

1677.

Roberts' Memorial Meeting

HELD ELEVENTH MONTH, 14TH, 1898.

WHAT WAS DONE IN "HONOR OF OUR FATHER AND
OUR MOTHER," JOHN ROBERTS AND SARAH, HIS
WIFE, WHO LEFT NORTHAMPTON, ENGLAND,
1677, AND SETTLED IN WHAT IS NOW
BURLINGTON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY,
ON NOVEMBER 14TH, 1682.

Original printing-

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JOHN AND SARAH ROBERTS.

Upon the assembling of about one hundred persons, more or less related to each other, on the pasture fields of John R. Mason, in Chester township, Burlington county, N.J., near what is known as the "Iron Bridge," over the north branch of the Pensauken creek, on the Moorestown and Camden turnpike road, at about 2:30 o'clock in the afternoon on the 14th day of November, 1898, Joseph W. Lippincott, of Philadelphia, Pa., arose and said the object of this gathering was well known to all assembled. He suggested that Elisha Roberts, the oldest descendant of John and Sarah Roberts, of Overstone, England, now present, be selected as the chairman of this meeting. Upon a vote being taken, it was so decided.

Elisha Roberts then took the seat which had been previously prepared for the chairman of the meeting, and said: "That it had been suggested that Samuel M. Roberts, of Camden, N.J., who bears the distinction of not only being a lineal descendant, but of having been born and bred on the very tract originally owned by John and Sarah Roberts, be requested to act as secretary." Upon a vote being taken it was so decided, and he was requested to act as secretary, and as a first duty to read the call of the meeting.

The secretary then arose and said: "That he thanked them for the compliment which they had conferred upon him by asking him to act as the recording officer

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of this meeting, for he considered it an honor to be called to serve at such a meeting. But he could not read the formal notice which resulted in this meeting without first giving an account of the incident which caused that notice. The fact is, one day about two years ago, while I was in the office of our friend Joseph W. Lippincott on business, he said to me that he had something about which he wished very much to have a talk with me. He said that while he was farming the place which he heired from his father, he filled up what was then quite a deep hole in the ground, so as to be able to farm over the place. He said that that was the very spot where our mutual ancestors, John and Sarah Roberts, had lived in a cave or dugout when they first fixed their settlement on this continent. He said that he was very much afraid that the spot would be forgotten, and that I was a much younger man than he was, he would like for us to go out there some day and he would show me the exact place, then I might tell those yet younger than myself, so that the spot would not be forgotten. He also said that he thought it would be well to take a spade along and set a post in the ground, so as to keep the spot.

"I told him that in my opinion we were both well enough off in this world's goods, not only to go out and mark the spot, but to do it well; and put such a stone in place that would not be removed, and one which others would see and notice and understand the wherefore of its being there. With this he quite united, but said that he was at a loss to know how to get the money to pay for it.

"Now the intense earnestness of Joseph's manner had already convinced me that the matter had 'The True Life' in it, and in his hands it would 'go.' For you know that what a man gets in earnest about, that he

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accomplishes. So I suggested that then and there I would start the ball rolling, and handed him a dollar for a beginning.

"This took him by surprise and he refused to receive it, saying that he had no authority to receive any money. Then I appointed him the treasurer to receive funds for the proposed stone to mark the spot which once was a hole, &c., and at last he consented to take it, saying that if he did not get enough money, then he would return it to me.

"Friends, it is useless for me to add that that coin in the hands of our friend put him in a state of agitation, and through him others, and from others it now appeals to many more. It has done my heart good to know that these people have not forgotten how to do a good thing. This is what led to the sending out of this formal notice which was mailed to many here assembled.

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"It reads as follows: THE ROBERTS FAMILY. It is proposed to mark the spot of the original settlement of the Roberts family in New Jersey, in **1682**, by the erection of a simple shaft of granite, with a suitable inscription thereon. The following is suggested: "At this place dwelt John Roberts and Sarah, his wife, in a cave, **1682-3**."

"After the enterprise had passed various vicissitudes, for it, like all good things, kept constantly growing, this notice was issued and sent out: '1898.- The proposed memorial stone being now erected upon the original Roberts Plantation, the descendants of John and Sarah Roberts are invited to a meeting on the ground, to inspect the Monument and hand the title to it, and the lot on which it stands, to Trustees; to be held 11th mo. 14th, 1898, at 2:30 P.M.'"

The chairman then read the following address in a strong and firm voice and manner:

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"My friends and relatives. Shall I tell you that we are met here to-day to obey one of the ten commandments, 'Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee?'

"That command, given by Moses, is reiterated in seven other places in the holy scriptures. You are aware that the Society of Friends took its rise in England, about the middle of the Seventeenth Century; and John Roberts and Sarah, his wife, were among the early members.

"As Friends could not conscientiously pay tithes to support a ministry they did not approve of, and being forbidden to take an oath by our Saviour and also by the Apostle James, they were persecuted to an extent which to us of the present day seems incredible. In 1661 Parliament passed an act providing 'that any Quaker refusing to take an oath when lawfully tendered, or if five or more Quakers above the age of sixteen years should assemble for religious worship, they should forfeit five pounds for the first offense, or suffer three months imprisonment, doubling the penalty for the second offense, and for the third they were to be transported.'

"As a consequence of this and other barbarous acts, the prisons were generally crowded with them. At one time there being more than four thousand in the various jails of the kingdom, and two hundred of them died in prisons. Can we wonder that many of them should resolve to brave the dangers of the deep, crowded in the little ships of that early day, to seek a home in this then wilderness land, where they could live and enjoy liberty of conscience?

"In the year 1677 John Roberts and wife, Daniel Wills and many other Friends from England, landed from the ship Kent, at a point on the Eastern bank of

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the Delaware, and then and there the town of Burlington began its existence.

"By a deed from the Proprietors, dated the 14th of November 1682, John and Sarah Roberts came into the possession of this tract of land, and for a while lived in a cave near a spring of water just across the road yonder, near the present brick works.

"Let us picture to ourselves what kind of a home that would be in the midst of the primeval forest. That now marshy creek that looks impassable for man or beast, then a tangled swamp. How could they live under such discouraging circumstances? But they persevered under all these trials and difficulties, and now the wilderness has become a fruitful field.

"It seemed to us, their descendants down to the seventh and eighth generation, proper that a simple, but substantial 'tablet' should be erected here, to show that We still wish to obey the Commandment, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.'"

At the close of these remarks he produced an iron crow-bar about three and one-half feet long, pointed at one end and a cloven foot at the other. On this were the letters "S.R." marked by a succession of little indentions as though made by a pointed punch. This he said was supposed on good authority, to have come down direct from Sarah, the wife of John Roberts, and that it was very much prized by its owner.

The secretary was then directed to read in abstract of the deed for the land upon which now stands the monument. It is as follows:

Deed dated the twenty-third day of the tenth month, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight, made by John R. Mason, of the township of Chester, county of Burlington, and State of New Jersey,

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and Margaret W., his wife, conveying a lot or piece of land in the township of Chester, (particularly describing the same) containing one-eighth of an acre, unto Joseph W. Lippincott, of Philadelphia, Pa.; David Roberts, of Moorestown, N.J.; Joseph Lippincott, of Moorestown, N.J.; Robert F. Roberts, of Baltimore, Md.; Samuel M. Roberts, of Camden, N.J.; John G. Roberts, of Gloucester county, N.J.; and Joseph Stokes Evans, of Evesham township, Burlington county, N.J., in trust for the erection and preservation of a monument, showing the place of settlement of John and Sarah, his wife, who emigrated from Northampton, England, in the year 1677, and settled on this land the 14th day of November, 1682.

The title deed recites further, that the one-eighth of an acre is a part of a tract of land that John Roberts took up from the Proprietors in 1682. He died in 1695, leaving his widow Sarah, and a son, John second, to whom at her death the property descended, and from John second to his son Joshua, and from him to his son William; from William to his son John G. Roberts. The property was sold to Joseph B. and Hephzibah Roberts Lippincott, (a daughter of William, and a sister of John G. Roberts) at whose death it descended to Joseph W. Lippincott, who by deed dated the 25th day of March, A.D. 1867, conveyed it to John R. Mason, in fee, which deed is recorded in Book P7 of Deeds, page 368, &c., in the clerk's office, at Mount Holly, N.J. And further it directs that the said trustees shall meet annually on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month, and also at other times at the call of a majority of them. They shall appoint successors as vacancies occur, and also a treasurer, who shall render his account at the annual meeting. They shall appoint two of their number annually to have the care and oversight of the property.

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The trustees shall have the power to sell a part of the said lot, and make proper deed for the same if it is thought best by a majority of them to do so, and apply any surplus funds towards improving the balance.

The monument was then unveiled by the canopy covering the same being lifted by pulling cords attached thereto, by Margaret S. Roberts, Mary Stokes Roberts, and Anna Passmore Sumner, three lineal descendants of John and Sarah Roberts, aged about ten years. And there was revealed to the world a granite shaft about ten inches by fifteen inches, ten feet high, set upon an appropriate base of the same material. On this is inscribed the lettering, "John Roberts and Sarah, his wife, from Northampton, England, 1677; settled here 1682. Erected by their descendants, 1898."

Then came the reading of the following address by Dr. Asa Matlack Stackhouse, of Maple Shade P.O., Burlington county, N.J., for which he was given a vote of thanks:

The name "Roberts" is said to be of Saxon origin, derived from "Rod" (counsel) and "Best" or "Bericht" (bright or famous); hence, "Famous in counsel."

(E. T. LAWRENCE in *A Quaker of the Olden Time*, London, 1898.)

Another authority connects the names Robin, Robert and Roberts with the word *Robber*, and this suggests thoughts of the robber-barons of the middle ages, of Robin Hood and his Merry Men, and of those good old days renowned in story, when to take toll on the highway with the demand for your money or your life was considered the most lucrative and honorable of trades. Judging the Roberts family of to-day by these standards, there is abundant evidence to show that they have sadly degenerated. They have sunk into the state of quiet respectability.

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The name Roberts as a patronymic is world-wide, and the members of the family are

"Thick as the autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
in Vallambrosa."

Our whole planet is their *habitat*, excepting the North Pole, and it is only a question of time before we find them located there also.

A Master Elias Roberts and his son were among the "Adventurers who colonized the Bermudas," as Captain John Smith, of Pocahontas fame, tells us. A naughty boy, Thomas Roberts, by name, came over with the Pilgrim Fathers, misbehaved and was soundly spanked by order of Court, as we read in the Plymouth Colony records. Another Roberts sleeps in Westminister Abbey; another has charge of Uncle Sam's money-chest at Washington to-day; and still another earned for himself the title of Field Marshal, and was raised to the peerage, for his consummate skill and ability in leading the Anglo-Indian army against Kandahar, and establishing British supremacy in Afghanistan.

Many of the name have become noted in the fields of literature and the arts. Allibone mentions one hundred and forty-four of them who have blossomed out into authorship. It was Daniel Roberts who has given us the finest gem in Quaker literature, and a John Roberts was the hero of the work. The roll of ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America includes eighteen of the name, several of whom are especially eminent for learning and piety; among them being a lineal descendant of the New Jersey settler.

Our New Jersey colonist was by no means the first of the name in the New World. I have already mentioned the three who were here before him. In addition we find several families of the name settled in New England long before the settlement of West Jersey. The name also

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appears in the Long Island records in 1675. Of still later date than our New Jersey family we find at least four families of the name that settled in Pennsylvania. One, John Roberts, located at Merion, another at Gwynedd, another Roberts settled near Quakertown, and still another we find settled later in Byberry and Moreland. All of these are, I believe, of Welsh origin and appear to be distinct families.

Our New Jersey settler came from a place in Great Britain, variously called Ourston, Ouerson, or, as some say, Ourton. No place bearing these names can be found on the English maps of to-day. Ourton is a corruption of Overton. There are several places of this name, three of them located within a few miles of the Welsh border. There are some who insist that John Roberts was of Welsh origin and came from one of these Overtons. This is unquestionably a mistake. Of Welsh origin he may have been, but he came from Overstone, or Overston, as it has been formerly called. (Ouerson and Ouerston are a corruption of the name.) Overstone is a parish in Northamptonshire, five miles from Wellingborough, and six from Northampton. The former of these places was the home of Daniel Wills; the latter of Thomas Olive, with both of whom John Roberts was acquainted and had business relations.

We read in Besse's "Sufferings of Friends," the following:

"Anno 1657. In this year Edward Roberts, of Overston, a Man of exemplary Patience and Innocence and of a Conversation truly edifying, died a Prisoner for his Testimony against Tithes in Northampton Goal, at the Suit of Lionel Godrick, his Parish Priest, after one and twenty Months Imprisonment. His Prosecutor had before taken from him four Horses worth £ 28 for a Demand of £ 3 3s. for Tithes."

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This Edward Roberts was no doubt kin to our John, and may have been his father. We do not, however, I believe, find the name of Edward among John's descendants for several generations.

The fires of persecution raged violently in Northampton, and both Thomas Olive and Daniel Wills suffered severely. Wearying of the continued annoyance of fines and imprisonment, they heartily embraced the opportunity of escaping it by emigrating to the New World, and accordingly they bought together a share in the West Jersey Proprietary. Their next step was to interest their neighbor John Roberts in the scheme, and they sold him a part of their purchase. The following is the record of the transaction:

"The sixteenth Day of the tenth month 1676.

Received then of John Roberts of Ouer-
son the sum of ten pound for A parsell of
land in West Jersey. I say received by me."

"DANIELL WILLS."

The project of emigrating had by this time taken definite shape, and so all haste was made in preparing to leave Northamptonshire. The indications point to a gathering together of the Proprietaries and intending settlers at some central place- in all probabilities London- where some months were spent in final preparations, including the legal adjustment and transfer of property. During this period the above loose receipt was replaced by a deed. The following is the substance of the document. I copy from a transcript in my possession, taken by Asa Matlack, in 1820, from the original document in the possession of his uncle, Joseph Roberts, a great-grandson of John.

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"Indenture made the 26th of 12th mo. (February) 1676, between Thomas Olive, of Wellingborough, in Northampton county, haberdasher, and John Roberts, of Ourston, in same county, yeoman, of the other part, Witnesseth, that Thomas Olive for £ 10 sells one-sixteenth part of a ninetieth part of propriety of Land, which the said Thomas Olive holdeth by virtue of a deed dated 23d of January, 1676, from Wm. Penn, Gawan Laurie, &c."

Signed THOMAS OLLIVE. [L. S.]

"I, Daniel Wills, being a joint purchaser with the within Thomas Olive for one whole Propriety of Land in West Jersey, whereof the one-sixteenth of a propriety of J. R. is a part thereof, I by this writing signify the same to J. R.

DANIEL WILLS. [L. S.]

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Present,

JOHN HOLLINSHEAD,
THOMAS FRENCH,
THOMAS EVES."

By reason of his interest in the propriety, John Roberts was now entitled to participate in the legislation for the new colony. Accordingly, we find him a few days afterwards (March 3d, 1676-7,) with one hundred and fifty others, signing that great West Jersey Magna Charta, "The Concessions and Agreements of the Proprietors, Freeholders, and Inhabitants of the Province of West New Jersey in America."

(Leaming & Spicer, p. 382; N.J. Archives, Vol. 1, p. 141.)

John Roberts was now the owner of "A parsell of Land," being the one-sixteenth part of a ninetieth part.

The acreage of land in the colony was of course an unknown quantity at the time the above mentioned "Concessions and Agreements" were drawn up in 1676, but provision was made therein for a settlement of the matter in due time. On December 5, 1681, an act was passed by the Commissioners and received the sanction and signature of Governor Jennings, for the settling and regulating of lands. This act contains nineteen sections and its wording is somewhat vague and indefinite. I quote the seventeenth section:

"That the proprietors who are yet remaining in England shall have notice that we find it necessary for the speedy settlement of this province and for the interest of all concerned therein to allow to every propriety as aforesaid three thousand two hundred acres for our first choice, and in case much people shall come (as may be reasonably expected, who have purchased no land in England and desire to settle among us) that then we reserve liberty to take up so much land more as shall fall to every propriety, not exceeding five thousand two hundred acres, which was allowed to us for our first settlement; provided, nevertheless, that none shall take up any proportion of land but as they shall settle it or cause it to be settled, which is to be done after the aforesaid three thousand two hundred acres shall be justly taken up and settled."

(Leaming & Spicer, p. 439.)

According to this, John Roberts was entitled to anywhere between two hundred to five hundred and twenty five acres. A short time after the concessions were signed, a scene of tears and hand-shakings followed, and Captain Marlow, pointing the Kent's prow towards the sunset, steered out across the broad Atlantic, and a

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tedious voyage followed. On August 4, we find the Kent riding at anchor at Sandy Hook, (N.J. Archives, Vol. 1, page 239); twelve days later she was at New Castle, on the Delaware, and soon after our Northamptonshire pilgrims set foot on the promised land.

What John Roberts did or where he lived for several years after his arrival, I presume is unknown. There is a hiatus in the story of the lives of most of the early settlers about this time. He appears to have eschewed politics entirely, as I cannot find his name mentioned as an office holder. He had a family, however, to support and this meant, of course, hard work. We may be sure that he thoroughly explored the country to select a place suited to his purpose for a home.

On November 14, 1682, Daniel Leeds surveyed for him 267 acres, being the tract of land on which we now stand. In due order and at different times he located other lands elsewhere, much of it further up the creek. Daniel Leeds' Record of the survey reads thus:

"Surveyed then for John Roberts 267
acres between the two branches of Pem-
soakin creek, beginning at a black oak
marked for a corner at the North branch
and runs S.W. 93 chains to a red oak at
the South branch, then up the said branch
29 chains to a white oak for a 3d corner,
then N.E. 90 chains to a white oak corner
at the North branch and so by the same to
the corner first named."

Asa Matlack says, in his notes: "On this tract is a small stream or spring of water that empties, after a passage of about 20 rods, into the North branch aforesaid, on the South side thereof, near 10 to 12 rods below the present bridge in the Stage Road from Moorestown to Cooper's

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Ferry. Having ascertained the spot near the aforesaid spring of water eligible for building accommodations for his family, he pitched upon this place to begin his settlement."

On the same day that Daniel Leeds surveyed this 267 acre tract for John Roberts, he also surveyed 100 acres for Timothy Hancock adjoining him on the east, and 100 acres for William Matlack adjoining Timothy Hancock. These tracts were the first surveyed on the Pensauken, and these three settlers were among the first, if not the first, in this neighborhood.

So, having staked their claims, John and Timothy, yeomen, and William, the carpenter, set to work industriously to prepare themselves habitations and the days passed quickly by. Still they were haunted by a sense of insecurity. The country was very thinly settled by white people, while the Indians were numerous. The Indian village of Pensauken stood perhaps on the land they had located. They may have heard mutterings of discontent among the red men as the trees fell beneath their axes, letting in the sunlight and scaring away the game. True, they had mingled with them ever since they had first come into the country, and had found them well-disposed and responding to kind treatment, nevertheless they felt it would be wise to make a private treaty with them to insure their good will. Accordingly, they made an agreement with Tallaca, the Indian Chief, of which the following is the text:

"Know all people that I Tallaca have had and received of and from John Roberts with the consent of the neighborhood at pimsawquin one match-coate, one little Runlit of Rum and two bottles of Rum, in consideration wheareof I the said Taleca doe hearby grant Bargin and

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sell unto the said John Roberts, Timothy Hancok and William Matlack all those plantations at pimsawquin, promising forever to defend the said John Roberts &c from all other Indians Laying any claim theareto, in witness wheareof I the said talleca have hearunto set my hand and seale the twelveth day of April 1684."

"The mark of Tallaca."

The mark of Tallaca resembles the figure "2." The witnesses are Nackontakene, Queieckolen and Notthomon, who make their distinctive marks; Thomas Eves and two others whose names I am unable to decipher. A law had been passed a few months before this, whereby it was forbidden to purchase land from the Indians, or to take title from them, unless by special order of the Governor and Commissioners. The penalty was not exceeding five shillings for every acre so purchased.

(Leaming & Spicer, page 479.)

It is presumed that our settlers received the necessary permission to make this deal, although there appears to be no record of it.

"The little Runlit of Rum" must have produced a decided sensation in the village of Pensauken that night when placed on tap. This act of the settlers was a most injudicious one, and more than that, it was a direct violation of law.

(Leaming & Spicer, pages 434, 445.)

Others, no doubt, did the same thing, and the evil results became so apparent that in November, 1692, a stringent law was passed by the Colonial Assembly forbidding not only the *sale*, but the *gift* of spirituous liquors to Indians and negroes under heavy penalties.

(Leaming & Spicer, 512.)

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John Roberts is supposed to have died in 1695. He was buried in the Pensauken graveyard, which had been set apart for burial purposes in 1692. Sarah Roberts survived her husband several years. She was living in 1712. She appears to have been a woman of considerable business ability, and we find her name connected with several real estate transactions. In 1697 she, with others, bought of Stephen Day a tract of land known as the "Canoe Swamp." In 1700 we find her name associated with those of John Hollinshead, Matthew Allen, John Heritage, John Adams, William Hollinshead, Thomas French, Joseph Heritage, Thomas Wallace, John Cowperthwaite, William Matlack, Richard Heritage, Thomas Hooten and Timothy Hancock, as grantees in a deed of trust for one acre of ground, now the Friends' grave-yard, in Moorestown, where the first meeting-house once stood. In 1703 she bought of William Clark one hundred acres of land adjoining the original 267 acre tract on the west. This tract had been sold in 1686 by Perceval Towle to William Clark, father of the above William. The younger William was settled upon it, and was consequently a neighbor of John and Sarah Roberts.

Another neighbor was John Rudderow. This settler, tradition says, was educated for a lawyer and came to Philadelphia when there was but one house there. He spent some time in the colony, but not liking it, decided to return. While waiting for a vessel to embark in, another ship came up the Delaware, having on board his father, John Sr., his mother and their family; also Robert Stiles and family. He then decided to remain here and purchased the land lying directly within the forks of the Pensauken. He married Lucy, daughter of Robert Stiles, and raised a large family of children. He was a Churchman and a useful man in the Colony.

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Robert Stiles was also a neighbor. He purchased by deed, dated May 26, 1694, from Daniel Mordecai and Katherine Howel, heirs of Thomas Howel, deceased, one hundred acres, or more, on the north side of the south branch of the Pensauken, now part of the estate of Samuel Roberts, deceased. He was a blacksmith by trade. We find the following mention made of him in Gabriel Thomas' quaint "Historical Description of the Province and Country of West Jersey in America."

"The trade in Gloucester county consists chiefly in Pitch, Tar and Rosin, the latter of which is made by Robert Styles, an excellent Artist in that sort of Work, for he delivers it as clear as any Gum-Arabick."

By deed, dated 27th of Fifth month, (July) 1695, Charles Read, of Philadelphia, tailor, conveyed to Robert Stiles four hundred and twenty-five acres between the branches of the Pensauken creek, adjoining the Rudderow tract. I am uncertain whether this Robert Stiles was the first mentioned Robert, or his son Robert; at all events, both seemed to have lived on it.

Clothed with the primeval forest, with hillsides gently sloping down to the deep creek, where the tide then ebbed and flowed, this spot was doubtless an attractive one when John and Sarah came here to live two hundred years ago. But beauty of scenery does little towards alleviating the hardships the pioneer is called upon to undergo. The keen northwest wind, with icy breath, swept up yon meadow in winter. There were perhaps times when the fierce rays of the burning August sun poured down on the parched earth, and the corn leaves rolled up and famine threatened them. There were days when food was scarce. There were hours of sickness, pain, suffering and anxiety.

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There were times when amidst their unremitting toil a feeling of deadly home-sickness came over them, as visions of that dear old home in far away Northamptonshire rose up before them. I fancy there were times, too, when Sarah's eyes were dimmed with tears of sympathy, born of a like situation, as she read in that well-thumbed Bible, brought from beyond the seas, the 137th Psalm, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept when we remembered Zion." Yet, despite all their hardships and privations, they were undaunted and of great courage. The Divine Hand which had led them across the trackless Atlantic still sustained them. They helped to make the comforts and luxuries of this Nineteenth Century possible for us. They were of the seed of Jehovah's planting in the New World and we partake of the golden fruitage.

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Note.- The deep interest in the story of John and Sarah Roberts inclines me to believe that the following little incident will entertain many and loses nothing in the quaint manner of its telling. The Joshua and Enoch Roberts referred to were the grandsons of John and Sarah. I copy from Asa Matlack's papers:

"Joshua Roberts' son Joseph (my uncle) told an anecdote of his father's shooting a large bear, as follows: 'Sometime in the fall of the year 1761 my brother John and I were plowing a piece of new ground near to 'Clarke's Old Field' when we heard a hog squeal in a northwest direction from us. I told my brother to go and see what was the matter. He went, taking the dog with him, and soon discovered a large black animal biting the hog over and on the back. With some fear he went immediately and informed his father what he had seen. Father (being somewhat lame) got a horse and his gun and rode to the place, but could not then find anything, but on his return came across a sow in the woods with her belly ripped open and several of the pigs bitten. A night or two after this we heard a hog squeal at Jeremiah Matlack's pond, and on the Seventh-day Jeremiah came to our house and desired my father to join him in hunting out the destroyer of the hogs. They set out accordingly, and got Uncle Enoch Roberts to go along, but could not then find the animal they were in pursuit of, so parting, each going for their own homes,

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David Roberts, of Moorestown, New Jersey, was then called upon, and he read the following address, for which he was extended a vote of thanks:

A GENEALOGICAL SKETCH.

John and Sarah Roberts, soon after their arrival in this country, it appears, first took up land on or near the mouth of Rancocas creek; but, being apparently dissatisfied with their location, afterwards secured a tract of two hundred and sixty-seven acres in extent, on the Pensauken creek, of which this spot is a part. As has been stated, they first lived in a cave on yonder knoll, which we are told they occupied until they were able to build a log house close by, afterwards building a more commodious dwelling, where the present house of John R. Mason now stands, a portion of which is still in existence.

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Joshua on his, was near a pond, and saw a hog which had been killed that day. He was then sure the bear or animal was near. The dog began to bark- he riding around the cripple- out came the bear and dog. The bear began to climb up a large white oak tree and when up a piece the dog would jump up and bite him and the bear would turn around and strike at the dog. My father at a suitable moment shot- the bullet grazed the tree. The bear took to another tree, a black oak standing in a southwest direction from the house, and got up to a large limb that came square out of said tree, whereupon he turned several times as lissome as a cat, being somewhat wounded with the first shot. He soon received a second, whereupon he fell on the limb and into the crotch with his face towards my father, who shot the third time, and down he came. I was at the plough and hearing the gun go off, went immediately to see and got to the place before the bear was dead. I went and got a sled upon which I took the bear home. My father had just got up a new corn house wherein was a beef roller, upon which we hoisted the bear, being the *first* animal ever dressed in that house and *last bear* ever killed in Chester township. A report thereof being spread, more than fifty people from Moorestown, &c., came the next day- being the first day of the week, to see the bear."

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They had four children- one son, John, and three daughters- Sarah, Mary and Hannah. From these four children we who are assembled here to-day are descended.

Our dear old many times great-grandfather, John Roberts, the record shows, frequently added to his possessions tracts of land of various sizes, until he had about him a domain of considerable extent. He died about the year 1695, leaving his widow to struggle along with her children in the wilderness. Would not a photograph of him be highly prized in this day? Cannot we imagine him as a tall, straight, and perhaps a stern man, and one that was always in a hurry?

His son John inherited the plantation, after his mother's death. He married Mary Elkinton, of Burlington. Imagine the various journeys through the woods he must have had during his courting days, and the possible danger that may have beset his path from the Indians and wild animals.

John's three sisters married as follows, viz: Sarah married Enoch Core; Mary married Thomas Eves, and Hannah married Samuel Borrough. From them a long line of descendants followed, bearing names of Core, Eves, Borroughs, Newbold, Stockton, Reeve, Ridgway, Hewlings, Wills, Stokes, Evans, Haines, Matlack, Thorn, Stiles, Lippincott and many others. Families were often large in those days, running in number from six to nine, ten, twelve, fourteen, and one family is recorded of seventeen children.

John (the second) and Mary (Elkinton) Roberts had eight children, three sons and five daughters, and all married. John, the oldest, died without children, and as he had inherited the tract of land, he left it to his brother, Joshua.

Joshua Roberts was born in the year 1713. He married Rebecca Stokes in the year 1741, and died in 1795,

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one hundred years after the death of his grandfather, to whose memory this stone is erected.

The next younger brother of Joshua, Enoch, was born in the year 1717. He married Rachel Coles in 1744, and died in 1784. From these two sons of John (the second), Joshua and Enoch, are descended most of those bearing the name Roberts that are settled in this part of New Jersey. A few are living in Pennsylvania; some in Maryland and Virginia.

Of the daughters of John and Mary Roberts, sisters of the above-mentioned Joshua and Enoch, one married Thomas Warrington, in the year 1747. Among her descendants are the children of the late Allen Roberts, whose wife was a great-granddaughter of this Thomas and Mary Warrington. The mother of Henry W. Moore, brother and sisters, of Moorestown, N.J., was also a great-granddaughter of this same Mary Roberts Warrington. She also had a daughter Hannah, who married Robert French, whose daughter Mary married Josiah Roberts, a brother of David Roberts, my grandfather.

A daughter of John and Mary (Elkinton) Roberts, Elizabeth by name, married Benjamin Haines, from whom are descended families of that name, also Albertsons, Crafts, Moon, Tatnall and others. A third daughter, Sarah, married William Evans, in the year 1738; their descendants include the children of the late Henry W. and Lydia Stokes Wills.

William Evans, father of Joseph and William J. Evans, of Marlton; also the children of the late David Darnell, of Mount Laurel, through their mother, a direct descendant of William and Sarah Roberts-Evans; the mother of Joseph G. Evans and sisters, of Haddonfield, also are direct descendants. We also find that the grandfather of John Buzby, of Moorestown, (Jabez) married a daughter of

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the above William and Sarah Roberts Evans. There were two other daughters of John and Mary E. Roberts; one married Isaac Evans, the other, Deborah, Isaac Haines. I have been unable to gather any information as to either of these families.

From these two sons of John (the second), Joshua and Enoch, are descendants not only those of the name of Roberts, but also through their daughters marriages families bearing the names Cowperthwaite, Cooper, Hunt, Evans, Matlack, Dudley, Darnell, Lippincott and others. Joshua Roberts had six children; Joseph, the oldest married Susanna Coles; he was my father's (Elisha Roberts) grandfather. A second son, John, married Phebe Andrews; they are the great grandparents of John M. Robert and sisters. Ebeneezer Roberts and sisters and the late Henry W. Roberts. John and Edwin R. Bell and sisters, of Haddonfield, are descendants from this branch, through their mother. In this branch is also included the wife of Edmund Darnell, whose mother was a great granddaughter of John and Phebe Andrew Roberts. A daughter of the above, Rebecca, married Hugh Cowperthwaite, and was the great grandmother of Joseph and William J. Evans, John E. Darnell and brothers, and the mother of David E. Cooper and brothers.

William Roberts, a third son of Joshua, was the grandfather of Joseph W. Lippincott, once owner of this tract where we stand; also the late Thomas Lippincott, and Lydia L. Walton, of Moorestown, N.J.; also of the late Samuel H. Roberts, formerly of Medford; he was also a great-grandfather to John G. Roberts, of Gloucester county, N.J.

From the fourth son of Joshua, Samuel, are descended the families of the late Joseph H. Roberts, of Easton, N.J.; the children of the late Nathan Evans, of Masonville, N.J.,

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and children of the late Hugh Roberts, formerly of Moorestown.

Enoch Roberts, (brother of Joshua) had seven children. A son, Samuel, married Hannah Stiles; they are the great grand-parents of Heulings Lippincott, of Cinnaminson, N.J., and sisters; William Matlack and sisters, of Moorestown, N.J.; Levi and John M. Lippincott. This Samuel was also grandfather of the late Levi Lippincott and Asa R. Lippincott, Emmor Roberts and his brother, the late Samuel L. Roberts, and their sister the late Lydia Roberts, wife of Josiah Roberts, now of Baltimore, Md. He was also great grandfather of Samuel M. Roberts, of Camden, N.J. In this branch are also included the children of the late John Haines, of Moorestown.

Enoch Roberts' daughter Rachel married Joshua Dudley, who was the grandmother of the late David Darnell, and great grandmother of Charles, Edmund and Henry Darnell, and their sister, the wife of Mark H. Buzby, of Masonville. This Rachel Roberts Dudley was also a grandmother of Jesse Lippincott and his brother, the late Dr. Aquilla Lippincott, formerly of Moorestown, and later of Salem, N.J.

A third daughter of Enoch Roberts married Joshua Hunt; she was my father's grandmother; also, of Edmund and Mordecai Hunt, and their sisters, the late Ruthanna Roberts, of Alexandria, Va., and Eliza Walker, late of Waterford, Va. This Esther (Roberts) Hunt was drowned in the Delaware river, when crossing on the ice, near Riverton, N.J. about the year 1822.

Joseph Roberts, as has been stated, was the oldest son of Joshua Roberts. He lived where the late Jonathon G. Williams lived, near Fellowship, N.J. Joseph and Susanna Coles Roberts had nine children; of these the oldest, a son Joseph, married Rachel Evans, a direct descendant of John

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and Sarah Roberts' daughter Mary. They were the great grandparents of William Dayton Roberts; also the children of the late Joshua Roberts, of Colestown, N.J., and Joseph Roberts, of Mount Holly, N.J. William, another son of this Joseph and Susanna Roberts married Ann Brick, and was a grandfather of Anna and Susan Coles Brick, daughters of the late Josiah Coles; their mother being a daughter of William Roberts, as was also Susan Carroll and Abigail Butcher (both now deceased).

Rebecca Roberts, daughter of the above Joseph, married Joseph Evans. Their children include the late Rebecca Matlack, wife of the late William Matlack, the late Thomas Evans, of Marlton, and Susan Evans and sisters.

Another daughter, Ann, married John Buzby, and was the mother of John Buzby, of Moorestown, and his sister, Mary A. Lippincott, wife of Levi Lippincott, before mentioned.

Josiah Roberts, the sixth child of Joseph and Susanna Roberts, married, as has been stated in the early part of this sketch, Mary French, a grand-daughter of John Roberts the second. Their descendants included Josiah Roberts and family, now of Baltimore, Md.; the children of the late Robert F. Roberts, of Alexandria, Va., and his brother George, late of Fellowship; also Edward and Josiah Roberts and brothers, of Camden, N.J. whose mother was also a Roberts, being a sister of Robert F. Roberts and brothers; she married Reuben Roberts, a descendant of Enoch Roberts.

My grandfather, David Roberts, was the youngest of this large family of Joseph and Susanna Roberts; he lived to the advanced age of eighty-nine years. His wife, Rachel Hunt Roberts, a daughter of Joshua and Esther Hunt, was the author of the "Family Oak Tree," from which this genealogical history is gathered.

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Thirty years was the period of time taken to gather the necessary data, and it was completed up to the year 1852. She was ably assisted by her son Edwin and daughter Esther, both now deceased. Should there be any one sufficiently interested and willing to again take up this work, and show the wonderful growth of this "Roberts oak," during the past forty-six years, their efforts would certainly be appreciated by many of us.

Joseph W. Lippincott, of Philadelphia, Penna., was then called upon, but because of the very inclement weather (it had rained most of the day and night before and there was a cold northwest November wind blowing and the meeting had already been in session over one and one-half hours) he read only a part of the paper he had prepared, as follows:

The love of family and kindred, and an interest in ancestry seems inherent in the human mind. The pride of lineage is one of the foibles of humanity, yet there is above and beyond it a love of and for ancestry, that is commendable. We see it illustrated in the beautiful custom still prevalent in the East, where an oath performed by the tomb of an ancestor is held to be forever sacred.

We see the value of genealogy in the preservation of the Jewish records so perfectly, that the Saviour's lineage could be clearly traced through them to its source in Adam.

We, naturally enough, want to know something of the early history of our ancestors, particularly of those whose names we have come to-day to record in stone, so as to rescue them from oblivion, and that they may be handed down to future generations. There is a valuable Scriptural injunction, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee."

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We would also like to know who John and Sarah Roberts were, whence they came and why, and as much of their history as possible. This we would now be ignorant of, except for the patient and untiring labors of the late Asa Matlack and Rachel H. Roberts.

Unfortunately for us, we know nothing positively of the history of parentage of John Roberts. But from "*Bessies' Sufferings of Friends*," we learn that one, Edward Roberts, of Overstone, a man of exemplary patience, and innocence, died a prisoner for his testimony, in Northampton Goal, in 1657. He was probably the father of John, but of that the proof is lacking.

John Roberts has been represented as coming to America from Wales; also from Ourton, in Warwickshire; both of which statements we believe to be in error, for on a careful examination of Lewis' *Typographical Dictionary*, published in England, and the maps of the counties of Warwickshire and Northamptonshire no trace of Ourton could be found in either county. But Overstone was found to be a parish in Northamptonshire, about five miles southeast from Northampton, and about the same distance from Wellingboro. In order to establish this fact beyond question, we have obtained a certified copy of a document from the office of the Secretary of State, at Trenton, which fully sustains our view of the case.

After a comparatively few years' residence in America John Roberts departed this life, and was buried in the old Pensauken burial ground, a few hundred yards from the spot where we now stand.

His wife Sarah, however, outlived him nearly twenty years. Judge John Clement says of her: "She was a public-spirited and prominent woman." Her name is found written in a bold hand among the incorporators of the township of Chester, and she was one of the trustees of the

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Friends' Meeting at Moorestown, then called the "Adams' Meeting."

She gave all her land, amounting to several hundred acres, to her "well beloved son, John Roberts."

We do not claim for the Roberts family any great pride of ancestral achievements or of heraldry, yet they were not without distinction even in that particular, for we find that thirty-six coat-of-arms and crests were granted to persons of the name Roberts; some of them Welshmen, but mostly to Englishmen.

We, as Americans, care far less for this than to honor the solid worth of that heroic pair, who braved the perils of a long sea voyage and the discomforts of a residence in a new country and established here their family roof-tree for the benefit of future generations.

It may be asked by some, why came John and Sarah Roberts and their co-religionists from England to this wilderness? What sought they but that freedom of worship denied them in their native land? This question is finely answered by the poet:

What sought they thus far?
Bright jewels from the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine.
Aye, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod:
They left unstained what there they found,
Freedom to worship to God."

By a unanimous vote it was then decided to have the entire proceedings of the meeting printed in pamphlet form for distribution, if the same was found to be feasible.

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The meeting then adjourned. The trustees met at once and made Joseph W. Lippincott their chairman and treasurer, and Samuel M. Roberts, of Camden, N.J., secretary for the ensuing year. David Roberts and Joseph Stokes Evans were elected a committee to have the care and oversight of the property for the same time.

The whole affair was most auspicious, indeed- a regular love feast. They felt themselves a common people, leading a common life, to a common destiny. John, like Abraham of old, was bidden of the Lord to "get out of his country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, unto a land which would be shown him." And he took "Sarah, his wife, and all of their substance that they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten, and they went forth" into a strange land. Abraham found his Melchizedek, and John his Tallaca, who were each rulers of their respective people, and they each gave succor to the respective travellers. Now Abraham has his cave in the field of Machpelah, and John his monument in the field of Mason.

SAMUEL M. ROBERTS, Secretary,
Camden, N.J.

Here is an account of the Roberts' Memorial Meeting from an old newspaper clip in Rebecca Matlack's 1909 Scrapbook, which is at the Moorestown Historical Society-

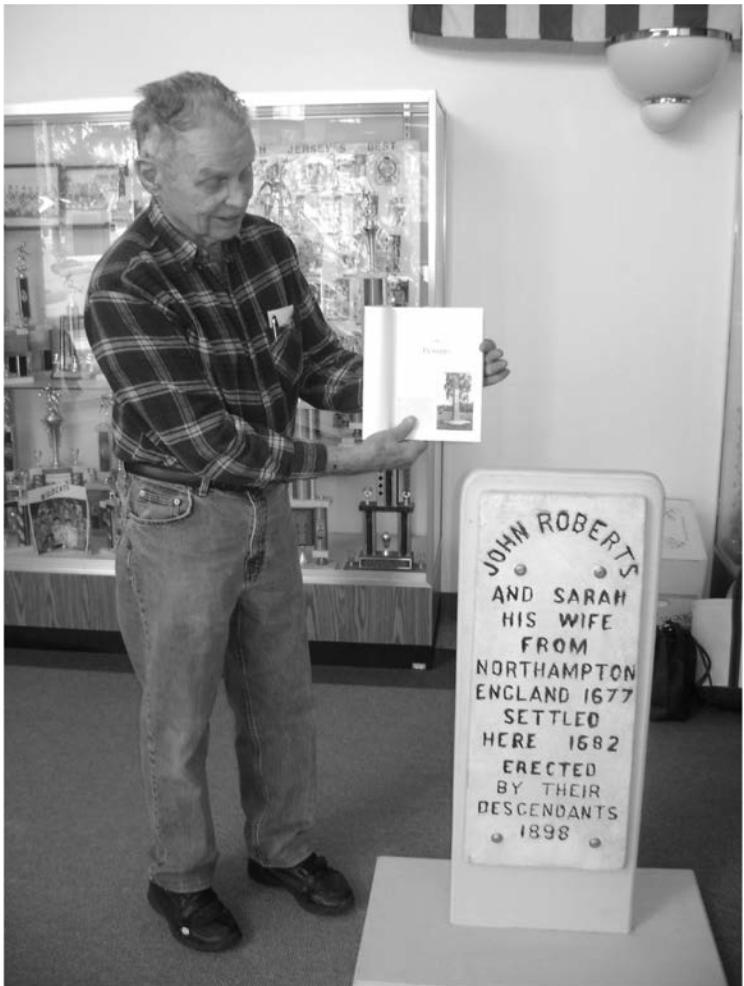
Roberts Memorial Shaft Unveiled

[Special to the Public Ledger]

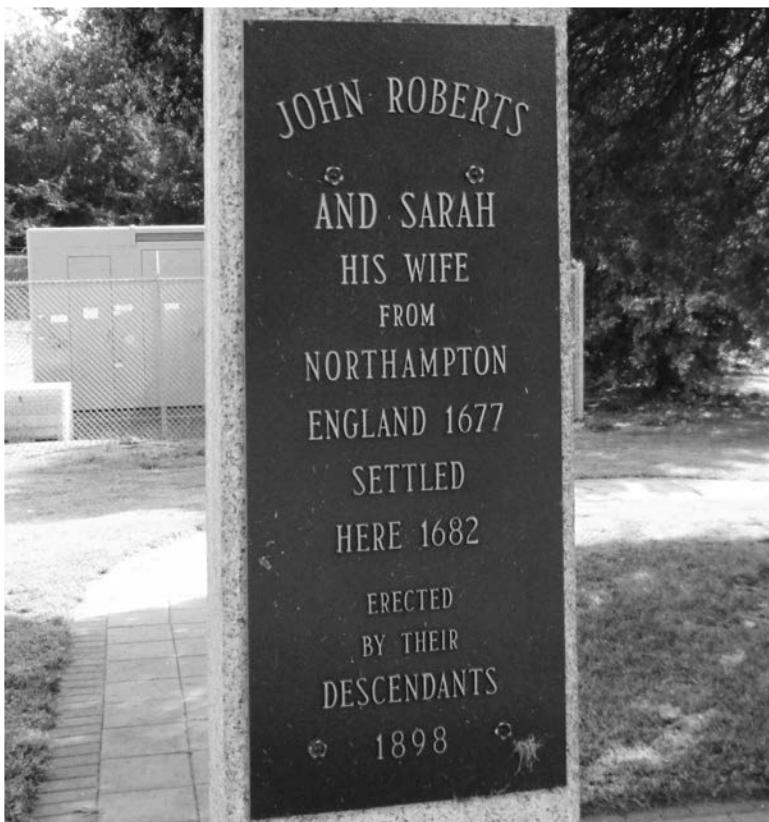
Moorestown, Nov. 15, - A monument to the memory of John and Sarah Roberts was unveiled yesterday on the Mason farm in Chester township, on the Camden and Moorestown turnpike, in the presence of about 100 descendants. The monument is a granite shaft 10 by 15 inches and 10 feet in height, and bears the following inscription: "John Roberts and Sarah, his wife, from Northamptonshire, England, 1677; settled here 1682; erected by descendants 1898."

Elisha Roberts, 86 years of age, the oldest living descendant, was made Chairman, and Samuel Roberts, who bears the distinction of having been born and bred on the original tract, was made Secretary of the ceremony. The Misses Margaret F. Roberts and Anna Passmore Sumner, each lineal descendants, about 10 years of age, pulled the cords unveiling the monument. Addresses were made by Elisha Roberts, Asa Matlack Stackhouse, David Roberts and Joseph W. Lippincott.

(Handwriting on the newspaper clip says "1898.")



Coles Roberts beside the original
Roberts Monument plaque in 2008



The Roberts Monument plaque in 2021

Reprint Notes-

This reprint was made to resemble the original to some extent. The format was copied. Spelling was not corrected. The size of the book is about the same.

The text covered on each page closely corresponds with the actual 1899 book. Sometimes though it wanders in either direction as much as to the next or previous paragraph, and is no longer exactly "same words to page" like the original.

The Palatino Linotype font was used for this book, mostly size 11. It is a close match to the original. For the capital letters "J" and "R" and numbers the Georgia font was used. The exception is when the capital "R" is in a fully capitalized word. For the reference "&" symbol the Alice font "&" was used to closely match the original.

Quiz-

What was the original idea for having the Roberts Monument?

Is the Roberts Monument in the exact place where the cave dug out was?

Does the Roberts Monument mean that the Roberts family was the first settlers?

Why did the Roberts have their memorial meeting on the damp rainy day of November 14, 1898?

What other families had their land surveyed the same day as the Roberts family in 1682?

What is the Roberts' Memorial commonly called today?

