

**ROBERT AYARS
AND
HIS DESCENDANTS**

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Robert Ayars and his descendants by Frank D Andrews

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FRANK D ANDREWS

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COMPILED BY
FRANK D. ANDREWS

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VINELAND, NEW JERSEY

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P R E F A C E.

This record of the descendants of Robert Ayars was commenced over a century ago, by one Joshua Ayars who beginning with the ancestor of the family in West Jersey, gathered the names of his descendants, leaving a written copy dated Sept. 1, 1811.

Under date of March 10, 1855 Jehu B. Ayars, writes: "The following list of families I have copied in part from a book written by Joshua Ayars, dated Sept. 1, 1811, and the remainder from what information I could obtain from other sources."

The record was of names only. Miss Elizabeth A. Ayars, of Greenwich, N. J., made a copy some years later, and added such information as she could secure, particularly of her family and its branches.

At her death in 1900, the manuscript record came into the possession of her sister, Mrs. Bessie Ayars Andrews of Vineland, N. J., wife of the compiler of the present work. They further added to the list names, date of marriages, births and deaths, consulting records, visiting and copying the Ayars inscriptions to be found in the old burying-grounds of Cumberland County.

During these investigations it was learned that Mr. Micajah Ayars had a copy of the Ayars' record, his copy coming from Josephine Highby, who writes under date of February 19, 1886:

"Copied from a book written by Jehu B. Ayars, and added what I could from other sources "

Mr. Micajah Ayars was a resident of Shiloh, the centre of the Seventh Day Baptist Society of Cumberland County. He was greatly interested in the genealogy of the Ayars family and gathered much information regarding them which he recorded in a book to which he prefixed the following:

"I copied, Jan. 1886, from Josephine Highby's book and added other families and the date of births, marriages and deaths, collected from different sources to this time. There were no dates in the book from which I copied of births, &c.

Micajah Ayars.

Shiloh, N. J. Feb. 1898.

Mr. Ayars died some years ago and the record upon which he had spent so much time came into the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Margaret D. (Ayars) Lane, through whose courtesy the writer has been permitted to make use of such material as he did not already possess.

The two records thus united, with some additional data obtained from Charles E. Sheppard, Esq., of Bridgeton, has formed the revised family record as it appears in the following pages.

That the efforts of those earnest workers in the genealogical field who gathered the material for an Ayars' genealogy may have due recognition, the compiler of this record has thought it worth while to preserve it in printed form, imperfect and incomplete though it is; names and dates occasionally differing in the records, and the reader is advised to make some allowance for errors.

The compilation of this record of the descendants of Robert Ayars, the first of the name to settle in "Old Cohansey," has been a labor of love on the part of the compiler, as no adequate return for his time and expense is likely to accrue from the limited demand for such publications.

With the belief that it will be of some use to genealogists, and of service to members of the family in tracing their ancestry, this record is respectfully dedicated to the descendants of Robert Ayars.

FRANK D. ANDREWS.

Vineland, N. J. December 6, 1918.

ROBERT AYARS.

ROBERT AYARS, the ancestor of the family of that name in southern New Jersey, was a native of England, where he was born about the year 1650. He is said to have emigrated to New England in 1664, settling in that part of Westerly, Rhode Island, now known as Hopkinton.

The first settlers of that colony were Baptists to which faith he probably belonged. He married Ester Bowen, doubtless a Baptist also, as the Bowen family were associated with the early church of that denomination.

Through some difference in belief, and maintaining the seventh day should be observed as the Sabbath, Stephen Mumford, Samuel Hubbard and others separated from the first church in Newport, and entered into a church covenant December 23, 1671, forming the first Seventh-Day Baptist Church in America.

Robert Ayars accepted their views, possibly through the influence of Stephen Mumford, who with his wife Ann came to America at or about the same time he did, and with whom he had business relations, he and his wife Ester uniting with them in making an indenture to Wm. Phipps, Kt., of Boston, in 1687.

The settlement of Salem in West Jersey, by John Fenwick and his colony of Quakers in 1675, opened up a rich agricultural section along the Delaware River and its tributaries. Into this region about 1684 or 1685, came Robert Ayars and his family from their Rhode Island home. They located on the south side of the Cobansey River on eight hundred acres purchased of Restore Lippincott, opposite the present town of Greenwich.

Robert Ayars purchased 2200 acres from an extensive tract of land covering part of the present site of Shiloh which on being surveyed was conveyed to "Robert Ayars, late of Rhode Island, Gentleman." November 21, 1705.

While but little is known concerning the life of Robert Ayars, we may be sure it differed but little from that of other men of wealth and standing in the country at that time. That he had acquired some property while living in Rhode Island is evident from his first purchase at Shrewsbury Neck; that he was able to make the still larger purchase leads us to believe he had prospered during his residence in West Jersey. Peace and prosperity appear to have been his portion, and we do not know as any objections were ever raised against his religious belief although he was surrounded by Quakers, Presbyterians and Baptists of other beliefs, and we may believe he was a consistent member and leader in the sect he embraced; faithful in the performance of duty, reverent, thoughtful, devoted to his family and his God, a man whose memory his descendants may respect and honor.

After more than thirty years spent in Cohansey, as that part of the county was then called, Robert Ayars conscious of the approach of that change which comes to all men, made his will February 25, 1716. Having disposed of his worldly effects he doubtless enjoyed that peace of mind which accompanies a duty well done. His will was probated May 1, 1719. His personal estate inventoried by Dickason Shepherd, April 20, 1719, amounted to £167, 6 shillings and 7 pence.

The descendants of Robert Ayars have generally followed the manner of spelling herein used. In a deed to Caleb Ayars, the name was written *Ayers*, by the writer of the instrument, but when Robert Ayars signed his name he wrote it *Ayars*, a form adhered to by the family.

WILL OF ROBERT AYARS.

FEBRUARY 25, 1716.

In ye name of God Amen, ye twenty-fifth day of February 1716, I Robert Ayars of Cobansey in ye County of Salem in ye province of West Jersey, yeoman, being weak in body, but of perfect mind and memory, thanks be to God for it therefore calling unto mind ye mortality of ye body. And knowing yt all is appointed for all men to dye, doe make and ordain this my Last will and testament yt is to say e Principally e first of all, I give e Recommend my Soul into ye hands of God yt Gave it e my body I Recommend to ye Earth to be Buried in Decent christian Burial. All Decently of my executors hereafter named nothing Doubting But Att ye General Ressurrection I Shall Resume ye same again by ye mighty power of God. And as touching such worldly state wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me with in this Life, I give devise and dispose of ye in ye following & same manner.

Imprimis: I give & bequeath to Isaac Ayars my eldest son and to his heirs, executors administrators or assigns, one hundred acres of land around to ye house where he now liveth it being part of two thousand two hundred acres of land which I BOUGHT of William Billy, Edward Shippen, Junr. & Joseph Wass, as by one deed bearing date ye twenty-first of Novem^r 1705. many more at large Appor.

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