

# **SKILLMANS OF NEW YORK**

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Skillmans of New York by Francis Skillman

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**FRANCIS SKILLMAN**

**SKILLMANS  
OF NEW YORK**



THE  
SKILLMANS

OF  
NEW YORK.

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COMPILED BY  
FRANCIS SKILLMAN,  
OF ROSLYN, QUEENS CO.; N. Y.

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1892.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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I remember when a boy to have listened in almost breathless silence, while my maternal grandmother and paternal great grandmother told of what they saw and what happened to their fathers' families and neighbors during the occupation of Long Island by the British, from 1776 to 1783. So fascinated was I with their narratives of the sufferings endured by the patriots, that as long as life lasts the memory of facts stated by them will be ever fresh.

Visits to my father's relatives, with long intervals between, gave me opportunities I did not know how to improve. All I done was to ask such few questions as might only be expected from a boy. During one of the visits made me by Samuel Griffing, I asked him to obtain from Abigail Skillman a statement of the Skillman family as correctly and as far back as she could give it. I received such statement in due time, and found it since to be entirely correct from Joseph<sup>o</sup> down, but she stated in it that, "Abraham was the father of Joseph," as the utmost limit that she could go back, and so I was given much trouble afterwards to find that Abraham had an only son Thomas, who died unmarried, and that Abraham and Joseph were brothers. This statement from my Aunt satisfied me at the time, and I felt thankful for it, but afterwards, as other points presented themselves, I found my craving unsatisfied. By that time my uncle and aunt paid the debt of nature, and I was left to devise other means of finding out what I wished to know.

In February, 1875, I determined that I would devote some of my time to collecting incidents relating to the different members of the family, and at the same time trace as far as possible its genealogy. I soon found that others had attempted this work, but for some reason had aban-

done it. So successful was I, that after I had got some way into it, I began to hope I could trace the New Jersey families also, but I found a reluctance to answer my letters, and my infirmity was such that I could not stand on my feet to search the various county and other records in that State, and was compelled to abandon that hope. Afterwards I heard of and corresponded with the Rev. Wm. J. Skillman, of that State, and my hope revived, only to be cast down again. I trust that, as he is yet young, he may be able, not only to unravel the genealogy of the New Jersey Skillmans, and connect them with their ancestors who left Long Island, but to ascertain the source of the family in England. I am satisfied that a search of the State records in England would repay one, as from a few extracts from the Parliamentary rolls in London, in my possession, the family is an ancient one, going back to 1316, 1485, 1510-20-22 and 23, at which dates John and in others Henry Skilman (in one instance the name being spelled Skylman) are spoken of, the one as Lord of the Township of Wymondham, in County of Norfolk, the other as keeper of the King's Park at Eltham, Kent, &c. I am greatly indebted to the Honorable Francis Martin Skillman, and also to the Honorable Joseph Hudson Skillman, for information and assistance.

FRANCIS SKILLMAN.

ROSLYN, Nov., 1875.



## TRADITIONS.

The traditions of the family as collected by me are as follows:

John Skillman said: "The first Skillman, a Thomas, was very fond of music (or a great musician;) that he came to this country with Gov. Richard Nicoll in 1664, from England, and was a favorite of the Governor, who gave him a patent for land at Albany, and also for land at Bushwick; that the farm Lambert Wyckoff once lived on was the tract. He left an only son Thomas, but his wife soon married again. In some way his estate was so managed or left that the son Thomas had none of it while she had all."

Thomas Skillman 3d., said: "Thomas Skillman came here with Gov. Nicoll. He was from Glasgow, Scotland, and was a land surveyor. He died soon and left a son under age. Maiden name of his wife was Pettit, and she managed in some way to get the estate in her hands, and the son got none. He had a patent for land at Albany and also on Staten Island."

Francis Martin Skillman said: "He exchanged his land at Albany for land on Staten Island."

Martin Schenck, cousin of the above, said: "The first Skillman had a patent for half of Staten Island, like the Van Rensselaers."

Joseph Hazzard Skillman said: "The first Skillman, a Thomas, was a musician in the British army on service in this country. That he had a patent for land at Albany, and that his widow, by some means, got possession of his property, and the son had none."

William Paynter, aged 80, at about 1844 said: "Thomas Skillman and wife came from England and worked a farm on shares, and in 1688 bought a farm of 200 acres at Dutch Kills, the deed for which he has in his house." (This man's mother was Hester, daughter

of Abraham Skillman.) His sister, Elizabeth Bragaw, said: "Thomas Skillman came from Barbadoes."

The earliest mention of the name of any Skillman that I find is in Thompson's History of Long Island, p. 138. 2d ed., vol. 2, giving a list of the inhabitants and probable freeholders of the town of Newtown in 1655-6. I have had no time as yet to verify the date but as dates in Thompson's book are noted for unreliability, I attach but little importance to this extract, unless in the future I should meet with something to corroborate it. *Riker*, in his Annals of Newtown, p. 74 and appendix G, gives a list of freeholders, in which the name of Thomas or any other Skillman *does not* appear at that date.

## EXTRACTS FROM PUBLIC DOCUMENTS.

In the Department of Historical Records, Secretary of State's Office, New York :

Vol. 2, p. 250 and 254, 1668.—Orders, Warrants, Letters.—The name of Thomas Skillman appears in a list of names to whom Col. Nicolls had promised lands at Esopus.

Vol. 2, p. 254, 1668.—The name of Thomas Skillman with others is signed to an agreement to accept "Dividends of lots" in Esopus, whenever the Governor shall give order for laying them out.

Vol. 2, p. 390.—Court of Assizes.—Thomas Skillman included in a list of soldiers discharged. April 6, 1668.

The next in order of date respecting Thomas Skillman is an item in an account book of John and Samuel Bowne, of Flushing, in which they give him Feb'y, 1672, "Cr. by 3 days' work in April, 7s. 6d., published in *L. I. Times*, Aug. 26, 1875\*:

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[From the *L. I. Times*, August 26, 1875.]

### \*ANCIENT FARMING IN FLUSHING.

BY HENRY ONDERDONK, JR., OF JAMAICA.

In 1789 the records of Flushing were burnt. This loss, so far as agriculture is concerned, is mitigated by the preservation of an old account book of John Bowne and his son Samuel, extending from 1656 to 1702. He was an enlightened, enterprising and thrifty planter, was County Treasurer, (1683) and once (1691) elected to the Assembly. He was systematic in his business, and noted down in his book many little items that others would have omitted. He seems also to have kept a country store, or else obligingly bought and sold for his neighbors. He kept up a kindly intercourse with the merchants at Manhattans, as New York was then called.

He kept horses, oxen, cows, sheep, bees, and swine. He raised wheat, buckwheat, rye, oats, barley, flax, peas, turnips, and tobacco. Farm hands and servants were "as precious as gold," and almost as scarce. Hence men were imported from Holland and Great Britain, whose passage was paid for by their being sold for a brief term of years to the planters. This class of servants were called *Redemptioners*, and many of them afterwards became respected citizens. Bowne, as his occasions required, bought negroes, and even Indians became servants and slaves. Bowne had orchards and made cider, which he sent to Manhattans.

1672, Feb. Reckoned with Wm. Smith, miller. Due me a quarter of veal, 3s; the use of a horse and plow 2 days; Thos. Skillman, cr. by 3 days work in April, 7s. 6d.