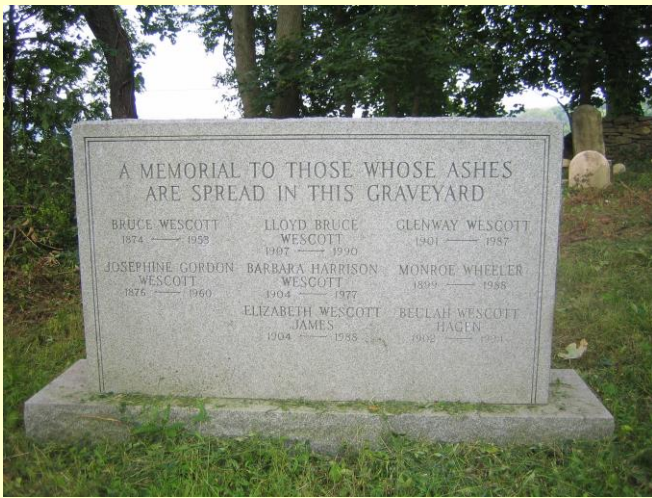


THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

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Westcott Family & the Reading Burial Ground



Deborah “Debo” Wescott Woodbridge died on December 23, 2008. She was the daughter of Lloyd and Barbara Wescott Hunterdon County philanthropists. Her ashes will be spread this Spring in the RBG along with those of her family including her mother and father, her grandparents and several aunts and uncles including her uncle Glenway, writer and important 20th century literary figure. The photo above is of the stone marker erected in 1989 and lists the names of the family members memorialized.

The Westcott’s were important figures in the History of Hunterdon County, albeit recent. Lloyd Wescott was a prime force behind the creation of the Hunterdon County Medical Center. He donated land in the Rosemont area for a game preserve which became the first Public County Park.

The MTAP has the honor of stewardship over the cemetery which holds the graves of early Hunterdon residents from the Reading, Opdycke, and Johnson families. The fusion of the history represented by these graves with recent Wescott history strengthens the memory of both.

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Meet the Ryersons

By William Luken

Part 3 of 3: Maritje Ryerson’s Family

Anneken Schouten married Theunis Dircksen Dey in 1685 and they had three children, Jannetje (Jane), Dirck (Richard), and Sarah, before Theunis died in 1688. In 1740, Dirck erected a mansion in present-day Wayne, New Jersey. This house served as George Washington’s headquarters during July, October, and November of 1780. Today, the Dey House is open to the public and is a prominent historic site in Wayne, New Jersey.

After Theunis’ death in 1688, Anneken married Joris Reyersen in 1691. Joris and Anneken had eleven children from 1692 to 1708, all born in New York City. These children included:

1. Johanna, born June 2, 1692; died before 1744;
2. Martin (first), baptized Sept. 17, 1693; died young;
3. Johannis, baptized Aug. 8, 1694; died in 1782;
4. Maritje (first), baptized Aug. 29, 1696; died young;
5. Martin (second), baptized Oct. 9, 1698; died in 1767;
6. Maritje (second), baptized July 19, 1699; died April 11, 1774;
7. Helena, baptized Feb. 2, 1701; died young;
8. Joris (George), Jr., baptized Jan 15, 1703; died April 23, 1792;
9. Lucas, baptized April 9, 1704; died in 1764;
10. Blandina, baptized May 8, 1706; died after 1747 (?);
11. Elizabeth, born circa 1708 (?).

As an adult, Joris (Jr.) always signed his name “Yoris” (1). This should give us a clue as to how “Joris” was really pronounced.

In June 1695, Joris purchased about 1200 acres of land in the Pompton Valley of New Jersey.

At that time, this land was mostly wilderness. Joris spent the next 13 years preparing the land for a new home for his family. In 1708, Joris, Anneken, and their eleven remaining children moved from New York to the Pompton Valley.

After moving to New Jersey, Joris was often engaged in surveying unoccupied land in New Jersey. During several of these surveying expeditions, Joris was accompanied by John Reading, a surveyor from Hunterdon County. John Reading reports that he spent the night at the home of G. Ryason in 1715 (2).

Maritje (Mary) married John Reading in November 1720. John took Maritje back to his home in Hunterdon County where they had eleven children. They lived in a house on the west side of the South Branch of the Raritan River. This house was known as "Walnut Grove". In 1760, they moved to a new home known as "the brick house" (3).

The children of John Reading and Maritje Ryerson included a daughter Ann, named for Maritje's mother, Anneken Schouten; a son George, named for her father, Joris Ryerson; and a daughter Mary. In addition, two of Maritje's brothers, Martin and Lucas, had strong connections to the Reading family.

Martin, like his father, was a surveyor. As a youth, he may have accompanied his father on surveying assignments. This would have helped him learn this profession. By 1715, he would have become familiar with John Reading, another surveyor.

After John Reading married his sister Maritje, Martin followed them from the Pompton Valley down to Hunterdon County. Martin joined the Dutch Reformed Church in Readington with a confession of faith in 1726 (4). Martin married Catherine Coxe around 1735. She is said to be a descendent of the Plantagenet family of English royalty (1).

Martin built a house on the east side of the South Branch of the Raritan River in Hunterdon County, possibly in 1738 (5). This house is still standing and is now known as the Brokaw House. It is located about 2 miles downstream from John Reading's "Walnut Grove" home, and only about 1/2 mile from the 1760 brick house.

In 1743, Martin was appointed to assist in the surveying of the boundary between East and West New Jersey. In this capacity, he was able to acquire large tracts of land in West New Jersey. One of these tracts in Sussex County includes the first mine located in that area (4).

In 1760, Martin formed a partnership with three of his nephews, George, Daniel, and Thomas Reading, sons of his sister Maritje. The purpose of the partnership was to establish a forge at Squire's Point near Martin's mine. The resulting business was a financial disaster and led to considerable difficulties for all four partners (4).

In May 1765, the partners offered all the assets of the business for sale in the Pennsylvania Gazette, without success. In March 1766, George Reading offered his share for sale in the New York Gazette, again without success. The situation became progressively worse over the next few years. Daniel Reading died in 1768 from an accidental gun-shot wound. In 1770, Thomas Reading announced that his property had been sold at a great loss in order to pay debts. Martin Ryerson was eventually forced to sell all of his property, including over 3000 acres of land and the house across the river from John Reading's home.

Martin and Catherine had nine children including a son John Ryerson who was surely named after John Reading, and another son Thomas Ryerson who was probably named after his cousin Thomas Reading. Thomas Ryerson, like Thomas Reading, fought for independence in the American Revolution. Thomas Ryerson was captured during the Battle of Fort Washington and was imprisoned on a British prison ship in Wallabout Bay.

According to family tradition, Lucas Ryerson grew to be a man of giant stature and great strength. He was well-known and well-liked in his community, he developed a penchant for acquiring land, and he became a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He married three times (1).

Lucas Ryerson's first wife was Elizabeth Howell who he married in 1736. Elizabeth was the daughter of Daniel Howell and Mary Reading, sister of John Reading. So, Elizabeth was a granddaughter of Col. John Reading, and a niece to John Reading.

Lucas and Elizabeth had five children, Mary (b. 1737), Luke (b. 1739), George Luke (b. 1742), Ann (b. abt 1743), and Elizabeth (b. 1745). George Luke Ryerson lived to an age of almost 100 years. Daughter Elizabeth seems to have "died young" (infancy?), and wife Elizabeth also died around that time, a situation all too common in those days. At that time, Lucas and his family were living in Hunterdon County, near the home of John Reading.

Soon after the death of his first wife in 1745, Lucas married Susannah Van der Linden in Hackensack, New Jersey. This marriage was tragically short. In 1747, Susannah gave birth to a daughter, Geesjen Ryerson. Geesjen died as an infant, and Susannah died soon after.

Lucas married for the third time in 1750. His third wife was Johanna Van der Hoff. They had six children born from 1752 to 1761. By that time, Lucas had moved back to Pequannock and all six of these children were born there.

The first child born to Lucas and Johanna was named Samuel. This child was a cousin to Samuel Reading who had died at age seven in 1749. Samuel Ryerson was the first male child born within the extended Reading-Ryerson family following the death of Samuel Reading, so there can be no doubt that Samuel Ryerson was named for his late cousin Samuel Reading.

The second child born to Lucas and Johanna was a son John Ryerson who was born around 1756 and who probably named for (Gov.) John Reading. Judge Joseph Reading also had a son named John who was born in 1756.

Three daughters, Hitje, Elizabeth, and Sarah, were born to Lucas and Johanna between 1757 and 1760. Their last child, Joseph Ryerson, was born on Feb. 28, 1761. This child was obviously named after Judge Joseph Reading. Judge Joseph Reading also had a son named Joseph. Joseph, Jr. was born on Jan. 28, 1760, little more than one year before the birth of Joseph Ryerson. Judge Joseph Reading reciprocated in 1771 when he named his fourth son Samuel Ryerson Reading.

Lucas's son Samuel married twice. He married his first wife in 1773 and they had four children between 1774 and 1782.

At the time of the American Revolution, Samuel Ryerse, like his older cousin Richard Reading, remained loyal to King George. In 1776, Samuel found it necessary to take refuge in New York City along with his wife and two small children.

Before the American Revolution, Samuel signed his name sometimes as Ryerse and sometimes as Ryerson. After the war, he used only the name Ryerse.

In September 1783, Samuel Ryerse removed to New Brunswick, Canada with other exiled Loyalists. By that time, his wife and two of his children had died. Soon after arriving in New Brunswick, he met and married widow Sarah Underhill Davenport from Westchester County, New York. They eventually settled in Port Ryerse on the north shore of Lake Ontario.

Samuel and Sarah had nine children including daughter Amelia. It is possible that Amelia was named for Amy Pierson, wife of Judge Joseph Reading. Amelia married surveyor Captain John Harris and they settled in present-day London, Ontario. Their home is now an important historic landmark in London, Ontario and it is maintained as a museum by the government of Ontario. See <http://www.londonmuseum.on.ca/EldonHouse/eldon.html>, or ask Google to search on "amelia-harris london ontario".

The Ryerse/Ryerson family records (1) list over 3500 descendents of Samuel Ryerse.

Although he was only 15 years old in 1776, Samuel's brother Joseph also chose the Loyalist side in the American Revolution. He too relocated to New Brunswick in 1783, and eventually followed his brother to the north shore of Lake Ontario. Unlike his brother, Joseph retained the spelling of Ryerson for his surname.

Several of Joseph Ryerson's children became very distinguished citizens of Canada. One of these was the Rev. Dr. Adolphus Egerton Ryerson, D.D, LL.D, born March 24, 1803, and died Feb. 19, 1882. Dr. Ryerson is considered to be the founder of the public school system for all of Canada. He is also the founder of a school known today as Ryerson University in Toronto.

The Ryerse/Ryerson family records (1) list over 1800 descendents of Joseph Ryerson.

References:

(1) Phyllis A. Ryerse and Thomas A. Ryerson, *The Ryerse-Ryerson Family, 1574-1994*, Second Avenue Printing, Ltd., Simcoe, Ontario, Canada, 1994.

(2) *Journal of John Reading*, (April 1715 to July 1719), published in the Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, Vol. X (1915).

(3) Hiram Deats, letter to Eleanor Templeman, Dec. 12, 1942.

(4) Phyllis A. Ryerse, *The Other Martin Ryerson & Squire's Point Forge*, The North Jersey Highlander, Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 1975, pages 3-16.

Lecture on Gov. Reading to HCHS

By David Reading



Executive director David Reading (L) presents a lecture of Gov. John Reading to the Hunterdon County Historical Society on Sunday, March 29th, 2009. Allan Reading (R) provides the support. Approximately 50 people heard the one hour and forty minute talk. There was a lot interest judging by the follow-up questions. A PDF copy of the lecture is available on the web site.

Announcements

Board of Directors

New board members Richard Reading and Jen Ellsworth were elected at the board meeting on January 14, 2009.

Web site Members Access

The MTAP web site has been changed to include a member's only page. Content includes current newsletters. To access simply click on the members page and enter user: Member, password: MTAP2008.

Fall meeting

We have a tentative date for the 2009 Fall meeting of 17 Oct 2009. The Location and details to be announced. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

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Membership dues

If you are not a life time member dues of \$10 for 2009 are expected.

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