To all who love the legends rare,
Of old heroic days,
I dedicate these rough hewn lines
Not seeking thanks or praise,
But trust that interest they may wake,
In each romantic spot,
And call to mind the worthy names
That ne'er should be forgot.

C. F. G.

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The Mullica

1

Tho many bards have lauded well
The castled Rhine and blue Moselle,
The Britons point with loving pride
To Avon's bright romantic tide.
Tho theme of legend and of song,
Still sweeps the blue Danube along,
While proudly rushes, wide and free,
Our lordly Hudson to the sea;
And inspiration brightly gleams
O'er Mississippi, King of streams,
My humble muse no more shall roam
But seek a subject nearer home,
And here she'll rest on folded wing
While of the Mullica I sing.

2

Dear Mullica! I love thee well
And on thy scenes I fondly dwell,
And ponder on the various ways
I knew so well, in boyhood's days.
How often I have plied the oar
Along thy low and marshy shore;
Or passed the higher banks that stand
Down sloping, to thy pebbled strand,
Where deep embowered in shades of green,
The cozy village homes are seen.

3

Three bridges, of historic fame,
The voyager's attention claim,
Which reaching forth, from strand to strand
Join two fair counties hand in hand.
Atlantic says to Burlington,
Divided once, we now are one.

4

Dear Mullica, a few short years
And I must bid this world adieu,
And all that now so fair appears
Must fade and vanish from my view.
Then let my grave be made beside
The shore where flows thy crystal tide.

Batsto

The story of our neighbor village Batsto is nearly as old and fully as interesting as that of Pleasant Mills. The name is a compound of two Indian words, Baatstoo, meaning a bathing place. Here in ages long past the wild people of the forest roved along the pine shaded shore or disported themselves in the swift flowing stream.

The first proprietor of the Batsto estate was Israel Pemberton, whose home was called, Whitcomb Manor. Mr. Pemberton sold the property to Charles Reed, who sold it to one Colonel Knox, and he in turn disposed of it to Thomas Mayberry. In 1767, Joseph Ball, a wealthy Pennsylvanian, bought the place for the sum of fifty-five thousand pounds sterling (\$275,000).

Mr. Ball was a practical man of business and at once began to develop the natural resources of his domain. Under his direction several hundred acres of wild land was cleared and fitted for cultivation. He also set up a blast furnace and began the manufacture of iron from the ore which abounded in the adjacent bog lands and was of excellent quality. During the War for Independence many cannon and large quantities of solid shot were cast at the Batsto works for the use of the patriot forces.

The next owner of Batsto was Colonel William Richards, who had served with distinction in the war and was a personal friend of General Washington. Under the management of Colonel Richards the industries of the place prospered greatly. During the war of 1812 he successfully handled several large munition contracts for the U. S. Government.

An incident of that time is worth relating.

The Colonel had finished an order for 50 tons of cannon shot which were to be delivered at New York. The only vessel in the river available for this service was a 60-ton schooner, owned and managed by a colored man, named David Mapps, who with a crew of his own race, traded regularly between New York and Little Egg Harbor. David was a Quaker and stuck to the tenets of his faith like brick dust to a bar of soap. Proceeding to the wharf where the schooner lay, Colonel Richards called the dusky skipper on deck.

"David," said he, "I have a freight for you, one that will pay you well."

"And what may it be?" queried David.

"I want you to take a load of cannon balls to New York as soon as wind and tide will get you there," said the Colonel.

"Did thee say cannon balls?" asked friend Mapps.

"Yes," replied the Colonel, "they are for the defense of the country and the government needs them."

"I'd like to oblige thee," was David's mild, yet firm rejoinder, "but I cannot carry thy devil's pills that were made to kill people."

No argument could change his decision and Colonel Richards was obliged to find other means of transportation for his devil's pills.

Colonel Richards was succeeded in 1822 by his son, Jesse, under whom the place attained the height of its prosperity. In addition to the iron works he built and operated a window glass factory that paid well. The iron and glass works with their correlated industries of wood cutting, charcoal burning and teaming kept a host of workmen busy and made Batsto one of the liveliest places in South Jersey.

Jesse Richards was a famous man in his day and his fame was well deserved, he was a true friend of his people and took an active interest in their affairs, making their joys and sorrows his own. He was a member of the Episcopal communion, but friendly to all denominations. His home was always open for the entertainment of ministers and he was liberal in their support. When his Catholic employees decided to erect a church at Pleasant Mills he assisted and encouraged them in many ways. He died in 1854 and

the word's "Beloved, Honored, Mourned," engraven upon his monument are a just tribute to the memory of a good man.

About 1843 the iron industry in South Jersey began to decline through inability to compete with the superior facilities of production possessed by the Pennsylvania plants. The Batsto iron works shut down in 1848, the glass factory continued in operation till 1865, when that, too, was closed.

The business ability of Jesse Richards was not inherited by his successors and the large fortune that he had amassed soon melted away. In February, 1847, a fire broke out in the main street and seventeen dwellings comprising the old and historic part of the village were totally destroyed. Batsto, to-day, is a quiet and restful place with charming bits of natural scenery. Its chief industry is farming and there is nothing in its appearance to recall the activity and grandeur of former times.

Hon. Benjamin Richards, son of Colonel Wm. Richards, was born at Batsto, 1797. He resided in Philadelphia and served two terms as Mayor of that city. To the day of his death he cherished a deep affection for the home of his boyhood. His son, Colonel Benjamin Richards, a distinguished soldier of the Civil War, was a frequent visitor to the ancestral domain and could relate many interesting tales of bygone days.

Supplement

Two Hundred Years Ago

A song for the brave old pioneer of stalwart arm and true,
Who came to the Jersey wilderness, when all the land was new,
He swung his axe with manly skill, laying the wood kings low,
And thro' the shade, a clearing made, two hundred years ago.

From early morn while dewdrops hung like gems on shrub and tree
He wrought till evening shadows fell, and carolled merrily
Some simple ballad of old Scotland, where heather blossoms grow,
Or perchance, a verse of sacred song, two hundred years ago.

Rude was the home of the pioneer, rough hewn from the forest tree,
And little his worldly wealth I trow, but not for that cared he,
There came no strife to vex his life as the days went calm and slow
Here in the Jersey wilderness, two hundred years ago.

And at the solemn Sabbath hour with neighbors gathered there
Beneath the greenwood canopy, they bowed in fervent prayer
And sang the praise of their father's God, who had safely led them so
Over storm seas to a friendly shore, two hundred years ago.

I sometimes think as we speed along in swift progression's tide,
That we miss the joys of our humble sires, with all our culture and pride,
The present pace of the human race is far too swift we know,
But men went straight at a slower gait, two hundred years ago.

Notes to Chapter One

The Indian name of New Jersey was "SCHEICHBI". Their name for the Delaware was "LENAPEWHIHITTUCK" (Rapid stream of the Lenape). The Leni Lenape belonged to the Algonquin branch of the red race. There were two subdivisions of the tribe in New Jersey. The Mauntaunak-Delawares, who occupied the lands between Little Egg Harbor river and Cape May, and the Mincees, located farther to the North, and having permanent villages on this side the Delaware.

The Lenape were valiant fighters, but preferred peace to war. As their numbers diminished, those of their old enemies, the Iroquois, increased, and finally through an alliance with the English, they were able to impose their will upon the Lenape, and compel them to do what they had once offered to do voluntarily, i. e., act as referees in tribal disputes, a service for which they received scant thanks or reward.

When white settlers coveted the best lands of the Lenape and the latter refused to sell, the Iroquois were called in and peremptorily commanded the Lenape to move on. But the limit of endurance had been reached with the injured people and they resolved to die like warriors, rather than live like slaves. On the breaking out of the French and Indian War soon after they espoused the cause of the French, and gave both English and Iroquois reason to repent their tyranny. Their great Sachem at that time was Tadeuskund, a warrior and hero. While burning with indignation over the wrongs of his people, he was ever merciful to a vanquished foe. Tadeuskund died in 1763 and was succeeded by the pacific Isaac Still, who some years later led the remnant of his tribe away from the graves of their fathers to the distant West.

The Indians of New Jersey had taken no part in the war, but many of them accompanied their Pennsylvania tribesmen in their exodus toward the setting sun. Many of them, however, still remained, in some cases forming little communities of their own, in others, living with the whites in peace and friendship. Their last reservation was at Indian Mills (Old Shamong).

Notes to Chapter Two

The attempt made by Charles II to establish episcopacy in Scotland was a flagrant breach of faith with his Northern subjects and an outrage on their national feelings. Accustomed to the simple service of the Kirk, they looked upon the showy ritual of the Anglican establishment as no better than idolatry and protested vehemently against the change. Their objections were answered with sternly repressive measures, until harassed beyond endurance by brutal soldiery and venal magistrates, the covenanters arose in arms to battle for their rights. In some instances they were successful, but the superior discipline and numbers of their foe were triumphant in the end, and the last armed resistance was crushed at the battle of Bothwell Bridge, in 1679.

The demons of persecution were then loosed upon the hapless children of the covenant, who without respect to age or sex, were done to death with a ruthlessness that would have shamed Nero or Domitian, but all suffering was endured with a heroism rarely equalled in the history of the world.

"The flaming pyre that round the martyr rose
Blazed like a torch to light him to repose,
The ocean wave, the scaffold, and the sword,
Were but a stormy passage to the Lord."

Many of these sorely tried people found a home in America, and gave to the land of their adoption a heritage of faith and virtue that was of untold value in the formation of our national character. Can we forbear a thrill of pride when we remember that of this noble stock were the founders of Sweetwater.

From data that appears reliable, I learn that the builder of the Sweetwater mansion was named Reid. His daughter, Honoria, a girl of rare loveliness in person and character, was educated in England, and returned home after the death of her father, in 1778. She was the Kate Aylesford, of local legend, and married an American officer, in 1782.

The pioneers of Sweetwater had their share of Scotch thrift. In those days immense shoals of herring were found every spring in the Mullica and its tributary streams and the settlers added to their stock of provisions by drying and smoking the toothsome fish by thousands. The surplus stock found a ready sale in the markets of Philadelphia and New York, thus building up an important local industry. The curing of herring in this manner was taken up in other settlements along the Mullica and continued until comparatively recent times. Within the memory of the writer, no family considered their winter store complete unless it included several hundred smoked herring.

Notes to Chapter Three

The capture of Chestnut Neck, and the ambuscade that checked the British advance on The Forks, were good illustrations of the fighting methods used by the opposing forces. The highly trained British soldier of the day was master of the bayonet, and the best troops of Continental Europe could not withstand the terrible Anglo-Saxon charge. Our forefathers, hardy and courageous as they were, frankly acknowledged their dread of the cold steel in stalwart British hands. On the other hand the American rifleman in his native woods was a foe that the boldest Briton did not care to face. The celerity of his movements and the deadly accuracy of his aim were well known and the general sentiment among the King's men was:

"I'd rather fight the bravest lads
That e'er came over seas
Than meet the blasted Yankee D--ls,
Among the rocks and trees."

The crack marksmen of the American service were armed with the Deckard rifle, the most efficient small arm of the period, having more than twice the range of the smooth bore service musket, or "Brown Bess" used by the Royal troops.

In the course of time, the Americans learned the trick of their English cousins, and used the bayonet with success, notably at Stoney Point and Cowpens.

Major Ferguson, who led the British expedition against Little Egg Harbor, was brave and ruthless. He hated the "rebels" and showed scant courtesy to such of them as fell into his power. He was an expert in gunnery and invented a breech-loading rifle which proved an efficient weapon, in rapidity of fire, surpassing the muzzle loader of the time, three to one. A battalion of British troops was armed with these rifles at Brandywine and the Americans opposed to it were astounded and dismayed by the terrific fusillade poured upon their line.

Ferguson directed the movements of his men when in action by the sound of a silver whistle and there was joy among the patriots when that whistle sounded for the last time at King's Mountain, where Ferguson was slain and his forces decimated by the woodmen of North Carolina.

"Their sharp reports upon the wind our deadly rifles hurled,
And one bold life was stricken then from out the living world.
But almost sped he raised his head and grasped his silver call,
And one long blast, the faintest last, wailed round the mountain wall."

Notes to Chapter Four

The noted refugee leader, Joe Mulliner, came of a good family, two of his brothers served with honor in the patriot army, and his lawless career was apparently due more to love of adventure than to inherent wickedness. He was tried and condemned for robbery and correspondence with the enemy, and it is true that his plundering raids were many and frequent, but there is no proof that he killed or inflicted physical injury on any one.

Shortly before his death he confided to a friend that he had buried a considerable sum of gold and silver near the road leading from Green Bank to Lower Bank, and many have searched for his money, but so far as known, it was never found.

The people of these parts, a few generations back, were firm believers in ghosts, and it was averred by many that Mulliner's spirit walked. Some of the most credulous claimed to have seen him in dim and shadowy form walking beside the river near the Buttonwoods, and looking from side to side as if in search of something. As the ghost has not appeared for many years, we may believe that he found the object of his quest.

Notes to Chapter Five

In 1645, Rev. John Campanius, a Lutheran minister from Stockholm, Sweden, went as a missionary to the Leni Lenape, but was unsuccessful in his efforts to convert them, though his personal popularity with them was great.

A century later, David Brainerd, in the short space of four years, brought them to accept the tenets of the Gospel, and few, if any, of them forsook the faith.

Twenty years after David Brainerd had entered into rest, another Brainerd, bearing the Christian name of John, preached the Word in South Jersey. He devoted much time to work among the Indians, thus amplifying the work of his predecessor. An old record states that in 1769 John Brainerd was pastor of the church at Cold Spring, Cape May County. In his diary for the year 1774, he tells of holding service at Clark's Meeting House. He describes the interior of the building, making special mention of the large red cedar beams overhead.

Notes to Chapter Seven

"Captain Jack"

An old-timer whose mortal remains lie beneath the mould of Pleasant Mills churchyard, was Jack VanDyke, seaman by profession, and master of the brigantine "Gypsy Jane."

He was engaged in the West India trade and from his good fortune in bringing his cargoes to port was known as lucky Jack VanDyke. Fortune at last, as she has a way of doing, played him a scurvy trick, when he was voyaging home with a freight that promised exceptionally large returns. A British frigate came along, seized his ship and made him and the crew prisoners. The loss of the "Gypsy Jane" and his liberty aroused Captain Jack to a white heat of fury and in a burst of sulphurous profanity he consigned King George and all his crew to a region of exclusively high temperature.

The English commander ordered him to be more respectful of his Majesty's name, but the reply of the irate Yankee was:

"D— the King, and double d— him, and d— the man that wouldn't d— him."

The British captain, a rough specimen himself, admired the spirit of his prisoner, and treated him like a brother. When Captain Jack was released, his late captor took his hand and wished him better luck next time.

"Never fear about that," said Jack. "Be sure I'll get my pay and King George will be the paymaster."

As soon as possible, he obtained command of a privateer, and in due time compensated himself for the loss of the "Gypsy Jane."

In speech and manner Captain VanDyke was rough and boisterous as the element in which he sailed, but beneath his rugged exterior beat a heart of gold. He was generous to a fault, and was a favorite with young people of the neighborhood, who delighted in hearing the story of his adventures. Time softened his once fiery temperament, and in his declining years he was wont to say that he felt nothing but good will to all the world. Of his old enemies he often said, "The English are brave lads, and good fellows, and though I'm American to the core I can say 'God Save the King', for like the rest of us, he needs it."

Notes to Chapter Nine

The First Shot at Bunker Hill

(This is Mr. Johnson's account of the incident, given verbatim).

"We were behind the breastwork and the Britishers were marching up as cool and unconcerned as you please, a pretty show they made, I'm telling ye. In their first rank opposite to me was a strappin' big feller that I didn't like the look of. Says I to myself, if I come to grips with that lad, it may go hard with me; so I up gun and cut him over. The lieutenant hit me a clip with the flat of his sword a'most knocked me off my feet.

"'Fire without orders will ye?' says he; 'I've a mind to shear your fool head clean off.'

"Then came the order to fire and I guess you've heard what happened after that."*

*Joseph Johnson was the son of a Danish immigrant, who settled at Beechwood, Pa., about 1749. In 1770, Joseph then twenty years old, came to New Jersey. Hearing of the fight at Lexington in 1775, he and five other youths journeyed, mostly on foot, to Massachusetts and joined the patriot army in time to participate in the battle of Bunker Hill. After serving thru the war with credit, Mr. Johnson spent the rest of life in the vicinity of Pleasant Mills, dying in 1853.