

## 5. PUMPKIN NECK AND ITS PEOPLE

*Eighteenth-century Pumpkin Neck was a community of Native, European, and African origin, ranging in wealth and status from landless to prosperous.*

This report chronicles people: rich and poor, white, brown, black, Dutch-American, English-American, African-American and Native-American, who lived in a place called Carroll Town Neck, or Pumpkin Neck, in Duck Creek Hundred.

Each family on the neck possessed characteristics of wealth, class and status that were well understood and observed, but poorly documented in the official record. Among the constituent parts of this community were some families of Native American origin, who were closely associated in business affairs with several unrelated families of European origin.

Bloomsbury, the tract where our site was found, touched the lives of many people of all degrees. Together they constituted a community that in turn shaped the site and created its historical context.

The area between Taylor's Gut and Hillyard's Branch (map, page 9) is called Pumpkin Neck, while a somewhat broader area is known in the records as Carroll Town Neck. Neither name is now current. The origin of the Pumpkin Neck name has not been explained to anyone's satisfaction. There never was an actual town at Carroll Town, but the name remained attached to the locality and to the Methodist Church on the neck long after the last Carroll had left.

Pumpkin Neck lies next to the broad marshes of Duck Creek, the southern boundary of territory claimed by contact-period Lenape bands (Figure 17). The Lenape were a dispersed people, who lived primarily by hunting and foraging, although they practiced some horticulture. To the south were the more settled and organized Nanticoke, who were related culturally to the Powhatan of Virginia. Between the Nanticoke and the Lenape, including the project area, were people called Ciconicin, or

Sikonese, who are not well known (Becker 1997).

Delaware society during the colonial period was organized by neck, which still is a point of historical reference. One of the first laws of the colony (Linn 1879:208) required the counties to build cartways to the most convenient landings, which meant that communication lines developed along the centers of necks, rather than radiating out from local central places. Pumpkin Neck and adjacent Dutch Neck were typical of this settlement pattern. The project area communicated with the landing at the bottom of Dutch Neck by a bridge and road across the adjacent property to Dutch Neck Road that gave access to a landing on the original Duck Creek near the house known today as the Allee House.

Any community consists of individuals, and a community history is in fact a collective biography of its members. The census and tax assessment, primary sources for any community history, are reprinted at the end of this chapter for ready reference.

Most farmers in eastern Delaware were tenants. In 1797, two-thirds of the taxable people in Duck Creek Hundred were not landowners. The wealthiest 20% of the population controlled 80% of taxable wealth. Three of five houses were built of logs, and only one in ten was brick (Grettler 1990:18). There were definite feudal overtones to this division of wealth, and the records clearly reflect a system of patronage.

One-room houses with sleeping lofts were the rule, even for large families of small landowners. A single-bay house, eighteen feet square, was not unusual as the "mansion" of an owner-occupied Delaware farm (Herman 1992). Large, young, families were the rule. In the neck, according to the 1800 census, about half

the population were under the age of 15, while less than 10% were over the age of 45 (chart, pages 81-82).

### THE NATIVE AMERICANS

By the time Bloomsbury was settled, the local Native American community was withdrawing, marrying primarily among its own membership and with similar people from other areas. This process of endogamy appears in the records a half-century before the Revolution, and probably had been happening much earlier.

The last formally constituted and legally recognized Indian villages and reservations in Maryland and within the present boundaries of Delaware were dissolved during the decade before 1750. Indians from lower Delmarva relocated to the north and to the west. Those who moved away were largely traditionalists,

alarmed at the prospect of adopting the alien white culture. When they left, the traditionalists took the Native religion, languages, and folklore with them.

But some Indian families stayed behind, merging almost invisibly into the larger society. In Kent County, a new community evolved, attracting Native people from other parts of Delmarva. Newcomers included members of the Puckham, Cambridge, Sanders, Sammons and Sisco families who originated farther south on the eastern shore of Maryland and Virginia.

### THE METHODISTS

The primary social unit in southern Delaware during the post-revolutionary period has been the Methodist church. Itinerant Methodist preachers established preaching sites throughout the Delmarva Peninsula, which



FIGURE 17: Location before the Revolution

Pumpkin Neck lay inland from the original Bombay Hook Island, which was then a part of New Castle County. The Joshua Fisher map of 1776 illustrates the location of Bombay Hook Island during the period when the project site was occupied. South is at the left. The southern mouth of Duck Creek, now Dona's Creek, served traffic into Little Duck Creek, now Leipsic Creek. Shallops to Smyrna were obliged to sail north along the creek from Deepwater Point before the present mouth of Duck Creek was cut through the island. In 1845, Bombay Hook was transferred from Appoquinimink Hundred of New Castle County and became part of Duck Creek Hundred of Kent County. The Woodland Beach resort is on the island.

Frequency of days with store transactions, by month from the Jonathan Allee store accounts for 1810  
(Ranked roughly by relative wealth and status)

MONTH:	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
F. Denney			1	1		5	2	1	1	1	3	
A. Allee jr	2	4	2	5	5	3	1	1	3	2	3	4
R. Severson		3	2	3	3	6	3	9	3	3	4	5
J. Raymond		2	3	5	2	1	3	1				
P. Conner		1	1	4	4	4	7	7	3	3	3	3
J. Foreacres					1	2	2	1	2	1	3	2
J. Macey	1	3	1	1		1						1
C. Durham			1				3	4		3	2	2
T. Conselor						1	1		1			
Totals	3	14	10	19	23	22	24	24	13	13	19	16

eventually became parish churches. One such location was Severson’s Chapel, less than a mile from the Bloomsbury site.

During the American Revolution, ties with the Church of England were broken. Finally, in 1784, Methodists established their separate American church. Almost immediately, Methodists began building chapels or churches in virtually every community on Delmarva.

Methodism was an inclusive religion, welcoming the common man, regardless of race, literacy, or wealth. While established “leading” families continued to attend and support the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches and the Quaker meetings, their neighbors joined the more convenient and often more culturally hospitable Methodist chapels.

Methodists of all races worshipped together at first, but eventually African-American and Native American congregations separated. Later in the nineteenth century, the African Methodist Episcopal Church established a church nearby, within a few yards of the Bloomsbury tract’s west boundary.

Carroll Town Methodist meeting house was established a short distance away, while the house on the Bloomsbury site was still occupied. James Severson made a deed May 13, 1783, to James Hull, Moses Thompson, Elijah Bartlett, John Jarrell, Benjamin Truax, John Conner, and John David May, Methodist trustees. Bishop Francis Asbury, the great circuit rider of early Methodism, mentions a visit to Severson’s in his diary.

A year after the land was conveyed, a

frame church was built. This edifice lasted until 1874, when it was replaced in brick and renamed Severson’s. Today only an overgrown graveyard survives to mark the church site. The A.M.E. church that stood nearby has vanished altogether.

## SUBSISTENCE AND TRADE

Fragmentary business records of Smyrna storekeepers Benjamin Coombe and Jonathan Allee have been preserved in the private accounts collection at the Delaware Archives,

incompletely covering the years 1809-1814. The accounts provide significant insights into the daily lives, business habits, and routines of Pumpkin Neck people near the end of the Bloomsbury site’s occupancy.

The same two store accounts were analysed in connection with the Darrach Store excavation (De Cunzo, Hoseth, Hodny, Jamison, Catts and Bachman 1992:53-59). These same documents tell much more about daily life among the people on Pumpkin Neck. Until recently, Saturday was the day when Delaware farmers went to town. Pumpkin Neck people were no different. In 1810, site occupant Thomas Consealor visited Jonathan Allee’s Smyrna store on three Wednesdays, seven Saturdays, and a Monday.

After Saturday, Wednesday was the second most favored store day in Smyrna, and frequencies of visits vary by season. Busy months for farmers’ transactions with storekeepers were the high summer and just after harvest in the fall. In the winter and early spring, grain, pork, and muskrat hides would be brought to the store on account.

Wednesday and Saturday were the legally prescribed (15 George III, Chapter 99) market days in Lewes, Dover, and New Castle, and apparently were observed in Smyrna as well.

Cash was used at the end of a year to settle accounts, but most store transactions amounted to a sophisticated form of barter augmented by double-entry bookkeeping. From earliest times, salt pork, tobacco and wheat

had been legal tender, but storekeepers typically accepted a much wider variety of country goods, including feathers, corn blades, and cordwood.

Townspople bought provisions, including food, from the stocks the merchants accumulated from the surrounding countryside. Accounts of Smyrna customers are obvious in the books because than Wednesday and Saturday.

Abraham Allee, "junior," a Bloomsbury owner, sold 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> dozen eggs at they contain the store in April 1810 and 12 dozen eggs the next April. He delivered 55 bushels of wheat in April 1811 to satisfy most of his account, which he settled with his storekeeper kinsman in June by cash.

Storekeepers were the conduits for the region's cash crops. Coombe ran a regular account for the local distillery and both storekeepers dealt in the grain trade by sloops up and down Delaware Bay. Indeed, a trading shallop was integral to a storekeeper's operations. Salt pork, bacon, and grain (beyond the needs of the local mills and Coombe's distillery) went to Philadelphia markets, where manufactured and imported goods were obtained.

From the cash flow reflected in store accounts, most of the actual specie and currency must have been reserved for transactions outside the community. Within the community, trade was conducted by book accounts, but both merchants' accounts with city contacts are noted in terms of "cash," which may have included bills of exchange and banknotes. These two accounts were created during the transition to decimal currency. Coombe kept his records in sterling denominations, while Allee was strictly dollar denominated. In spite of this clash of systems, the local trade apparently proceeded smoothly.

One striking aspect of the accounts is their balance. The corn, wheat, and muskrat skins usually appear on the record to be exactly the right amount to pay a store debt. This apparent precision means either that the price was negotiated, or that there was some cash paid off the books for some goods, and the store

account reflects only that part of the transaction that was needed to cancel the store debt. In any case, money was not the commonest way to settle debts at the store. Only the less wealthy customers, with nothing to trade, are shown as settling in cash.

Small farmers followed a seasonal cycle of trapping, butchering, planting and harvesting. Some times of the year, Smyrna was crowded, but in other seasons trade was sluggish. Yeoman farmers could go months without a commercial contact.

Charles Durham, who favored Saturday sale days, settled his 1810 store bill with wheat and his 1811 bill in corn, totalling \$65.26. His neighbor John Foraker satisfied a \$61.54 store bill with corn in March 1811; about half his trips to town were on Saturdays. William Sisco, whose trips to town almost always occurred on Wednesdays and Saturdays, was credited by Coombe with bringing in pork or bacon three times between 1810 and 1813; he derived most of his store credit from corn and wheat.

Wealthier farmers traded store goods for crops, but they naturally had more cash as well. Francis Denney's 1809-1811 account at the Jonathan Allee store is instructive. He settled for cash on Monday, December 18, 1809, and next paid cash on Wednesday, November 7, 1810. In the interim, he was credited nine times in 1810 with farm produce in trade. In June and July, he brought in five parcels of bacon, always on Wednesday or Saturday.

On Saturday, March 10, 1810, around the end of muskrat season, Patrick Conner brought skins to Jonathan Allee's store, but most of his bill was paid over the course of the year with oats and corn.

Conner usually chose any days except Wednesdays and Saturdays for his store business. In 1810, he bought goods at the Allee store on four Mondays, eight Tuesdays, one Wednesday, eight Thursdays, ten Fridays, and five Saturdays. During the winter, he posted transactions only once a month at the store,

but in the warm months, he averaged three or four visits a month.

Bombay Hook residents, surrounded by marsh and hay meadows, traded heavily in muskrat skins; cattle farming appears to have been a significant part of their economy as well. James Wells of Bombay Hook dealt at the Coombe store (in pounds sterling) almost entirely without cash between 1811 and 1815. Among the products he proffered in payment were muskrat skins, feathers, pork, and a pair of oxen. Wells also was credited with 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> days of work mowing hay for Coombe in July 1812. His store balance grew to £68/12/7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> including interest, in February 1815, when he settled the account with five head of cattle valued at \$76.

Cattle were sold as live animals, while swine appear in the record as bacon, barrels of salt pork, and hides. Beef was not so easily preserved, which meant that driving cattle to market was an important part of the meat industry until the middle nineteenth century, when refrigerated railway cars were introduced.

Thomas Thompson of Bombay Hook conducted business in hides, pork, and livestock with Coombe, but he also supplied 105 bushels of wheat in September 1812.

John Wright of Bombay Hook traded in wheat and rye through Coombe, but he also sold pork in December 1810. His purchases included tea, tobacco, and a barrel of herrings.

### THE URBAN CORDWOOD TRADE

Cordwood was a significant item of trade during the federal period, before coal became readily available. Cordwood trade is a peculiar characteristic of early urbanization, which was taking place in Smyrna. The first householders in American towns were farmers or immediate family of farmers, who enjoyed

ready access to family farms and woodlots.

As urban-rooted generations developed, familial connections with rural firewood sources were severed. Town professionals were forced to buy firewood or to buy woodlots in the poorly-drained hardwood scrub lands outside town. Delaware legislation in 1742 provided for cordwood trade regulation (15 George II Chapter 98), which indicates that the trade was becoming important.

Woodlands were shrinking in central Delaware. Between 1771 and 1812, Bloomsbury was deforested to create the open farmland that exists today. This was happening throughout the region (Grettlar 1990:50).

Fuel had become a market commodity, even in relatively rural Smyrna. Elijah Loatman paid his store bill to Benjamin Coombe in 1812 with 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cords of wood. His cordwood trade was part of the larger pattern of consumption typical of this period. Ebenezer Bell sold Coombe's distillery some wood in July 1810, which he used to satisfy his store debt.

Cordwood was then becoming a marketable commodity, not only for industrial purposes. In Cambridge, Maryland, a formal "subdivision" of woodlots was sold off in 1799 on the edge of town, where urban professionals could control their fuel sources. Such woodlots became obsolete after Pennsylvania coal became readily available, and the woodlots were sold off to small farmers (Heite and Blume 1994).

Other communities developed less formal sources of supply, including a brisk trade in firewood through retail outlets and personal contacts, much as exists today. By the time railroads arrived, this trade had been made obsolete by the arrival of Pennsylvania anthracite barged down the bay. Wood-fired

Seasonal cash flow											
Cash payments cited in a sample of eleven customers' accounts at Jonathan Allee's store, by month											
JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
\$12.77	\$1.04		\$13.00		\$56.32		\$13.35		\$13.83	\$32.96	\$11.40

stoves became, by default, a “country” appliance, while townspeople converted to hard coal and then to gas.

During the period of the wood trade, one might expect to find poor farmers depending upon fuel as a source of income, especially where it could supplement the timber trade. Smyrna store accounts do not include large quantities of firewood, and Loatman’s wood may have been for the storekeeper’s personal use.

Other commodities in the store accounts may better illustrate the connection between Smyrna householders and their suppliers in the Pumpkin Neck hinterland.

#### A DAY AT THE STORE

A single day’s transactions at Jonathan Allee’s store reflects the pace of business. On Friday, August 31, 1810, Allee began his day by paying tobacconist Levi Garrett \$10.90 for tobacco. David Miller brought in some butter and asked Allee to pay John Clark \$1.86 and put it on his account.

John Denney’s wife came into the store and sold Allee some butter, for which he paid cash. Then she bought a set of tablespoons for 75¢ on credit.

Samuel Green’s wife bought some cheese for \$1.50. Israel Peterson, Jr. bought a peck of salt.

Richard Sawyer brought in feathers and flax seed. He was credited for the feathers but the flax seed was to be “on the market” until the last day of September. Sawyer also got cheese, sugar, indigo, and spirits, as well as \$1 cash. He was also credited for 136 quills that he delivered, at 16¢ for the lot.

Patrick Conner brought 72 bushels of oats and bought some snuff. His brother, John, sent in an order for Allee to pay Sally Jones \$1.50, which was duly credited to her. David Miller bought some sugar and tobacco, charging 79¢ to his account.

The day’s book-account business amounted to \$21.74<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, both paid in and paid out. The next day, Saturday, would be busier. Dr. Bates would buy a quart of rum for 25¢, and David Miller would buy a hat for \$4.00, which must have

been elegant indeed, since Bloomsbury tenant Thomas Conselor’s new blanket cost only \$2.75.

All these people belonged to an interlocked community related by marriage, business, tenancy, trade, religion, and friendship, sometimes in ways that cannot be discerned from the surviving evidence. Most of these people left no writings at all; only a few left even so much as a family Bible. Those literate few who left documents have been historically prominent because historians have noticed them beyond their actual numbers.

#### ABRAHAM ALLEE

The Allee family and their relatives owned hundreds of acres in the project vicinity, including Barren Hope tract to the west and, for a time, Hillyard’s Adventure to the east of Bloomsbury. Their principal holdings were south of Hiron’s Branch, on Dutch Neck (Figure 3, page 9). In each generation, Allees acquired land in order to pass along substantial farms to their children. The Allees intermarried with the Cummins, Hoffecker, Conner, Raymond, Denney, Moore and other landowning families of Duck Creek Hundred.

John Allee (1749-1787) married Rachel Moore, and they had three sons. He inherited the eastern third of Bloomsbury from his kinsman, Exell, shortly before his own demise.

His estate was administered by James Raymond, his brother-in-law, who would later marry the widow. Until his son Abraham came of age and married, the Exell farm, alleged to contain 55 acres, was administered under Orphans Court jurisdiction, with Patrick Conner as the tenant. It was during his tenure as Allee’s tenant on the eastern third that Conner discovered and laid claim to an apparent discrepancy in the boundary between Bloomsbury and Hillyard’s Adventure.

A logged dwelling, 18 feet square and in disrepair, may have been the old Exell dwelling, since other sources indicate that the family had lived on the eastern side of the whole tract. The commissioners who inspected

### Countersuit to the eviction

To the Honorable the Justices of the Court of Common Pleas of the State of Delaware, in and for Kent County, amongst the Records and proceedings had before me, there is the following:

State of Delaware Kent County ss	To any Constable of said county Greeting you are hereby commanded that you take Moses Thompson and Jacob Thompson and have them at my office in Dover before me or some other Justice of the Peace of said county forthwith to answer a complaint of Thomas Consciller to me made in a plea of Trespass Vi et Armis, wherefore with force and armes at Duck Creek Hundred, in the county aforesaid, that the said Moses Thompson on the sixteenth day of April, Instant, and did plough up the ground, and did then and there plough, to the great damage, of the said Thomas Conceiller to the value of thirty two Dollars, Lawfull money of the United States of America, then and there against the peace and dignaity of the said state.
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Giving under my hand and seal at Dover the 18 day of April 1814.

Source: Common Pleas case files

James Schee

was frequently the only witness on a document who could sign his name. When Thomas LaCount died in 1796, for example, Patrick signed the bond while the administrator, William LaCount, made his mark.

Patrick Conner married Mary Griffin, widowed daughter of Samuel and Sarah Exell, between April 7 and May 12, 1772. On the latter date, he joined with his wife and mother-in-law to convey the western third of Bloomsbury to James McMullen. In 1795, while he was tilling the eastern

the house for the court ordered that a brick chimney be built, and that a roof be placed on the separate kitchen. Daubed wooden chimneys were not uncommon on poor settlers' houses during the period.

Abraham Allee (1780-1858), son of John Allee, married Susannah Denney, daughter of Francis, February 1, 1805. After her death, he remarried twice.

Upon marriage, Allee became *de facto* proprietor of the entire Bloomsbury tract [except the Joy portion] by right of inheritance of the eastern third from his father, and inheritance of the other two thirds by right of his first wife from her father upon his death in 1812. A small triangular tract at the northwest corner of the farm, still recorded as a separate tract in the current deeds, was granted by the surveyors to Mrs. Allee's brother Francis Denney the younger.

Abraham probably built the two-story frame house that still stands on the farm, but outside the state property. The construction date of this farmhouse has not been established.

### PATRICK CONNER

Patrick Conner's father, also Patrick, obtained a warrant and had surveyed 258 acres north of the project area in 1748. He spent his whole life as a farmer on Pumpkin Neck, cultivating both his own land and rented ground.

Because he was literate, Patrick Conner was able to help his illiterate neighbors when legal documents needed to be signed. He

third of Bloomsbury, Conner received a warrant for 113 acres 130 perches of vacant land that he called Canton, said to lie between the east boundary of Bloomsbury and the west line of Hillyards Adventure. At about the same time, he was representing Martha McMullen, owner of the western two thirds, relative to a chancery case aimed at recovering the boundary lines of Bloomsbury.

Conner's role in the community, as go-between and as literate counselor, was important to his illiterate neighbors.

### THOMAS CONSELOR

The Conselor family was in Kent County before 1720, when the estate of Thomas "Gonsila" was settled. Thomas had registered an earmark in 1700, indicating that he was already an established farmer. A later Thomas "Conselah," who died in 1739, left among his heirs daughters Elizabeth Francisco and Sarah Butcher, surnames that have since been associated with the Kent County Lenape group of families. He also had a grandson William Consela, who bought 100 acres from John Durham, a patriarch of the community in 1756, which he sold to Francis Barber in 1776.

John Durham's daughters Elizabeth and Hannah married Thomas and Elijah Conselor. When he made his will in 1788, one of the witnesses was Mary, widow of William Conselor. Francis Denney was the executor.

According to a note on the 1812 Francis Denney estate map, Thomas Conselector lived on the western two thirds of Bloomsbury as Denney's tenant. At about the same time Thomas was administering the estate of Charles Durham in Little Creek Hundred.

In March 1812, Abraham Allee settled Thomas Conselector's store debt with Jonathan Allee in Smyrna. Two years later, his store debt with Benjamin Coombe was collected by the constable and he was evicted by Abraham Allee.

The identity and origin of this person is uncertain. Thomas and David Concealor were listed on the Duck Creek Hundred tax rolls in 1817. Jonathan Allee's store accounts associate Thomas Concealor and John Concealor (possibly his father) in business transactions.

He almost certainly was the same Thomas Counselor, born in Delaware March 7, 1784, who died October 22, 1853, and was buried in the First Baptist Church cemetery in Salem, New Jersey. His children, beginning with his son John in 1815, were born in New Jersey.

### THOMAS CUTLER

Thomas Cutler was James McMullen's tenant on the western third of Bloomsbury in 1782 and was still there in 1801. His wife was the daughter of John VanGaskin. John VanGaskin, Jr., her brother, may have built Cutler's house, for he was reported to have been present while the house was being built, and his estate included a significant kit of carpentry tools when he died shortly thereafter.

In May 1784, Cutler asked the Orphans Court for permission to buy the widow's third, about 35 acres, of the John VanGaskin estate land. He already owned the share of Nicholas VanGaskin, the eldest son. Francis Denney was Cutler's surety in the petition to the court.

Denney also went surety for the widow Van Gaskin in her petition for guardianship of three children, Sarah, Thomas, and Joseph, who were under 14 years of age.

Francis Denney also bought the share assigned to John VanGaskin, the minor son. In the same year, Cutler sold to Francis Denney the 34.75 acres his wife had inherited from her father.

### FRANCIS DENNEY

Francis Denney (1738-1812), son of Phillip Denney II, was a landowner and real-estate entrepreneur. He married Sarah Nash in 1774. He was administrator of John Durham's estate in 1789 - 1796, and acquired the western two-thirds of Bloomsbury in 1799 and 1801. During his lifetime, Denney asserted his influence in the personal affairs of many neighbors, some of whom were his debtors or tenants. In the course of his many business transactions, he accumulated a fortune that he was able to parcel out among his heirs.

Denney's role as John Durham's executor gave him the right to dispose of a large holding around the present Bishop's Corner near Cheswold. Even though Durham had named another executor in his will, Denney persuaded the court that he should be installed instead.

During his lifetime, Francis Denney accumulated farms in New Castle and Kent counties, so that when he died he had more farms than children. He directed that his sons should receive the larger share of his property, but saw that his daughters would be provided for. Susannah received the western two thirds of Bloomsbury, except for about five acres granted to Francis Denney, Jr.

Immediately after Francis Denney died in 1812, his widow Sarah (1751-1830) released her lifetime right of dower in a third of the whole estate, which gave her five children immediate control of all the land their father had left them.

### SAMUEL EXELL, SR.

The early life of Bloomsbury's second owner has not been chronicled, but he may have come from the upper Eastern Shore



of Maryland. Samuel Exell's widowed mother, Prudence, married Robert Carr, an innholder of Salisbury (Duck Creek). She inherited several town lots from Carr, which her son later inherited.

He married Sarah Raymond, daughter of a prosperous Duck Creek farmer. Samuel and Sarah Exell sold Carr's real estate to George Stevenson, the surveyor who would handle the regranting of Bloomsbury. Samuel signed the deed in his handwriting, while Sarah made her mark. None of his children would be able to sign their names.

Thomas Williams sold him the Bloomsbury tract in 1738. In 1741, he obtained a warrant for 100 acres of marsh at the mouth of Hirons Branch and, the same day, a warrant for resurvey of Bloomsbury. Stevenson carried out the surveys, making adjustments to allow Exell to claim land overlapping Hillyard's Adventure.

In May 1746 he sold 130 upland acres of Bloomsbury "poplar land" to Edward Joy. In the 1748 assessment, he received a rating of "12," which placed him squarely in the middle range of Duck Creek Hundred landowners.

He died in 1753. His movable estate was valued at £47/18/10, but Presley Raymond, his brother-in-law and administrator, reported that he had to disburse an additional £17/5/3 above the total to settle debts. It would be sixteen years before his estate could finally be settled, since there were very young children, at least one of whom was less than five years old.

During her widowhood, Sarah lived in a log house on the east end of Bloomsbury, which actually stood on the neighboring Hillyard's Adventure tract. The landowner, Abraham Allee, knew about the overlap, but refused to disturb his poor relation's squat while she lived. His grandson would be less charitable a generation later to a tenant.

### SAMUEL EXELL, JR.

Samuel Exell, Jr., was born before 1750, probably in the family cabin on the east end of the Bloomsbury tract. There is no evidence that he ever married or traded in land. He could not

write his name.

Exell lived out his days in the small, dilapidated log house on Bloomsbury. He made his will in July 1783, and died before August 20. His movable property went to his sister Prudence's daughter, Mary McFarlin, and his land went to his "cousin and only friend," John Allee. His brother in law, Patrick Conner, cultivated the farm.

### JOHN SISCO (FRANCISCO)

The Francisco family, who concurrently went by the name Sisco, were in Kent County before the middle of the eighteenth century, at which time they were already intermarried with the families now identified as the Kent County Lenape community. The family name has been documented on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in the seventeenth century, among free people of color identified consistently as Native Americans.

In Kent County, the Sisco name appears in the records before mid-century. Thomas Consealor's daughter Elizabeth married a John Sisco before 1739. In 1756, a John Sisco petitioned Kent County Orphans Court for custody of his brother's orphaned child "till such time as it will be fit to bind out to some trade." Neither the name nor the sex of the child nor the name of the brother is identified in the petition; the signature is firm and reflects education.

Sisco family members were leaders of the emigrant Nanticoke Indian group who chose to leave the lower Eastern Shore to settle along the upper Susquehanna.

Abraham Sisco and Jacob "Sinoscoe" were among the Nanticoke delegates who appeared before Governor Hamilton at Philadelphia in 1760 on behalf of their people then living in the Susquehanna valley (Weslager 1948:147).

A John "Siscomb" was among the Nanticokes from the Susquehanna refuge who visited the Eastern Shore of Maryland in 1767 to invite the remaining members of their group to move north (Weslager 1948:150).

**An inventory of all the goods and chattels of Samuel Whitman  
Dec'd appraised the third day of March 1783 by us the Subscribers**

To his wearing apparel .....	8	0	0
Best bed and furniture £10 ..... one bed and dito £7/10 .....	17	10	0
1 Coverlid 20/..... Quantity of old pewter 40/..... Dish 40/ Table 3/9.....	5	3	9
2 old chests 7/6..... 2 old wheels 22/6 real 10/ earthen & tea ware 7/6.....	2	7	6
1 old tea kittle 10/..... pair of steelyards 10/ 13 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> lb of thread 49/8.....	3	09	8
1 gun 22/6..... 18 lb of toe 9/..... pair of flat irons and old box do 7/6.....	1	19	0
1 looking glass 45/..... small dito 5/..... slate 2/.....	2	12	0
6 Rush bottomed chairs 12/..... fire shovel and tongs 5/.....	0	17	0
bag with 35 lb of lard 28/..... woodenware 10/..... 2 Iron pots and hooks 10/.....	2	8	0
1 frying pan 2/6..... hogshead and barrel 7/6..... bag 2/6.....	0	12	6
1 old bed 40/..... old iron and trumpery 3/..... Wooling wheel 12/6.....	4	2	6
1 saddle 40/ old ax 5/ trumpery 7/6..... 100 bushels corn £15/3.....	17	2	6
5 lb of wool 7/6..... crosscut saw 20/..... 368 lb of meat hung to dry £12/5/4.....	13	12	10
1 old slay 45/..... Sopotub and soap 5/..... 2 old casks 7/6.....	2	17	6
7 bushels of flaxseed and cask 20/.....	1	0	0
2 cows and calf £5..... Bull 3/10..... 2 cows £8.....	18	5	0
3 poor yearlings 40/.....	2	0	0
29 head of hogs £10-0-0..... iron tooth harrow & flax break 25/.....	11	5	0
old gray mare £10..... Sorrel dito 3 years old £18.....	25	10	0
mare Colt 1 yr old £7-10..... old gray horse £8.....	15	10	0
9 head of sheep £3-12..... 400 sheaves of corn blades 40/.....	5	12	0
1 plow 25/..... Rotted flax 40/..... Top stack 10/.....	3	15	0
<sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> part of a grind stone..... bedstead 3/9..... old cart 10/.....	5	7	6
Spoon mould 7/6..... 5 knives and forks 7/6..... horse hide 2/6.....	0	17	6
half of 48 bushels of wheat sown in the ground.....	30	0	0
half of 2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> bushels of rye sown.....	1	4	0
old grubing hoe 2/6.....	-	2	6

Silas Snow

204 3 3

James Raymond

The Sisco, Consealor and Durham families were closely related. John Durham died in 1788, leaving three sons, Isaiah, William and Whittington, and four daughters, Sarah Sisco, Letitia LaCount, Elizabeth Consealor and Hannah Consealor. A son-in-law of John Durham, named John Sisco, died in 1791, leaving a considerable estate.

John Francisco of Bloomsbury was listed in the 1800 census, labelled “N,” with seven free nonwhites in his household in Little Creek Hundred between Muddy Branch and the great road.

In the 1803-1804 reassessment, John Sisco was identified as occupying 134.5 acres of Francis Denney’s land, the western two thirds of Bloomsbury. He apparently moved there about the time Denney acquired the property, displacing Thomas Cutler on the western third.

Around 1803, Bloomsbury tenant John Sisco married Mary, widow of Isaiah Durham, who brought nine children and a substantial dowry to the marriage. She was listed in the

1800 census with “N” after her name and eleven nonwhites in her household.

When Mary administered Isaiah’s estate, William VanStarvon went bond for £250 to ensure her performance. When Mary remarried, VanStarvon petitioned to be released because Mary and married a “mulatto.” Such varying perceptions of race perfectly exemplify the environment of racial confusion that prevailed at the time. Given these conflicting eyewitness accounts, it is impossible at this time for a researcher to determine the actual racial background of the individuals involved.

Isaiah Durham’s children, listed in the estate accounts, were named Pheby, William, Elijah, Margaret, Isaiah, Rebeca, Jeremiah, John and George. The merged family would have contained as many as 15 persons, depending upon the number of children who still were living at home. Far from being a burden, a house full of children provided a workforce for the labor-intensive activities of agriculture.

## DAVID GRIFFIN

David Griffin married Mary (Polly) Exell and died early in 1770. William Cook, the principal creditor, was awarded letters of administration on his estate 23 April 1770, and filed administration accounts in 1772. The inventory of the estate was valued at £11/7/2.

## THE LACOUNTS

The LaCount surname entered the Cheswold community records late in the eighteenth century. In 1796, Patrick Conner of Pumpkin Neck went bond for William, son and administrator of Thomas LaCount, a farmer of Duck Creek Hundred who had been married to Letitia, John Durham's daughter. The widow, Hester, renounced her right to administer the estate. Thomas LaCount had signed his name, but his son William signed the bond with a mark.

Elizabeth LaCount was identified on Carroll Town Neck by the 1800 census taker as a head of household without racial designation who had only free nonwhites in her household. Samuel LaCount appeared in the Mispillion Hundred census as the white (or not nonwhite) head of an all-white household.

## JEREMIAH & AGNESS LOATMAN

The Loatman family today are recognized as Native American descendants, who have been associated with the Kent County Lenape community since the eighteenth century. The first Loatman land in Kent County was located between the farms of William Handsor and John Durham, patriarchs of the community, on the headwaters of the St. Jones River. On 7 October 1735, Samuel Tharp obtained a warrant for 250 acres called "New Years Chance" on the north branch of Dover River between the tracts "Concord" and "Providence." The survey was returned 10 April 1736. On 4 February 1740, he conveyed it to Joseph Butler (Deed Book M1, page 100).

On November 12, 1739, Nicholas

Powel and his wife Rebecca conveyed 100 acres to John Loatman on the northwest branch of Dover River. The deed referred back to the deed from John Housman 17 November 1733 (Kent County Deed Book M-1, page 57).

On August 10, 1741, John Loatman and Esther his wife conveyed to Philip Lewis 100 acres on Dover River adjoining "Concord" tract and White's land. The Loatmans signed with marks. Witnesses were Benjamin Johnson and Samuel Ridgway, both of whom signed with marks.

John Loatman died in 1747. His widow, Esther (or Hester), signed with a mark, but his son Jeremiah wrote his own name on the administration bond. Other securities were Philip Lewis and William Rees (Probate file). Among the effects were books and shoemaker's tools.

John Loatman's daughter Elizabeth and her husband George Howard, sold Thomas Murphey, blacksmith, her interest in "New Year's Chance," on February 14, 1753 (Deed Book O-1, page 173). On August 15 of the same year, Thomas Murphey and Margaret his wife conveyed their interest in the 100-acre estate (Deed Book O-1, page 199). Witnesses were John Housman and a person named John Loatman. This John obviously is not the father of Elizabeth, and she is not known to have had a brother by that name.

John Loatman's children were Jeremiah, Alexander, Elizabeth Steward, and Mary Carey. On 11 November 1757, Jeremiah Loatman and Agness his wife joined with Joseph and Mary Carey in a deed to Abraham Moor of Kent County. The deed referred to a parcel called "New Year's Chance" adjacent to "Concord" on the north side of the main branch of Dover River. Alexander Loatman, "shoe maker" conveyed his claim to a share in "New Years Chance" to Abraham Moor on August 7, 1758 for £16 (Deed Book P, page 82). Jeremiah also bought the share of George and Elizabeth Steward. All signed with their marks except Jeremiah (Deed Book P, page 42).

When Jeremiah Loatman died around 1761, he left a widow, Agness, and daughters Elizabeth, Susannah, Martha, and Hester.

Jeremiah Loatman's probate record includes a payment from Alexander Loatman, his brother (Probate file). Agness promptly married William Sappington, whose claim to ownership of the project area was disputable at best.

On August 26, 1767, Agness asked the Orphans Court for permission to sell William Sappington's land in order to support Loatman's four daughters (Orphans Court case, William Sappington Estate). The same day, she filed for letters of administration on the estate (Probate file). Samuel Whitman joined Agness on the administration of both husbands' estates.

The Loatmans were respected in the community, even though they were mostly landless. A near neighbor to Bloomsbury was Jacob Loatman, described by Thomas Tilton as a "poor, honest, and inoffensive man." He gave evidence in 1767 about the boundaries of the Axell property (Kent County Chancery case R#3).

Another Loatman, Benjamin, lived nearby. His administrators filed for letters of administration 9 November 1768. The administration bond was executed by John and Jonathan Allee, who were near neighbors of the project area. The inventory was made by John VanGaskin, a cousin of the Allees who later built a house for his brother-in-law Thomas Cutler in the project area, and Jonathan Raymond, who probably was Mrs. Axell's brother or nephew (Probate file). It was a very tight community.

Jeremiah Loatman's race is not specified in the record, but in the 1800 census, every Loatman in Kent County is listed as "N" with only nonwhites in the family. Today's Loatman family is among the Lenape inhabitants of Cheswold and New Jersey. Agness later married Samuel Whitman of Little Creek Hundred, who had been surety when she administered the estates of her two other

husbands. Whitman was financially better off than the first two husbands, and when he died in 1783.

Her daughter Elizabeth Loatman was one of the witnesses to her stepfather's will when he made it in 1776. Agness and Samuel were parents of a son Jonathan and a daughter named Savory, who married Stokely Morgan. In all records relating to Agness and her husbands there is no mention of race. Her three literate husbands were from landowning families, and her Loatman in-laws all married into white families. The nonwhite label in the Loatman census returns therefore must spring from some source other than mixing with African Americans. Instead, it most likely arose from perceived nonwhite, probably Indian, ancestry.

Agness did well financially on the third marriage. Her husbands were literate, even though she was not. Loatman's family had land, but sold it when the parts were too small to divide among the heirs. Sappington's slender claim to the project area could not have brought much money to the widow, but Whitman was substantial and well established, with generations of landed money behind him.

## JOHN JOY

Edward Joy was a resident of St. George's Hundred when he started assembling his properties on Duck Creek in 1743. He assembled a plantation from parts of Pearman's Choice and Golden Grove tracts.

Edward Joy bought the north part of Bloomsbury in 1746 from Samuel Exell and left it to his son John. When John made his will, he left his property to his sons Edward and William and two of his daughters, Jean and Ellinor, in equal shares.

The fifth child, Rachel, wife of Phillip Denney, was written out of the will, because she introduced dancers and revellers into his house. His will was probated in June 1786.

Edward Joy, John's son, was the heaviest taxpayer among the Pumpkin Neck

residents who could be identified in the 1800 tax list reprinted at the end of this chapter.

#### PRUDENCE MACEY

Prudence Exell first married John MacFarland, who precipitated a local incident when he took the roof off the Sappington house in order to drive the widow out. He died in 1769, when his estate was appraised at £34/4/6.

Mary McFarland was the daughter of Prudence Exell and John MacFarland. Timothy Hart and Mary MacFarland were married by the Rev. John Patton July 6, 1789.

Prudence married John Macey before 29 November 1770. This may be the same John christened in Shrewsbury Parish, Kent County, Maryland, January 24, 1746-1747, son of Thomas and Mary Macey (Wright 1983: 13). On July 13, 1796, letters of administration were issued on Macey's estate to his eldest son, John. The inventory was valued at £135/12/0. When John Anderson, later the administrator, distributed the estate, it contained £31/17/12

Prudence was dead before December 6, 1796, when Patrick Conner asked for a division of her estate. Conner claimed that he had obtained the daughter's share. The estate had been paying rent to Patrick Conner, probably for the share he held in the right of their half-sister.

#### THE MCMULLENS

James McMullen's will was proved November 12, 1784. A codicil, which he never signed, would have caused the project area to descend immediately to Martha, his daughter. Instead, the descent was conditioned on a property swap among her brothers.

Martha McMullin was a minor when her father died, and the farm remained in the hands of her guardians. In 1795, the guardians asked for commissioners to re-establish the boundaries of Bloomsbury. The testimony gathered by the commissioners provided considerable colorful data about the people and the land.

On Christmas day, 1801, Martha deeded to Francis Denney a 75-acre tract which was

then still in the tenure of Thomas Cutler. This was entirely within the project area, which probably contained the house Cutler's brother-in-law had built for him.

#### WILLIAM SAPPINGTON

William Sappington was the younger son of Nathaniel Sappington II of nearby Cecil County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He witnessed the will of Ann Day in Kent County, Maryland, in 1742. He may have moved to Delaware shortly thereafter.

In 1749, William Sappington gave a promissory note at Philadelphia to Jacob Spike in the amount of eight pounds sixpence, for some merchandise he bought. He later incurred another obligation of 26 shillings. Spike finally sued Sappington in the Kent County court, which appointed a jury to set the amount of damages. The jury awarded Spike damages of eight pounds sixpence, plus sixpence for his costs.

William Sappington was in the Pumpkin Neck vicinity as early as 1758, when he witnessed the will of Joseph Thompson, who lived across Hirons Branch from the project area. Sappington was unable to defend his title to land at the head of Hirons Branch that he claimed during the widowhood of Sarah Exell.

The land dispute apparently began when the Barren Hope and Bloomsbury tracts were resurveyed in 1746 and county deputy surveyor George Stevenson claimed what he believed to be vacant land. No vacancy actually existed, but Stevenson sold his warrant to Sappington, who moved onto the property.

He married Agness, widow of Jeremiah Loatman, who brought four daughters to the marriage. Jeremiah Loatman's letters of administration were granted to his widow June 22, 1761.

According to recollection of Daniel Morris in a 1795 deposition, Sappington's house stood about a hundred yards from the southwest corner gum tree of the Bloomsbury tract.

## THE VANGASKINS

John VanGaskin, the elder, died in 1776, and his estate was finally settled in 1783. His daughter married Thomas Cutler, who would become administrator of the estate of his widow, Sarah. The home farm on Dawson's Branch, just south of the project area, was

divided among his heirs and sold, mostly to Francis Denney, in pieces. John VanGaskin, Jr., died during the winter of 1780-1781. He left carpenter's tools in his inventory, and eyewitnesses have placed him on the site of Bloomsbury tenant Cutler's house under construction a few years earlier.

### 1800 Federal Census, Carroll Town Neck, Duck Creek Hundred

(First column is the individual's county tax basis, derived from the 1800 county levy)

The basis of taxation always includes a head tax valued, for computation purposes, at £50. Female heads of household were not taxed, but widows' property was assessed under the name of their husbands' estates.

Tax	Heads of Households	White males (columns 1 to 5)					White females (columns 6 to 10)					nonwhite	
		column number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		<10	10-15	16-25	26-44	45 +	<10	10-15	16-25	26-44	45 +	free	slave
	Saml Reese .....N												4
51/17/6	Wm Raisin .....N												5
50	Phebe Allee.....N												2
375/0/0	Robert Shorts (Shortess)...1		1		1	3		1	1				
963/5	Abram Taylor Senr.....		1	1		1			1		1		2
	Isaac Taylor.....	1			1				1		1		
	Mary Trusty.....N												1
1048/10	Mary Thompson.....	1					1			1	1		
	Sarah Thompson.....	1		1	1		2		2		1		
54/10	Thomas Thompson.....				1		3	2		1			1
66/10	Thomas Foster [Forester?]1	2		1					1				
391/19	John Anderson.....	3	2		1			1	1	1			
	William Truax.....				1	1	1		1	1			
115/2/6	John Jamieson.....		1		1		2	1		1			
	Richard Morris.....				1		1	1	1	1			
2122/18/9	James Robinson.....					1							
	Joseph Jarmon.....		2			1	2	2	2		1		
230/15	Isaac Truax.....	4		2	1		1	1	1	1			3
	John Green.....	2			1				1				
309/11/3	James Robinson Jr.....	1		1	2			2			2		3
80/17/6	Samuel Conner.....	1		1					1				1
deleted	Paddy Conner.....	1	1	1		1	1	1		1			1
176/4	Alexander Graham.....			3			2				1		4
192/2/6	Samuel Jones.....	1			1		1	1	1				
800/1/8	John Denney.....	1		1	1		1	1	1				
	Elizabeth Weldon.....	1	1				1		1		1		
	Silvia.....N												2
	Elizabeth LaCount*												3
	John Rutter.....	2	2		1		1	1		1			
	Thomas Prettyman.....			1				1		1			
841/11/8	Capt. Peter Hawkins.....	2		2	1		3		1	1	1		2
437/5	William Hawkins.....	2		1	1				2				1
60	Moses Thompson Jr.....	2			1	1	1		1				
50	John Foreacres.....	1	1	1				1	1				
69/15	Thomas Macey.....	1	1		1		1			2			
	Richard Burchall.....			1			1		1		1		
	Richard Curtis.....N												4
	William Harden.....N												5
65/10	Samuel McKee.....	2				1					1		
85	John Holliday.....	1		1					1				
923/6/8	Thomas Hawkins.....		1			2		1		1			
	Daniel Newnam.....	1			1			1		1			
	Richard Newell.....	3	1		1				2				
68/15	Robert Severson.....			1	2		1	1	2		1		1
	Phillip Philemon.....		1		1			1	1	1			

\* Elizabeth LaCount does not appear in the tax list, but Thomas LaCount "N" is assessed at 50.

1375	Thomas Jamison.....	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	John Severson.....	1	1		1		1	1		1				
	Mary Severson.....	2								1				
	Mary Bennett.....	1								1				
166/15	Daniel Morris.....			1	1									
	Betty Toogood.....N												4	
	David Price.....	1	1	1	1		2	1	1					
115/1	William Robinson.....	1	2	1	1	1		2	1		1			
225	James David.....	1	3		2		1	2	1	1	1	1		1
179/3	Moses Thompson, Sr.....1	2			1	1		2	1	1		1		
	John Starling.....	2		1	1		1		1		1			
183/5	James Morris.....					1		1	1	2	1			2
56/15/15	Robert Robinson.....	1	2		1		1							
58/10	William Thompson.....	1	1		1		1			1				
50	James Wells.....	1			1		1	1	1		1			
59/8/9	John Anderson, Jr.....			2			1	1	1					
143/12/6	Thomas Reed.....		2		1		1	1		1				1
50	John Edwards.....	3			1			1	1					
	Jonathan Sherman.....	1			1			1	1		1			
178/7/6	John Norton.....	2			2			1		2				
185/15	Christopher Cole.....	1			1		2	2	1	1				
50	George Dobson.....		1		1		3	1	1	1				
	Mary Porter.....	1	1						1		1			
659/9	John Truax.....	3	1	1	1			1			1			1
	John Nail.....	1			1		2			1				
	George Harris.....	1		1		1	1	1			2			
	Hannah Sherman /John Morris.....		1		1			1	1	1	2	1		
106/6/8	Michael Rice [Reece?].	2	1	1			1	1						
119/7/6	Elisha Robinson.....	2			1			1		1				
242	Thomas Rothwell.....				1		1	1	1			1		2
55	Seth Brinkle.....N												6	
83/13/6	George VanPelt.....		2		1			1	1					1
	John Dade.....				1					1				
301/18/9	Evan Denney.....	1			1						1			
455/18	Phillip Denney of Joseph.....			2			1		1					
160	James Barrett [Barnett?].	3		1	1				2					
120/8/6	John Farlow.....		1	1	1				2					
3580/1/10	Edward Joy.....	1	1		1				1			1		4
	John Jefferson.....N												4	
161	William Denney.....	2			1			1	2			8		
11625/17/6	William Collins.....				1		2		2			3		3
75	Israel Peterson.....	2	1	3	1		3	1	1	1		2		
143/2/6	John Brown.....	1			2		4			1				1
	Abram Truax.....				1		1			1				
56/5	John Durham.....N												3	
64/10	Pompey Denney.....N												7	
155/16/8	Robert Patterson.....				1	1		2		1	1			1
	Israel Peterson Layton.....		1	1						1	1			
Totals			77	43	36	59	19	64	47	54	45	24	68	30
Total white males:		234	Total white females:		234									

### 1779 Duck Creek Hundred Assessment List

Listed below are relevant entries from the 1779 Duck Creek Hundred assessment list, now at the Historical Society of Delaware, Interestingly for the race-perception issue, there is only one person on the entire list for whom a racial designation is made, and that is Ned Gibbs, Negro, who was taxed at £6.

Sarah Allee.....20  
John Allee.....40

Patrick Conner.....6  
William Conselor.....4  
Thomas Cutler.....3  
Elijah Conselor.....8  
Thomas Butcher.....4  
Jno Conselor.....1  
Whittington Durham.....15  
John Denney.....12  
Joseph Denney.....15  
Francis Denney.....20  
Christopher Denney 35

Isaiah Durham.....8  
William Durham.....15  
John Durham Jr.....8  
Evan Denney.....6  
Jno Joy.....25  
Daniel Macey.....10  
Jno Macey.....4  
James Raymond esq.....50  
Edward Rees.....25  
Robert Rees.....20  
John VanGaskin.....12