Mahlon Stacy – Quaker Pioneer at the Falls of the Delaware

A presentation by Shawn Carney – July 2020

Mahlon Stacy
at the Falls of the Delaware

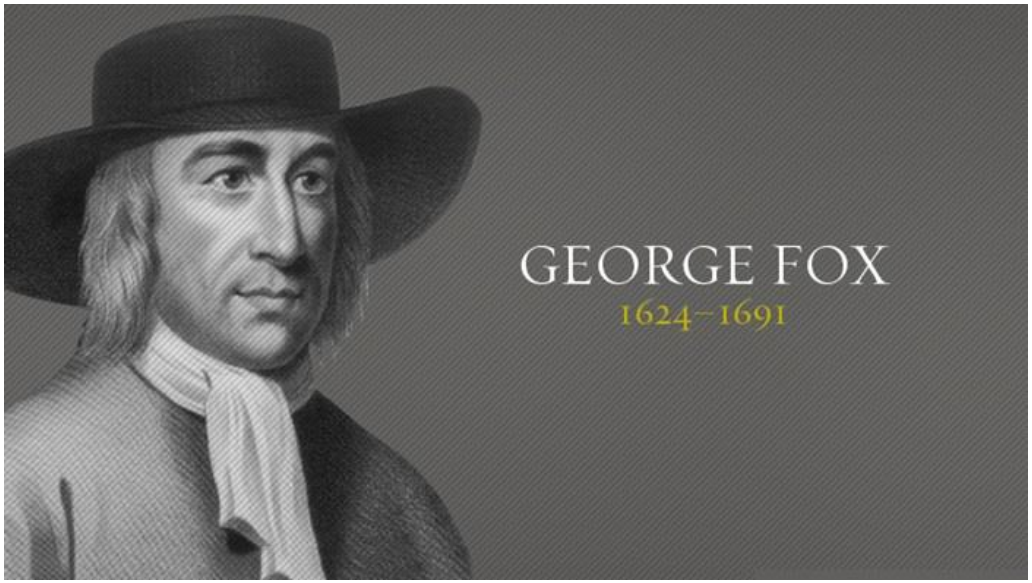
- Stacy, a Quaker, came to New Jersey to flee religious persecution in England
- He settled at the Falls of the Delaware and established a grist mill on Assunpink Creek
- He named his estate here “Ballifield” after his family home in England

Ballifield – Handsworth, Sheffield England

Ballifield Hall – George Fox himself held religious meetings at the home of Mahlon Stacy on his way to Yorkshire.

The Society of Friends
George Fox- Founder

- Son of a prosperous Puritan weaver; Worked as an itinerant shoemaker
- Had personal spiritual revelation in 1647
  - Both church and state authority were corrupt
  - God's message comes directly as personal inspiration
- Was imprisoned multiple times for offenses such as refusing to take an oath, pay tithes, or honor officials by removing his hat



The Society of Friends

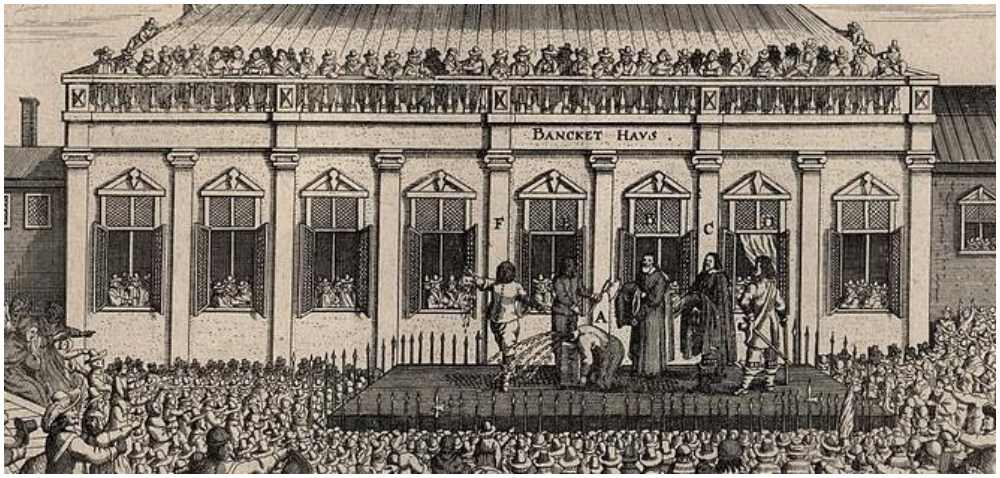
- Began in the Midlands and North of England
- Formally founded in 1652 as the "Religious Society of Friends"
- Followers originally called themselves "Friends of the Truth"
- By 1660 there were 50,000 followers.
- Known as "Quakers" because they "trembled before God"

Core Beliefs/Values

- Direct relationship with God – No need for a church or clergy
- Pacifism – Would not take up arms for any reason
- Equality – Hence their anti-slavery stance, would not bow to royalty etc.
- Freedom of conscience
- Simplicity

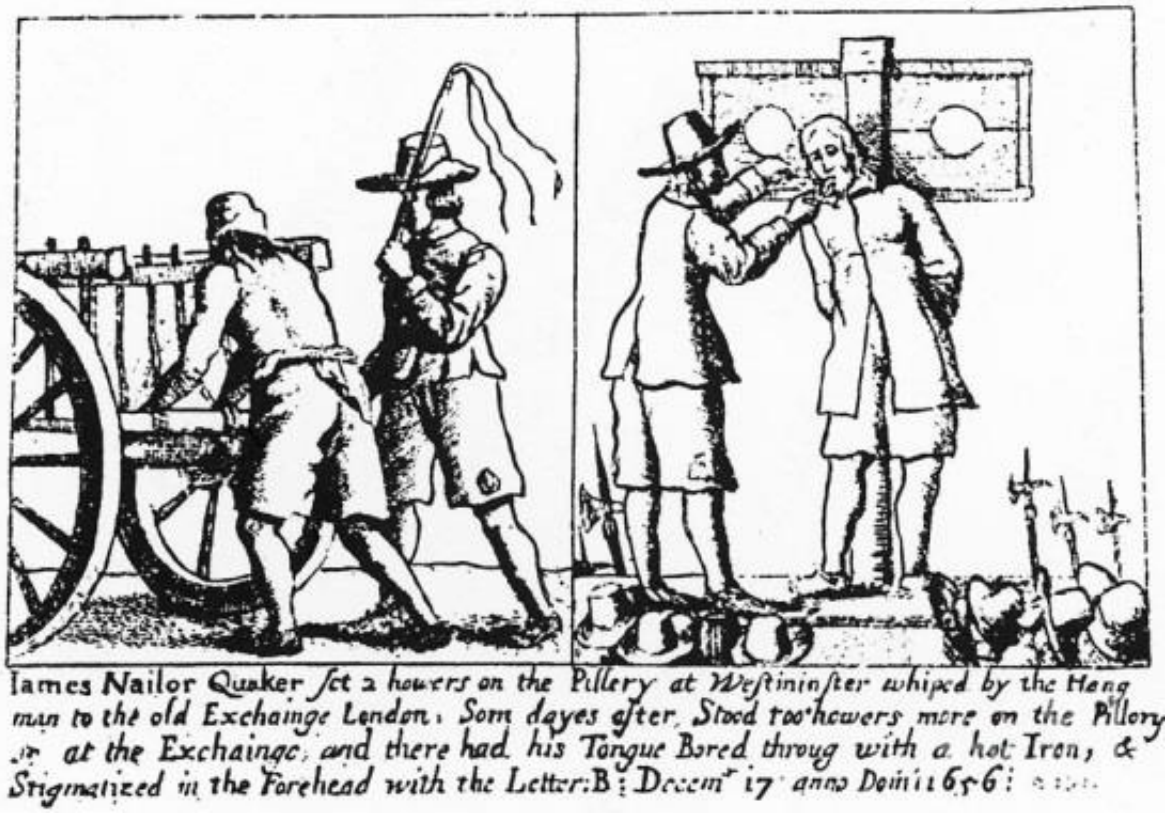
Quakerism as a Radical Movement

- Quakerism was founded in a time of upheaval in England
  - Civil wars (1642-1651)
  - Overthrow & restoration (with limited powers) of the monarchy
- Monopoly of Church of England ended in 1689
  - However, Quakers were still persecuted as “radical”
  - Were grouped with other “radical” sects at the restoration of the monarchy



Quaker Persecution

- Members subjected to imprisonment and violent punishments – though none were executed in England
- However, at least 4 Quakers were executed in the Massachusetts colony



Quakers in New Jersey

Formation of New Jersey

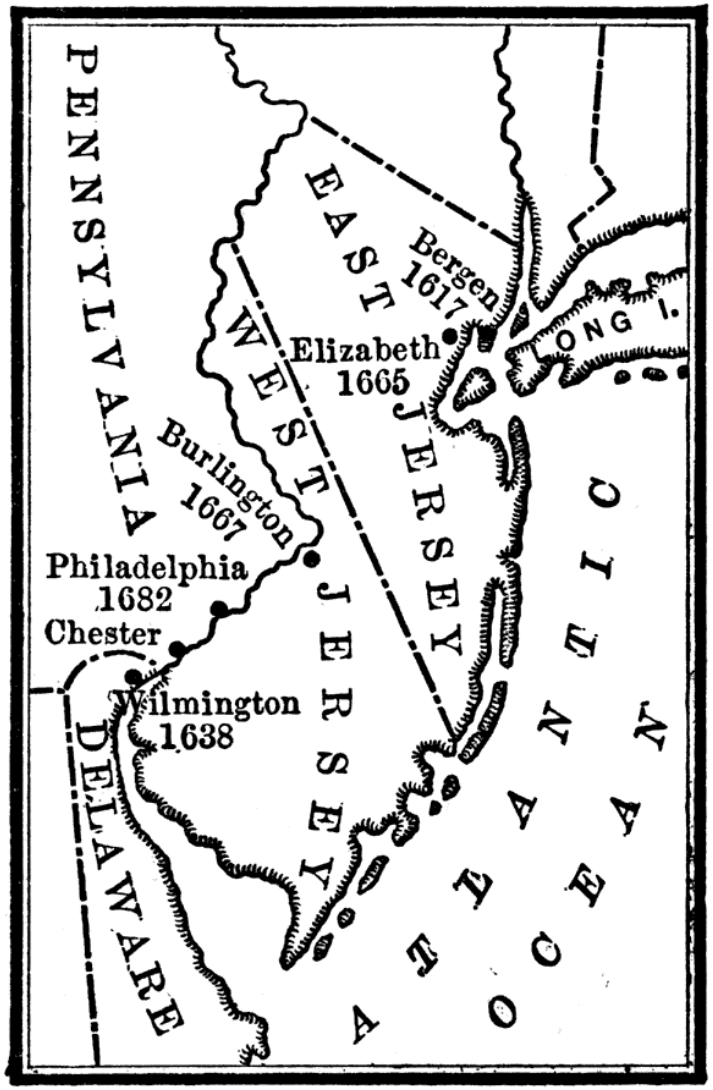
Tract of land granted to Duke of York in 1664
York granted the land to John Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret

The Duke of York

Berkeley and Carteret

Formation of New Jersey

- In July 1676 the Quintipartite deed was made
  - Divided New Jersey into East and West



Purchase by English Quakers

- Large shares of land in West Jersey were then sold to buyers in England, including Quakers in Yorkshire and in London
- The Yorkshire Quakers included Mahlon Stacy of Hansworth with 4 others
  - Their purchase fell between Assunpink Creek and Burlington – known as the Yorkshire 10th
  - Mahlon Stacy's share was more than 3500 acres on both sides of the Assunpink Creek

Early Quaker Settlements in NJ

- The first Quaker settlement in East Jersey was at Shrewsbury in 1664
- The first Quaker colony at West Jersey was John Fenwick's colony at Salem in 1675
- Quaker settlers arrived on *The Kent* in Burlington in 1677

Mahlon Stacy's Arrival In New Jersey

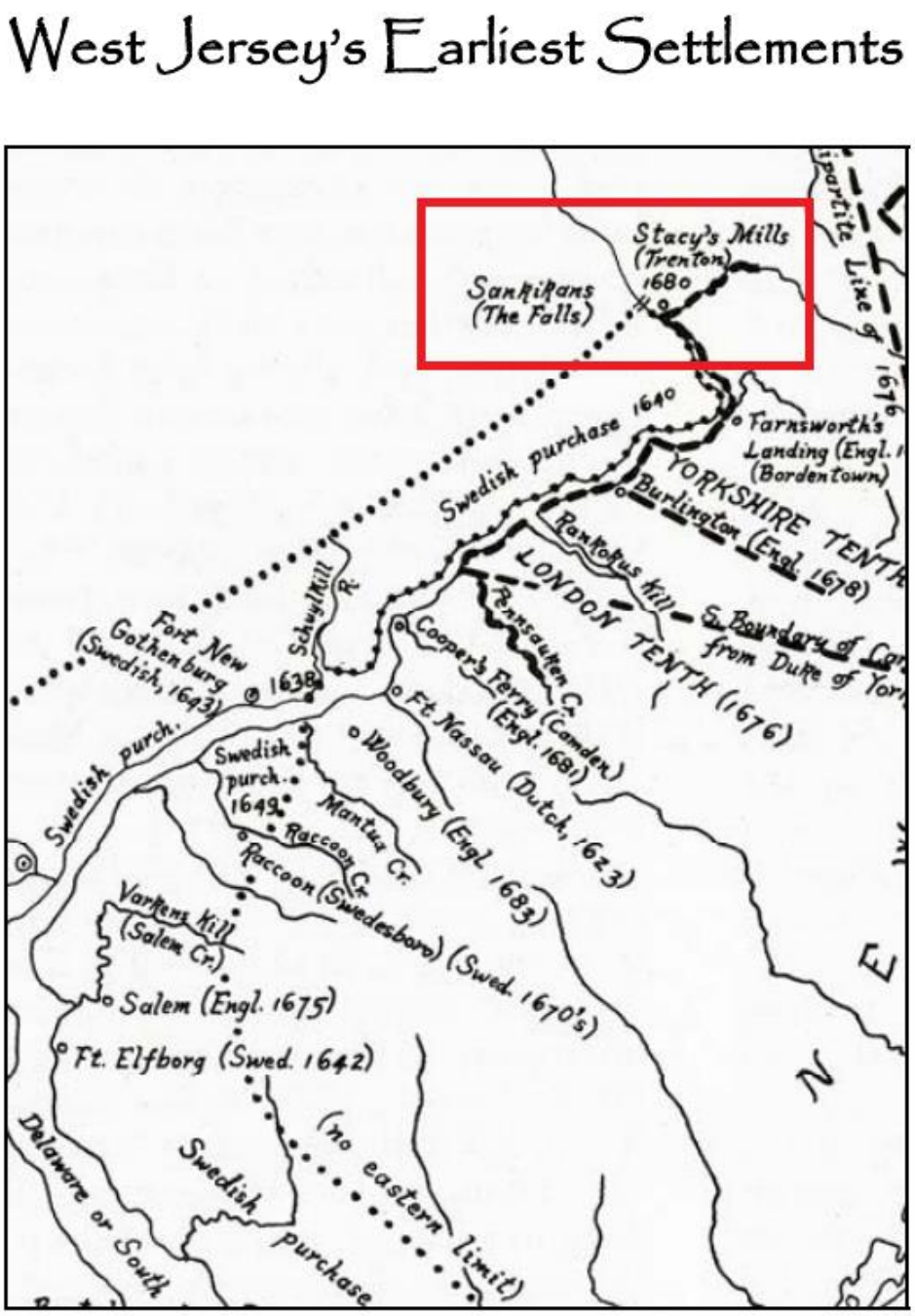
- Mahlon Stacy with other Quaker families landed in Burlington in December 1678
  - Arrived on the ship *The Shield*, one of William Penn's ships, after 16 weeks at sea
- In the Spring of 1679 he and his family settled at the Falls, the first permanent European settlement in the area

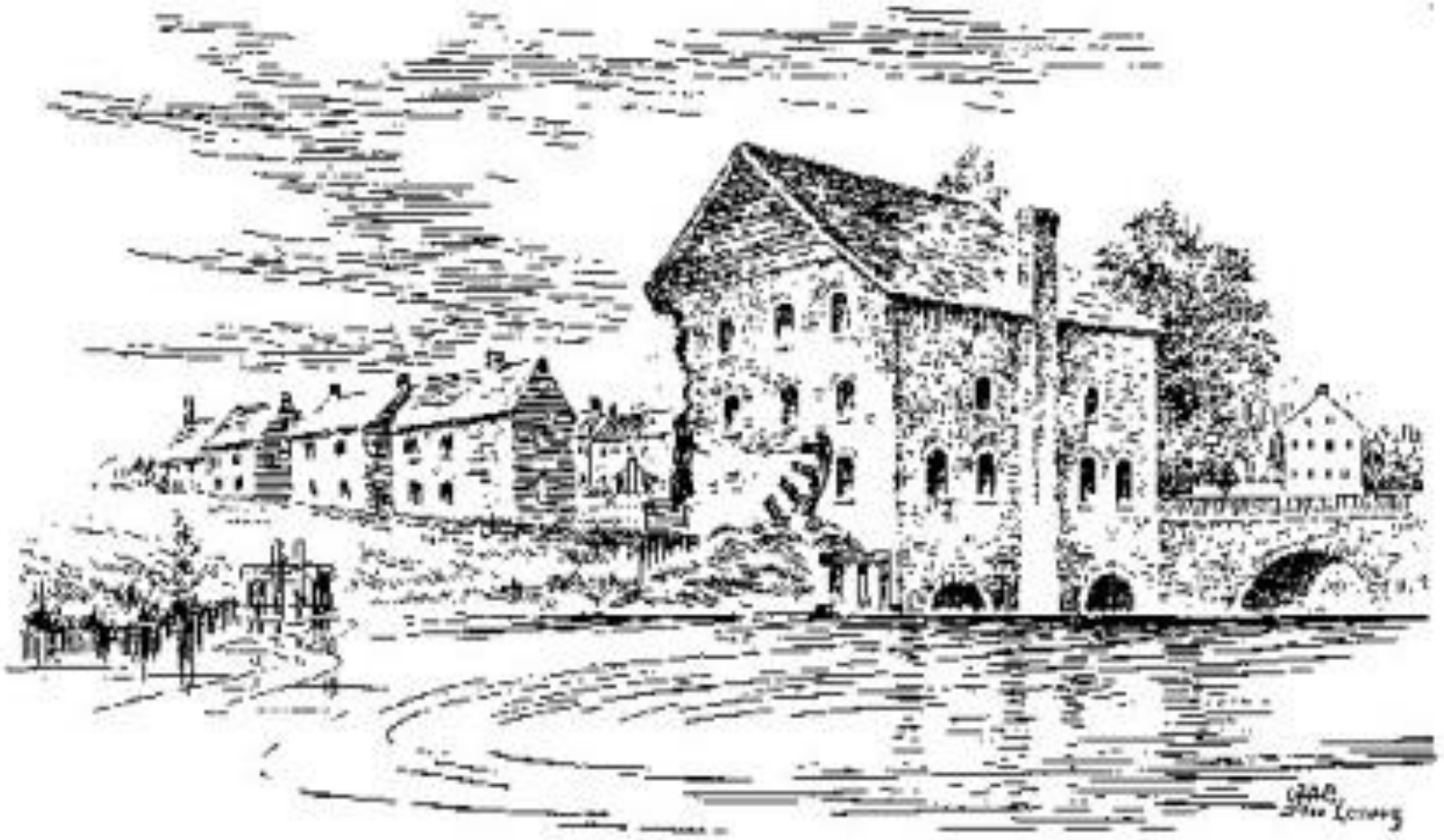
Mahlon Stacy's Homes

- Stacy's first home was a small hastily built clapboard house on the property
- This was later replaced by a more spacious, well-built house, called "Dorehouse"
- Stacy's will described the house as having two parlors and a chamber over the parlors
- The will also noted that the estate had a water pump, orchard and pasture lands

Stacy's Mill

His property also included a grist mill he built on the Assunpink Creek





**OLD STACY MILL, ENLARGED AND IMPROVED BY WILLIAM TRENT,
AS IT APPEARED IN 1848, DILAPIDATED BY FIRE AND FLOOD.**

A Man of Wealth & Influence

- Stacy held political positions
  - Appointed to the General Assembly of NJ in 1682 and reelected in 1685
  - Elected to the Assembly for the Yorkshire 10th in 1684
  - Also chosen a member of the Royal Governor's Council and a Justice for Burlington County
  - Became a member of the prestigious council of proprietors of West Jersey in 1792
  - Was also a commissioner for West Jersey and a member of the Provincial Assembly.

Abundance at the Falls of the Delaware

Mahlon Stacy wrote many letters to friends and family in England including a letter with a detailed description of the good life and the abundance at the Falls of the Delaware.

In fact, he enjoyed his new land so much that he “had never the least thought of returning to England, except on the account of trade.”

Contact with the Native Americans

The Stacy family and all the settlers at the Falls came into contact with the Native Americans in the area.

Enslaved People of African Descent

Despite George Fox's admonitions against slavery, Stacy, though a Quaker and like many other of his co-religionists, owned enslaved people.

Stacy's Heir – Mahlon Stacy the Younger

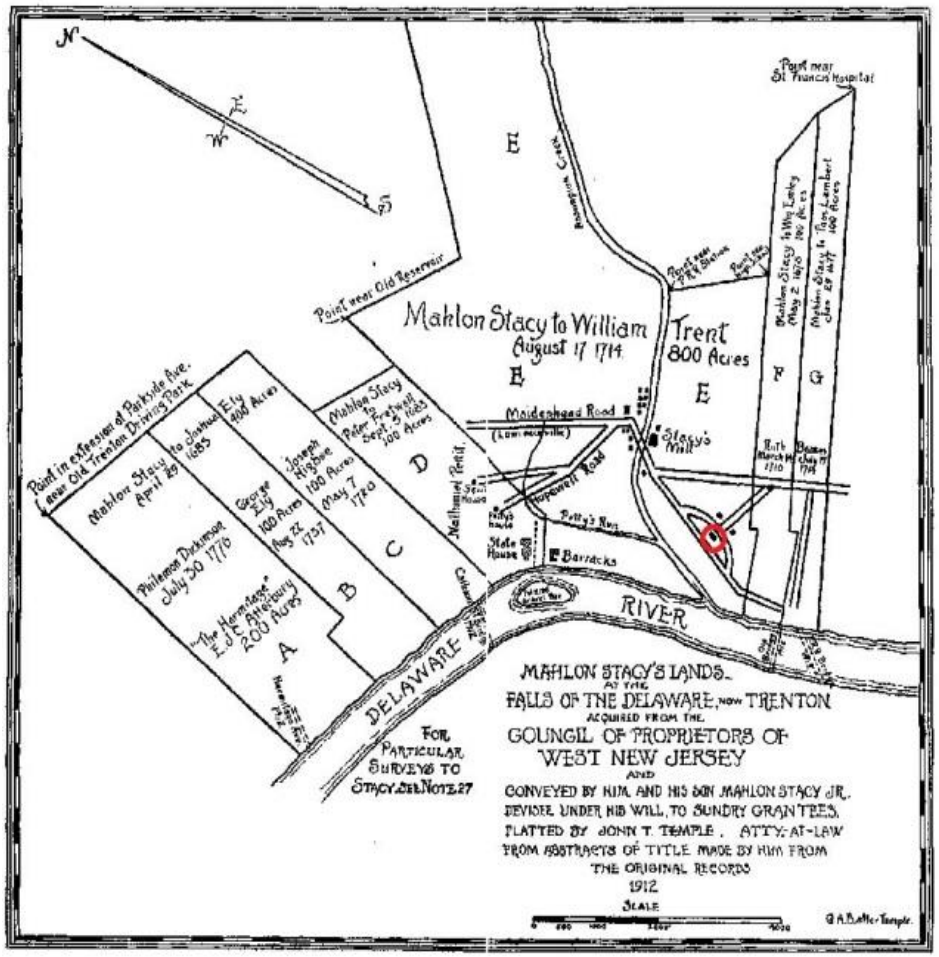
- While in England, Stacy the elder married Rebecca Ely in 1668. They had 6 children.
- Surviving at his death in 1704 was one son, Mahlon the younger, and 5 daughters
- The younger Stacy inherited the plantation Ballifield, along with the house, mill and other buildings, lands and meadows

Stacy's Land

- In 1714 there were a few houses on the land
  - Renting tenements to a small group of people

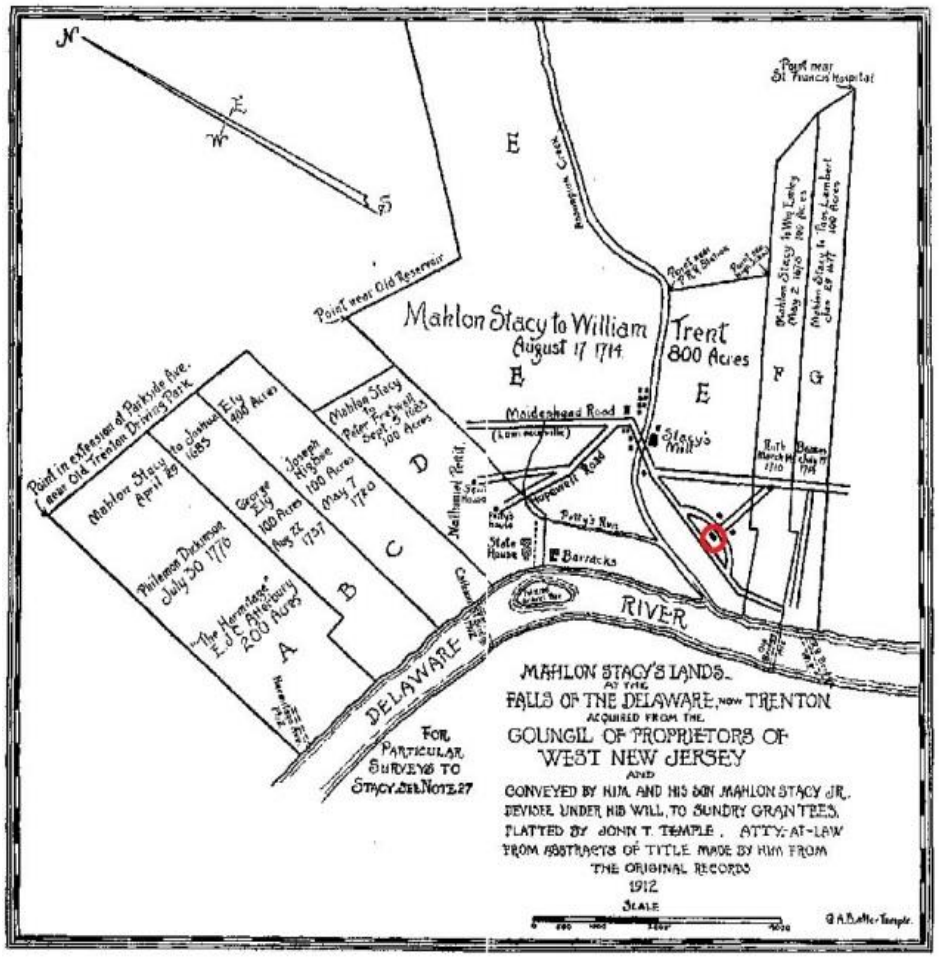
Trent's Purchase

- Stacy the younger sold 800 acres to Trent in August, 1714 for 1400 pounds
- Included the Ballifield plantation of 500 acres with the house, grist mill and numerous outbuildings
- Another 300 acres of adjoining land was also conveyed to Trent



The Trent House is Built

- Trent built his summer home circa 1719.
- In 1721 Trent, his wife Mary Coddington, his youngest son William, and eleven enslaved people made this their full-time home.



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