

THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

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Meet the Ryersons

by William Luken

Part 1 of 3: John Reading and Mary Ryerson

On November 20, 1720, John Reading, son of the late (Col.) John Reading, married Maritje Ryerson, daughter of Joris Reijersen. At that time, John was 34 years old and Maritje was 21. Neither Leach (1) nor the Ryerson Family records (2) indicate where this wedding took place, but is probably safe to surmise that the ceremony took place in the Dutch Reformed Church at Acquackanonck (or Acquackanonk, present-day Passaic), New Jersey. According to the Ryerson records (2), Joris was a deacon in that church and he was sometimes called to read the service there if a minister was not available.

The marriage of John and Maritje (Mary) lasted almost 47 years, until John died on November 5, 1767. During that time, John and Mary had eleven children, ten of whom lived to become adults, marry, and raise their own families. As such, Maritje Ryerson became the mother of all the Readings, and the Reading family owes as much to Maritje as it does to John.

At the time of his wedding, John Reading was essentially the only Reading in America. The child of immigrants, his mother, Elizabeth, had died in 1714, and his father, Col. John Reading, had died in 1717. An uncle, Daniel Reading apparently lived along with his father in Gloucester, New Jersey, in the 1680s, but he returned to England around 1691 (1). His sister Sarah died in 1691, and sister Elizabeth died in 1692 (3). His only surviving relative in America was his sister Mary who had married Daniel Howell in about 1710.

John Reading's attenuated family was offset by his wealth and prestige. Following his father's death in 1717, John inherited the considerable tracts of land his father had accumulated. In 1718, he was nominated for a seat on the governor's council, a position he assumed in March 1721. At age 34, unmarried, and wealthy, John Reading must have been a most eligible bachelor.

Unlike, John Reading, a child of immigrants, Maritje Reyerson was already a third generation American.

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Her grandmother, Annetje Rapalje, was born in Breuckelen (present day Brooklyn) in 1646. Her father, Joris, was born in Brueckelen in 1666. Joris was one of eleven children, including five brothers who married and raised families. Maritje was herself one of eleven children including four brothers who married and raised families. Consequently, by 1720, there were quite a few Ryersons living in New York and New Jersey.

Due to the family's Dutch origins and the uncertain process of Anglicization, the name is spelled variously as Reijersz, Reijerszen, Reyerszen, Reijersen, Reyerson, Ryerson, Riersie, and Ryerse (2). John Reading refers to Maritje's father as "Ryason" in his journal (4).

Maritje was born in New York City in July 1699. Maritje lived with her family on a farm in Manhattan until they moved to the Pompton Valley of New Jersey in 1708. Two of her uncles, Ryer and Frans Reyerszen also moved to New Jersey.

There is an error in Leach (1) regarding Maritje's birth. According to Leach, "Mary, daughter of George Ryerson, Esq." was baptized on July 29, 1696. According to the Ryerson records (2), Joris and Anneken had two daughters named Maritje. The first of these was baptized on August 29, 1696, but "died young". The second Maritje was baptized on July 19, 1699.

In spite of John Reading's prominence, there were geographical and cultural obstacles that had to be overcome in order for enable him to marry Maritje Ryerson in 1720. The geographical obstacle resulted from the fact that John Reading lived in West New Jersey, near the Delaware River, while the Ryerson family lived in Bergen County near the Hudson River and New York City. This was resolved by the fact that John Reading, like his father, was a surveyor.

His duties as a surveyor required a considerable amount of travel to many places in New Jersey. His journal reports meeting with "G. Ryason" as early as 1715. At that time John would have been about 29 years old, and Maritje just 16.

Another possible opportunity for John Reading to meet the Ryersons occurred in 1719. The minutes of the New Jersey Provincial Council for October 19, 1719 report that a "Shew Cause" order was issued on behalf of George Ryerson regarding the laying out of a highway near his home (2). This work threatened part of his orchard, his cellar and his well. This situation obviously called for some expert surveying in order to determine the correct alignment of this highway. It is not known whether John Reading was involved in this project. By this time, Maritje would have been 20 years old, and it was a good time to start a courtship leading to a wedding 13 months later.

A second potential obstacle to the marriage of John Reading and Maritje Ryerson is the matter of religious affiliation. Maritje's family was clearly associated with the Dutch Reformed Church, and Maritje's father was a deacon in this church.

The only question then is what was John Reading's religious affiliation? Although his father was born into a Quaker family in England and he came to West New Jersey with other Quaker Proprietors, he apparently drifted away from Quaker beliefs. Even today Col. John's religious affiliation remains the subject of debate (1). Leach (1) provides no guidance on the younger John Reading's religious affiliation before his marriage and there is no evidence that John Reading was ever associated with the Quakers.

The solution to the religious question appears to have been for John Reading to adopt and support the religion of Maritje and her family, the (Dutch) Reformed Church. It seems unlikely that Maritje's father would approve of anything less. Evidence of this choice is provided by the fact that all of their children were baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church in Readington, Hunterdon County.

Eventually the association with the Dutch Reformed Church, a Calvinist denomination, would evolve into affiliation with the Presbyterian Church, a similar Calvinist denomination. In this case, the principal change would be a shift away from the use of Dutch language to use of English (with no change of principles).

That brings us to the final challenge, the question of language. By the time she was married, Maritje must have had a reasonable command of English. It is hard to imagine their courtship without it. Maritje's family, however, most likely spoke only Dutch at home, so English would have been a second language, probably spoken with a strong accent.

References

(1) Josiah Granville Leach, *Genealogical and Biographical Memorials of the Reading, Howell, Yerkes, Watts, Latham, and Elkins Families*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1898.

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

(3) Hiram Deats, Hunterdon County Historical Society, notes found in a book of prayers owned by Gov. John Reading (since lost?).

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

Daniel Reading's Will

by Carol (Reading) Morris

The relationship between Daniel Reading, well known as the sheriff in Gloucester, NJ until 1691, and John Reading who was a West New Jersey Proprietor and clerk of the county has long been the subject of speculation. We now know that he was in fact his brother. A recently uncovered will in the town of Litchfield, indicates without a doubt as he leaves property to his brother John in Gloucester, America. My transcription of the will follows.

Will of Daniel Reading (1661-1704)
Litchfield Record Office Staffordshire England
File: P/C/11 "Wills probated in the Peculiar Courts"
Written 4 June 1704; Presented for probate 18 October 1704

"In the name of God Amen, the Eight Day of the fourth month called June in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and four I **Daniel Reading** of Pipe Hill in the County of Stafford being at present but weak of Body yet of a perfect memory and sound disposing mind thanks be given to God yet calling to mind the uncertain state of this transitory life and that it is Appointed for all men once to dye.

Do make and ordain this my Last will and testament that is to say:

First of all I give and Recomend my Soul into the hand of God that gave it and for my Body I Comend to the Earth to be Buried in orderly maner at the discretion of my Executor here after named. And as touching such Wordly Estate whom with it hath pleased God to Bless me with all I give order and Dispose of the same in mannor and forms following.

Imp [*abbr. imprimus; "In the first place"*] my Desire is that what Debts I shall happen to owe with my funeral Charges shall be truely payd and honestly Discharged.

Item: I give Grant and bequeath to my Brother John Reading of Gloucester America all my right title and possession of Land in West Jersey aforesaid now already taken up and disposed or to be taken up together with all improvemts Buildings and other edifaces in what kind or nature ___ also what catle sprung out of the loynes of those which I formerly had unto the said John Reading his heirs and assigns for ever.

Item: My mind and will is that my Brother John Reading my Brother above mentioned shall have Delivered up or Cancelled one writing oblegatory bareing date the Twenty fifth day of May 1691 being made to me by my brother John Reading above named with condition thereunto for payment of forty seven Pound currant money within the province of West Jersey to ___ have been payd to me my heirs Executors Administrators or assigns on or before the 25th day of May 1693 wh__ sd writing I would have delivered up and canceld by Job Reading my Executor hereafter named. Now if in case that my brother John Reading should happen to be dead at this writing hereof then my desire is that what I have in the whole [*share?*] shall be equally divided between my coz [*nephew*] Jn Reading and my coz [*niece*] Mary Reading and to the survivor of them.

Item: I give forth of what I have here in England In the first to the poor whom belong to Chesterfield Meeting the sum of three pounds to be payd within the space of one year to be pd by my Executor here in and here after named to be disposed of by William Hall and Jn Hall ha___ his son both of Chesterfield and Richd Palmer of Leshfield [*Litchfield?*] as they shall soon meet and convenient.

Item: I give in order to pay two years rent for the meeting house at Tamworth the sum of Two pounds to be pd within the space of two years to Jn Greenwood and his wife Ann to be carefully payd accordingly.

Item: I give to coz G___ns [*?*] four children the sum of Twenty Shillgs namely Joseph, Wm, Sarah and Robert to be equally divided between them and to be payd within 12 months after my decease.

Item: I give those present servants which live with my Brother Job first to May Fowler ten shillings to Hannah [*Groves?*] five shillings to Wittm Lent two shillings if he continues a servant otherways of nothing to Ann Reading my almswoman [*?*] Two shillings & six pence if she continues in such service for a T_velumoth [*Twelve months?*] as heretofore otherways nothing. To old [*?*] Wm Wright and old Hen: [*Beals?*] Eighteen penies apiece And I doe hereby Impower & order to [*Reserve?*] that Rent which belongs to my Brother Jn Reading and to pay those creditors of my sisters According as I have concluded with them And also my desire and order is that my Brother John Reading of West Jersey send over to by Brother Job Reading as good and Absolute Title of all those severall parcels of Land with a House Barn Barkside etc which Lyes in over Stonnall and my desire is that my brother Jn take efectual care it being for that money which was fifty pounds I h___to[*?*] his wife at such time as she went over to her Husband. And Lastly I contribute make ordain and Appoint my Loving Brother Job Reading my full and solo Executor of this my Last Will and Testamt with all Goods and Chattles moveable and immovable with all Bonds writings obligatory Bills book Debts in any part within the Relm of England onely [*only*] I Except as is above Eccepted together with all debts that arein any respect to me owe or owing.

In Witness where of I have hereunto set my hands and seals Declaring this to be my last Will and Testament and not another it being the day and year about Written.

Sealed Published Pronounced Signed and Declared by the said Daniel Reading to be his last Will and Testament in the presence of
Wm Hall -- "H" his mark
Henry Jackson
Josiah Sutton – his mark
Mary Fowler --"F" her mark

Daniel Reading (& wax seal)

Inventory Taken July 7, 1704 by William Hall and Henry Jackson"

“An inventory of the goods Cattel and Chattells of Daniel Reading late of Pipe hill In the County of Stafford Tobacco Cutter deseased taken and prised the seaventh day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand seaven hundred and foure by William Hall & Henry Jackson.

In the Tobaccohouse

Imprimus

One engine press and mill one dryer
Two pare of scales with Tobacco in the C____
Cutt & un cutt 08 – 00 – 0

One beddstid one featherbed two boulsters
One pillow four blankets three pare of sheets
02 – 10 – 0

Three putter dishes three pollingers one pot
Two kettele 00 – 12 – 0

Two chest chests one table with other lumber
00 – 14 – 0

Purse and apearill 05 – 00 – 0

One horse 2 yewes 2 lambes 01 – 10 – 0
16 – 06 – 0”

Announcements

Fund raising

We are still short of our goals in raising \$4000 to restore the wall at the Reading Burying Ground in Rosemont. Please help us by finding donors.

Fall meeting

We have a tentative date for the Fall meeting in Stockton of 11 Oct 2008. If anyone has any strenuous objections please let me know. DRR.

Membership dues

If you are not a life time member dues of \$10 for 2008 are expected.

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