

THE CLARK FAMILY

By Mrs. John D. McMullin

Read October 5, 1935, at the Dedication Ceremony of the
Markers placed by General Lafayette Chapter, DAR
on the graves of the Revolutionary soldiers buried in the
Clark Burying Ground at the site of Clark's Mill Meeting House
At Clark's Mill, Port Republic, N.J.

When our country was young and little known, the spirit of adventure gripped one Thomas Clark of Herfordshire, England, and he sailed away in 1664 to found a new home in Connecticut.

For two centuries the Clark family lived and prospered in Saybrook, Connecticut, then Thomas 2nd, with his wife Hannah, and four sons came to New Jersey, and settled on ground to be known as Clark's Landing. There he established a mill, and for the use of his family and neighbors, he built a log meeting house, in which he preached ministers sent down by the Philadelphia Presbytery.

The four sons of Thomas 2nd and Hannah were Thomas 3rd, David, Samuel, and Elijah. Of their young life little is known, save that they were raised in a deeply religious atmosphere, and in some way prepared for college. Elijah went to Yale, and I have been told that his brothers went there too. Samuel was a Presbyterian minister, so he must have attended some college.

From a note in the biography of John Breiners, taken from Mickle's History of Gloucester Co., N.J., we read: "During the war, Elijah Clark and Richard Westcott, Esquires, built at their own expense, a small fort at the Fox Burrows on Chestnut Neck, near the port of Little Egg Harbor, and bought a number of cannon for the defense of said fort. While the Revolutionary Legislature was in session at Haddonfield, in 1777, the two branches passed a resolution for paying Clark and Westcott 430 pounds, 1 shilling and three pence for this fort, which we are told, was at one time defended by 1500 of the Shore Men."

In a letter written by Mrs. E.M. Sims, granddaughter of Col. Elijah Clark, she wrote: "My grandparents on this side of the house were very godly people. Elijah Clark, I have been told, was a man of mind, taste and cultivation. He possessed a fine library and was an extensive reader. He owned many slaves whom he instructed and cared for as his children. He was quite a wealthy man." We know that he eventually went to live in Philadelphia, where he engaged in the shipping business. He died in 1795, and was buried in the Presbyterian burying ground in Woodbury.

Thomas Clark 2nd, some time after the death of his wife Hannah, sent his son Thomas 3rd, to Connecticut to ask an old sweetheart, Ruth, if she would reconsider and marry him. At the same time he took the precaution to saddle and bridle an extra horse, and sent it along! Well, Ruth came back on the horse! While young Thomas was in Saybrook, he met and fell in love with the "beautiful and brilliant Sarah Parker." Later he went back and married her. The Guinea gold beads and ear drops, which he gave for her bridal gift, and bought in New York on their way home, are now in the Pennsylvania Historical Society. To them were born three sons: Adrial, Reuben and Parker. A granddaughter of Parker, Sarah Nathalie Doughty, in 1895 organized this General Lafayette Chapter, DAR, remaining its Regent until her death in 1918.

Thomas Clark 3rd built the Clark Mills, a few miles from his father's plantation, now a part of Port Republic. Here also he built, in about 1762, the Clark Mills Meeting House, where John Brainerd preached. This small house of worship was a shingled structure, about 25 by 30 feet. In this was organized a Presbyterian Church, and Robert Doughty and Thomas Clark were the ruling elders.

From the journal of the Rev. Philip V. Pithien is taken this note: Wed. 9th – According to appointment, I preached in Mr. Clark's little log Meeting House, present about 40. I understand the people in this wild and thinly settled country are extremely nice and difficult to be suited in preaching. One would think that not any but a clamorous

person, who had assurance enough to make a rumpus and bluster in the pulpit, would have admirers here. It is however, otherwise. They must have, before they are entertained, good speaking, good sense, sound divinity, and neatness and cleanliness in the person and dress of the preacher. This I found from the remarks which several of them freely made upon gentlemen who had formerly preached here.

Of Thomas 2nd's son David, whose wife was Elizabeth Betts, we know little, save that he remained on the homestead at Clark's Landing, and was a Revolutionary Soldier, - as were three of his sons - Thomas, Benjamin and Joseph. Later the pioneering spirit took Joseph and Benjamin to Ohio, where they remained and died.

Thomas 3rd's son Adrial's line gave a United States Congressman, the Honorable Champ Clark, later to become Speaker of the House of Representatives, and his son Bennet Clark is one of the present Senators from Missouri.

Today General Lafayette Chapter, DAR is here to appropriately mark the graves and honor the memory of three of the Clarks who served as soldiers in the Revolutionary War – Thomas, Adrial and Parker. We feel that both David and Reuben must be buried here and should receive their share of honor, but we have no proof. However, Hall's History of Atlantic County says that there are five of this family buried in the family burying ground, who were Revolutionary Soldiers, and the five must be Thomas, Reuben, Adrial, Parker and David.

(Signed) Charlotte S.G. McMullin
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Chapter Chairman for the Preservation of
Historic Spots Committee.

[Provided by courtesy of Patty Luthy <pattyluthy@yahoo.com>, Nov. 2003].