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Benjamin A. Ayers--his ancestry and
descendants.

by

Mrs. Rebecca Graham (Ayers) Andrews.



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BENJAMIN A. AYARS

HIS

ANCESTRY AND DESCENDANTS

COMPILED

BY

BESSIE AYARS ANDREWS

VINELAND NEW JERSEY

1912

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P R E F A C E .

“The glory of children is their Fathers.”

My sister, Elizabeth A. Ayars gathered a record of the Ayars family; descendants of Robert Ayars the first settler of that name in South Jersey. From her manuscript, I have traced the line of Benjamin A. Ayars, our father, and have added a biographical sketch. I trust the information contained in the following pages may be of service to those who are interested in this particular branch of the family.

Rebecca Graham Ayars.

[Mrs. Bessie Ayars Andrews.]

Vineland, N. J. May 1, 1912.

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The Ayars family is very old. It is said in England complete records exist going back to 1060 the time of William the Conqueror.

The name has many synonyms: Ayars, Ayers, Ayer, Ayre, Eyre. Ayr.

The legend concerning its origin dates back to the eleventh century and is found in Thorp's "Catalogue of the Deeds of Battle Abbey."

"Legend: The first of this family was named Truelove who was one of the followers of William the Conqueror at the battle of Hastings in 1066. The Duke was flung from his horse and his helmet beaten into his face, which Truelove observing, pulled off and horsed him again. Duke William said to him, "Thou shalt hereafter instead of Truelove be called Eyre or Ayr; because thou hast given me the air I breathe."

After the battle the Duke found him severely wounded, his leg and thigh having been struck off. He gave him lands in Derby, a coat of arms—the leg and thigh in armor cut off—and an honorary badge yet worn by all the Eyres in England. Arms: Argent, on a chevron sable, three quarters foils or crest: An armored leg couped at thigh erect per pole. Motto: *Lacte aere florent.*

Robert Ayars emigrated from England in 1664, first settling in Rhode Island, where he married Hester Bowen, remaining there about twenty years.

In 1684'5 he left Hopkinton, where he had located in Rhode Island, and removed with his family to Back Neck, Cumberland County, New Jersey, on Cohansey River in what was then known as Shrewsbury Neck, just across the river from Greenwich.

He purchased 200 acres from the daughters of John Gilman and 600 acres of Restore Lippincott, from a tract of one thousand acres purchased of John Fenwick. This section south of the Cohansey river was surveyed as early as 1678 by Fenwick's deputy surveyor, Richard Hancock, who laid off 500 acres for William Worth, the first white person to settle on that side of the river; he was however soon followed by others.

November 21, 1795, Robert Ayars purchased 2200 acres of land covering the present site of the village of Shiloh, of Dr. James Wass, a London physician who bought 5,000 acres July 12, 1675 of John Fenwick before he sailed for America. This tract was located and surveyed in 1694 by John Worledge a deputy surveyor. It was resurveyed October 15-18, 1705 by Jacob Barkstead and 2200 acres conveyed to Robert Ayars, late of Rhode Island, gentleman.

"The first Virginia councils were composed almost entirely of men of title. The spirit of adventure which had brought Hawkins, Drake, the Gilberts and others such honors and renown

drew the young gallants fresh from their father's estates or from the wars in the low countries, and the term 'Gentleman,' as showing one of the arms bearing class is constantly found in the list of immigrants."

After a residence of upwards of twenty years on his estate at Shrewsbury Neck, Robert Ayars took possession of his new purchase. He was one of the early Baptist settlers and is thought to have been a Seventh Day Baptist, as most of his descendants adhered to that branch of the Baptist denomination which keep the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. He sold off his tract to those of the same faith, who naturally settled in the neighborhood, the better to carry out their belief.

The place was called Cohansey Corners, but a short time after the establishment of the Church of the Sabbatarian order in 1737, the name was changed to Shiloh, after the Biblical Shiloh, in the land of Canaan that was consecrated to the worship of God.

In a deed to his grandson Caleb Ayars, jr , the name was written *Ayers*, by the person who wrote the deed, but when Robert signed his name he wrote it *Ayars*, and his descendants have generally followed his way of spelling

Robert Ayars' will is dated February 25, 1716-17. He probably lived for sometime after that as the will was not proved until May 1, 1719. His wife and Henry Buck were named as executors. The inventory of his personal estate, made by Dickason Shepherd, amounted to £167 6.7, including books valued at £1 6.

Robert Ayars' family consisted of nine children, as follows:

- | | | |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| 1. Isaac | 2. Stephen | 3. Judah |
| 4. John | 5. Robert | 6. Caleb |
| 7. Joshua | 8. Hester | 9. Ann |

Isaac, eldest son of Robert (1), married Hannah Barrett, and has many descendants in West Jersey one of whom, James Hunt, participated in the "Tea-Burning" at Greenwich in 1774.

Stephen, the second son of Robert (1) died in 1726. His will is dated February 27, 1725-6, and Joseph Reeve, William Garton and Samuel Johnson were witnesses. An inventory of his personal estate was made by the two first named, April 12, amounting to £45 12: the will was proved the next day. His brother John was the executor.

Judah, third son of Robert (1), is said to have returned to Rhode Island.

John, fourth son of Robert (1), married Cecilia Colwell. He was constable in 1729, his death occurred in 1741.

Robert, fifth son of Robert (1) married Sarah Burgin. She was a descendant of John Burgin, first settler of that name, who in 1651, married Mary Winthrop of Dudley, Mass. and came from that province to New Jersey. The Burgin family was of considerable importance in England, Burgin Castle being situated in the county of Norfolk, a few miles from the town of Great Yarmouth.

On the Burgin coat of arms is seen a sword and key crossed, with the motto, "*Sud Spe.*"

Robert died in the year 1735.

Caleb, sixth son of Robert (1), married Rebecca Berryman, he died January 24, 1760, aged 67.

Rebecca died September 19, 1774, aged 75.

Joshua, seventh son of Robert (1), born in 1695, married Kezia Brooks, daughter of Rev. Timothy Brooks. His second wife was Anna Swinney. Joshua died May 5, 1759.

Hester, eighth child of Robert (1), married John Jarman.

Ann, ninth child of Robert (1), remained single.

The children of Robert (2), and Sarah Burgin Ayars, fifth son of Robert (1), and Hester Ayars, are as follows:

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. James | 2. Burgin | 3. Robert |
| 4. Temperance | 5. Sarah | 6. Ann |

James, first son of Robert (2), married Hannah Ayars, he died in 1796.

Burgin, second son of Robert (2), was born in 1726, he married Susanna Gilman.

Robert, third son of Robert (2), no record.

Temperance, fourth child of Robert (2), married Henry Paulding.

Sarah, fifth child of Robert (2), married Joseph Paulding.

Ann, sixth child of Robert (2), no record.

Burgin, second son of Robert (2), of whom Benjamin Ayars was a descendant, was born in Shiloh, New Jersey, in 1720. He settled in Upper Pittsgrove, Salem County about 1750-60. He married Susanna Gilman May 28, 1754.

Bishop Asbury in his writings informs us of preaching at Murphy Meeting House now Friendship. He says, "after service we came to the

widow Ayars, the mother and daughter are serious and the son thoughtful." Mrs. Susanna Ayars, of whom Asbury here speaks was one of the first Methodists in Pittsgrove. She first received the Lord's prophets in that place. She died in peace in 1807.

The children of Burgin and Susanna Ayars are as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------|
| 1 Temperance | 2 Robert | 3 Sarah |
| 4 Elizabeth | 5 John G. | 6 Burgin |
| 7 Ann | | |

Temperance, first child of Burgin (3), remained single.

Robert, first son of Burgin (3), was born in 1750, married Elizabeth Morgan, he died in 1828

Sarah, third child of Burgin (3), was born March 2, 1755, married Joast Newkirk, she died November 14, 1831.

Elizabeth, fourth child of Burgin (3), married Stephen Garrison.

John G., second son of Burgin (3), was born about 1764, married Mary Sparks, who was born November 14, 1768, died December 1, 1821. He died September 29, 1838, aged 74.

Burgin, third son of Burgin (3), married Hannah Early.

Ann, seventh child of Burgin(3), married Rev. Jephtha Abbott.

The children of Robert and Elizabeth Morgan are as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 Elizabeth | 2 James | 3 Susanna |
| 4 Sarah | 5 Burgin M. | 6 John |
| 7 Temperance | 8 Samuel | 9 Rebecca |
| 10 Mary | 11 Robert | |

Elizabeth, first child of Robert (4), was born in 1783 and died in the year 1803.

James, son of Robert (4), was born June 12, 1785, married Deborah Abbott, who was born January 18, 1785; died December 6, 1843. He married for his second wife, Elizabeth Riggins, and died April 29, 1862.

Susanna, third child of Robert (4), died young.

Sarah, fourth child of Robert (4), was born in 1787, married James Tebble.

Burgin M, second son of Robert (4). born in 1789, died unmarried January 20, 1862.

John, third son of Robert (4), born in 1791, died young.

Temperance, seventh child of Robert (4), was born in 1792, married George Anderson. She died in March 1875.

Samuel, fourth son of Robert (4), was born in 1794, married Catherine Dendlebeck, who was born in 1808, and died September 16, 1891. Samuel died February 3, 1864.

Rebecca, ninth child of Robert (4), was born August 12, 1796, married Simon Wilsey.

Mary, tenth child of Robert (4), was born in 1800, married Charles Cassady.

Robert, fifth son of Robert (4), born in 1802, died young.

James Ayars, first son of Robert (4), was the writer's grandfather, who remembers him as a genial, jolly old man, loving his grandchildren as they visited him at the Ayars homestead and farm in Upper Pittsgrove, about one mile from old Pine Tavern. A short distance back of the house was a charming strip of woodland where

were pine trees that grew cones in clusters which were preserved as curiosities. Along the mossy roadside the wintergreen berries grew in such abundance that the pockets of each grandchild visiting this ideal woodland were filled to their greatest capacity on returning to the homestead.

After the death of his wife in 1843, he remained on his farm until 1846, when he sold his personal effects, rented his farm and made his home for a few years with his eldest son, Benjamin Abbott Ayars, in Greenwich. During this period he made a visit to his sons in Kansas; returning from the West the attractions of the old homestead drew him thither again. He engaged a competent housekeeper, Miss Elizabeth Riggins, whom he afterwards married, and spent the remaining years of his life on the farm.

The writer at the age of 13 attended his funeral at his home in Upper Pittsgrove. An old hair covered trunk used by him on his western journey came into her possession; among the old papers it contains is the advertisement of his vendue in 1846, as follows:

VENDUE.

Will be sold at public sale, on Monday, the 23d March inst. At the residence of the subscriber in Pittsgrove, Salem county, near the Red Lion School House and Pine Tavern, the following personal property, viz: 2 good work horses, cattle, sheep, and swine; 1 heavy two horse wagon, 1 light do. and harness, plows, harrows, rakes, forks, hoes; hay by the ton, corn, rye and potatoes by the bushel; pine and poplar boards, pine logs from 1 to 3 feet through, coal,

wood Pump logs, &c.: 3 barrels of cider; beehives. Household Goods.—such as stove, cupboard, bureau, chairs, carpet, shovels and tongs, dishes, andirons, &c. &c.

Sale to commence at 1 o'clock, P. M. Attendance and conditions at sale by

JAMES AYARS.

March 10. 1846.

A. S. Barber Printer, Woodbury, N. J.

The children of James and Deborah Ayars are as follows:

1 Benjamin A. 2 Robert 3 Jephthah
4 James 5 Elizabeth

Benjamin Abbott, first son of James (5), was born in Upper Pittsgrove N. J. January 12, 1809. He married in 1835, Mary Barber Sheppard of Roadstown N. J. She was born May 14, 1815, her death occurred at Greenwich N. J. January 27, 1885. Benjamin A. died March 5, 1870.

Robert, second son of James (5), was born June 28, 1810, married Lydia A. Wood, who died in 1858. He married for his second wife Elizabeth P. Stathem. Robert Ayars died November 23, 1886.

Jephthah, third son of James (5), was born July 9, 1813; married Margaret Thomas, who was born August 9, 1821. Jephthah died May 8, 1892.

James, fourth son of James (5), was born on the 17th of April 1815, married first Jane ——— second Hannah ——— and died July 24, 1894.

Elizabeth fifth child of James (5), was born March 11, 1820, she married David M. James, M. D., settling in Laceyville, Pennsylvania. She died March 31, 1895

Benjamin Abbott Ayars, eldest son of James (5), was the writers father, his mother named him after her great uncle, Rev. Benjamin Abbott one of the founders of Methodism in West Jersey; whose grave in Salem is yearly visited by many of his admirers.

Benjamin and his brother Robert were apprenticed to a Mr. Cole of Harrisonville, to learn trades. They served their apprenticeship with credit; then commenced business for themselves.

Benjamin married in 1835 and settled in the village of Shiloh, the home of his early ancestry, remaining there about two years, then removing to Greenwich where his brother Robert had preceded him. There the brothers entered into partnership and carried on an extensive business.

Benjamin was of an inventive turn of mind, his latest invention being an improved thresher and cleaner. A clipping from a Bridgeton newspaper gives the following account:

FARMING IMPLEMENTS.

“We have frequently referred to the importance of more extended manufacturing in this part of the state, and are pleased to learn that Mr. Benjamin Ayars of Greenwich, has been increasing the manufacture of Threshers and Cleaners—another patent which he has just obtained, making his the best machine in the market; they are rapidly taking the place of others, and all is wanted is a more extended knowledge of them when instead of this part of the state being supplied as heretofore by those from a distance to a great extent, Ayars’ make will not only supply

the home demand but will take extensively wherever known. One of these machines owned by Jonathan Bee of Mannington, Salem County, has threshed and cleaned over 75 thousand bushels of wheat and is now in good running order. Mr. Ayars has a good stock on hand, the price varying from \$190. to \$260, according to style for horse or steam power."

The children of Benjamin A. and Mary B. Ayars are as follows:

- 1 Elizabeth A.
- 2 Mary S.
- 3 Benjamin H.
- 4 Rebecca G.

Elizabeth Ann, first child of Benjamin (6), was born in Shiloh, September 24, 1836; died September 7, 1900.

Mary Sheppard, second child of Benjamin (6), was born in Greenwich, February 23, 1840; died April 7, 1904.

Benjamin Homer, first son of Benjamin (6). was born in Greenwich, June 20, 1846.

Rebecca Graham, fourth child of Benjamin(6), was born in Greenwich, February 28, 1849; married Frank D. Andrews of Vineland, N.J., April 10, 1890.

By adoption, James, son of Thomas and Mary Sheppard, born June 15, 1852, married Mary E. Kirby.

The children of Benjamin A. Ayars ever remember and cherish their father's memory. He was the simple gentleman, with a good kind heart. "Of that best portion of a good man's life, are his little nameless acts of kindness and of love." He taught his children love, and in all of their business dealings to be just and gener

ous, thinking not only of themselves, but the benefit others were receiving also, and, in reviewing his Day-Book and Ledger after his death, the many forgiven debts proved he lived his teachings. Mr. Ayars represented his district in the legislature in 1849 and 1850, postively declining a re-election in 1851. He was freeholder of the township at the time of his death, having filled the position for ten years, he was also assessor for fifteen years.

Mr. Ayars was one of the constituent members of the Greenwich Baptist Church, laboring for the advancement of every righteous cause.

He was an abolitionist, a benefactor to the old slaves that frequented his shops, and the last time he left his home, the week of his death, was on an errand of charity to relieve a destitute colored family. He died after a sickness of short duration March 5, 1870, having been injured a few months previously through an accident.

His funeral was attended by a large number of people; a friend whose house the procession passed counted two-hundred carriages in line.

A few obituary notices from the papers of the day are here inserted:

DECEASED— Mr. Benjamin Ayars, of Greenwich, died at his residence, March 5th. He was a member and deacon of the Greenwich Baptist Church. He was greatly beloved by all who knew him. His funeral was attended by a large concourse of people. The sermon was preached by Rev. Andrew J. Hay, pastor of the Church, from Rev. xiv, 13—“And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the

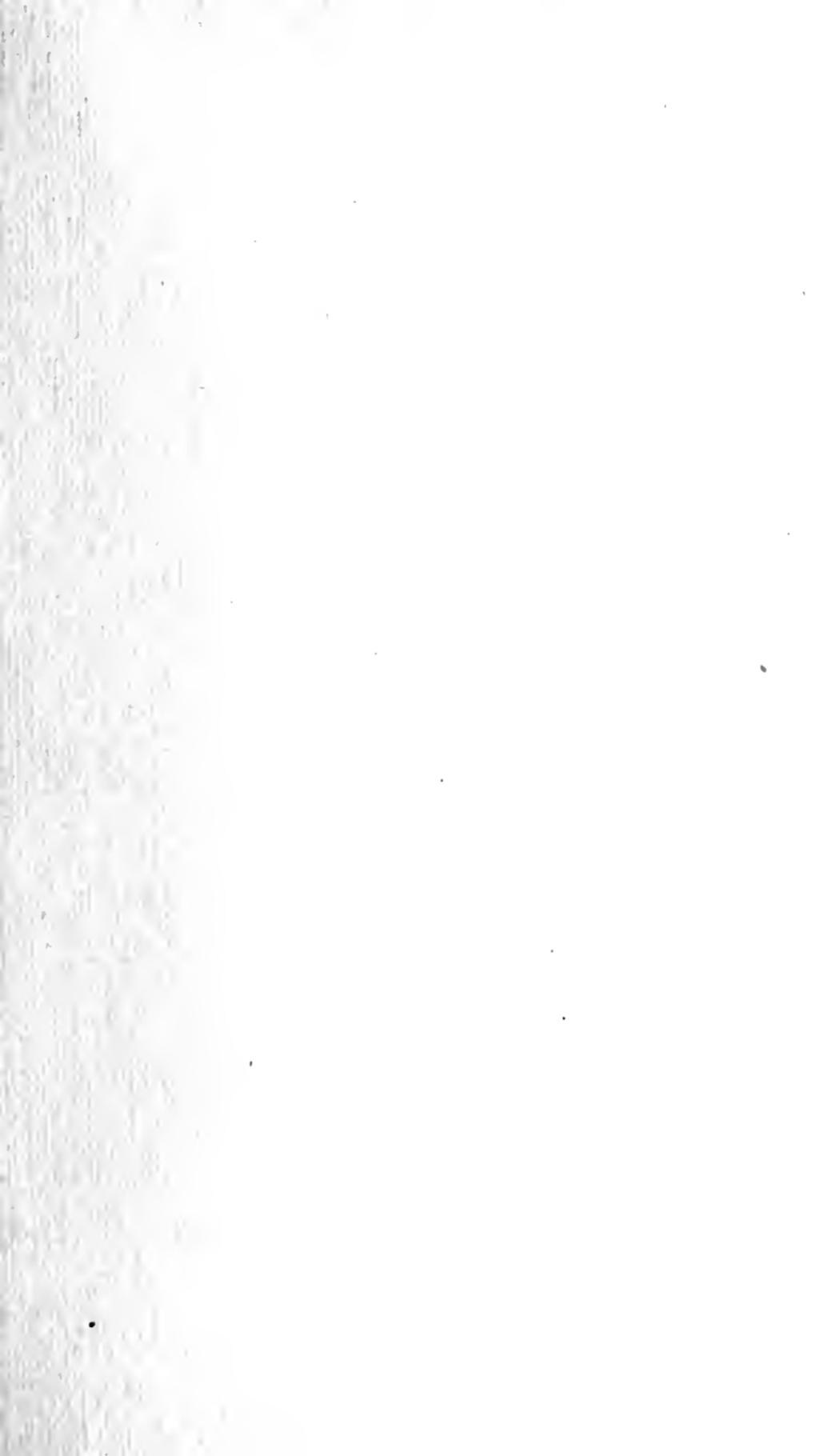
dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Revs. Dr. Murphy, of Salem, Wilder, of Bridgeton, and Maul, of Woodbury, participated in the services. Mr. Ayars is greatly missed by his family and the community. A faithful christian has left the Church, but the members console themselves with the thought that their loss is his gain.

BENJAMIN AYARS.

"The deceased was well known throughout this section of country, having at one time represented his district in the Legislature. He was a deacon of the Baptist Church at Greenwich for many years, and all who were acquainted with him speak of his many good qualities of head and heart. The funeral was attended by a large concourse of relatives and friends, among whom were his former pastors, Revs. Murphy, Maul and Hay. Rev. Wilder also took part in the solemn ceremonies.

"The Greenwich Baptist Church speaking of the loss of one of their efficient deacons Brother Benjamin Ayars says: He was baptised in 1837, became their deacon in 1857. He was for a number of years a Trustee of the Association. As a husband and father, he was affectionate and kind, as a citizen respected and beloved, as a christian prudent and liberal, earnest and devoted and always at his post. As an officer of the Church self-sacrificing and laborious. He was a good man full of faith and the Holy Spirit."





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