

THE DAWN OF HUNTERDON

By Norman C. Wittwer

The subject of pre-history, as applied to the land now embraced by the borders of Hunterdon, is generally associated with the ethnology of the local Indian tribes. One might introduce the history Hunterdon by letting the land emerge from mist-shrouded eons of geological and paleontological development, the treatment, of necessity, being of a more general nature than that which this booklet purposes to present. It is more appropriate, in these few pages, to confine our attention to subjects which belong to Hunterdon alone or otherwise contribute to her history.

That the Indian dwelt in present Hunterdon County previous to the white man's coming is well known. It is apparent in the abundance of relics which have been and are yet being found, plus the names, still in such, which they gave to streams, hills and villages. We know the **Indians called themselves Leni Lenape, Or "Original People,"** and **that the colonists renamed them Delaware**, after the river along or near which most of them lived. How and when they reached New Jersey are questions which remain to be answered. Archeological evidence indicates that New Jersey has been inhabited for at least five thousand years, though it fails to establish an ancestral tie between the Lenape and the inhabitants of the Archaic Period. According to which is reputed to be Lenape legend, they originated in Canada and migrated through western New York to Ohio, thence eastward toward the Atlantic, arriving in New Jersey only a few hundred years before the European colonists. Attempts to trace the migration archeologically have led to no definite conclusions.

The Lenape nation was composed of three tribes, the Minsi in the north, the Unami in the central portion and the Unalachtigo in the southern part of the state. The language of the Lenape was divided into two dialects, one used by the Unami and the Unalachtigo and the other by the Minsi. It has never been determined whether present-day Hunterdon was under the domination of the Minsi or the Unami. The confusing intermingling of names belong to the two dialects leads to the possible conclusion that this was border territory, perhaps first in possession of one tribe and then in possession of the other. One bit of evidence does exist, however, which mentions that Minsi in connection with present Hunterdon. On his 1717 parchment map of the Society Line (separating the West Jersey Society's Great Tract from the Willocks Indian Purchase), James Alexander shows a "Minisink Path" along Cold Brook and crossing the line about two miles north of Oldwick. One authority on the Indians of New Jersey writes, "—it appears on the coming of the Dutch that the Raritan (Unami) held dominion in the Raritan watershed. The Sanhicans (Unami) inhabited the Delaware Valley in the vicinity of Trenton, and the Musconetcong (Minsi) the Sourland and Cushetunk mountains and the plateau region north of Flemington"

Most of the Indian names still in use are easily recognized as such. None would question the Indian origin of Wickecheoke, Lockatong, Nishesakawick, Mulhockway, Neshanic or Cushetunk. One might be unsure about Rockaway. Who, on the other hand, would look to a Lenape dictionary of such seemingly English names as Lamington (Alamatunk,) Prescott (Piscot) Brook, or Locktown (probably Lockatong). Yet these too were of Indian origin.

A survey conducted between 1912 and 1915 disclosed four hundred and sixty-two camps, villages, burial sites and rock shelters within Hunterdon County. Principal concentrations

were in the Delaware River Valley (thirty-eight sites), Flemington area (eighty-two sites), Oldwick area (fifty-nine sites), and the High Bridge area (forty-four sites). Nearly every old Hunterdon family has gathered some artifacts; arrow and spear points, knives, scrapers, hammers, axes, net sinkers and bits of pottery are typical finds. The Hunterdon County Historical Society has in its possession two major collections. The John C. Thatcher collection is a display of several thousand pieces collected largely on the Thatcher farm, west of Flemington. The Deats collection, principally gathered by the late Hiram E. Deats on his Minneakoning Farm at Flemington Junction, is properly described as a research collection, it too comprising several thousand pieces. From these articles and from historic accounts we have come to know much of the habits, customs, and daily pursuits of our red-skinned predecessors.

Many Indian paths, some important, and some minor, crisscrossed the county. One of the more important was the Raritan path which followed up the Raritan to Racahovawalaby (Bound Brook), thence to Tuccaramahacking at the forks of the Raritan, thence to Whitehouse, Potterstown, Lebanon, Annandale, to Minsolackaway near High Bridge, thence through the pass by Glen Gardner to the village of Pelouese at Hampton. This path led ultimately to the forks of the Delaware at Easton and was a trade route and one followed by early explorers in their search for minerals in the mountains of Pennsylvania. The Malayelick path originated in the Village of Assampink (Trenton), went through Wishalamosney (Rocktown to Essakauqueamenshehikkon near Quakertown, through Pittstown, thence west of Pattenburg to Bloomsbury and eventually to the village of Lopatcong (Phillipsburg). Another important east-west trail crossed from Pennsylvania at the old Indian Village of Nishalemensey (Lambertville), continued to Rocktown, Neshanic, Tuccaramahacking, Bond Brook, Elizabeth and Staten Island.

From the archeological evidences in Hunterdon alone that are mentioned above, one might suppose that the wilderness teemed with savages at the time of the coming of the white man, but such was not the case. Robert Evelin, writing of the present New Jersey in the 1640's, said, "I doe account all the Indians to be eight hundred." Other reliable estimates range up to two thousand natives. Indeed, this fact was exploited in a pamphlet of 1683 designed to attract settlers to East Jersey in which is stated "The Indian Natives in this country are but few, comparative to the Neighboring Colonies; and those that are there, are so far from being formidable or invincible and advantageous to (the) English..." Jasper Danckaerts, in 1679, made the following observation relative to land along the Delaware, "There are Quakers who either are more wise, or through poverty act so, who do not buy land on the east side of the (Delaware) river but buy on the west side where it is cheaper in consequence of the Indians being there."

The earliest written record of the Hunterdon area was probably the journal kept by one Beauchamp Plantagenet as he, in company with sire Edmund Ployden, marched, "lodged and cabinned together among the Indians" of New Albion (New Jersey) for seven years. Sir Edmund Ployden had been granted by Charles I in 1631, all of the land now included in New Jersey. He and other nobles, to whom the talk of democracy and opposition to the established church were so repugnant, planned a county palatine where they hoped to become lords in the new world. In Plantagenet's account of his travels, published in 1648 and entitled "New Albion," he writes of "the Raritan king whose seat is at a place called Mount Ployden twenty miles from the Sandhay Sea, and ninety from the ocean, next to Amara hill, the retired paradise of the children of the Ethiopian Emperor. --- a wonder, for it is a square rock, two miles compass, one hundred and fifty feet high, a wall-like precipice, a strait entrance, easily made invincible, where he keeps two hundred for his guards, and under is a flat valley all plain to plant and sow."

Some researchers have attempted to identify the above kingly seat with Hunterdon's Round Valley, some of Somerset's Chimney Rock or Neshanic Mountain. Others insist, however, that the place existed only in the imagination of the author. The late Charles A. Philhower who devoted more than half a century to the study of New Jersey Indians, has suggested that Round Valley might fit the location if the Sandhay Sea were meant Lake Hopatcong and if the distance from the ocean measured up the Delaware rather than across the land ... perhaps from the head of Delaware Bay.

The account of New Albion certainly touches the southern border of old Hunterdon and the access to it from the eastward. Reports flowing back from West India Company's investigation of the Pahaquarry Copper mines above the Delaware Water Gap during the same decade joined the Plantagenet's New Albion, and others soon follow in heralding the dawn of modern history in Hunterdon.

The ownership of the land by the Lenape was recognized by the English. This was undoubtedly more the result of convenience than of any altruistic concern for the welfare of the natives. By so doing, the way was cleared for purchasing lands for trifling amounts and thus extinguishing the Indian title without trouble or hard feelings. A law was passed by the General Free Assembly of West Jersey in March 1683 which provided "that no Person or Persons, shall presume to buy any tract or tracts of land, of, or from the Indians within this Province, without special Order and Authority to him and them given by the Governor and Commissioner." The intent of this law was to protect the Indians from too harsh treatment at the hands of cunning entrepreneurs by having the details of all transaction submitted for the approval of the Governor and Commissioners.

The first Indian purchase of Hunterdon County land was made in 1688, the last in 1758. The more important purchases were those of David Coxe in the southern part, the Lotting purchase in 1703 of lands laying on both side of the South Branch of the Raritan, the Lewis Morris purchase about 1710 of 100,000 acres along the northern border, and the Willock's Purchase in 1709 of about 18,000 acres between Holland's Brook, Cushetunk Mountain and Alamatunk (Pottersville).

There exists three very interesting manuscripts concerning the Willocks purchase. The warrant from Lieutenant-Governor Ingoldsby and the deed from Metamisco and Wataminian are preserved in the Office of the Secretary of the State in Trenton. The most interesting document, however, and one which has come to light and been identified only recently, is Willocks' account of expenses in making the purchases. This was prepared in 1716 to share the cost of the original purchase with James Logan and John Budd who in that year succeeded to only half of the tract. The transcript is below:

WILLOCKS' INDIAN PURCHASE

A tract of land in the Western Division of New Jersey lying to the Westward of the Plantations of the Eastern Division of said Province upon the Branches of Raritan

Dr

1708 November 17th

To Coll Ingoldsby for two Licenses one to myself and wife and the other to John Rudyard £ 6-0-0

Secretary Bass for P...orders thereon Licenses and Recording 2-16-0

1709 8 br 11th 12 & 13 Treating the Indians at Corse Vromes when I agreed with them 2-3-10½

Hoopers Negroes for my own two & Thomas Horse pasturing 4-6

Cash & Goods pd the Indians Viz:

Cash 8-0-0

6 white Blankets at 20/ 6-0-0

5 stroud water coates at 40/ 10-0-0

3 Kerzie coates making & Furniture at £1-11-6 4-4-6

1 made Coat promised & Given privately to Metamisco ye Indian who managed the sale For the rest 2-0-0

18 yards of Blew duffel at 7/6 6/16/0

5 Brass Kettles at 20/ 5-0-0

3 Gunes at 35/ 5-5-0

2 pistols afterwards bought of pretending they could not be gott 2-4-0

11 shirts Thread & making at 6/ 3-6-0

15 pair of Hose at 3/3 2-8-3

16 Hatchets at 3/ 3-12-6

a Cask of Gun Powder 1-15-0

22 Bares of Lead at 9d 16-6

40 Knives at 8d 1-6-8

a Cask of Rumm 2-0-0

a Barrell of Cyder 10-0

a Coat of my own to the Indian that Showed the Line 30/ and pd to Corse for Cloath to make him stockings 9/ 1-19-0

Thomas Folks for attending and Interpreting 3-0-0

Corss Vrom for his expense 0-12-0

1708 November

My own Expense about ye aforesaid Purchass Going to Burlington for Licenses 5days for Expense 1-10-0

1709 July	A week myself Tho; Folks & a Servant Looking upon the Land and find out the Owners in Order to be treated with Expense	1-10-0
Augt	An other journey to Thomas Folkes House & With him to the Sea Side to treat with one Of the Indians then there 6 days	1-4-0
	Going to N;York to by the Goods ___ with _____ & _____ being 5 days	1-13-0
	Victuall ye Indians at my house being very Numerous when the Goods were pd - - - - -	12- 0
9 th 14 th	pd Coll Cox for graving the returns of the Licenses	-12-0
	The Sectry for recording	6-0
	Interest of the above Sume being £92-03-3 ½ at 8 percent is near 7 years	51-1-3
		<hr/> £158-9-6 ½

Surveying Charges from May 28 to June 8th
In the year 1716

To	Thomas Folkes -----	3-0-0
	Ad: Lane -----	1-10-0
	Cash at Traphagens -----	1- 5-0
	To An Indian -----	-6
	Cross Vroom & his son-----	1- 8-6
	Mr. Allexander-----	10- 0-0

Beside Provisions Carried wth me & my own
Trouble & a servant to all the time

There are several points in the account worth noting. Corse Vroom lived in Somerset County at the confluence of the North Branch and South Branch of the Raritan, probably the white habitation closest to the purchase. Note particularly the secret deal with the Indian who managed the sale. A bit of deceit is acknowledge in the manner of the pistols were promised, but, resorting to a pretext, not delivered.

Paying an Indian to show the line implies that the Indian groups did possess distinct tracts. "Finding out the owners" says the same thing, but explicitly. It was apparently a collective ownership, since one or two Indians "managed the sale for the rest." Possibly in the number of certain items paid lies a clue to the number of adults (male adults) then living on the tract.

Indians are known to have traveled to the seashore in the summer to fish and dig clams. Apparently Metamisco or Wataminian spent summers at the sea side.

Adrian Lane was probably the first settler of Readington Village. From the above account, it would seem he may have arrived between 1709 and 1716. By 1717, he had erected a mill on Holland's Brook. (The Indians call this brook Amanmechunk. The present name has been in use

at least since 1688, and it is interesting to note that a lot bordering the brook was sold by Thomas Holland to Andrew Hamilton in 1687).

In the year, 1664, the English decided to seize New Netherland, which they held to be rightfully theirs, from the Dutch. In the mind of King Charles II, the deed once projected became an accomplished fact. This is made apparent by his granting to his brother James, Duke of York, all of the territory lying between the Delaware and the Connecticut Rivers in March, five months before the actual seizure was effected.

On June 24, 1664, still two months before the English took over, the Duke presented the land now the state of New Jersey to Sir John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. With this conveyance passed the last royal title to lands in New Jersey, thus making Berkeley and Carteret the only non-royal recipients of royal grants in this state. (The frequently-heard reference to individual farms having been devised by royal grant are in error. The error must likely arise from the careless reading of the old parchment deed, of which a typical beginning might be: "THIS INDENTURE made in the fourteenth year of the reign of our gracious sovereign, GEORGE the SECOND". Reference to the reign is made only by way of dating the instrument. The grantor whose name appears at the lower right will be every bit as much a commoner as the grantee.)

Ten years later, the joint, undivided proprietorship of Berkeley was sold to John Fenwick, "in trust for the use of Edward Byllynge." "Undivided" meant that the land was not divided between the owners, but rather that they shared the joint ownership of the whole. Byllynge, being in severe financial difficulties, turned over the management of the affairs of the "whole undivided half" of New Jersey to William Penn and two other Quakers. An agreement was reached between Byllynge and his trustees and Sir George Carteret on July 1, 1676, by which New Jersey was divided into East Jersey and West Jersey. Byllynge and the Trustees thus became the owners of a 4600 square mile tract lying to the westward of the partition line. The right of the Quaker proprietors to govern their colony was granted in 1680.

Next, the Trustees formed a stock company of one hundred shares or proprietries. Each share represented ownership of 1/100 of the nearly 3,000,000 acres in the province of West Jersey. Shares were valued at £350 each in the beginning. They were sold as whole and as fractional shares. In most cases, from two to eight persons joined in the purchase of a propriety. Of 120 odd known purchasers during the early period all but one were Quakers and all, with the exception of seventeen Irishmen and three Scots, were Englishmen.

Most of the proprietors sold off their holdings quickly as land dividends were awarded them. The large proprietor often found it profitable to dispose of this interest in fractional lots, since prospective settlers were not interested in thousands of acres. Owners of fractional proprietries often held an eighth, a sixteenth, a thirty-second or sixty-fourth. Often they held such shares only long enough to receive single dividends, which, at most, would be a few hundred acres each. On these they might settle, or they might sell to other settlers. Dividends on fractional shares thus often became individual farms or small estates.

The first dividend in West Jersey, by which holders of shares in the undivided whole could secure to themselves title to particular tracts, was authorized in 1681. A dividend of 5200 acres per share was declared, but only 3200 acres was to be allowed in the first "taking", all of this being below the Falls at Trenton. The second "taking" of the remaining 2000 acres was authorized in 1683 and included land above the Falls. The third "taking" of land on the basis of

5000 acres per share was made in 1708 and was considered as the second general dividend. Most of the original titles to Hunterdon lands were secured under the second and third takings. Most of the land in Hunterdon was taken up in large tracts and later reduced to farmsteads by division and sale. Typical early farm prices were £5 to £10 per one hundred acres.

Later declaration of dividends probably had little or no effect on Hunterdon, since all or nearly all of its land had already been taken up.

With the declaring of the land dividend and division of large tracts into farmsteads, the settlement of the country began and soon transformed the primeval wilderness into the energetic agricultural colony. To illustrate the rapidity of this transformation, consider the statement of George Fox, the Quaker divine who passed through the colony in 1672, "Then we had that great wilderness to pass through, since called West Jersey, not then inhabited by English." A journal entry by the Labadist envoy, Jasper Danckaerts, on 1679, "The falls could be made navigable on none side. As no Europeans live above the falls, they may so remain,". He was spending the night at the house of Mahlon Stacy who had already erected a mill on the Assampink. Danckaerts also noted that "Quakers live hereabouts in great numbers and daily increase." He, apparently, even while witnessing the rate of settlement, did not foresee the push up into present Hunterdon which was soon to come.

In 1703, the proprietors, with a view to increasing their holdings, appointed John Reading, John Wills and William Biddle as their agents to treat with the Indians above the Falls. They purchased from Copponockus a 150,000 acre tract. Reading, then of Gloucester, must have been favorably impressed with the country, for in the following year he purchased a plantation near Stockton which he named Mount Amwell after his home village in England.

Col. John Reading, father of Gov. John Reading, has been accorded the distinction of being the first settler of what is now Hunterdon County. Certain it is that he was one of the first. John Holcombe, in 1705 or shortly thereafter, settled in present Lambertville and was also among the earliest. Others followed, some from the southern part of the colony and some parading north from Hopewell. Ferries were soon established at Stockton and Lambertville. By 1714 there were enough settlers in Amwell to form a company of militia.

Also within the first two decades, 1704-1724, settlers began arriving from the eastward by way of the Raritan and its tributaries. These were the Dutch, and included Huguenots and Walloons and perhaps Germans, all of whom through association and intermarriage had essentially become Dutchmen themselves. Settlements were made along Holland's Brook, along Campbell's Brook (Pleasant Run) and at Three Bridges. Readington Township, in fact, became so predominantly Dutch that it was later referred to as "an outpost of the large Dutch Settlement of Somerset County".

Settlers from Monmouth, Burlington and further south were largely of English, Scotch, or Scotch-Irish extraction. English Baptist groups are said to have appeared on Spruce Run about 1738, at Baptistown in 1741 and Flemington by 1765. Quakers from Burlington County settled in the vicinity of Quakertown about 1730. English and Scotch Presbyterians lived near Ringoes and Mount Airy at an early date. Others resided in Kingwood and Bethlehem townships by about 1735 and at Mount Pleasant by 1750.

A new element in the settlement of Hunterdon made its appearance between 1715 and 1720. In this interval then began a trickle of German settlers across the southern border. This was soon

to become a torrent, so that Germans, by the mid-eighteenth century accounted for a large segment of Hunterdon's population. Toward the end of the 1720-1730 decade, Germans also began to appear in northern Readington and Lebanon Townships. These were members of a group of Palatines who had come to America in 1710 with Governor Robert Hunter. The purpose in bringing the Palatines was to produce naval stores in the pine forests of New York. After the collapse of the project, a group of these Germans settled in or near Franklin Township, Somerset County, before 1714. Chief among this group was one Balthasar (Baltes) Pickel, who for fifty years provided the civil and spiritual leadership of the community, even to the extent of building two churches at his own expense. By 1729 he had purchased a large tract west of Whitehouse and settled there. Others followed, probably attracted by the West Jersey Society's Great Tract nearby, on which they were able to lay out farms and build houses without any molestation by the absentee owners. Several years later, in 1735, the Society's agent, Lewis Morris, sent his son to enumerate the squatters on the tract and to induce them to sign leases. He found ninety-eight families, among whom were many Germans. He apparently had no difficulty in persuading the people to sign the leases, though later owners of the tract, meeting resistance when about the same business in 1755 made an example of a German family who had barred doors and windows at their approach. They removed the contents of the house, leveled the house and barn, and drove the family off the tract. All of the others signed with no further resistance.

A tradition exists which places German settlers in the northern part of the county about twenty years before they actually arrived. This is the account of a band of German emigrants bound for New York, whose ship was blown off course and landed in Philadelphia. Undaunted, this band set out overland to reach its intended destination, but were so taken by German Valley that they there stopped and stayed. This story has been traced to this source and found to be a traditional account given to one Franze Loher by descendants of some of the storied band and published by him in German in 1847. Historians considered this account apocryphal, at best a distorted version of the true story of the 1710 tar emigration.

Within a few years, the German tide from the South had joined that from the east, and together they and their descendents crossed into Morris, Warren and Sussex Counties. It has been estimated that by 1790, one third of the population of Hunterdon, Morris and Somerset was German.

In 1694, it was enacted by the Governor, Council and Representatives of West Jersey "that all Persones inhabiting in this province above the River Derwent (Assanpink) (being the Northern Boundary of the County of Burlington) shall belong and be Subject to the Jurisdiction of the Court of Burlington, until further Order of the General Assembly." By the County Act of 1710 the northern boundary of Burlington County was made the "northernmost and uttermost bounds" of the township of Amwell. Oscar M. Voorhees in his Exterior and Interior Bounds of Hunterdon County, quotes the royal patent setting off the township of Amwell in 1708 and ventures the opinion that the northern border of Amwell was the northern Lamington Falls above Pottersville. Evidence against this is the 1711 return of the survey of the West Jersey's Society's Great Tract which locates the tract as "Situat and being in the County of Burlington." This 100,000 acre tract included parts of Franklin, Readington and Tewksbury and all of Lebanon, Clinton, Bethlehem, Union, Alexandria and Holland Townships. **Thus, though some vagueness remains, it is certain that present Hunterdon lay entirely in Burlington County prior to 1714.**

The journey to Burlington was an exceedingly arduous one, which fact prompted the inhabitants of maidenhead to hold, on January 1, 1712, a Town meeting “to endeavor for the promoting of a County in the upper part of the Province.” Subscriptions for the financing of the project are recorded in the Maidenhead Town Book and ranged from two pounds downward. Perhaps it was a result of this meeting that a petition to this effect was circulated and submitted to the Governor and Council. A bill was prepared and given its first reading before the council on January 26, 1713/14. This was amended and resubmitted by a committee headed by John Reading. **It became law on March 11, 1713/14.** The bounds of the County as then erected included present day Sussex, Warren, and Morris Counties and a portion of Mercer County.

The name of the new County, Hunterdon, obviously honors Governor Hunter; probably being taken from the name of his old-world home, Hunterston, rather than being merely the addition of a suffix to his surname.

Following is a transcript of the act creating Hunterdon County:

AN ACT FOR ERECTING THE UPPER PARTS OF THE WESTERN DIVISION OF NEW JERSEY INTO A COUNTY.

Whereas the Inhabitants of the upper parts of the said Western-Division, have, by their Petition, set forth, that for many years last past their frequent attending the several Courts held in Burlington being at a very great distance from most of their Habitations, inconvenient and troublesome, as well as chargeable to the Inhabitants of the said Upper parts of the Western-Division, aforesaid, and to the great Detriment and Damage of the said Inhabitants. For the Removing of which Inconveniencys, and making of the said People more easie for the time to come, it is Humbly proposed and pray – that it may be Enacted.

And be it Enacted by the Governor, Council and General Assembly, and by the Authority of the same, That all and singular the Lands, and upper parts of the said Western-Division of the Province of New Jersey, laying northwards of or situate above the Brook or Rivolet, commonly called Assunpink, **be erected into a County, and it is hereby Erected into a County, Named, and from henceforth to be called, The County of Hunterdon;** and the said Brook or Rivolet, commonly known and called by the Name of Assunpink, shall be the Boundary Line between the County of Burlington, and the said County of Hunterdon.

And be it Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said County of Hunterdon shall have an enjoy all the Jurisdictions, Powers, Rights, Liberties, Privileges and Immunities whatsoever, which any other County within the said Province of New Jersey doth, may or ought of Right to Enjoy, excepting only the choice of Members, to Represent the said County of Hunterdon, in General Assembly, which liberty is herby suspended until Her Majesties Pleasure by further known therein, or that it shall be otherwise ordered by Act of Assembly.

And be it further Enacted by the Authority Aforesaid, That until such time that the said County of Hunterdon shall be allowed the Privilege of chusing Representatives of their own to serve in General Assembly, it shall and may be lawful to and for the Free-holders of the said County (being qualified according to law) from time to time, as occasion shall be, to appear at Burlington, or elsewhere in the said County of Burlington, and there to

vote and help to elect and chuse Representatives for the said County of Burlington, after the same manner as formerly, before the making of this Act, they were accustomed to do; and their said Votes shall be as good, and of the same validity and effect, as if the Person so Voting were properly Freeholders of the said County of Burlington, any Law, Custom usage to the contrary thereof notwithstanding.

And be it Enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all Taxes and Arrearages of such Taxes, that are already laid by Acts of General Assembly of this Province, which are all ready assessed and paid according to Directions of the said Acts formerly past for that purpose, and that all Persona concerned therein shall be under the same Restrictions and Penalties as are experts in the said Acts, in all Intents, Constructions and purposes, as if this Act had never been past.