

# **Colonel Daniel Coxe**

*Father of NJ Freemasonry*

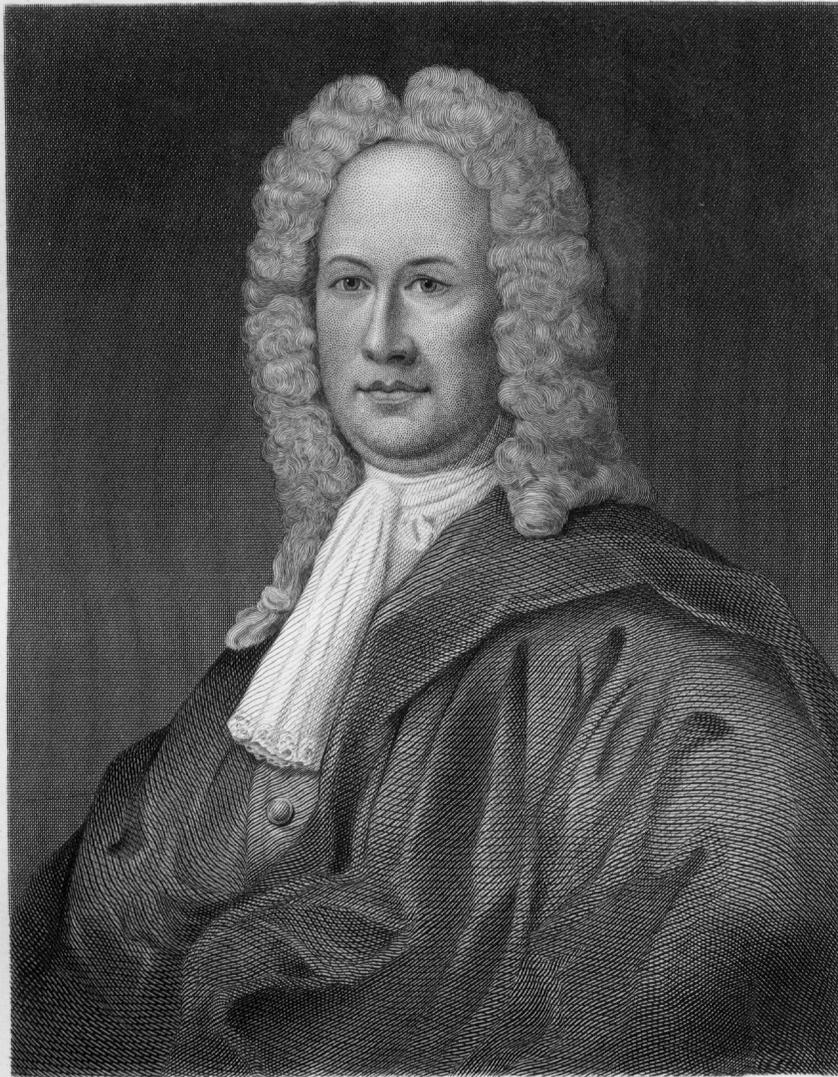
By

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COLONEL DANIEL COXE  
OF TRENTON.

FIRST GRAND MASTER OF THE FREEMASONS OF NEW JERSEY.

## Introduction

It was well past sundown on a hot humid night and along the banks of the river. Two men left the ferry docked on the river bank and headed up a trail leading into the woods. They were very familiar with the trails they needed to follow as their families had lived in this area for nearly forty-five years.

Their names were Thomas Smith and John Parke and they had a plan. The plan was for revenge and when seen to fruition, would force them to flee the place their families had called home for generations. After a half-hour hike through the woods they caught the scent of burning tar and knew they were near the meeting place. They broke into a small clearing and met up with ten friends who all smiled at their arrival. "This is going to be a great night, John" one of them mentioned.

"Are we all ready?", John replied.

"Aye" they all said.

One spoke out "How far to the houses?"

"The first one is down the trail about two furlongs." Thomas reported.

They smeared dirt and charcoal on their faces and clothes to disguise themselves. John gathered them close to the firelight and spoke one last time.

"You all do this of your own accord. You may not be able to stay here if you partake of this action. If you do, Tom and I can only hope that you will keep our names in confidence as we will keep yours.

Everyone agreed? Good. Get the buckets and sacks and let us go."

The group of twelve filled their buckets with hot tar and several grabbed sacks that lay near them on the ground. A couple lit torches and they all headed off down another trail.

A few minutes later they broke out of the woods near a large house. A hound dog tethered to a nearby tree bayed loudly at their arrival. Thomas ran down to the dog and tossed him a large meaty bone he had prepared earlier. This quieted the dog.

The group stared at the house for a minute. All the windows were dark. "Are you sure O'Guillon is here?" one of the companions asked.

John replied "Oh, he is here. See his horse over in the stables? He is here all right! Come we will enter through the rear door." No one questioned John as they knew he was familiar with the homestead. He knew it well for his family had lived here for many years.

They snuck around back and entered the homestead through the rear door. They passed through the pantry and dining room. John and Thomas left the others in the common room and headed into the bedroom. There was some ruckus and yelling heard before they returned dragging a stunned man by his feet. The group went quickly into action. They stripped the man, cursed at him and kicked him. They drenched him in hot tar still cursing his name and the name of his leader. Once covered from head to toe in the sticky tar, Thomas grabbed one of the sacks and dumped a load of chicken and goose feathers on the poor wretch. They continued to berate and beat him. Several of them dragged the man from the house. The remaining set torches to wood and cloth then rejoined the rest outside. John looked upon his home as flames began to appear in the windows. Soon the house was engulfed in fire.

One of the companions asked John, "What shall we do with him?"

“Leave him, he can cry to His’oner in shame. Thomas you have the final piece?”

Thomas reached into another large sack and pulled out a rope end. On the other end of the rope was a large dummy dressed in shirt and pants stuffed with hay. Thomas slung the rope over a nearby tree limb and hoisted the dummy a few feet off the ground. It swung like a hanged man. John put his finger into a pot of tar, walked up to the dummy, and wrote “C-O-X-E” on its shirt. He walked over to the beaten man and pulled his head up so he could see the effigy swing on the rope.

“Tell His’oner that next time it will be him swinging on the end of the rope!”

The group fled into the woods with the buckets of tar and sacks of feathers. They spent the rest of the night visiting several households in the area and serving the same punishment to each of its inhabitants.

The above is a fictional account of an actual event that took place over three hundred and fifty years ago in an area now known as Hopewell, NJ.

Tarring and feathering and hanging effigies were old English ways of showing contempt for corrupt officials when there was no legal recourse that could be followed. John Parke and Thomas Smith were at that point. They had had their lands taken from them and had no legal recourse to regain the places their families had called home for generations. They and their families were forced to move, penniless, to other areas as far away as Virginia.

Who was the person they blamed for this action? Who was the person they hanged in effigy? It was none other than our founding father and the Father of Freemasonry in New Jersey, Col. Daniel Coxe

## Col. Daniel Coxe

Though we consider Daniel Coxe as one of the founding fathers of Freemasonry in our country, information about him is sporadic at best. Yet we have a Masonic Medal of Honor named after him. If you asked most Freemasons in New Jersey, “Who was Daniel Coxe?”, especially the newer Masons, you would probably receive an answer like “Who?” Some knowledgeable brothers could probably answer that he was the first Provincial Grand Master of New Jersey. They would be right, but do they know anything else?

This paper originally began as a Trestleboard article. I set off to search for some info on our first Provincial Grand Master and the man emblazoned on the Coxe Medal. The readily available information was common and often repeated. Upon further research, I found some very useful information that will shed light on this figure on our history.

Very little is known about the day to day activities of Col. Daniel Coxe. Most of the information available is found through correspondences written by or about him and by researching individuals associated with him. He was a very important figure in the early history of New Jersey. He was born to a prominent family in England and traveled to the American Colonies at the age of 28.

In 1730, Col. Daniel Coxe was appointed the first Provincial Grand Master of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. An action that not only acknowledged Daniel’s notoriety but also, for the first time, acknowledged Freemasonry on the continent.

In addition to giving information about the life and background of Col. Daniel Coxe, one of the questions that I wished to answer by writing this paper is, why was he selected to be the first Provincial

Grandmaster in the Colonies? What set him apart from other prominent Freemasons living in the New World at that time?

To answer these questions we have to start with Col. Coxe's Family.

### **Dr. Daniel Coxe**

Daniel Coxe was born in April 25, 1673, in London, the son of Dr. Daniel Coxe.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Daniel Coxe was a very prominent in English High Society. A well-educated and published physician and scientist, Dr. Coxe rose rapidly in the medical profession, serving as court physician to King Charles II and later Queen Anne.<sup>2</sup>

It is not known whether he was a Freemason or not, but he was active in Freemasonic circles.

He was an early member of the Royal Society of which several members were Freemasons.<sup>3</sup> The Royal Society was an organization of freethinkers consisting of scientists and physicians, statesmen and other gentlemen. Twelve individuals including Christopher Wren, Robert Boyle, John Wilkins, Sir Robert Moray, and William, Viscount Brouncker organized it in 1660.<sup>4</sup>

The Society was under the auspice of gathering and discussing scientific information and publishing it for the good of the community. Scientific finds that were deemed too dangerous for public consumption were sworn to be kept secret by its members. Because the Society accepted men of all religious background it was able to attract the best minds of the age. Several of the founders of the Society were thought to be Freemasons, Christopher Wren being but one.<sup>5</sup>

Theories abound concerning the true purpose of the Royal Society. Some say that it was formed as a haven for Jacobites (those sympathetic to the Stuart line returning to the throne). Some say that it was a meeting ground for those who were anti-monarchist. Others conclude that it was a continuation of Bacon's Rosicrucian society. Many say that the Society was a precursor of the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. Whatever the true purpose of the Royal Society, it would continue to attract many of the best minds during the "Age of Enlightenment". Many of the same members would be attracted to Freemasonry.<sup>6</sup>

In 1664, Dr. John Wilkins recommended Dr. Daniel Coxe for membership in the Royal Society.<sup>7</sup> A year later he published his first paper and was admitted for Membership.<sup>8</sup>

Sometime over the next two decades, he came into great favor with King Charles II and was named Court Physician. He remained in this capacity through Charles II's reign and that of Queen Anne (1714). Prior to his appointment as Court Physician, Coxe had amassed a great deal of wealth. Some of this wealth is said to have come from his wife Rebecca's family.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Daniel Coxe became an ardent speculator in the colonies and acquired vast tracts of land in the New World. Of these tracts, eight were land in New Jersey, several along the eastern bank of the Delaware River, north of the "ffalls" (Trenton) and one extensive tract at it's southern tip (Cape May). Although this was quite a bit of land, Coxe's real acquisition was a vast parcel called "Carolana" which included present day Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. This tract was said to extend as far as the Pacific Ocean. Dr. Coxe would spend a large amount of his wealth sending teams to explore this vast holding.<sup>10</sup>

It did not take long for Coxe to expand his lands in West Jersey. By September 1687, he had acquired a majority of the land shares in West Jersey and using the established laws of Proprietorship, declared

himself Governor. He would remain Governor for 5 years never setting foot in the New World. In his stead, he named John Tatham of Burlington as his resident Agent in West Jersey. <sup>1112</sup>

John Tatham traveled to the colonies from London in 1685. He received a grant of land in Eastern Pennsylvania and changed his name from John Gray<sup>13</sup>. Tatham proved to be very active in industry and governance.

Tatham acted on behalf of Coxe in the selling and leasing of his various holdings in West Jersey. <sup>14</sup> Although Tatham was well respected as an educated man and leader, he was suspected of being a Jacobite. <sup>15</sup> One thing both Tatham and Coxe had in common was their acquaintance with William Penn. Coxe held William Penn in high esteem and relied on him for advice concerning his speculation in New Jersey. William Penn and Dr. Coxe had similar situations as both were interested in developing the Delaware Valley area. <sup>16</sup>

Dr. Daniel Coxe invested heavily in West New Jersey. Through Tatham he began several trades including the first pottery in North America located north of Burlington, an iron forge, fur trade, whaling, and lumber. Most of these speculative trades never returned what he expected in the way of profit. <sup>17</sup>

In 1690, Dr. Coxe built Coxe Hall as the Center of his Cape May Holding (which were approximately 95,000 acres and extend to Burlington County).<sup>18</sup> Here he hoped to create a neo-feudal manor that would concentrate efforts in winemaking, shipbuilding and lumber.<sup>19</sup> He intended to travel to New Jersey around this time, but never made the trip.

After five years Coxe had given up on West Jersey. The citizens under his governance never accepted him and the probability of making money from the land owned in this area was not enough to warrant his

retention of them. He focused his attention to the Carolana lands. In 1692, he sold the bulk of his West Jersey holdings to the West Jersey Society based in London and gave up his governorship.<sup>20</sup>

He did retain his Cape May lands and it was here in 1701 that his son Daniel Coxe arrived to take control of his father's New World holdings.

### **Col. Daniel Coxe Arrives in America**

It is thought that the young Daniel Coxe arrived in the New World with Edward Hyde, the Lord Cornbury, in 1701. Lord Cornbury was cousin to Queen Anne and would later be appointed Governor of New York (1702) and New Jersey (1703). He was also a good friend of the Coxe family in London. Lord Cornbury would appoint the younger Daniel to the command of the Queen's forces in West Jersey. Daniel was thereafter known as Colonel Coxe.<sup>21</sup>

Col. Daniel Coxe settled on his father's lands in Cape May. He took over Coxe Hall, which was located about four miles north of Cape May Point on the bay side. Daniel began the foray into the local trade and built a plant for the processing of whale oil. At this time, there were less than 100 Freeholders in the entire county of Cape May. Daniel found himself frequenting the more populated towns of Salem and Burlington.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Cornbury Ring**

In 1702, the Provinces of West and East Jersey came under the rule of the English Crown becoming the Royal Province of New Jersey. Lord Cornbury was appointed Governor of the Province in 1702.<sup>23</sup>

Lord Cornbury was a curious figure in early New Jersey. Since he was first cousin to the Queen, he felt that his will was an extension of hers. He took these thoughts to very eccentric extremes going as far as to dress as a woman when acting on her behalf. He even had a portrait painted of himself dressed as a woman. The portrait hangs today in the Historical Society museum in New York.<sup>24</sup>



Lord Cornbury – Edward Hyde

Lord Cornbury had a tumultuous reign as governor of the colony. He immediately alienated most of the colony's population. In addition to his madness, he was known as “a frivolous spendthrift, an impudent cheat and a detestable bigot” who would use any and every opportunity to increase his status, wealth and powerbase. Upon his arrival in New Jersey, he took little time in surveying the landscape and determining what he could do to take advantage. He gained the assistance of several powerful figures in both East and West Jersey and formed what would be known as the Cornbury Ring.<sup>25 26</sup>

The Cornbury Ring would spend the next six years in constant dispute with the New Jersey Proprietary Party (Quakers). Using his power as governor and the assumed authority of the Crown, Cornbury would deny the Quakers the right to vote. He also denied them the right to sit on juries or hold office as they refused to take oaths. He would remove them from council seats and refuse to allow them to serve if they managed to get elected. He demanded revenue (tax) from both West and East Jersey. He created a militia in which every man would have to serve or pay a £1 fine. The Militia would also levy taxes for its own support. This placed an undo burden on the pacifist Quakers.<sup>27</sup>

The Cornbury Ring would become notorious for creating political upheaval in the colony of New Jersey that would last for decades. Col. Daniel Coxe was an integral part of this “Cornbury Ring”.

### **Coxe Dives into Colonial Politics**

Col. Coxe had not stayed in America very long when he began his long battle with the West Jersey Society and several Proprietary landowners over the rights of lands in West Jersey.

In 1704, he is recorded as being in England defending himself against the attacks from some of the New Jersey Proprietaries.<sup>28</sup> It seems as though, when Dr. Coxe sold his proprietary shares “Above ye ffalls of ye Delaware” to the West Jersey Society in 1792, the Society failed to execute the deed to the property. Agents for the Society had been selling and leasing off parcels of land on which they had no legal deed.<sup>29</sup> Ten years later, young Daniel began the motions necessary to reclaim the lands his father had sold earlier. The West Jersey Society consisted of several speculators living in London. Coxe must have returned to London to grieve his case against the Society in front of the Crown.

He stayed in England for several years during which time he was recommended for the Governor’s Council of New Jersey. Upon his return in 1706 he was appointed to the Governor’s Council despite objections from the Proprietary Party. Cornbury also appointed him Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Province in 1706.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Supreme Court for West Jersey was held in Burlington, NJ, Col. Daniel Coxe eventually settled there. Another reason was that Burlington was considered the capitol of West Jersey and the Governor maintained a residence here. Daniel’s home was a dwelling attached to the Governor’s Mansion on the Green Bank.<sup>31</sup>

## Col. Coxe takes a Wife

It didn't take long before Daniel became the focus of a different kind of scandal. In 1707, Col. Daniel Coxe eloped with Sarah Eckley of Philadelphia.<sup>32</sup> The western shore of New Jersey, at the time, was becoming famous for elopements from Philadelphia. The reason it was a scandal was that Sarah was a Quaker, the daughter of the prominent John Eckley who had died nine years earlier. John was also a friend of William Penn who had appointed him Supreme Court Justice in Pennsylvania. It is not known how Daniel and Sarah met but, since Dr. Coxe was in communication with Penn, perhaps Sarah and Daniel met while he was conducting his father's business. It is an odd circumstance as Col. Daniel Coxe was thought at the time to be leading the Anti-Proprietary Party (Anti-Quaker).<sup>33</sup>

Margaret Preston, a member of the Society of Friends, wrote in 1707: "The news of Sarah Eckley's marriage is both sorrowful and surprising, with one Col. Coxe, a fine, flaunting gentleman, said to be worth a great deal of money, a great inducement, it is said on her side. Her sister Trent was suppose to have promoted the match. Her other friends were ignorant of the match. It took place in the absence of her Uncle and Aunt Hill, between 2 and 3 in the morning, on the Jersey side, under a tree by fire-light. They have since proselyted her and decked her in finery."<sup>34</sup>

The above quote is curious as family records indicate that the Hon. John Eckley only had two children one boy, John, and one girl Sarah. Perhaps Trent refers to a sister in the Society of Friends or a cousin since she resided with her Aunt and Uncle after her father's death.<sup>35</sup>

Col. Coxe and Sarah were married in the woods by the firelight early in the morning. Lord Cornbury's chaplain was said to have performed the wedding. I would suppose the marriage took place just south of Burlington, as this is where both Daniel and the Chaplain would have resided at the time.<sup>36</sup>

Col. Coxe lived in Burlington with his new wife. Shortly after the elopement, Daniel was involved in the chartering of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Burlington with John Talbot, the Church's first rector. He sat on the Church Council when a Charter was granted by then Governor Richard Ingolgsby.<sup>37</sup> St. Mary's is one of the nation's oldest Episcopal Churches. Coxe would remain one of the heads of the Church all of his life.

### **Col. Coxe Versus Governor Hunter**

All during this time, Coxe was a member of the Governor's Council. It was during the next several years that Daniel would become embroiled in the political landscape of both West Jersey and England. His main nemesis would be Robert Hunter, who was named Governor of New York and New Jersey in 1709. Coxe and Hunter would battle for political supremacy of West Jersey for the next ten years.

At the time, Col. Coxe had quite a power base in the provincial council. After Lord Cornbury was stripped of his Governorship, the West Jersey part of the Cornbury Ring came under the sway of Col. Coxe. Coxe remained on the Governor's Council and moved his way into the Chairman's position.<sup>38</sup>

As the head of the Council, Coxe along with his contemporaries would refuse to pass laws unfavorable to themselves and where they could act as the colony's supreme court. Coxe continued his contempt for the Quakers and would use every political strategy to refuse them say in the government of the New Jersey. Coxe and company refused to pass laws that would allow Quakers to serve on juries or hold local offices.<sup>39</sup>

By 1713, Hunter called for the ouster of the Coxe group from the council. Using several political tactics, Hunter secured the removal of Coxe and cleansed the court system of all his subordinates. Col. Coxe took several avenues to try to wrest power away from Hunter. These included gaining a place in the Assembly

through elections in 1714 and again 1716. This despite the rigging of elections in some places.<sup>40</sup> Coxe regained the Speaker of the Assembly position but Hunter wasted no time in making attempts to remove him. By repeatedly dissolving the Assembly and calling for new elections, Hunter eventually attained what he needed, an Assembly composed of greater than 50 percent Quakers. He then called for the expulsion of Coxe, which the Quakers did with glee.<sup>41</sup>

After his defeat to Hunter and with his powerbase crumbling around him, Coxe returned to London in late 1716. He would spend the next two years using his family's influence to attempt to sway the crown to remove Hunter. He also suggested the idea of placing himself as Hunter's successor.<sup>42</sup>

Hunter, sick and worried about Coxe and his other political enemies, retired his governorship in 1719. Instead of placing his position open for appointment, he elected to trade with William Burnett who was Comptroller of the customs.<sup>43</sup>

Funny thing about the relationship between Coxe and Hunter is that both had similar interests for the future of New Jersey and the Colonies. Both were ardent Anglicans and very involved with bringing the Church of England to the Colonies. Hunter wanted the establishment of an Anglican Episcopate in America based in a Burlington Cathedral. Although his motives for may have been different as he considered the congregation of St. Mary's to be the root of all the problems in New Jersey.<sup>44</sup>

### **Coxe Turns Author**

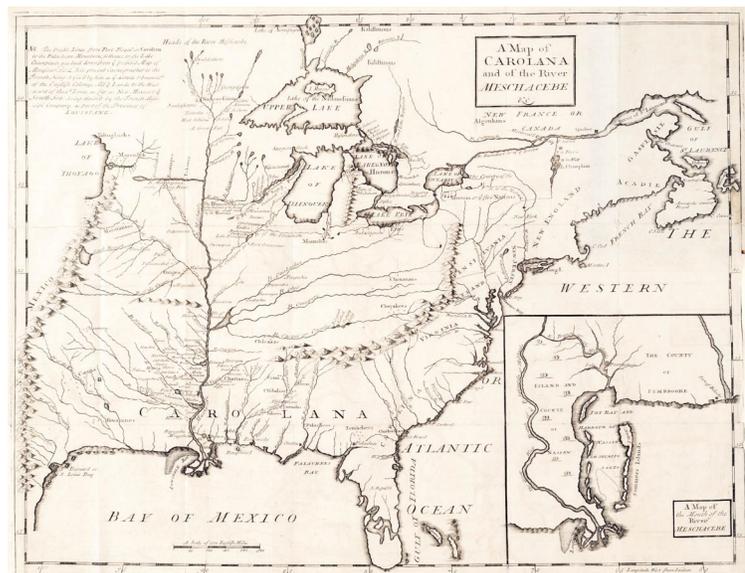
During his stay in London, Coxe wrote a book describing his father's southern holding entitled "A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spaniards call'd Florida, And by the French La Louisiane". He used descriptions recorded from various explorations his father commissioned. Col. Coxe hoped to use this publication as a brochure for the development of this tract of land. His description of

Carolana was published three times (1722, 1727, 1745).<sup>45</sup> It was in this publication that he wrote his plan of Union of the Colonies.

In the volume, published in London, Coxe proposed that all the British colonies in the New World should be united by a national covenant, in a national government, over which a supreme viceroy or governor, appointed by the crown, should preside in some part of America. The governors of the several colonies would be subordinate to him. Also that there should be a general congress of deputies chosen by the several colonies to promote unity of action in times of danger.<sup>46</sup>

These were not new ideas. William Penn proposed a similar theme several years earlier. Coxe expanded on Penn's theme. Benjamin Franklin expanded further on these ideas in his Albany Plan. Franklin eventually received credit for the idea, which would lay the foundation for the emergence of the United States of America. Franklin did credit Coxe for his ideas, though.<sup>47</sup>

Another item of interest in the publication was a map entitled "A Map of Carolana and of the River Meschacebe". Meschacebe is one of the Indian names for the Mississippi River. This map is considered the first English map of the Mississippi Valley. An insert map entitled "A Map of the Mouth of the River Meschacebe" gives a fairly



accurate representation of the Mississippi Delta. The Map was unique in that it was one of the first to use Symmetrical Geography and would later influence cartography to use this method for more accurate representations in maps.<sup>48</sup>

### **Coxe Returns to New Jersey**

In 1723 with Hunter out of the picture and the political landscape a little more settled, Coxe returned to his residence in Burlington.<sup>49</sup> During his stay in London, he gained many powerful friends and upon his return he immediately resumed his political career.

Shortly after his return he was elected as a member of the West Jersey Council of Proprietors, which met in Burlington. The Council of Proprietors is an organization that had its roots prior to Lord Cornbury's arrival. The first Royal governor suspended the operation of the Council during his term in office. Later Governor John Lovelace, allowed the Council to reform.<sup>50</sup>

Originally, the Council of West Jersey Proprietors was composed of men who had purchased large blocks of land, and were designated to govern the surveying, granting, and purchasing of land within West Jersey. Once England claimed New Jersey as a colony, the council's purpose changed slightly. They would survey land claims and purchases for the Crown.

Col. Daniel Coxe would remain on the Council, serving many years as its President, until his death. In 1725 he was elected to the Assembly in Burlington.<sup>51</sup> It was also this year that his wife of eighteen years died.<sup>52</sup>

### **Coxe Moves to Trent-Town**

During this period of time, a shift was taking place in the Colony. Trenton was becoming an established city and it was becoming a popular stop between New York and Philadelphia. In 1719, Governor Hunter suggested that the county of Hunterdon's courts should be held there. It was closer to Amboy were the

East Jersey courts were held. By 1730 a new courthouse and jail had been built and court was being held in “Trent-Town”.<sup>53</sup>

In 1729, Col. Daniel Coxe decided to change his residence to the town of Trenton. This is evidenced by several correspondences dated 1729 being written by “Daniel Coxe of Trenton”<sup>54</sup>

During these ensuing years he must have traveled back to Burlington frequently where he remained very involved in the St. Mary’s Church and the Council of Proprietors.<sup>55</sup>

In 1730, Col. Daniel Coxe was proclaimed Provincial Grand Master for the colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The deputation would last for two years at which point a successor was to be selected. It was also during this year that Daniel had learned that his father died at the age of ninety.<sup>56</sup>

In early 1731, Daniel returned to London. No reason could be found as to why he returned<sup>57</sup>

The return trip afforded him the opportunity to return to his mother Lodge where a communication of the Grand Lodge was held. He was present and was toasted as the Provincial Grandmaster of the Colonies at a meeting held at the Devil Tavern on January 29, 1731. Daniel did not stay long in London. He returned shortly to his home in Trenton.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Coxe Affair**

Upon Daniel’s return to Trenton in 1731, he resumed his battle to regain lands his father had sold north of Trenton forty years before. Perhaps he was armed with new information from the legacy of his father. Perhaps he had secured the critical backing he needed for the coming fight in England.

After his return he received a favorable ruling from the Hunterdon Supreme Court concerning his claim to the lands in question. The High Sheriff was ordered to serve a “Writ of Ejectment” to over one hundred “Tenants or Trespassers” located in a area known as Hopewell. The Writ ordered them to either pay for the property they resided on, lease it, or “Quit” the land. Those who failed to produce payment would be forcibly removed from the property.

Hopewell was not the only area affected. Coxe brought suit against several landholders in other counties that his father sold to the West Jersey Society.

In April of 1731, fifty Hopewell residents unified and hired a Mr. Kinsey, esq. to represent them in a counter suit against Col. Coxe. Other suits were also filed for the same reasons. Most residents, though, either paid the second time, leased, or moved on to other colonies.

It was unfortunate for those who filed the counter suits as Coxe had so much power and influence at the time, that the verdict was never in doubt. Col. Daniel Coxe had regained the lands.

This verdict would be the beginning of years of unsettlement in the colony. For the next 40 years, various actions would be brought in court by landowners against other landowners disputing tracts sold prior to the Colony coming under Royal governance. Evictions would lead to retaliations. Clashes between different classes of people would lead to religious disputes and accusations. Violence was common.

The Coxe verdict would be appealed several times until it finally had a chance to go to the Hunterdon Supreme court. Alas, by that time, Col. Coxe had been appointed Associate Justice of the Supreme Court for a second time. The suit would not be heard in the Colony’s highest Court. The landowners had lost.

The violent reaction that followed was characterized in the opening paragraphs of this paper. Several of the former landholders retaliated against those persons that Coxe had placed in the homesteads. Warrants were placed for the capture of the vigilantes. They were never apprehended.

Not all inhabitants reacted violently, most just packed their belongs and moved to other colonies. Many Hopewell residents ended up at the Jersey Settlement in Virginia including John Parke and Thomas Smith.<sup>59</sup>

During the Coxe Affair, Daniel was renamed Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court under Governor William Cosby. He would serve in this capacity residing in Trenton until his death in 1739.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Coxe Family**

Col. Daniel Coxe was married to Sarah Eckley in 1707. They resided in Burlington where they raised a family. The exact composition of this family is confusing. Daniel left a will in which he named several heirs to his lands and wealth. Since one source names Sarah and Daniel as only having four children, those named in his Will could have been grandchildren.

Daniel and Sarah had four children:

- John born in 1708.
- Daniel was born in 1710.
- Rebecca was born in 1716
- William was born in 1723<sup>61</sup>

William Coxe married Mary Francis and they raised thirteen children. The second of these children, Tench Coxe, would go on to make his own name in the annals of the newly formed United States. He was well known as a proponent of the newly formed government and was appointed to sub cabinet positions (just below a Cabinet Secretary) by Presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. Tench was one of the major advocates for the right to bear arms.<sup>62</sup>

### **Col. Coxe's Masonic Career**

Masonic membership records kept prior to the inception of Grand Lodge are non-existent. Things did not change much following the Grand Lodge's formation.

In 1730, in the minutes of the Grand Lodge of England, there is a record of the list of names of every member of every regular lodge in London as of 1730. Daniel Coxe is listed a member of the Lodge at "the Devil Tavern within Temple Bar"<sup>63</sup>

The Devil Tavern was actually a nickname for "The Devil and St. Dunstan" tavern at No.1 Fleet Street just outside of the Temple Bar. It was also nicknamed the "Old Devil" and was frequented by English High Society especially the literary sect. It is best known for being the favorite of the famous poet Ben Johnson.

The Devil Tavern was a large, rambling place boasting 19 hearths. There was plenty of room in the tavern as in 1680 it was said to have hosted a gathering of 180 members of Parliament. There were several dedicated meeting rooms including the then famous Apollo Room which held meetings of a club created by Johnson.<sup>64</sup>

According to Lane's Masonic Records, one Lodge was meeting at the Devil Tavern during the period when the Grand Lodge met there to both proclaim Daniel and toast him on his return to England (1730, 1731). The Lodge was numbered 36 and named Union Lodge but it was not named until 1734. It is not known what the Lodge was named prior to that and may have just been known by the name of the place it met in. According to Lane's, the Lodge was warranted in 1722 and met at the Duke of Chandois's Arms at Edgworth/Edgware, England in 1723. In 1729 it moved its meeting place to the Devil Tavern.

As to when Daniel was made a Mason is a mystery. He was in London in 1722 at the time of the warranting of the Lodge at Devil Tavern. Where the Lodge met at that time is a mystery but it was recorded as meeting somewhere in London.<sup>65</sup>



Thomas Howard – Duke of Norfolk

In 1730, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, Thomas Howard, the Duke of Norfolk, proclaimed Col. Daniel Coxe Provincial Grand Master of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Daniel was not in England at the time of his appointment in April of that year. It would have taken one and a half to two months to get word of his appointment as news could only travel as fast as a boat across the Atlantic.

According to the Proclamation, Daniel and “several other free and accepted masons in the provinces of New York New Jersey and Pennsylvania” applied to the Grand Lodge for the appointment of a Provincial Grand Master. The Grand Lodge nominated and elected Daniel to fill the position.<sup>66</sup>

It is not known whether the application indicated Daniel as recommending himself to fill the position or not, but this would not be contrary to his character. This proclamation along with earlier word that his father had passed may be what prompted Daniel to return to London in December of 1730.

At a quarterly meeting of the Grand Lodge held at the Devil Tavern on January 29, 1731, Daniel was noted as being present and was duly toasted as “The Provincial Grand Master of North America”.<sup>67</sup>

Much has been written that Daniel did not exercise his authority as Grand Master during his term as such. The Grand Lodge of England states that no reports were ever transmitted as to Daniel’s appointment of a Deputy Grand Master or Grand Wardens. Neither did he report on any congregations of Masons into Lodges nor the warranting of any Lodges. The conclusion is that he did not take his position seriously.

There is no way to know whether this is true or not as Daniel did not keep a diary. Also, as records were just beginning to be kept in lodges in London, it is easy to conclude that records of Lodges in North America would have also been sparse. This is evidenced by the lack of them.

In fact, it is not until Ben Franklin, an avid writer, is anything placed in writing concerning Freemasonry in the area. In 1731, Franklin’s account books show that he sold stationary and did printing for St. John’s Lodge in Philadelphia. Further evidence of St. John’s existence in 1731 is the Lodge ledger titled “Liber B”. Its entries begin in 1731 and consist of amounts paid by members to the Lodge.<sup>68</sup>

In 1873 a letter was shown to Bro. Francis Blackburn at the Grand Lodge Library in Philadelphia. The letter was purported to have been from by Bro. Henry Bell of Lancaster, Pa., to Dr. Thomas Cadwallader of Philadelphia dated Nov. 17, 1754.

The excerpt of this letter said to have been written, is as follows:

*"As you well know, I was one of the originators of the first Masonic Lodge in Philadelphia. A party of us used to meet at the Tun Tavern in Water Street and sometimes opened a Lodge there. Once in the fall of 1730, we formed a design of obtaining a charter for a regular Lodge, and made application to the Grand Lodge of England for one, but before receiving it we heard that Daniel Coxe of New Jersey had been appointed by that Grand Lodge as Provincial Grand Master of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, we therefore made application to him, and our request was granted"*

St. John's Lodge No. 1 of Philadelphia met in the Tun Tavern on Water Street and Tun Alley.

This letter unfortunately is not to be found at this time. It is not known if it was misplaced or the original owner kept it. The original owner's name is not known either. These facts bring into question the authenticity of the letter and even doubt of its existence. Perhaps it was a total fabrication. The only proof we have is the report of the Grand Lodge Library Committee of Pennsylvania which stated that the letter bore all the marks of being genuine, and they had no doubt of its being correct.<sup>69</sup>

Whether Daniel Coxe was involved in the forming of St. John's No.1 may never be known unless some document indicating such is found. No warrant exists from the Provincial Grand Master because the term "warrant" was used differently then as it is now. During the time of Daniel Coxe the terms constituted and warranted meant, "expressly permitted". Thus a warranted lodge was one that was regular and had permission from the Grand Lodge to meet. Daniel Coxe's proclamation as Provincial Grand Master of North America gave him the authority to grant permission to meet as a regular lodge of Masons.<sup>70</sup>

## **Why Daniel Coxe?**

This brings me to the question written earlier in this paper – Why Daniel Coxe? Why was Col. Daniel Coxe selected to be the First Provincial Grand Master of North America? Several reasons exist that could lead one to draw a conclusion as to why he was selected:

- His family's, especially his father's, notoriety among the high society in England especially the Royal Society which had many notable Freemasons as its members. Many of these members were instrumental in the forming of the Grand Lodge in 1717.
- His own notoriety as a speculator and promoter of the expansion into the Colonies.
- His experience as a litigator having served prominent positions in the government in the colonies including Supreme Court Justice.
- He was the largest single landowner in New Jersey and was only second to William Penn in the Delaware Valley.
- Finally, the application to the Grand Lodge requesting the appointment of a Provincial Grand Master made by Daniel and several brethren of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

If the last item was the driving factor for Daniel's appointment, than he would have been well known in Masonic circles in the colonies. Henry Price made a similar request several years later and it too was granted in 1736.

## **Conclusion**

I do not think it is fair to label Col. Daniel Coxe as not having exercised his authority or not interested in spreading the Fraternity. At the time of his term as Provincial Grand Master, Freemasonry was already

spreading as quickly through the colonies as it was in Europe. Records were not kept as they were just a few years later.

Daniel obviously cared about the craft as far as it being regular and based on allegiance to the Grand Lodge of England. This is evidenced by his application for a Provincial Grand Master appointment. Even if not selected for this position, he still wanted an appointment to be made.

If the Henry Bell letter is to be believed, he was known by area Freemasons for his authority and exercised it in the warranting of St. John's No. 1. Who knows, perhaps he was at the making of Brother Ben Franklin in 1735. Maybe he handed him a copy of his recently republished book concerning Carolana. Maybe this is what planted the seed of democratic ideas in Bro. Franklin's head.

For further information about Daniel Coxe including the complete proclamation of him as Provincial Grand Master, I would recommend "Early Freemasonry in Pennsylvania" by Henry S. Borneman. It was produced by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and may not be readily available as it was published in 1931 and again in 1981.

Overall, Col. Daniel Coxe was a very colorful figure in the shaping of New Jersey. He is largely forgotten in the history of the Colony. It is a shame, as his influence extended from the Lodge room to the Judiciary and state government. He may not represent the model of the present day Freemason, but his was a different time and shaped by many different influences.

## End Notes:

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- <sup>1</sup> Henry S. Borneman, "Early Freemasonry in Pennsylvania", The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Mason of Pennsylvania 1931,1981 p. 60
  - <sup>2</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.225.
  - <sup>3</sup> Paul A. Stellhorn and Michael J. Birkner "The Governors Of New Jersey 1664-1974: Biographical Essays", (The New Jersey Historical Commission, 1982) p. 27
  - <sup>4</sup> "The Royal Society" – History of the Royal Society <<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/royalsoc/rshist.htm>>
  - <sup>5</sup> Bobby J. Demott, M.P.S., "The Royal Society And Masonry" 1995 The Philaethes Society
  - <sup>6</sup> Demott
  - <sup>7</sup> "Sackler Archive Resource" – Part of "The Royal Society" Website <<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/DServeA/>>
  - <sup>8</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.27
  - <sup>9</sup> Lloyd E. Griscom, "The Down-Jerseyemen: Spirited Adventurers" (Main Line Press, 1963) p. 55
  - <sup>10</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.27-29
  - <sup>11</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.28
  - <sup>12</sup> John D. McCormick, Samuel Smith's "History of Nova Ceasarea – The Colonial History of New Jersey", Published by William S. Sharp 1890, Appendix II
  - <sup>13</sup> Thomas F. Meehan, "Newark (Novarcensis)" chapter in the Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. X (John Appleton Company 1911) Website: <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10779c.htm>>
  - <sup>14</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.28
  - <sup>15</sup> McCormick, Appendix II
  - <sup>16</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.27
  - <sup>17</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.27-29
  - <sup>18</sup> Griscom, p. 56
  - <sup>19</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.28
  - <sup>20</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.29
  - <sup>21</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.225.
  - <sup>22</sup> Griscom, p. 57
  - <sup>23</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.36
  - <sup>24</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.36
  - <sup>25</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.36
  - <sup>26</sup> Ethel Stroupe, "First Families of Jersey Settlement", Rowan County Register, vol. 11, no. 1, February 1996 website < [http://www.geocities.com/mayes\\_deb/newjersey/hopewell.htm](http://www.geocities.com/mayes_deb/newjersey/hopewell.htm) >
  - <sup>27</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.36-37
  - <sup>28</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.225
  - <sup>29</sup> Stroupe
  - <sup>30</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.225
  - <sup>31</sup> George DeCou, "Burlington: A Provincial Capitol" Burlington County Historical Society, p.100
  - <sup>32</sup> John F. Watson, "Annals of Philadelphia" 1870-1879
  - <sup>33</sup> Borneman, p.60
  - <sup>34</sup> Watson
  - <sup>35</sup> Myrna J. Madsen and Sallie J. Flanagan, "Descendants of Peter & Esther Ralph Eckley", 1994, website < <http://www.users.qwest.net/~mhdonohue/HilEck/JohnEck.html> >
  - <sup>36</sup> Griscom p.57
  - <sup>37</sup> Borneman, p.61
  - <sup>38</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.44-45
  - <sup>39</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.45
  - <sup>40</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.226
  - <sup>41</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.45
  - <sup>42</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.226
  - <sup>43</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.45
  - <sup>44</sup> Stellhorn and Birkner p.45

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- <sup>45</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.226
- <sup>46</sup> Borneman, p.66
- <sup>47</sup> Borneman, p.67
- <sup>48</sup> “A Map of Carolana and of the River Meschacebe” University of Virginia Library Website < [http://www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/exhibits/lewis\\_clark/exploring/ch2-12.html](http://www.lib.virginia.edu/speccol/exhibits/lewis_clark/exploring/ch2-12.html) >
- <sup>49</sup> Borneman, p.69
- <sup>50</sup> Borneman, p.69
- <sup>51</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.226
- <sup>52</sup> Borneman, p.67
- <sup>53</sup> Edwin Robert Walker, “A History of Trenton 1679-1929” Trenton Historical Society, Chapter I – The Colonial Period
- <sup>54</sup> Borneman, p.76
- <sup>55</sup> Borneman, p.69-79
- <sup>56</sup> Various Sources including New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.226
- <sup>57</sup> Borneman, p.84
- <sup>58</sup> Borneman, p.76-84
- <sup>59</sup> Stroupe
- <sup>60</sup> New Jersey Archives Volume X, p.226
- <sup>61</sup> Borneman, p.61, 62, 66, 67
- <sup>62</sup> Stephen P. Halbrook and David B. Kopel, “Tench Coxe and the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, 1787-1823”, Publications Council of the College of William & Mary, 1999 Website <http://i2i.org/SuptDocs/Crime/hk-coxe.htm>
- <sup>63</sup> Borneman, p.85-86
- <sup>64</sup> Henry C. Shelley, “Inns and Taverns of Old London”, 2004 from Website < <http://www.gutenberg.net> >
- <sup>65</sup> Website “Lane’s Masonic Records” < [http://freemasonry.london.museum/Lane\\_v3/ui/frame.htm](http://freemasonry.london.museum/Lane_v3/ui/frame.htm) > part of Sheffield University Centre for Masonic Research
- <sup>66</sup> Borneman, p.79
- <sup>67</sup> Borneman, p.85
- <sup>68</sup> Borneman, p.95
- <sup>69</sup> David McGregor, “Daniel Coxe’s Relations to American Freemasonry”, The Builder Magazine, November 1924, Vol. X No. 11
- <sup>70</sup> Borneman, p.87