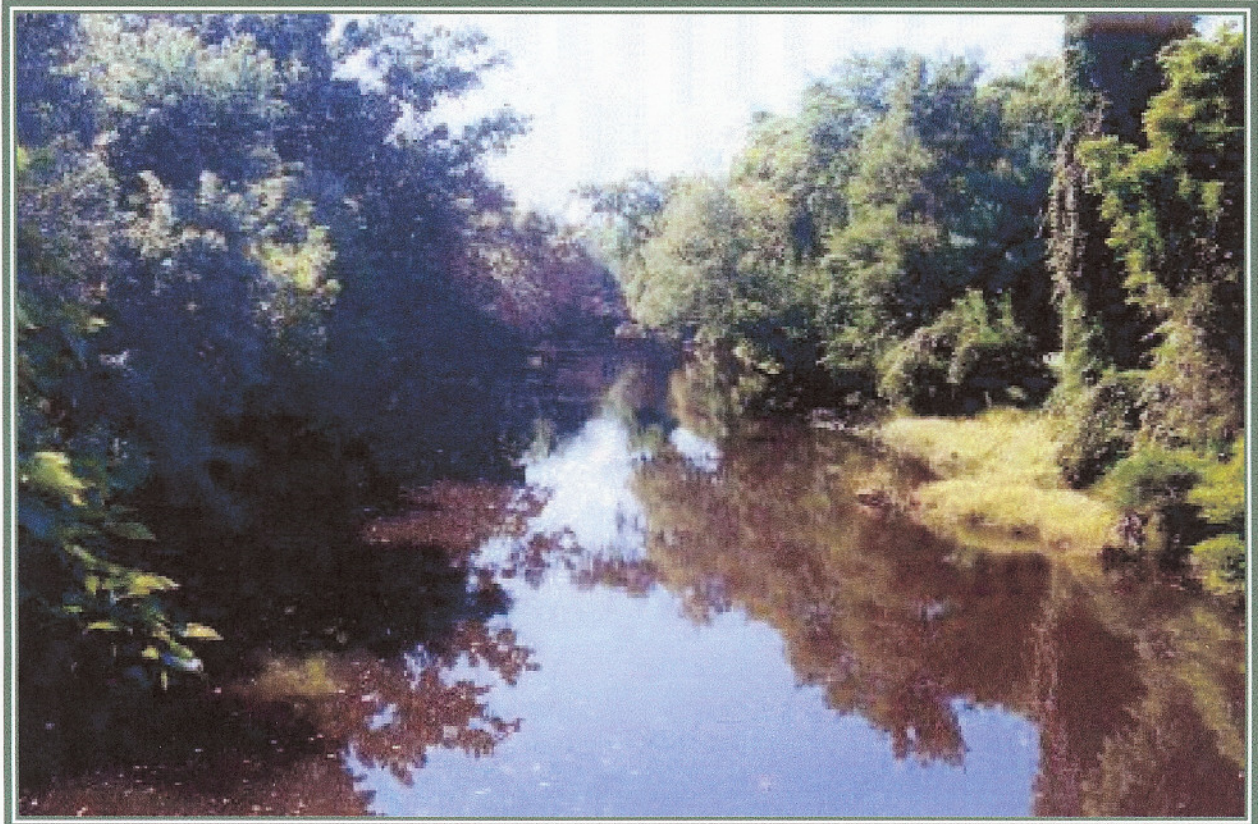


LOW SOUNDS BY THE SHORE

Diligence and Modesty on the Banks of the Rancocas



The South Branch of the Rancocas Creek as seen from Main Street in Lumberton, New Jersey in September of 2001.

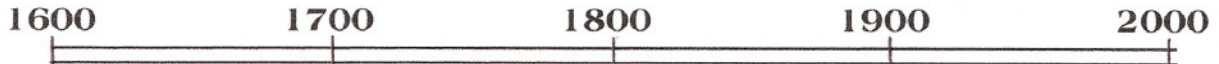
Photograph by Daniel A. Seeger

A Brief History of Lumberton from the Lenape to “the Leas”

Lecture given in the Great Room at the Lumberton Leas Community Center
by Daniel A. Seeger on September 27, 2001

(The gathering opened with a few moments of silent worship).

(Lumberton's Mayor, Margaret P. Gest, was welcomed, as was Michael Peasley, Executive Director of Medford Leas. Appreciation was expressed for those who had traveled from Woolman Commons and Medford Leas to be present for this inaugural lecture at Lumberton Leas).



Friends, at the outset I will admit that when I agreed to undertake this assignment a couple of months ago I was being rather brazen, because at that time I had absolutely no knowledge of Lumberton's history earlier than 1994. But I have been anxious to learn more about our Township since moving here one year ago and since becoming concerned about community affairs. So I welcomed the assignment as providing a useful impetus for undertaking some learning that could too easily be postponed in the face of other pressures on one's time. At any rate, it was in a state of blissful ignorance that I first went to the Burlington County Library to do research. One of the first sentences I encountered when I began reading, as I recall it, went approximately something like this: although the insignificant village of Lumberton does not have an interesting or eventful history, for some reason there are those who love the place.

Well, I felt a little deflated by this thought, encountered right at the outset of my work. But in truth, as I pursued my studies, I found that Lumberton indeed has a most interesting and instructive history, a history with which I became quite enchanted. Needless to say, my grasp of it is still very incomplete, and perhaps even somewhat imbalanced. In any case, in the time available this evening I can only provide a rough sketch. I do not know if I will be able to get any of you to share some of my enthusiasm for this subject, but I certainly hope to work more on this project myself in the future.

The first inhabitants of the Rancocas Valley which we know anything about are the Native Americans who called themselves the Lenni Lenape. This cultural group, which included people who spoke many different dialects of the Algonquin language, can be subdivided into distinct branches. The people who inhabited the Rancocas Valley were of the Unami branch of the Lenni Lenape people. Route 541 follows an old Native American trail which ran from what is now Burlington Township all the way to Cape May. In earlier days it was known

as the Shamong Trail.

You will see references to so-called "Delaware Indians." "Delaware" is not a Native American word, but is derived from the title of Sir Thomas West, who was the third Lord de la Warre and served as royal governor of the Virginia colony, after whom, for some reason, the river up here was named. "Delaware Indians" is a collective name applied to diverse indigenous peoples living in the Delaware Valley by Europeans, who had trouble pronouncing Native American names.

As we all know, operating on the assumption that all of humanity has a common primordial ancestry, scholars hypothesize that human populations arrived in the Americas during the last ice age, when the accumulation of ice so lowered the sea level that the Aleutian Islands formed a land bridge from Asia, and when, perhaps, the ice itself allowed migration on foot from one continent to the other. At any rate, the peoples of the Americas, having gotten here however they did, existed in either a high degree of isolation, or perhaps in total isolation, from the human communities developing on the Eurasian land mass and in Africa.

A wide diversity of cultures evolved in the Americas, with extensive civilizations and empires rising and falling long before any Europeans became aware of them. When Cortes arrived in Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, he described it as the most beautiful city in the world, the capital of a vast empire, with thriving markets, hanging gardens, and spectacular causeways providing access across the lake which surrounded the city. It was among the six largest metropolises in the world at the time, and was utterly unknown to the people in the other five until Cortes' arrival.

I bring the Aztec civilization into view not to carry us very far afield, but to offer a basis for contrast with the culture of the Lenni Lenape people who lived in the woodlands which then existed around present-day Lumberton. Before the arrival of the Europeans they inhabited a serene and seemingly endless wilderness. The streams were clear, the air was fresh, and fish abounded in the rivers, lakes and estuaries. Deer, elk, and bears flourished in the woodlands; ducks, geese, herons and cranes flocked to the lakes and marshes. The wild grasses of the meadows and the underbrush of the forests nurtured turkeys and quail. In this unspoiled wilderness, the Lenni Lenape lived close to nature, hunting animals for food, while avoiding wanton overkilling, foraging for edible berries, nuts, plants and roots, and, in later ages, planting gardens and building lodges of saplings and bark.

Lenape life, even with its deficiencies in health care and technology, must have been immensely satisfying in many ways. Society was family oriented and communal. As long as anyone among the Lenape had food to eat, no one would go without. Orphans were cared for. The elderly were respected. They

lived peacefully in small, dispersed settlements. Lenape life conformed to nature and was free of modern problems caused by alcohol, drugs and pollution.

Like most native Americans, the Lenni Lenape were a deeply religious people. They felt the presence of the supernatural everywhere. They believed that innumerable spirit forces controlled the world. While cultures derived from European civilization are apt to regard humans as more favored by God than the other creatures, the Lenni Lenape saw themselves as an integral part of a natural world filled with an infinite variety of plants, animals, insects, clouds and stones, each of which possessed spirits no less important than those of human beings.

While different branches of the Lenape were culturally and linguistically related to each other, they remained independent of each other, never forming any politically cohesive group. They built no monuments, established no government organization, and invented no written language or complex sciences. Their way of life required none of these, and they certainly were unconcerned about what future historians or archeologists might think of them.

Bringing the Aztecs back into view, it is interesting to reflect about the differences between the famous empire builders and the more pacific Lenni Lenape. Archeologists and historians have tried to discern patterns in cultural evolution and they have tried to analyze the motivational dynamics involved. The assembling of larger political communities, and the civilizations which cohere within them, seems often to reflect a recognition of the advantages of trade, and a desire to establish a context of law and order facilitating the exchange of goods over a wide area. Usually, early rulers are charismatic personalities who gain the confidence of other clan leaders and clan groupings. In the absence of a conspicuously charismatic successor to an innovative leader, heredity becomes a basis for succession. Unfortunately, once gaining in power and might, empires frequently expand not on the basis of the mutually beneficial covenants with which they started, but by conquest and exploitation. Exploitative relationships with vassal peoples were characteristic of the Chinese, Roman, and the British Empires. Cortes' conquest of the mighty Aztec Empire was due only in part to the superior technology available to his small band. It was more due to his quick perception that the subject peoples he encountered on the outer fringes of the Empire hated the Aztecs, and his skillful exploitation of the military possibilities that resulted.

In our own spiritual tradition, the Bible speaks of something quite similar. The Hebrew people were a loose coalition of clans presided over by headmen, called judges. There arose of judge of unusual charisma and wisdom named Samuel. Samuel was a kind of circuit judge, traveling among the clans and dispensing a guiding wisdom. As Samuel became old, the Bible tells us that the people

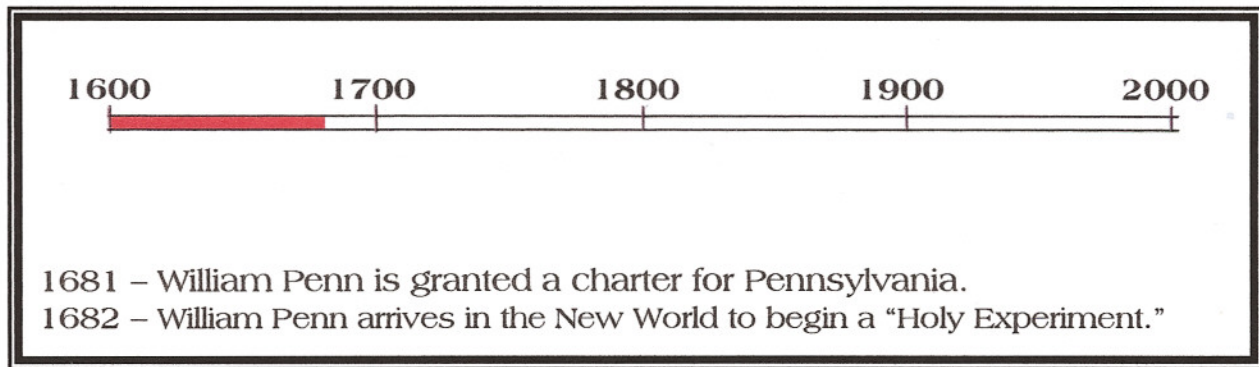
pleaded with him to set a king over them, that such a king might fight their battles for them. The people were envious of the material and military success of nearby monarchies. There is the wonderful passage in I Samuel 8:10-18 where Samuel warns the people not to go down this road. "This will be the ways of the king who will reign over you . . . He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. . . He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. . . He will take one tenth of your flocks. . . He will make you slaves." The people persisted, and after much prayer Samuel at last anointed Saul to be king, and after him David, and the people of Israel, like so many other people, traded their simpler existence for the next succeeding steps of civilization.

Civilization, then, is not an unmixed blessing. It too often results in the subjugation of people and in a government of despots devoted to the construction of tombs and of monuments of architectural grandeur for a ruling elite. The Lenni Lenape would have none of this. They are known to have been of a strongly egalitarian inclination. Theirs was a world of mutual support and community. They were highly regarded among other native American groups for their diplomatic skills, and were referred to affectionately as the "grandfather people."

The first Europeans to settle along the Delaware in this region were a scattering of Dutch and Swedish people. I was unable to determine if any came as far inland as Lumberton. The English were the first group to come in significant numbers, although by today's standards the population remained very small for more than a century and a half. William Penn was granted the province of Pennsylvania on the west side of the Delaware River by King Charles II in settlement of a debt the Crown owed Penn's father. The grant was made in 1681, and Penn was on the scene by 1682. It was Penn's idea to conduct a "Holy Experiment" in which the polity would be governed according to Quaker and Christian principles, which included the practice of non-violence, the practice



A monument of the Mayan civilization, a culture which preceded that of the Aztecs. The Mayas, too, were empire builders. (Tikal, Guatemala)
Photo by Daniel A. Seeger

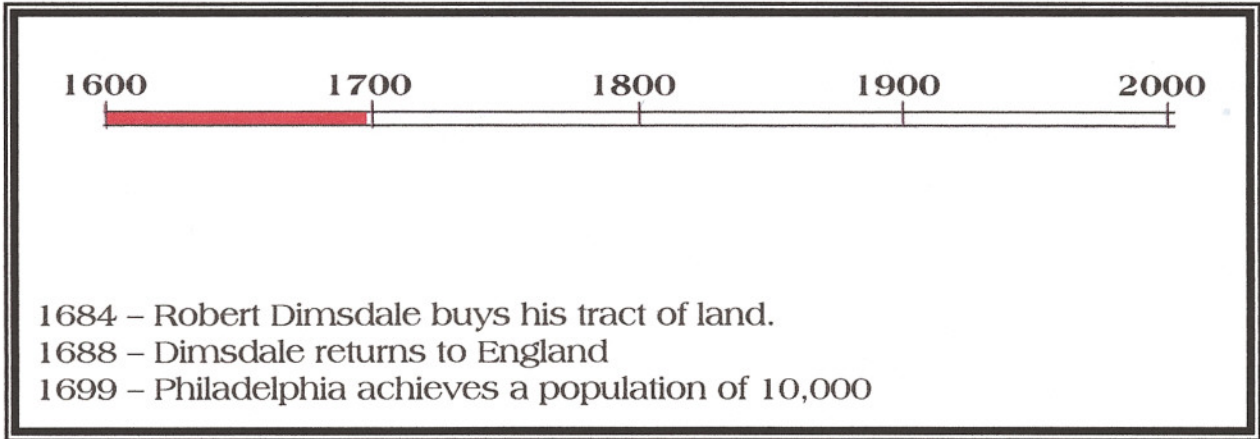


of equality not only of men with each other, but equality among men and women, and democracy.

Penn's arrival began a process of settlement of the area by English Quakers, although people of other backgrounds joined in as a consequence of Pennsylvania's practice of religious toleration. Nevertheless, in the early days, the preponderance of settlers were English Quakers. Less than twenty years after Penn's first arrival, by 1699, Philadelphia was a flourishing town of shops and dwellings with a population of 10,000 people. This, of course, sounds small by today's standards. But remember that at that time the population of London itself was only 220,000. The establishment of a commercial center of 10,000 people out of the wilderness in a mere twenty years must be considered an extraordinary development. I bring this into view, because, as far as settlement of the Lumberton area by Europeans is concerned, as well as the subsequent conduct of social and economic life here, the proximity to Philadelphia provided a defining context, as it does to this very day.

Penn's 1681 charter clearly identified land which is west of the Delaware. By what rights, then, might we ask, did Quakers presume to settle in what is now southern New Jersey as well? Through a tangled web of transactions involving the English Crown, William Penn became one of three Quaker trustees or managers of what is now the west side of southern New Jersey. So, like eastern Pennsylvania, the western part of southern New Jersey, too, was initially settled by members of the Religious Society of Friends.

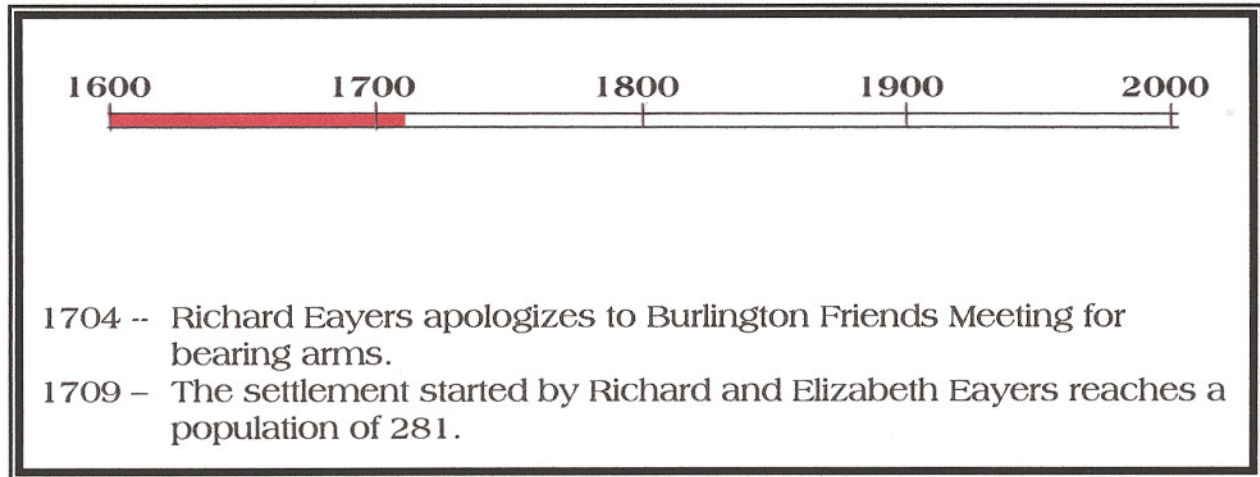
The first recorded settler in Lumberton was Robert Dimsdale, a Quaker physician, who in 1684 bought a large tract of land which apparently stretched from the South Branch of the Rancocas here in Lumberton to the North Branch of the Rancocas in what is now Mount Holly. But after buying the land in 1684, he retired to England in 1688, where he eventually died. Three or four years is hardly enough time to make a dent in the wilderness. Dimsdale also owned a large tract in Pennsylvania, and it could be that he should be regarded more as a land speculator than as a pioneer. No physical evidence remains of activity in



the area during the Dimsdale period, and the oral tradition is contradictory. Bobby's Run, a stream which empties into the Rancocas, was once called Dimsdale Run, and the present day Bobby's Run School is located on a road called Dimsdale Road, but these names seem to be the extent Dimsdale's impact on the region.

Another Quaker family, the Eayers, settled on land which was located near what is now the intersection of Eayerstown Road and Bridge Road, within present-day Lumberton but at the extreme east end of the Township. I have not been able to determine when they arrived, but by 1709, when a census was taken, their settlement was comprised of 281 residents, including Richard and Elizabeth Eayers and their three natural and two adopted children.

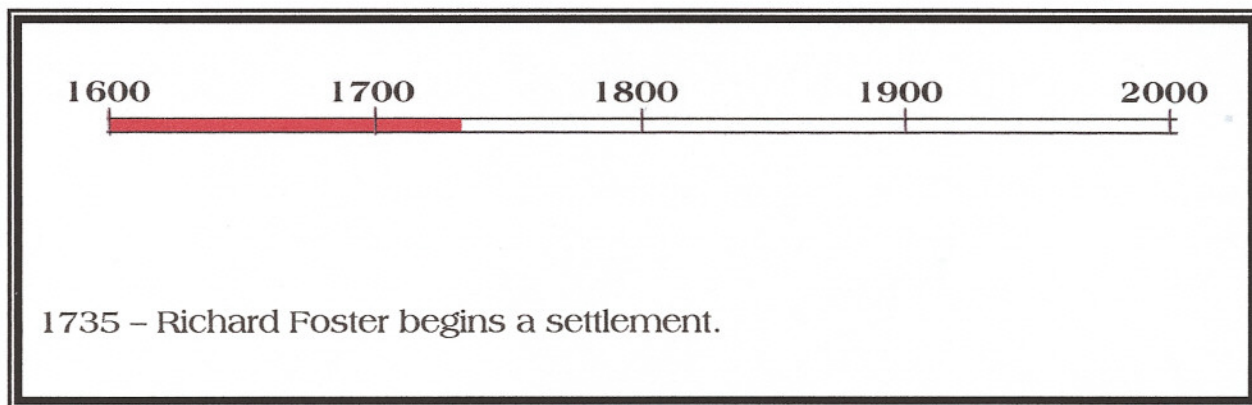
But there is an earlier reference to the Eayers in the minutes of Burlington Friends Meeting for November 12, 1704. As a member of meeting Richard Eayers was supposed to follow the rule that he "could not bear or use arms to the destruction



of the lives of men.” But on November 12, 1704 Richard Eayers and some of his neighbors made “acknowledgment for carrying arms, upon a rumor reaching them that the French were at Cohacksink.” The four men explained themselves by saying, as the minutes quote: “That it seemed best for those that had guns, to take them, not with design to hurt, much less to kill, man, woman, or child, but we thought that if we could meet these runaways, the sight of the guns might fear them.” Apparently the meeting did not find this pretense toward violence to be a sufficiently grave offense to warrant expulsion from the Quaker spiritual community.

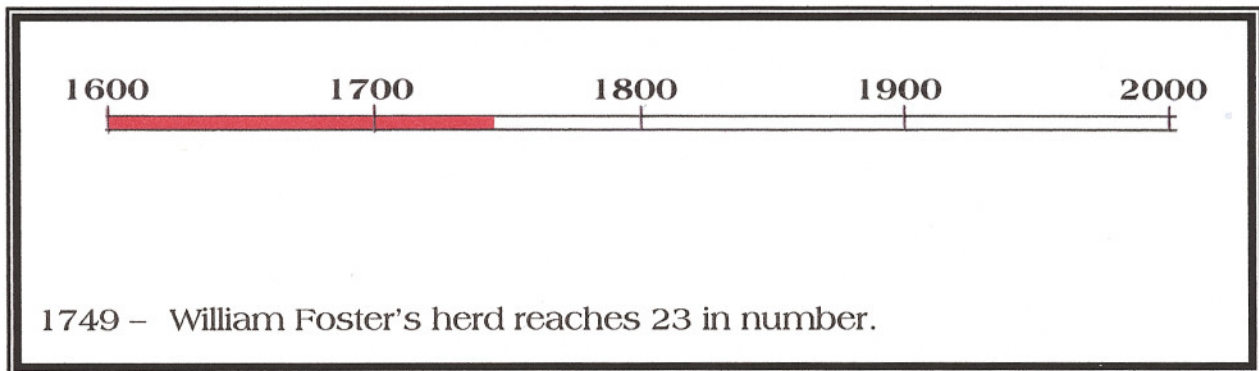
The Eayers family lived in a simple stone structure located within a hundred feet of the Rancocas at what was then considered its furthest navigable point. What is navigable depends, I suppose, upon what it is you are trying to navigate with – a canoe or a steamboat. If the Rancocas at that point on the map was in those days anything like what appears there today, only the smallest of vessels could have managed. At any event, the stone house which the Eayers inhabited was suggestive of frugality and simplicity. Two adults and five children lived in a house described as one room wide, one room deep and one and a half stories high.

Clearing the land for cultivation must have involved real hardship, for it was heavily wooded. I have not found any account of what sort of division of labor might have been practiced by Eayers and the neighbors which eventually grew to number 281, presumably including children, by 1709. At the same time, the Eayers family apparently prospered, for the land was marvelously suited for cultivation, once it was cleared. Moreover, the Rancocas provided power for the races of several mills which Eayers set up -- apparently a sawmill, a grist mill, and a fulling mill. While perhaps at the very beginning the family practiced subsistence farming, the market town of Mount Holly, less than three miles



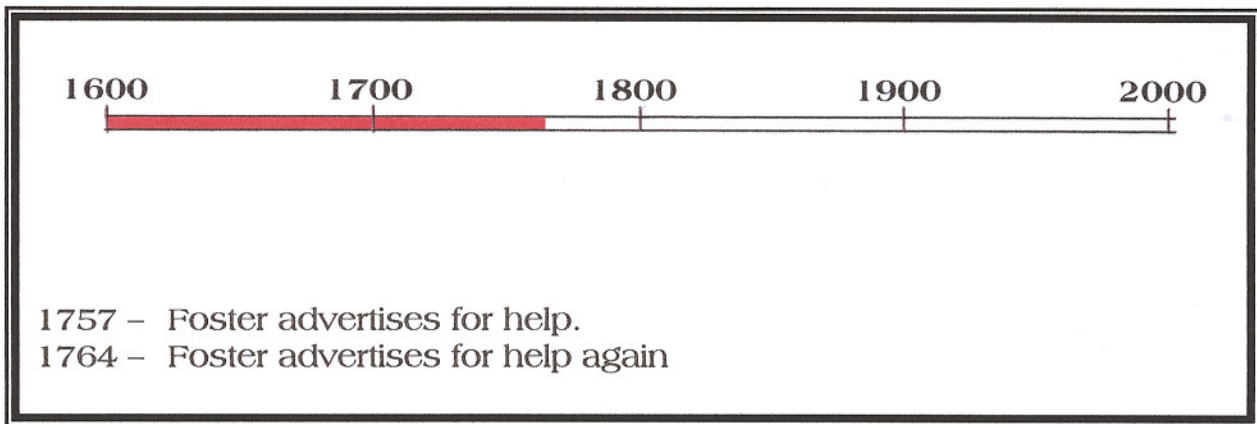
away, provided a good place to sell excess farm products once they could be produced, and the lumber from the land clearing could be sold in Philadelphia by floating it down the Rancocas and across the Delaware River.

Around 1735 a second settlement was eventually opened about a mile away from Eayrestown by William Foster. As best as I can make out, it was in the vicinity of Main Street (Route 541) and Fostertown Road, although there is not anything that one could call a settlement there now. Foster is recorded as having



a herd of 23 cows by 1749, which was regarded to be an impressive number for those days. He was also clearly trying to establish a working, self-sufficient community. In 1757 he placed an advertisement in Benjamin Franklin's *Gazette*, back in Philadelphia: "Wanted immediately, a good cooper for packing pork and beef." In 1764, again in the *Gazette*, he advertised: "The following tradesmen are wanted, vis, a shoemaker, a taylor, and a wheelwright, who, if they come well recommended for sobriety, honesty and industry, may find good encouragement by applying to the subscriber, where convenient dwelling houses may be had for moderate rent." A year later he was seeking "an honest, sober, industrious man, that writes a tolerable good hand, that is willing to do different sorts of business about a shop."

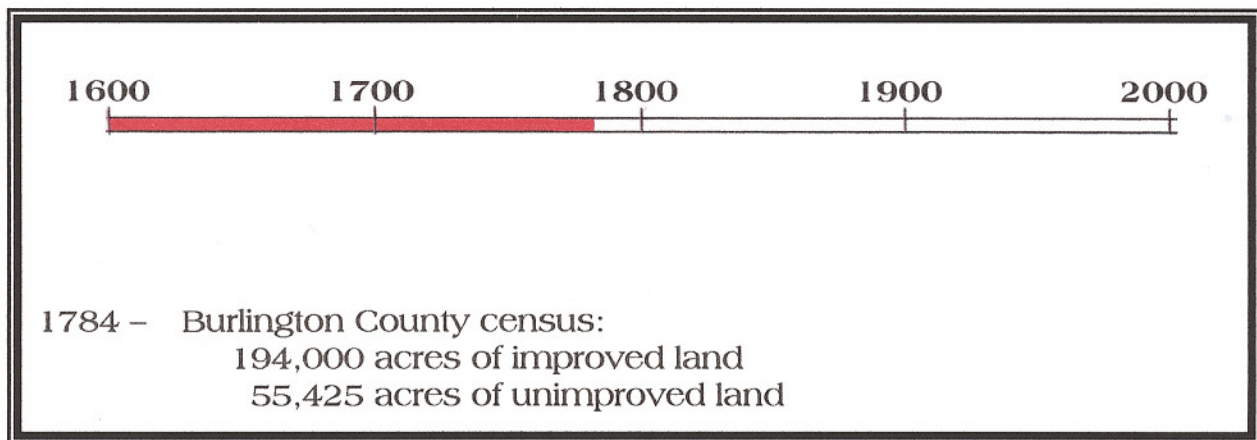
These advertisements are crucial for our understanding of the development of Lumberton in the 1700s. They imply that there were people in the neighborhood to be served by the cooper, shoemaker, tailor, wheelwright and storekeeper. By 1784 there was a census which reported that within all of Burlington County, then larger than it is now, there were 194,000 acres of improved land, and only 55,425 acres of unimproved land. While it cannot be said for certain that all of what was termed "improved" land was cleared for agriculture, it seems likely that much of it was. Since the soils in Lumberton are particularly fertile, it probably can be assumed that by 1784 the rich farmland in these parts were under



cultivation by an industrious group of settlers who achieved a modest degree of prosperity.

While I am sure that life must have been hard in the beginning, I did not encounter any bitter stories of isolated couples and their children locked alone in a battle against a howling wilderness – stories such as one hears in connection with the settlement of the colony at Massachusetts or with regard to the mid-western frontier. The climate here was relatively mild, the wild game plentiful, and what was a substantial city for those days, Philadelphia, was a short float down the Rancocas Creek. Moreover, relations between the pacific Quakers and the pacific Lenni Lenape were friendly, and it is clear that the Native Americans were quite willing to help the European settlers over the rough spots when their initial encounters with the wilderness proved to be clumsy. Letters written by settlers in southern New Jersey to relatives back in England often give account of kindnesses extended to them by Native Americans.

George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, visited Quaker settlements in the New



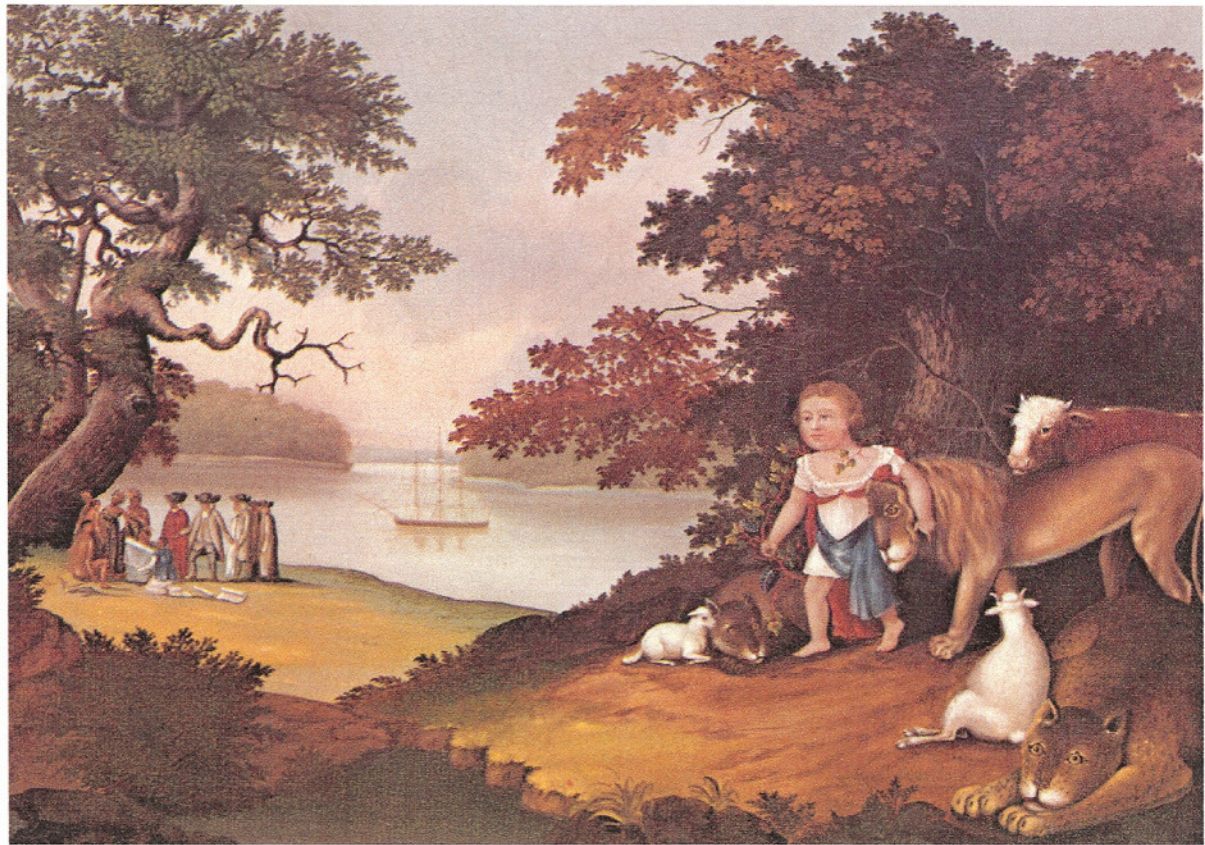
World in the early 1670's and passed through Burlington Village on his way across the Delaware in 1672. Fox believed that Native Americans were the equals of Europeans, and that they were as capable of knowing spiritual truth as were Christians. In the course of his travels he sought to demonstrate this to one royal governor by discoursing with a Native American about spiritual and philosophical things in the governor's presence. Like Fox, William Penn always expressed the belief that Native Americans and Europeans could live together in harmony if they were regarded as equals. He always treated Native Americans in a friendly way, and promised them redress of grievances and peace. He concluded a treaty with the Native Americans as soon as he arrived in Pennsylvania. Quakers did not believe in taking oaths, so it is often said of this treaty that it is the only treaty Europeans concluded with Native Americans which was never sworn to and never broken. A century later, the well-known Quaker artist Edward Hicks, painted many versions of a composition he called "The Peaceable Kingdom," illustrating the passage from Isaiah about the lion and the lamb¹ being friends. He eventually began to incorporate into the background of the painting an illustration of William Penn concluding his treaty with the Native Americans as an illustration of how the utopian vision of the Biblical prophet was beginning to be realized in actual human affairs.

In contrast to this Quaker approach, the Puritan cleric and writer Cotton Mather declared that the Devil had placed the Native Americans in the New World in the hope that the gospel of Jesus Christ would never come here to destroy or disturb the absolute control Satan exercised over them. "We must either convert these tawny serpents or annihilate them." declared Mather. Many colonists accused Native Americans of paying homage to the Devil, and saw them as savage and wild and strangers to all decency. The Quaker attitude towards Native Americans was very unusual among European settlers.

It is interesting to contemplate the interaction between the Friends who settled in Lumberton and the Native Americans. The Native Americans as a cultural group were a people who had not entered the path of nationhood and empire and the despotic government which these seemed almost universally to involve. The Quakers were at the other end of this long human evolution, emerging from tyranny, rebelling against monarchy, preaching egalitarianism, refusing to take their hats off to the King, reaching uncertainly toward the concepts of democratic practice which at long last were to rescue civilization from ages of tyranny.

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The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah XI: 6-9)



“The Peaceable Kingdom” by Edward Hicks

Remember that when the Quakers began arriving in Lumberton John Locke had not yet written his treatises on government or his letter on toleration, pivotal works which were later to influence the drafting of the American Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. At any rate, both groups were similar in their egalitarian spirit and their pacific nature.

One wishes that the mutual kindness which apparently prevailed between these two disparate yet strangely similar groups, the Quakers and the Unami branch of the Lenni Lenape -- one emerging from the stone age, and the other emerging from feudalism toward democracy -- had involved more thorough interactions and that such interactions had been well documented. But apparently the settlers set about the monumental task of clearing the wilderness and setting up systems of commerce somewhat single-mindedly -- probably conditions offered them little choice -- and they seemed not to have had huge amounts of time for deep and searching cross-cultural exchanges, with all the mastery of Native American languages which that might have required. The Quaker supposition that Native American culture and religion was equal to their own, and that Native

Americans were not in need of being saved spiritually, may have contributed to a certain neglect of the interactive possibilities. In other parts of the New World, Jesuits and Moravians did make some careful notes about Native American culture, but these were made mainly for the purpose of orienting new generations of missionaries. So, although such records are assumed to be fair and reasonably accurate, they were made as part of a long-range plan to convert the Native Americans away from their own traditions.

Trade, rather than cultural exchange, was vigorous among the Quakers and the Native Americans. Things like metal pots and duffel cloth were of great value to the Native Americans, and the animal skins provided by Native Americans in exchange were highly regarded by Europeans.

In spite of our Quaker pride in the treaties involving the exchange of goods for land with Native Americans, with the benefit of twenty-first century hindsight it must be asked whether Europeans and Native Americans understood the meaning of these exchanges in exactly the same way. European and Native American socio-economic attitudes were quite different. Parts of the Old World were overpopulated, and land ownership conveyed great wealth, the value increasing with the size of the plot. Real estate was a commodity that could be bought, sold, inherited, divided, or used as collateral. Settlers who had known only Old World traditions might naturally expect to get permanent and exclusive title, and the right to fence off lands and prevent trespass, as a result of their treaties with the Native Americans.

The Lenape, on the other hand, believed that a benevolent spirit had created the earth for all people and all creatures and that Mother Earth could not be appropriated by any individual and despoiled for the sake of personal profit. Land, like the sun, air and water, was an essential ingredient of life; without it corn could not grow, and animals could not graze. While the settlers probably believed that they had entered a legal transaction with the Native Americans for which they received title to the land for their exclusive use, the Native Americans most probably thought the colonists were offering gifts to show their appreciation for the right to *share* in the use of the land. One surmises that Native Americans were quite startled to see their woodlands cut for timber and cleared for farms and pastures, and to see the areas they used to hunt, fish and collect berries being dotted with houses, barns, mills and wharves.

At any rate, for all their pacifism and kindness as practiced here in the Rancocas Valley, one is driven to the conclusion that the effect of Quaker settlement on Native American communities was, over the long run, very little different than that of other less tolerant and more cruel Europeans. In other words, the Native Americans lost out, big time, in every case. They were decimated by European diseases to which they had little resistance, for the colonists unwittingly inflicted



William Penn's treaty with the Native Americans as depicted by Edward Hicks.

upon them measles, typhus, smallpox, and influenza.

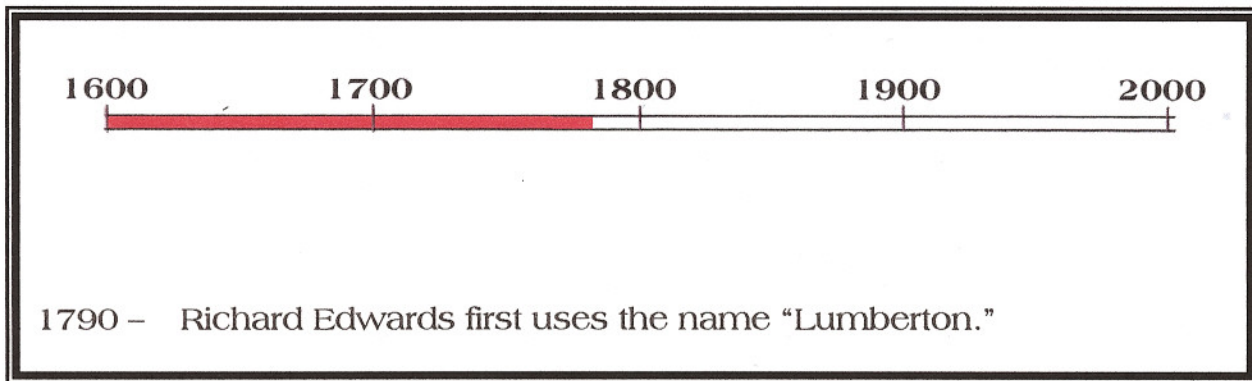
As land was cleared and fenced here in Lumberton the Native Americans were gradually pushed out of the area as their way of life became unviable. While a very few remained in the vicinity, most of these semi-nomadic people simply found it better to move westward, ahead of the teeming hordes of Europeans which kept coming ashore. In this migration the Native Americans began assimilating with each other, and this happened with respect to the Unami as well. No Unami Tecumseh or Unami Sitting Bull arose to resist the seemingly inexorable process. Distinct evidence of Rancocas Valley Unami people have

been traced as far Oklahoma, Indiana and Ontario, the ones in Oklahoma merging formally with the Cherokee in 1890. Today it is doubtful that anyone speaks the Unami language any longer.

Most sensitive people who think about it regret the treatment Native Americans received. But few realize that a like process is going on to this very day as modern society continues its incursions into the life of indigenous peoples around the globe. We are most apt to be aware of this with respect to the Amazon Basin and in Indonesia, where the decimation of the vast tropical rain forests which are crucial to the restoration of the earth's atmosphere threatens our own future ability to breathe. But few of us, when we drink a glass of pineapple juice, ask how many Filipinos may be malnourished because a modern equivalent of the Dutch East India company has taken over land which once fed local populations and has planted instead crops for export because they can make more money that way. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, I have listened to many anguished discussions on National Public Radio about why the terrorists could hate us so much. While I have little experience in the Middle East, my travels in Quaker work in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s frequently left me with the opposite question: "How can they love us so much?" Seeing so many countries in the grip of American-backed dictatorships, seeing no way out of a seemingly endless cycle of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, seeing the evidence of American penetration into the nooks and crannies of these backward economies, and seeing evidence of American profiteering from them everywhere, why, I wondered, did people's faces light up when I introduced myself as an American from New York City?

Getting back to Lumberton of the eighteenth century, the diligent, modest and pacific people who tamed the wilderness here, being Quakers of an egalitarian frame of mind, took poorly to the efforts of the royal governors sent from the English Court to supervise them. Although William Penn was an aristocrat who was a familiar figure at Court, the relationship between any monarchy and people with the values of Friends is inevitably a vexed one. None other than the *Encyclopedia Britannica* observes that, unlike other colonists, who suffered greatly from the harshness of English rule, the early Jerseyans were of such an independent nature that it was the royal governors who did most of the suffering. Yet, when the American Revolution occurred, in spite of their aversion to monarchy, Quakers were even more averse to violence and war, and most did not participate. The American Revolution seemed to pass Lumberton by, although there were British raids on Mount Holly, and there was a big battle at Trenton after Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware.

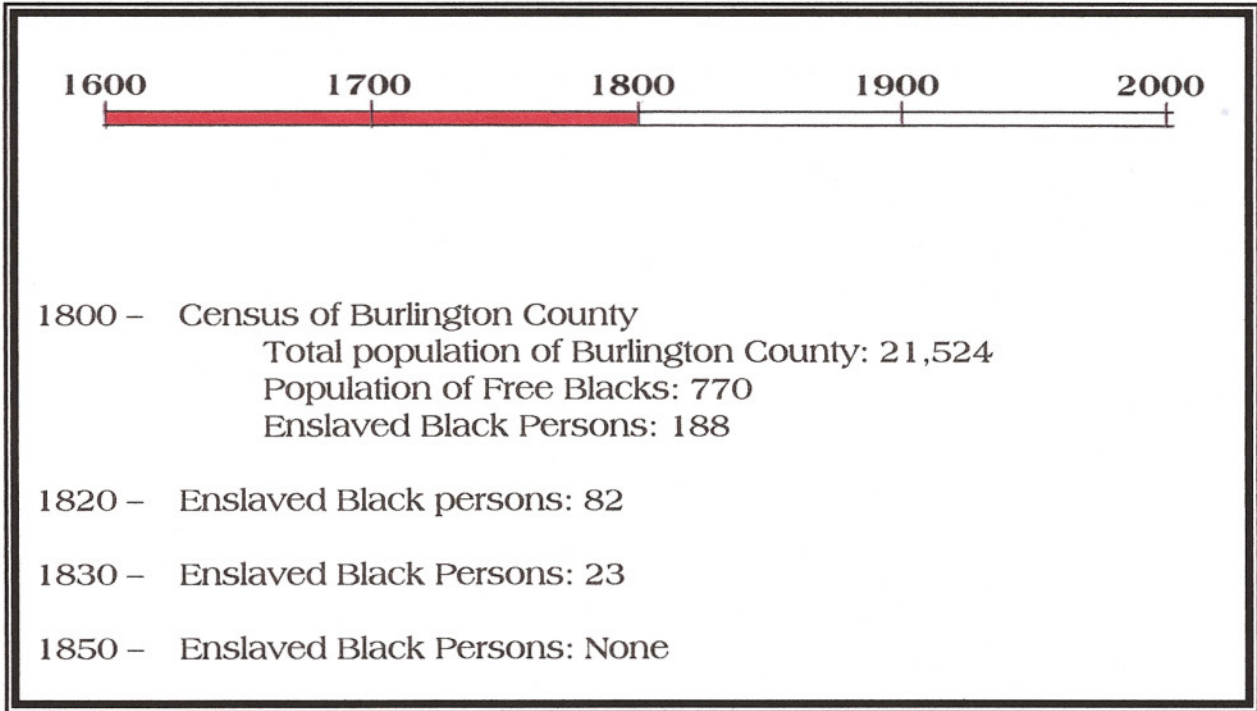
At this point I should explain that, although I have tried to focus on historical events pertaining to the area that is now Lumberton, Lumberton as such did not



exist until much later. The word "Lumberton" first appears in a deed for a land transaction dated April 12, 1790 when Richard Edwards bought some land and was described in the deed as being from "Lumberton." Three years previously, although living in the same place, he had been described as being from Northampton. So some time between 1787 and 1790, Richard Edwards began to conceive of himself as living in Lumberton. His house is believed to be one which is still standing at the southeast corner of Main Street and Edwards Street. Up until Edwards' time, the area was clearly a farming community with a reasonably sized market center at Fostertown, south of the present village center, and a mill community in Eayerstown.

With Richard Edwards, the present Lumberton Village became the hub of activity. With that also came a shift away from agriculture toward industry, with the inevitable tensions between town and country, merchant and farmer. By 1799 Edwards had gotten into financial trouble, and when he sold his holdings in Lumberton, the deed mentions houses, storehouses, buildings, wharfs, fencings, and fields." By that time the cross street known then, and now, as Landing Street had been established. The wharfs were located between Landing Street and the Creek where the Street runs close to the Creek just to the west of Main Street. Historians regard the list associated with Richard Edwards' sale as hints that there were a variety of commercial enterprises in Lumberton by 1799, a substantial population, and direct connections with the metropolis of Philadelphia, most probably via the Rancocas Creek.

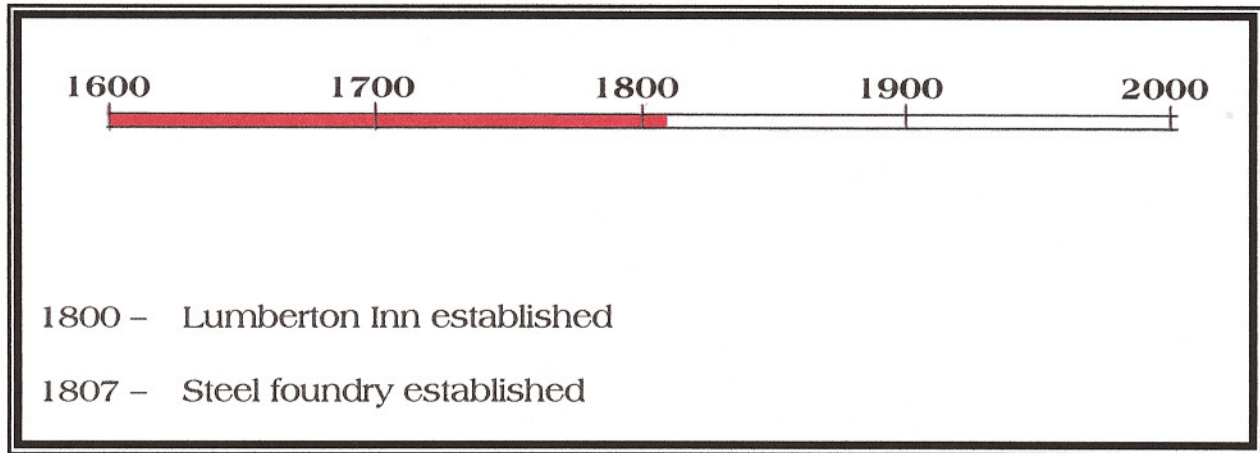
Before giving a brief account of the growth of Lumberton during the 1800s, one must pause to acknowledge another significant population in the region. I saw no references to Black settlers or to enslaved persons in the materials I reviewed giving account of Lumberton's history. This does not mean that such references do not exist; it is just that I did not uncover them in the time available. I did see materials which provide information about Black people in Burlington County as a whole. It is almost impossible, apparently, to know how the Black population evolved before 1800, and how many of the Black people were free and how



many were enslaved. But by 1800 there is a census which indicates that out of a total population of 21,524 persons in Burlington County, 770 were free Blacks and 188 were enslaved. By 1820 there were 82 enslaved Blacks, and by 1830 there were 23. The 1850 census recorded the presence of no enslaved persons.

Some historians state that because of Friends' influence in the region slavery never gained a firm foothold in the three Quaker counties of Burlington, Gloucester, and Salem. Yet the Quaker record with respect to slavery is not without its embarrassing aspects, since it is known that some Friends did own slaves, in spite of skepticism about the practice among their fellow meeting members, and it was not until 1776 that the Religious Society of Friends officially embraced the idea of abolition, and declared slaveholding to be an offense against Christianity. John Woolman, a saintly Quaker who was a member of nearby Mount Holly Friends Meeting, was a widely known anti-slavery crusader who lived from 1720 to 1772. A search of Burlington County Deed Books indicates that numerous slave manumissions were effected during the period from 1786 through 1800.

There are many wonderful stories about the contributions free Blacks made to Burlington County life in the 1700s and 1800s, but since none of these people



lived in Lumberton,¹ a discussion of them will have to await some future occasion. Burlington County supported an important branch of the underground railroad, but I did not encounter any evidence that Lumberton residents were involved in this, so a discussion of that, too, must await another occasion.²

As mentioned earlier, the village of Lumberton began to develop as an industrial area at about 1800. Large quantities of lumber and cordwood were shipped from Landing Street to Philadelphia. There were enough transient visitors, either drawn by business here in Lumberton, or else in transit between Philadelphia and points to the east, that the Lumberton Inn was erected in 1800. A steel furnace was established in 1807 and was located at what now is 10 West Landing Street. The Lumberton Foundry Company was established in 1850 at the foot of Landing Street and was the leading industry of Lumberton for some years. It manufactured pipe, stove and plough castings, water wheels, window grates, hat and umbrella stands, pots, and horsehead hitching posts. All the piping for the Brooklyn Water Works was manufactured at this foundry. But it burned down only nineteen years after it was established, and for some reason was not rebuilt.

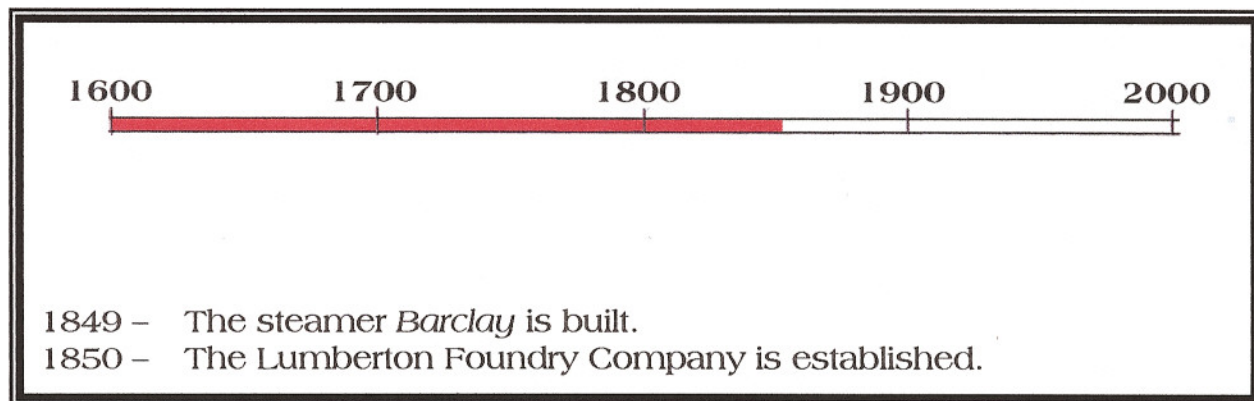
The village also had a charcoal grinding mill powered by horse, and at least two limekilns, the limestone being brought from Pennsylvania by boat. It is clear that

1

This assertion was corrected by an attender when this lecture was given on September 27, 2001. Dr. Benjamin Stille, a well-known and widely respected physician, whose name readily appears in histories of Burlington County, apparently lived in Lumberton at least for a short time. This topic needs more research.

2

This statement was also corrected by an attender, who said that evidence has been found of a probable underground railroad hideout on Creek Road.



Lumberton as a manufacturing center owed its prosperity to the possibility of shipping goods in and out via the Rancocas Creek.

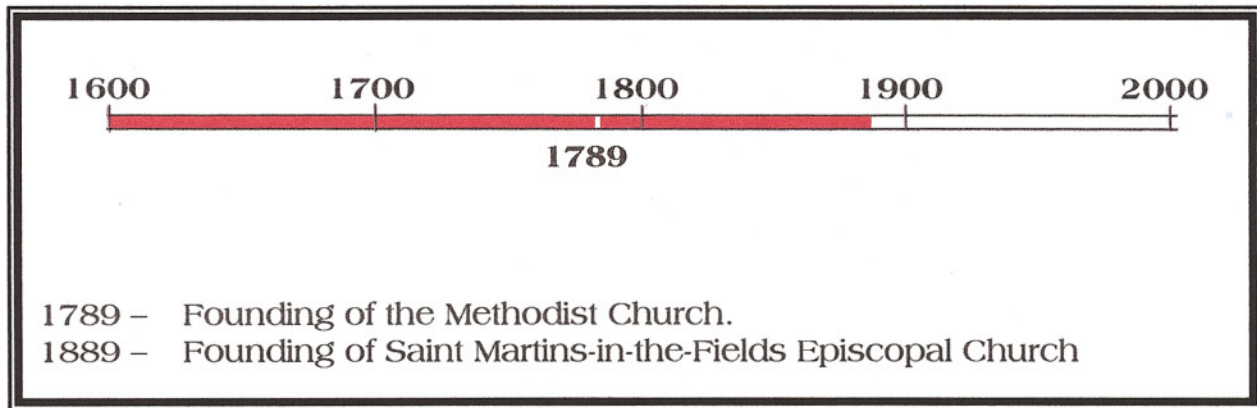
Although it may seem a little incredible to us, given the way the Rancocas Creek looks at present, shipbuilding was an important industry here in the 1800s. Many sailboats, and at least one steamboat, were built in the Lumberton Navy Yard. The steamer *Barclay* was built here in 1849. It was 120 feet in length and 24 feet wide and made many trips between Lumberton and Philadelphia. I have to admit I cannot quite visualize this being possible.

The manufacturing of infants and children's footwear became an important industry during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first shoe factory was established in 1874, the second in 1881. The second, the Lumberton Shoe Company, was located on the northwest corner of Main and Landing Street. It was discontinued in 1934. Two Leas residents, Claire Engle and Don Killian, come from families associated with the Lumberton shoe industry.

I have found no records of a Quaker Meeting in Lumberton, so I presume local Friends must have worshiped in Burlington, as did the Eayers, or in Mount Holly.³ The oldest religious organization in our village is the Lumberton Methodist Church, established in 1789. The first church the Methodists established was on Church Street. Nothing is left of the structure, but the graveyard is still there, and can be readily seen by driving north on Main Street, turning right on Edwards Street just before the Creek, and then turning right again on Church Street and driving about one block. The first Methodist Bishop in the United States, Francis Asbury, preached in Lumberton on May 8, 1813.

3

When the lecture was given a Friend in attendance told me that there is evidence of a Quaker meeting house on Creek Road in what is now Hainesport.



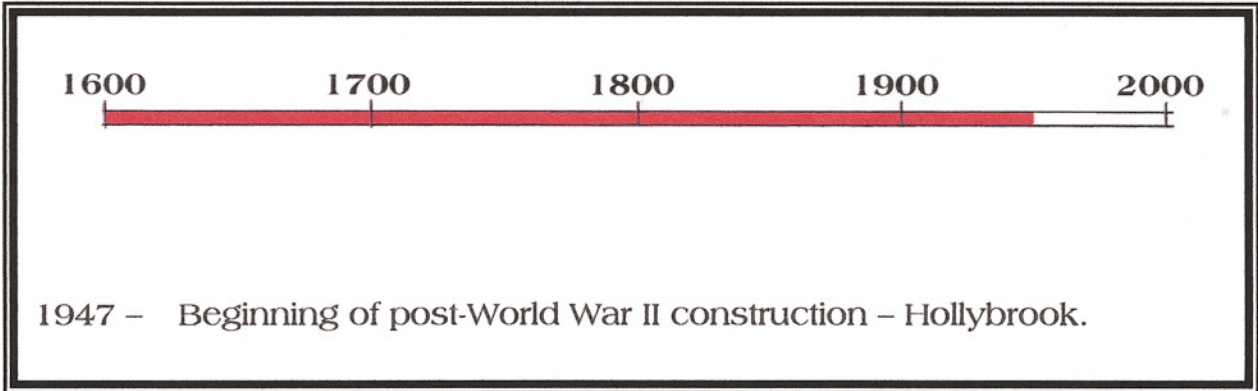
The Episcopal Church in Lumberton, Saint Martins-in-the-Fields, was originally a mission under the Trinity Episcopal Church of Mount Holly and was founded in 1889. The mission must have borne fruit, for the present attractive church was built only a few years later in 1896. The cemetery on high ground a little further south on Main Street was originally the Episcopal burying ground, or churchyard.

There are other congregations in Lumberton which I am certain have interesting histories, but I did not encounter any references to them in my researches.

Although, as mentioned earlier, the name Lumberton began to be applied to the collection of homes and businesses which were aggregated around the intersection of Main Street and Landing Street as early as 1790, it was not until 1860 that the Township of Lumberton was established by being set off from Northampton by an act of the State Legislature. When founded Lumberton was larger than it is now, because it included Hainesport. Hainesport was set off from Lumberton in 1924.

Lumberton apparently lost ground as a center of industry at the end of the 1800s, and with the closing of the Lumberton Shoe Company in 1934 the area apparently reverted to its rural agricultural character, a condition which prevailed socially until the mid-1950s, and politically until January of 2001. The post-World War II housing construction boom found its manifestation in Lumberton with the development of the Hollybrook subdivision, which you can see by driving north on Main Street and turning right on Nassau Street, which is just past the post office and just before Flower Junction.

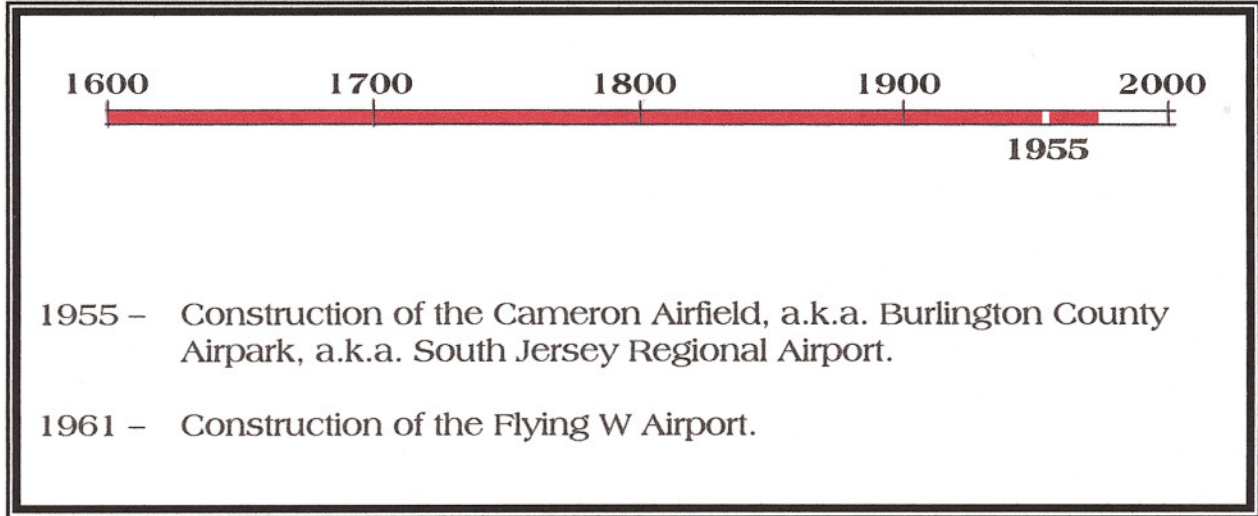
Lumberton's present Mayor, Marge Gest, moved into the second phase of the Hollybrook development in the early 1950s. A third phase of the Hollybrook development followed. In spite of the influx of new citizens, the control of the Township government remained with the agrarian elements of the Township, and the result has been long years of neglect of the infrastructure of the more suburban or urban sections of the Township. One of the things that Mayor Gest



has worked on for long years, while she was a minority of one on the Township Committee, is renewal of the roads in Hollybrook. Now, after so many long years of neglect, work on repaving the roads is expected to begin this fall.

South Jersey Regional Airport, originally known as Cameron Field, and subsequently named Burlington County Airpark, was originally constructed in 1955. It was located on 120 acres and was comprised of two turf landing strips.

The original plan was for an executive flying park with private homes built along the taxiways. It changed hands in 1960, and was upgraded with a pilot's lounge, operations office, restaurant, aircraft storage, offices for student instruction, and a sky diving center. In a short while the runway was paved, and by the early 1980s there were more than 230 based airplanes which had their home their. Its focus, then, became more broadly recreational, serving a larger clientele than was visualized in the original residential executive airpark idea.



During the mid 1980s, ownership of the airfield transferred several times. The facility became neglected, and by 1988 it was all but closed, with only 35 aircraft based there. At this point the present owners purchased the airfield and renamed it South Jersey Regional Airport. They began an aggressive campaign of recovery, attracting back the small recreational aircraft which had deserted the airport, until, by last year, 250 planes were reported to be based there, bring utilization back up to levels comparable to those of the 1980s heyday. At the same time, while accessing large amounts of government grant money, the owners and managers began a vigorous campaign to enlarge the facility and to transform it from a center of recreational flying into a facility serving business-oriented jet traffic. These enlargement plans have not yet been realized.

Although these transformation plans at the South Jersey Regional Airport were facilitated by the Lumberton Township government, the great preponderance of the residents of Lumberton have no desire to live with a jetport in their midst, and the working out of the conflicts involved has been the pre-eminent theme of the Township's political life since the mid-1990s.

As if one airport was not enough for a small community, six years after Cameron Airport was constructed, that is, in 1961, a 150 acre farm straddling the Lumberton/Medford border was purchased and another airfield was constructed on it. This airport was the vision of Eastern Airlines pilot William Whitsell, who had been disabled in a near-fatal road accident. Unable to fly any longer, he poured his love of aviation into his vision for a unique type of combination airport and resort area. He built not only an airstrip, but an entire recreational facility where recreational pilots could bring their families for a weekend of entertainment and relaxation. The idea was apparently very successful, and the airport is said to have attracted to so unlikely a place as Lumberton such visitors as Arthur Godfrey, Robert Cummings, Hugh Downs, Johnny Carson and other celebrities. Like the South Jersey Regional Airport, the Flying W, too, has had its ups and downs. The present owners bought it in 1996 and have undertaken major restoration. There is an airplane-shaped swimming pool, a restaurant, a bar, and a motel. The owners have recently purchased the nearby Golden Pheasant Golf Course. There are plans for an equestrian center, an educational facility for aviation-related subjects, a wedding chapel, and an expanded catering facility.

Coping with its airports will be the first of two major themes which will color Lumberton community life in the early years of the 21st Century. The second major theme will be the issue of urban sprawl. As I mentioned at the outset, it is its proximity to Philadelphia which provides a defining context for much of what has occurred and is occurring in Lumberton. At the beginning of the 21st Century, the defining issue which this proximity raises up is the matter of sprawl – a haphazard and disorderly growing outward from a metropolitan center of traffic arteries, housing developments, businesses, and industries.

The State of New Jersey is already the most densely populated state in the union. Sprawl has overtaken its northeast portion, agglomerating around New York City and Newark, to such a bad effect that the state is a national laughing stock. The same phenomenon is occurring here in the south emanating from Philadelphia and Camden. Having overtaken Cherry Hill first, then Mount Laurel, immediately to our west, sprawl seems poised and ready to engulf Lumberton. Clearly there is a serious danger that the entire State of New Jersey will soon become a kind of wall-to-wall Los Angeles.

Sprawl poses special challenges and will require creative planning. If left unchecked sprawl obliterates the natural features of the landscape, consumes farmland for residential use all out of proportion to population growth, and causes traffic gridlock. Sprawl marginalizes pedestrians in favor of automobiles, diminishing everyday human interaction; it tends to segregate communities by age, income, culture and race; it obliterates a place's history; it diminishes air and water quality; it eliminates meaningful and memorable public and civic spaces; and it spreads unsightly clutter.

Because of New Jersey's idiosyncratic tax structure, in which so many local government services have to be paid for out of real estate tax revenues, sprawl has even more complicated implications here than elsewhere in the nation. Although residential real estate taxes in New Jersey are reputed to be the highest in the country, a municipality like Lumberton must spend approximately \$1.40 for each \$1.00 it collects on residences to provide needed educational services, garbage removal, police protection, and street maintenance. Therefore, every time a new house is built, the municipality sinks into a deficit unless it raises taxes on everyone, or unless it attracts counterbalancing business ratables, where the amount of taxes collected exceeds the cost of the services provided. The scramble for any kind of business ratable is one reason why New Jersey thoroughfares are such an unsightly mess, and one reason why politicians are inclined to look favorably upon the idea of chemical plants, oil refineries, or airports coming to town.

There are defenses against sprawl which a township can employ. But using these defenses involves overcoming the resistance of various people who profit from sprawl, and who often assume activist roles in local government, functioning as foxes in the chicken coop.

One mode of self defense which municipalities can employ is simply to buy land which is still open before real estate developers can get hold of it. Here in New Jersey there are programs through which municipalities can preserve open space by buying land, with the county and the state picking up 75% of the cost. Obviously, care has to be exercised that such land is purchased by the government at fair market value, rather than at an inflated price. Even so, the

“sticker price” is apt to startle tax payers. But the reason that the purchases prove to be wise, in addition to the advantage of keeping the community attractive and open, is that the purchase price is a bargain when compared to the cost to the municipality of providing, year after year, essential services, the cost of which will never be retrieved from the real estate taxes levied. This approach is apt to be resisted by people who automatically oppose government spending, but who for some reason fail to realize that every housing development involves enormous government spending and government deficits. It is also apt to be resisted by local entrepreneurs, who do not see customers coming into their restaurants and shops from the undeveloped open fields.

A second mode of defense is called down zoning. A municipality can decide to allow only two houses per acre rather than four houses per acre in its high density areas, and only one house per five acres or one house per ten acres in its rural areas. This sometimes discourages development altogether. But if housing developers decide to proceed in spite of such low density zoning, the municipality will be left with far fewer houses to support with services for the residences which might be built, and much more open space. Owners of rural real estate obviously hate this solution, since it decreases the value of their land if fewer houses can be built upon it. But it is not really an unfair taking by government, since the transaction between the owners of farms and real estate developers, transactions from which both reap immense profit, occurs at the expense of the community which remains after they leave, expenses which must be borne year after year. Down zoning is a just way of ensuring that there is some proportionality between the burdens borne by the community as whole and profits gained at community expense by a few individuals and corporations.

A third strategy for mitigating sprawl is to allow the “transfer of development rights.” Any history of Lumberton which includes the modern era ought to mention that the Township was a pioneer in the employment of this “transfer of development rights” strategy. In fact, Lumberton Leas exists because of it. I will present you with an oversimplified version of this strategy just so you can comprehend the general idea. Rather than have market pressures result in the building of one house on every two acres throughout its entire rural area, a township might decide that the owner of a parcel of 100 acres, qualified to build 50 houses, might sell his right to build the 50 houses to another owner of 100 acres, so that the second owner could build twice as many houses on his plot. The seller, in return, agrees never to allow his land to be developed, thus keeping it perpetually open.

This is an approach favored by large real estate holders and by developers. Critics of the program note that, while it does preserve some open space if utilized, it does not thin out or decrease in any way the number of houses which ultimately could be built in a township. It simply aggregates them closer together

in some places in order to keep other spaces open. Moreover, Lumberton's experience is that it accelerates development and the resulting tax pressures, since builders like the possibilities offered by smaller lots, whereas they might not have built at all under the prevailing one-house-per-two-acre zoning if it had remained intact without the transfer process.

In truth, some blending of these strategies is probably the best. Lumberton has put all its eggs in the "transfer of development rights" process, and unfortunately it has superimposed the program on a zoning pattern which maximizes density overall. Correcting this is an objective of Lumberton's new administration led by Mayor Marge Gest.

As mentioned, in getting Lumberton Leas established, the transfer of development rights program was utilized. The housing density here in Lumberton Leas is much higher than would ordinarily been allowed in a rural area. This higher density is possible because Medford Leas, when it was functioning as a housing developer, purchased rights from another land owner in town who, in return, agreed to keep his land perpetually open. As a matter of fact, the development rights we utilized are those of the Prickett family. Phillip Prickett is a former mayor of Lumberton who was in office while the transfer of development rights program was being established. The subsequent development of Lumberton Leas was a kind of "coup" for the township, because, since residents here do not send children to school, the disadvantageous ratio between costs to the town of providing services and the taxes collected is mitigated, and perhaps even eliminated or slightly reversed. I am not presently in possession of the figures I would need to analyze this accurately right now, but I will get them eventually.

So, here we are, the latest addition to one of the pre-eminent continuing care retirement communities in the country. The "invention" of Lumberton Leas marks a continuation of the carefully thought out yet innovative approach to providing this service which has characterized the Medford Leas enterprise from the beginning. All of us here are aware of the various aspects of the partial service contracts and the memberships, so I do not need to review that. We all love our beautiful environment, our spacious homes, our excellent community center, and our access to the myriad and diverse facilities of the main campus in Medford. We can observe that in their own way, the Estaugh Board and Tak Moriuchi, who chaired it for so long, and Lois Forrest, Mike Peasley, and their staff colleagues, have continued the pioneering spirit of the Quaker Dimsdales and Eayers who first came to Lumberton, and we are the beneficiaries of their creativity, effort, and vision.

Who would have thought that the exploration of the supposedly uneventful history of a small village would disclose such a rich panorama? Here in microcosm is the story of humankind's relationship with the earth, as the Native

Americans' gentle touch is replaced by pioneers who, with diligence and modesty, nevertheless more assertively turned the land to their own uses, and as now in our own time the obliterating prospect of sprawl looms on the horizon. When we consider the encounter between the Quakers and the Native Americans we see that tragedy can grow out of political and social life even as we seek, in our human limitations, to be responsive to the will of God. We see the tensions between agriculturalists and townspeople. We see the blessings of an ordered, democratic, civil community which allows the fair working out of our interdependence and which provides procedures for resolving peacefully and equitably the conflicts which human life inevitably raises up.

We see that meeting our essential needs for food, water, clothing and shelter, and also the formation of our spirits and personalities, depends upon the complex human relationships we know as community. In contemplating Lumberton's past we learn that true and authentic history is not only those things which are discussed by scores of historians, not only those things watched by millions of consumers of the mass media. True history also involves the intimately scaled places of our existence, the small villages where we seem to more readily understand that as members of the human family we are part of an organic whole. In our smaller communities we see our interdependence, and we appreciate more readily that this interdependence is an image or sign of the mutuality inherent in the Creation itself. We understand that in the helpfulness, patience, and gratitude we practice among our friends and neighbors, and in our conscientious attention to our civic duties, we are participating in the creative, sustaining and ordering work of God. We are helping to build the holy mountain of which the prophet Isaiah speaks -- the holy mountain where nothing will be hurt nor destroyed, where the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and where the earth will be as full of the Lord as the waters which fill the sea.

Daniel A. Seeger
September 27, 2001
Great Room, Community Center
Lumberton Leas
Lumberton, New Jersey