Bristol: The Origins of a Pennsylvania Market Town

The English Quaker settlements that grew along the Delaware River in the late seventeenth century gradually formed into distinct units which came to be designated as counties. These were originally economic as well as administrative divisions, each one occupying a stretch of the river shore and extending into the hinterland as far as the European settlers had pushed. Each county had a town regularly established and laid out at some advantageous point along the river. The towns served as hubs for trade, travel, and communication, as well as the seats of government, for the various counties. As “central places” in the settled agricultural areas in which they were located, they were situated to offer access both to the river, which was the region’s greatest highway, and to the surrounding countryside.¹

The earliest permanent English settlements in the Delaware Valley were located along the eastern bank of the Delaware River in West New Jersey. Salem (1675) and Burlington (1677) were both laid out as towns intended to be the focal points of the territory in which the rural tracts of the settlers were located. As such, Salem remained the hub of Salem County and Burlington, of Burlington County.² These towns soon established markets and fairs that served the needs of the settlers in the surrounding countryside. The rural inhabitants resorted to the towns for their business with the

county court, to purchase supplies, and, when enough land had been cleared to produce more than a subsistence, to sell the products of their farms. A market place was provided in the center of town in the original plan of Burlington, and the town’s fair is mentioned in May, 1682, when the Assembly of West New Jersey changed the time of the spring fair so that it would coincide with the time of the Assembly’s session.  

The division of the province of Pennsylvania into three counties shortly after William Penn’s arrival in October, 1682, reflects the same pattern. The section of Penn’s Charter of March 4, 1681, which granted him the power to divide the province into “Townes, Hundreds and Counties,” also empowered him to “erect and incorporate Townes into Burroughs, and Borroughs into Citties, and to make and Constute ffares and Markets therein, with all other convenient priviledges and immunities according to the merits of the inhabitants and the sittntes of the places. . . .”

Pennsylvania was divided into three counties, Chester, Philadelphia, and Bucks. In Chester County, the old village of Upland, which had been settled long before by Swedish colonists, was renamed Chester and made the county town. In Philadelphia County, the newly founded town of Philadelphia became the center of economic, social, and administrative activity, and, as the capital of the province, it soon came to a position of predominance throughout the river valley.

Markets at Philadelphia and Chester are mentioned in a letter of February 10, 1683, by Thomas Paschal, who also mentions that he visited a fair at Burlington. Penn’s Further Account of the Province of Pennsylvania, published in 1685, boasts that Philadelphia had two markets every week and two fairs a year, and “In other places Markets also, as at Chester and New-Castle.”

3 Aaron Leaming and Jacob Spicer, The Grants, Concessions, and Original Constitutions of the Province of New Jersey (Somerville, N. J., 1881), 442-451; Pomfret, 133.
5 Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB), VI (1882), 324.
6 Ibid., IX (1885), 66. The business acumen of the early Pennsylvania Quakers and their success in the pursuit of commercial interests are discussed in Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House (Chapel Hill, 1948), especially chapter 3.
The third original division of Pennsylvania, Bucks County, was for several years an exception to this pattern in that it had no market town of its own. The small village of Crewcorne, which stretched out along the river bank at the Falls of the Delaware on the present site of Morrisville, and which had been settled in 1679 by Quakers from Burlington, served as the county seat and the place of election. But the influx of new settlers into the county after 1682 did not lead to the transformation of Crewcorne into a significant town, and there is no evidence that a market was ever established there. Until 1697 the settlers of Bucks County had to carry their produce down to Philadelphia or cross the river to Burlington to go to market.

The site finally chosen for the county's market town, known first as Buckingham, later as New Bristol and then as Bristol, was located in the angle of land formed by the Delaware River, flowing roughly southwest, and Mill Creek, flowing almost directly southward throughout Bristol Township and curving in a southeastward direction just before emptying into the river. The site lay a few miles north of the mouth of Neshaminy Creek and almost directly opposite Burlington. Since the location was several miles below the Falls of the Delaware, the navigability of the river at this point and below was unhindered, and boats could be taken for a short distance into the estuary of Mill Creek for docking. The creek could also be used as a source of power for mills, a possibility that had already become realized to some extent by the time the town was established.

The town site itself was high and dry, but it was surrounded by several low, marshy areas, most of which were eventually drained and used as meadow. To the southwest, beyond Mill Creek, were two islands that were separated from the mainland only by "Some small Gutts" which made "a Considerable Quantity of Criples thro-which they Run . . . ." Beyond these, along the river, was a swamp

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8 The early years of the town, from its settlement to 1720, have been given brief and often inaccurate coverage in William Bache, Historical Sketches of Bristol Borough . . . (Bristol, 1853), 5-17; Doron Green, A History of Bristol Borough . . . (Camden, 1911), 19-40; W. W. H. Davis, The History of Bucks County . . . (Doylestown, 1876), 339-342; and J. H. Battle, ed., History of Bucks County . . . (Philadelphia, 1887), 384-390.
that came to be known as "Green Swamp." In addition, there were swampy areas along Mill Creek just above the town. Part of this area was developed into mill ponds, but portions remained marshy until well into the nineteenth century.

The earliest recorded land grant on the west side of the Delaware in the vicinity of Bristol was Governor Richard Nicolls' patent to Peter Alrichs on February 15, 1667/8, for "two certaine Islands in Delaware River scituate lying and being on ye West side of ye said River and about South West from ye Island comonly called Matineconck ye wch is the biggest of the two Islands haveing beene formerly knowne by the name of Kipps Island and by ye Indian name of Koomenakanokonck containing about a myle in length and half a myle in breadth and ye other Island lying somewhat to the North of ye former being of about half a myle in length and the quarter of a myle in breadth," along with "the small creek . . . neare unto the lesser Island running up a mile wth in land to have liberty to erect and build a mill thereupon where shall be found most convenient as also a convenient proportion of land on each syde of the said creek for Egresse & Regresse to and from the mill . . . ." Nicolls granted all of this land, "to wch there appeares no other lawfull Pretenders," to Alrichs for a quitrent of four otter skins a year.

10 This swamp is mentioned as the southwest boundary of the land of William Sanford in a resurvey made following a warrant dated June 28, 1683. Warrants and Surveys of the Province of Pennsylvania, III, 521, Municipal Archives, Philadelphia City Hall, cited hereinafter as Warrants and Surveys; and in a deed of William Homer to Samuel Carpenter, Dec. 16, 1713, Bucks County Deed Book 5, 58, Doylestown Courthouse. It is called "Green Swamp" in a deed of Hannah Carpenter et al. to Joseph Bond, May 1–2, 1716, Deed Book 5, 150–151. All deed references in this article are to Bucks County Deed Books.

11 Sherman Day, Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania . . . (Philadelphia, 1843), 164. The wet conditions gave Bristol a reputation as an unhealthy place in the eighteenth century. As early as 1768 efforts to drain the swamps were made by promoters of the Bristol Bath Springs, which later became the leading health spa of the American colonies. See John DeNormandie, "Therapeutic Value of the Waters of Bristol, Pennsylvania," Early Transactions of the American Philosophical Society Published in the American Magazine During 1769 (Philadelphia, 1969), 75–76.

12 E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York (NYCD), XII (Albany, 1877), 461. Matineconck is identical with modern Burlington Island. The two islands granted were those mentioned above, located just south of the mouth of Mill Creek in what is now Bristol Township, and separated from the mainland only by
Alrichs was a prominent Dutch settler who had settled near New Castle, Delaware. He had resisted the English takeover of the Dutch colony in 1664, and as a result his lands were seized. He then moved to New York, gained the confidence of Governor Nicolls, and returned to the Delaware in 1665. Re-establishing his former position of prominence, he became a magistrate at New Castle in 1672.\footnote{See Edward A. Price, Jacob Alrichs and his Nephew Peter Alrichs (Wilmington, Del., 1898).} The islands granted by Nicolls were settled by Alrichs' servants, and a plantation was established. When the Quaker settlers of Crewcorne sent their petition from Burlington on June 23, 1679, asking permission to settle on the west bank of the river, they requested a grant of land "between Mr. Pitter Alderridges Plantation & the falls of Dellowar River."\footnote{NYCD, XII, 623–624.} The island plantation, separated by a "Swamp" and the mouth of Mill Creek from Samuel Clift's, is marked on Jasper Dankaert's map of 1679, with the name "Pieter Aldrix" and a drawing of a house.\footnote{Jasper Dankers and Peter Sluyter, "Journal of a Voyage to New York and a Tour in Several of the American Colonies in 1679–80," Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, I (1867), plate VI.} A petition from the newly established village of Crewcorne against the sale of liquor to the Indians, dated April 12, 1680, contains the notation, "Mr. Gilbert Wheelers house [at Crewcorne] broake open by Indians & Peter Aldrix mans house on the Island & another house."\footnote{NYCD, XII, 645–646.} John Thornton's map of Pennsylvania, prepared in 1681 for William Penn, indicates Richard Noble's land just above the mouth of the Neshaminy, and the land of "Peter Aldrix" opposite "Bridlington towne" with two small islands in the river.\footnote{John Thornton, "Map of Some of the South and east bounds of Pennsylvania . . . ," PMHB, XLVIII (1924), frontispiece.}

Alrichs sold the two islands on January 17, 1682/3, to Samuel Burden of Burlington County for £175. Alrichs does not appear to

marsh and narrow streams. These marshes were later drained and the islands are now attached to the mainland. Their position is marked clearly on a draught of Samuel Carpenter's land around Bristol made about 1706 and copied in Survey Book BB-2, 46, Land Office, Department of Community Affairs, State Capitol, Harrisburg.
have built a mill on Mill Creek, the location alluded to in his land
grant, but Burden hired Thomas Millard of Philadelphia to build a
mill along the watercourse between the islands in the spring of 1687.
A dispute arose between Burden and Millard concerning their arti-
cles of agreement in March, 1688, and was settled by arbitration.
Even then, Millard had to sue Burden in the following December to
recover the contracted sum for building the mill. The mill appar-
ently ceased to operate after Burden's death, when his lands became
involved in lengthy litigation, but it is mentioned in a deed of 1716,
in which the description begins "at a post by Delaware River near
ye Flood-gates of ye old Mill where ye Creek dividing between ye
two Islands emptieth itself into ye said River . . . . ."  

The next settlement after Alrichs' in the neighborhood was that of
Samuel Clift. Clift was one of the early Quaker settlers of West New
Jersey, bringing a certificate of removal dated March 6, 1675/6,
from Nailesworth Monthly Meeting in Gloucestershire. It appears
that he was a passenger on the Kent, which brought the first settlers
of the town of Burlington, arriving on the Delaware in August,
1677. He and his wife and son, with Daniel Wills, were among the
first to settle on the actual town site of Burlington in the following
October after it had been laid out by the surveyor Richard Noble.  

Clift was one of those who signed the petition to Governor Ed-
mund Andros on June 23, 1679, requesting a site on the west bank
of the river just below the falls, but he was not among the actual
settlers at Crewcorne when the resulting grant was made. About

\[18\] Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, XIX, 414-415; Records of the Courts of Quarter
Sessions and Common Pleas of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, 1684-1700 (Meadville, Pa., 1943),
97-100, hereinafter cited as Bucks County Court Record; Articles of agreement dated May 12,
1687, bond dated Mar. 26, 1688, and award dated Mar. 27, 1688, in Bucks County Court
Papers, Bucks County Historical Society. Burden had settled in Burlington County by 1681,
and owned a tract of 200 acres there, for which a return of survey is dated Feb. 21, 1681/2.
New Jersey Archives, XXI, 350; cf. H. Clay Reed and George J. Miller, The Burlington Court
Book, A Record of Quaker Jurisprudence in West New Jersey, 1680-1700 (Washington, 1944),
31, cited hereinafter as Burlington Court Book. Burden died before Feb. 8, 1692/3, when
letters of administration on his estate were granted to Francis Rawle, his principal creditor.
New Jersey Archives, XXIII, 46.

\[19\] Deed Book 5, 150-151, Hannah Carpenter et al. to Joseph Bond, May 1-2, 1716.

\[20\] William Wade Hinshaw, Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy (Ann Arbor, Mich.,
1938), II, 208.

\[21\] George DeCou, Burlington: A Provincial Capital, Historical Sketches of Burlington, New
Jersey, and Neighborhood (Philadelphia, 1945), 21, 30; NYCD, XII, 624.
this time or shortly afterward he obtained a grant of land opposite Burlington itself, between Mill Creek and the Delaware, covering the future site of the town of Bristol. The name Samuel Clift, and "Clift's Creek" (corresponding to Mill Creek), appear on the map of the Delaware between Burlington and the falls made in 1679 by Jasper Dankaerts.  

It seems that Clift first established a ferry across the river while he was living at Burlington, and, after obtaining the grant of land on the opposite bank, he began a plantation around the landing there and continued to operate the ferry. This crossing was to become increasingly important as the region filled with new settlements in the succeeding years. From the available evidence, it appears that Clift's ferry house, which no doubt served as an inn as well, was located on the site now occupied by the Delaware House at the foot of Mill Street in Bristol.

Clift's land grant was followed by others within a few years. William Sanford of New Castle obtained a grant of 250 acres on March 8, 1680/1, located across Mill Creek from Clift's on the mainland adjacent to Alrichs' two islands, and on the same date Barent Gerritzen obtained 250 acres just above Sanford's on Mill Creek. Sanford at least settled on his tract and built a house, where on May 31, 1684, he married Frances Homer, a widow with a son and daughter. Gerritzen, who had been a resident of New Castle County in 1677, sold his tract on October 19, 1682, to John Otter, a Quaker from London who had arrived the previous August on the Amity.

Samuel Clift had two children, a son Jonathan who was still a minor when his father died, and a daughter whose name is not known but who married Joseph English probably before either the

22 Dankers and Sluyter, Journal . . ., plate VI.
24 William J. Buck, Local Sketches and Legends pertaining to Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania (Privately printed, 1887), 11.
Clifts or the English family moved to America from England. After selling several portions of his land, Clift wrote his will on November 23, 1682. He left to his son-in-law Joseph English “my Cow that is called Colly, with her calf, and one Clack saw,” as well as thirty acres of land on which English had already begun to build a house near “[M]ilne Creek.” Clift’s own house (the ferry house), the rest of his land, and his other property were left to his son Jonathan, who was nominated executor of the estate although he was still a minor. Christopher Taylor, a representative of Bucks County in the first Pennsylvania Assembly in December, 1682, and later Register General of the province, and Richard Noble, formerly a surveyor in West New Jersey and now the first sheriff of Bucks County, were appointed overseers and trustees for Jonathan during his minority.

Clift died some time during the next few months, and the will was proved on July 2, 1683, by Richard Noble. Taylor declined to take part in the settlement of the estate, and Noble was left sole trustee. At Clift’s death, English moved into the ferry house, although the estate had not yet been settled. His motive must have been, at least in part, to keep the essential ferry service going without serious interruption. Noble, as administrator of the estate, complained before the Bucks County Orphans Court on March 4, 1683/4, that English kept possession of the lands and estate and “refuses to give possession thereof or give an acct. of the goods left in the house or on the said land.” Noble was ordered to “prosecute the matter” so that Clift’s son Jonathan, “to whom the substance of the estate is left may have that which is right according to will.”

26 Joseph English II had a grown and married daughter in 1695. His father, Joseph English I, also came to Pennsylvania, evidently as a widower, and settled on the Poquessing Creek in Philadelphia. He lived there when on Apr. 26, 1685, he married Joan, the widow of Henry Comly of Bucks County. General Registry of Bucks County, 1684-1687, 54, Bucks County Historical Society. Within a year and a half he died and his widow was given letters of administration on his estate on Dec. 13, 1687. Bucks County Orphans Court Minutes, Book A-1, 12, Doylestown Courthouse. A Jane English, possibly the widow, was buried at Neshaminy meeting house on Dec. 20, 1689. Middletown Monthly Meeting Records, 181, copy at Bucks County Historical Society.


28 Bucks County Orphans Court Minutes, A-1, 1. English in November, 1683, gives his residence as “of the Ferry House in the County of Bucks.” Deed Book 1, 167, Joseph English to Francis Rossil, Nov. 10, 1683.
Noble soon did obtain possession and, probably in the spring of 1684, leased the ferry house to Michael Huff, who remained the innkeeper for two years. In 1685 Jonathan Clift was in England, where he died. On November 4, 1685, a letter from Naillesworth Quarterly Meeting in Goucestershire, Clift's old home, was read at Bucks Quarterly Meeting, requesting the meeting to "sell & dispose the ferry house over agt Burlington to the use of Thomas Taylor administrator of Jonathan Clift of the Said County of gloster deceased & son to Samuel Clift late of the said ferry house deceased." John Otter and William Biles were appointed to determine whether there were any previous encumbrances or bargains on the property, and the following February they reported that there were none. Apparently the Quarterly Meeting oversaw the sale or confirmation of the property to Joseph English, for on August 4, 1686, it was reported that a letter was sent to England "about the ferry house," and there is no further reference to the matter.

About the time that the property was confirmed to English by the Quarterly Meeting, he leased the ferry and thirty-two acres to Abraham Cox on May 8, 1686. However, Michael Huff, the "ordinary keep" who had previously leased the house, refused to turn it over to Cox, and on May 22 Cox entered an action of ejectione firmae against Huff, whom he charged "entered the sd house and forceably keeps possession thereof & of the lands thereunto appertaining to the damage of the sd Abraham Cocks and Conterary to the kings peace . . . ." The case was tried on June 9, Huff conceded that he had no title to the property, and Cox was given possession by the court. Cox's lease ran for one year.

For several years following, English remained the owner, but it is uncertain who actually operated the ferry and inn. There is no reason, however, to doubt that the establishment's operation was continuous. During these years the interior parts of Bucks County began to fill with settlements made by Quaker families coming to Pennsylvania under the encouragement of William Penn. The landing at the ferry no doubt became an increasingly busy place.

29 Minutes of Falls Monthly Meeting, Mar. 3, 1685/6, microfilm at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.
30 Minutes of Bucks Quarterly Meeting, Nov. 4, 1685; Feb. 3, 1685/6; Aug. 4, 1686, Friends Historical Library.
31 Bucks County Court Record, 44-47.
Meanwhile, the potential for milling operations on Mill Creek was being developed. An agreement concerning a mill was made on November 23, 1682, when Samuel Clift sold fifty acres to Richard Dungworth. Dungworth was a "joyner," or carpenter, who had been living across the river in the jurisdiction of the Burlington court as early as June 1680, but who had by this time moved into Bucks County. The tract was located "a little below the new dwelling place of the said Richard Dungworth being situate on the mill creek." In the deed it was specified that "It is agreed between these parties that if they find it convenient to build a mill upon the said creek that then they the said Samuel and Richard shall be jointly concerned..." Clift's death evidently caused the project to be dropped, and on October 13, 1683, Dungworth, who had moved down the river to "Tawcony," sold the fifty acres to Edmund Bennett "of Mill Creek," for £, a profit of £2 over the price he had paid Clift.

Renewed effort to construct a mill followed shortly. Several months after Clift's death, his son-in-law Joseph English sold a part of his inheritance to Francis Rossill, a millwright from Burlington. The deed, dated November 10, 1683, conveyed to Rossill "three acres of land within the plantation of the said Joseph English in the County of Bucks aforesaid one acre whereof lying to the Kings Road there together with such privileges as shall be necessary and convenient for the setting up and building of a mill at the said creek and the making of weares Mill ponds or Mill pools and the maintaining of same with liberty and freedom for all convenient ways paths and passages to and from the said mill..." The price for the three acres was £3.

Rossill soon moved from Burlington to Bucks County and built his mill. On September 10, 1688, he sold one of his three acres to Joan Huff, the widow of the former innkeeper at the ferry house, with liberty to cut timber on Rossill's land in order to build a house.

32 Deed Book 2, 118, Samuel Clift to Richard Dungworth, Nov. 23, 1682. Dungworth is mentioned in Burlington Court Book, 1; he later built a mill in Philadelphia County, mentioned in 1696 in Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania (Colonial Records), I, 500-501.

33 Deed Book 2, 119, Richard Dungworth to Edmund Bennet, Oct. 13, 1683; this deed is misdated 1693 in Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, XIX, 194. After Bennet's death his widow Elizabeth sold the land on Mar. 5, 1696/7, to Thomas Yardley, Deed Book 2, 117. Yardley's widow later sold it to Samuel Carpenter.

34 Deed Book 1, 167, Joseph English to Francis Rossill, Nov. 10, 1683.
and fence in her lot. On November 20, 1689, Rossill purchased from
John Otter, who had by now moved to Philadelphia, a piece of
meadow land "over against the miln" of Rossill's, "to contain in
length and breadth so far as there shall be occasion for the Mill
Pond of the aforesaid Mill to overflow." 35

By an agreement dated July 20, 1692, Rossill formed a partnership
in his milling business and property with Samuel Carpenter, the
prominent Philadelphia merchant and businessman. Rossill died
late in 1694 and, having no relatives in America, left his share of the
mill and its land to Carpenter. 36 The land consisted of the two acres
on which the mills stood, the meadow that Rossill had bought from
Otter in 1689, and twenty-five acres lying along the King's Road that
Francis and Michael Rossill had purchased from William Penn as
overplus land of Samuel Clift. 37

Meanwhile, on April 6, 1692, Joseph English had sold twenty-
seven acres, the remainder of the thirty acres he inherited from
Samuel Clift, to Thomas Brock for £10. Also Brock married the
widow Joan Huff, and thus her acre of land was added to his pur-
chase from English. 38

Following Rossill's death, a difference arose concerning the boun-
daries of the three acres that Rossill had bought from English, and,
"to the end that all Differences thereupon for the future might be
ended. . . .," Thomas Brock, on August 1, 1698, conveyed eight
acres, including all of the three acres, to Samuel Carpenter. 39 At a
later date Brock sold the remaining twenty-two acres to Carpenter,
so that the whole of the thirty acres originally left by Clift to Joseph
English became the property of Carpenter. 40

The importance of the ferry landing and of the mills erected nearby

35 Deed Book 1, 183, Francis Rossill to Joan Huff, Sept. 10, 1688; Deed Book 1, 308, John
Otter to Francis Rossill, Nov. 20, 1689.
36 The date of the partnership is recited in Deed Book 2, 199, Samuel Carpenter to Henry
Baker, Sept. 3, 1698.
37 "Wills Proved at Philadelphia, 1692-1697," PGSP, II, 20-21; the Rossills had obtained
a warrant for the twenty-five acres on July 25, 1684, and had it surveyed, according to the
record, on the same day. Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, XIX, 253-254. Michael Rossill
was apparently a brother who predeceased Francis.
38 Deed Book 1, 347, Joseph English to Thomas Brock, Apr. 6, 1692; PGSP, II, 20.
40 Ibid., 473-474. The thirty acres was resurveyed and found actually to contain thirty-
eight acres, or five acres overplus, which Carpenter purchased.
made it necessary at an early date for the settlers situated up and down the banks of the river and farther inland to have ready access to the neighborhood. The area was undoubtedly criss-crossed by paths, but in order for their plantations to thrive, the settlers needed regularly established roads. An old Indian path which became known as the King's Path and subsequently as the King's Highway ran along the side of the river directly past the ferry landing and through the site of Bristol. When later regulated and laid out as a cart road, it followed Mill and Radcliffe Streets in the town. Overseers of this road had been appointed by the Upland Court before Penn's government was established, and the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania ordered improvements on the road in 1686.\(^1\)

Some of the earliest roads laid out by order of the Bucks County court were specifically intended to provide access to the landing opposite Burlington from the more remote settlements. As early as June, 1686, there was a petition which noted that “Several persons upon Ne shaminah creeke have complained of the want of A road to the ferry house over agt Burlington,” and the court appointed seven men to “lay out A Road from wrights town to the sd ferry hous being a convenient Landing.”\(^2\) This order was not followed immediately, and again in September, 1691, the grand jury presented the “necessity of way from new Town to the mill & Burlington ferry.”\(^3\) Another presentment in June, 1696, called for “a road from Wrights Town to the Landing at the ferry agt Burlington,” and it was apparently this last effort, contemporary with the laying out of the town of Bristol, that led to the development of the path into a “cart road” suitable for vehicles.\(^4\) This was the first section of a major artery running up through the middle of the county, known first as the Newtown Road and, after its later extensions, as the Durham Road.

In December, 1688, the grand jury presented the necessity of “A Sufficient Cart Roade . . . from the upper plantations above the falls unto the ferry house where the Common landing is over agt Burlington,” and a committee of eight men, including Joseph English

\(^1\) Paul A. W. Wallace, Indian Paths of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1965), 45; Upland Court Record, 194; Colonial Records, I, 195.

\(^2\) Bucks County Court Record, 49.

\(^3\) Ibid., 256.

\(^4\) Ibid., 299.
and Abraham Cox, was appointed to lay it out.\textsuperscript{45} However, this order "was not observed," and in September, 1692, a new committee was appointed, which made its report in June, 1695. The road ran "first from Richard Houghs Plantation by a line of marked trees to the falls meeting house and from thence to the Cold Spring—by a line of marked trees & so down the old road to the ferry."\textsuperscript{46} Part of this route approximates the present road from Fallsington to Tullytown (the latter area then being known as "Cold Spring"). At Cold Spring the road joined the older King's Highway coming from the Falls of the Delaware toward the landing opposite Burlington.

There are no documents dealing with the emergence of the plan to found a town at the mouth of Mill Creek, and it cannot be determined with certainty who the initiators of the idea were. However, it is clear that the plan was formulated by the early part of 1696 and put into effect in the next few months. On February 20, 1695/6, Joseph English, who had by now moved to Burlington County, New Jersey, conveyed the tract at the ferry at "Buckingham," estimated at twenty-two acres "besides the road that lies through the same." One-half interest he gave to his son-in-law Peter White, and the other half he sold for £20 to Thomas Brock and Anthony Burton.\textsuperscript{47}

Peter White was born in England on August 3, 1663, the son of George and Elizabeth White. He and his brother John obtained a certificate of removal from Newberry Monthly Meeting in Berkshire on April 21, 1682, and soon thereafter came to Pennsylvania. Their parents also came to the colony, and George died in Bucks County in 1688. Peter married Elizabeth, the daughter of Joseph English, and lived in Middletown Township, where he was elected constable in September, 1693. By 1700, after the founding of Bristol, he had moved to Burlington County, New Jersey.\textsuperscript{48}

Anthony Burton, a carpenter, came to Pennsylvania as a servant of William Penn and served his time at Pennsbury. Thereafter he

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 96, 100, 196, 199.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 267, 285.
\textsuperscript{47} Deed Book 2, 57, Joseph English to Thomas Brock and Anthony Burton, Feb. 20, 1695/6. This deed contains the first recorded use of the name "Buckingham" for the locality.
\textsuperscript{48} "Records of the Hall Family, of Bristol, Pennsylvania," PMHB, XI (1887), 314; Gilbert Cope, "Notes From Friends' Records in England," PGSP, III (1908), 233; Bucks County Court Record, 278. White served on a jury in Burlington County in May, 1700, and was constable of Springfield Township in that county in February, 1700/01. Burlington Court Book, 233, 247.
purchased a farm in Bristol Township and gradually established a prominent position in the county.\(^\text{49}\)

The deeds of February 20 were acknowledged before the county court on March 11. At the same session a complaint was registered, presumably by those who were planning the town, concerning the irregular course of "the Cart way from the mill Dam to the landing at the ferry in Buckingham." As a result of the complaint, the court ordered Henry Baker, Peter Worral, Nicholas Walm, John Wilsford and Enoch Yardley to "lay out the same upon a Straightline."\(^\text{50}\)

On March 16, 1695/6, a deed of partition was concluded between Peter White, Thomas Brock, and Anthony Burton. White received eleven acres "besides the road" in three tracts, and Brock and Burton jointly took the other eleven acres, also excepting the road, in two tracts. The description of the tracts carries the first reference to the place as a "town."\(^\text{51}\) Burton and Brock likewise divided their eleven acres by a deed of partition dated June 8, 1696. The only road mentioned in the descriptions of the lands conveyed in these deeds is the one from the mill pond to the ferry, but the division of the land follows lines which anticipate the laying out of other streets along the property lines, which indeed was done shortly afterward.\(^\text{52}\)

The deeds of partition were acknowledged at court on June 10. The court's order requiring straightening of the road had not been carried out, and on the next day at court, "The road from the mill pond to the Landing at the ferry aforesd agt Burlington [was] presented to be Layd as straight as may be." Peter Worral, Enoch Yardley and Henry Baker were appointed to lay out the road thus to the "Common Landing at the ferry." This order, when carried out shortly afterward, finally settled the course of the road, which soon became known as Mill Street. The grand jury of this date also ordered the establishment of the road from Wrightstown to the ferry, which was subsequently known as the Newtown Road and which provided the principal link between Bristol and the inland settlements.\(^\text{53}\)

\(^{49}\) Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, XIX, 453, 590.

\(^{50}\) Bucks County Court Record, 293.

\(^{51}\) Deed Book 2, 71, Peter White to Thomas Brock and Anthony Burton, Mar. 16, 1695/6.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 73, Thomas Brock to Anthony Burton, June 8, 1696.

\(^{53}\) Bucks County Court Record, 295, 299-300, 302.
The first town meeting of the “Inhabitants and purchasers and owners of lands within the Town of Buckingham” was held on June 16, 1696. First, the courses of the town’s streets were agreed upon. Parallel to the river were Radcliffe Street, Cedar Street, Wood Street and another that was not named but which was later called Pond Street. Parallel to the creek and intersecting the other streets were Mill, Market, Mulberry and Walnut Streets, all running between the river and the mill pond. All streets were to be three rods in width except Mill and Radcliffe, which formed the King’s Highway and which were to be four rods wide. The streets of the town formed a grid in a manner similar to those of Burlington and Philadelphia, both of which were familiar to the men who laid out the town. However, the streets running inland from the river were not quite perpendicular to those running parallel to the river, since they were laid out parallel to Mill Creek. Thus, the town plan formed a grid pattern that was slightly askew.

The town meeting ordered that Mill and Radcliffe Streets were to “be grubed & Cleared every one through their own lands some time before the frost set in so as to harden the ground that it cannot be grubed.” The entire town site between the river and the mill pond was to be cleared within two years except for “the grown trees that are of a considerable bigness.” It was agreed that town meetings be held “on the first weekly third daye” in June, September, December and March. Thomas Brock, who had obtained the ferry house in the partition of land, was not to be disturbed in his “houseing & Garden that lyes in the road” for two years, in which time he promised to remove the obstructions. A “cart way” was ordered to be made “down to the river by the ferry house,” the work to be done by Thomas Brock. Subscribers to pay for the work were Samuel Carpenter, Anthony Burton, Thomas Brock, Phineas Pemberton, William Croasdale, John Town and John White. Finally, John White consented “to leave open a road from his wharfe in a direct Course to mill street & to confirm it to be the Inhabitants fully when

54 Copy of deed, Peter White et al. to Joseph Growden et al., June 16, 1696, and Town minutes, Pemberton Papers, I, 59, 60, Etting Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
55 Radcliffe and Cedar Streets ran East 27° North, Wood Street East 32° North, and Pond Street “about the same course” as Wood.
thereunto requested the Inhabitants assisting to mentaine & repaire a wharfe at the Creeke in the end of sd street.”

The plans for the town had attracted some wealthy and influential investors. On the same day as the town meeting, Phineas Pemberton, who was clerk of the county courts and a member of the Provincial Council, purchased a strip of land on the north side of Cedar Street from Brock, Burton, and Peter White. The strip was four perches wide and ran nearly the full length of the town from Mill Creek, crossing Mill Street and other streets. Samuel Carpenter likewise purchased the western half of Peter White’s middle lot in the town, three and a half acres extending from the riverside to Wood Street, crossing the intervening streets and Pemberton’s land.

Other land sales soon followed. On June 22 Anthony Burton sold three lots on Mill Street between Cedar and Wood Streets, one to Henry Baker, one to Samuel Bowne of Flushing, Long Island, and one to William Croasdale of Middletown Township. On December 8, 1696, Peter White sold the lot at the corner of the town, bounded by the river, Mill Creek, Cedar Street, and Mill Street, to Joseph Growden of Trevose, a justice of the county courts and one of the county’s greatest landowners.

Between the old ferry tract (the part of the town site partitioned by Peter White, Anthony Burton, and Thomas Brock) and Samuel Carpenter’s mill property was a strip of land containing thirty-seven acres which had been surveyed to John White on January 9, 1690/1, as part of the overplus land of Samuel Clift. This tract constituted the area between Wood and Pond Streets, extending down to Cedar Street on the southwest side of Mill Street, and at its other end extending 160 perches, or half a mile, in a north by east direction beyond the town. John White, the brother of Peter, had previously

56 Town minutes, Pemberton Papers, I, 60, Etting Collection.
57 Deed Book 2, 86, Thomas Brock et al. to Phineas Pemberton, June 16, 1696; Deed Book 2, 70, Peter White to Samuel Carpenter, June 16, 1696.
58 Deed Book 2, 85, Anthony Burton to Henry Baker, June 22, 1696; Deed Book 2, 88, Burton to Samuel Bowne, June 22, 1696; Deed Book 2, 84, Burton to William Croasdale, June 22, 1696. Bowne’s wife Mary mentions a recent visit to the Pembertons in a letter to Phineas Pemberton from Flushing, Sept. 12, 1696, Pemberton Papers, II, 127, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
59 Deed Book 2, 97, Peter White to Joseph Growden, Dec. 8, 1696.
60 Warrants and Surveys, III, 188.
lived in Middletown Township, serving as constable along the Neshaminy in 1689, 1690, and 1691.61

On March 6, 1696/7, White, now a resident of "Buckingham," sold half his land there, eighteen and one-half acres, to John Smith for £4 silver.62 Two days later Smith sold half of this, nine and one-quarter acres, to John Town for £15.63 Another boundary dispute now revealed itself where Town's land adjoined the mill property, "because of a Claim made by the said Town to the ground on which one Corner of the Mill stands." In order to resolve the problem, Samuel Carpenter, on March 9, bought a lot sixty-three feet wide between Mill Street and the creek, adjoining the mill property, from Town for £7.64

On March 8, John Smith also sold three lots amounting to four and one-half acres to Thomas Musgrave, a clothier of Keighley, Yorkshire, who had not yet left England for Pennsylvania. The price was £9, and Phineas Pemberton acted as Musgrave's attorney.65 Smith also sold a lot for £11 to Richard Burges.66

The earliest land subdivisions, and most of the early buildings in the town, were located along Mill Street between the mills and the ferry house. For many years the town's buildings were concentrated along Mill Street and Radcliffe, and the other streets of the town remained undeveloped.67 However, even with this modest beginning, the town had started to attract residents and businessmen, and its leaders could now seek recognition from the provincial authorities for the town and for the market which they wanted to establish.

A full year after the first town meeting, the grand jury of Bucks County, on June 10, 1697, set in motion the formalities necessary

61 Bucks County Court Record, 106, 147, 159.
62 Deed Book 2, 119, John White to John Smith, Mar. 6, 1696/7.
63 Deed Book 2, 120, John Smith to John Town, Mar. 8, 1696/7.
64 Deed Book 2, 123, John Town to Samuel Carpenter, Mar. 9, 1696/7; Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, XIX, 254.
65 Deed Book 2, 121, John Smith to Thomas Musgrave, Mar. 8, 1696/7; Bucks County Court Record, 311. Musgrave died at sea on the voyage to Pennsylvania. [George Haworth], "Early Letters from Pennsylvania, 1699-1722," PMHB, XXXVII (1913), 331.
66 Deed Book 2, 124, John Smith to Richard Burges, date given as Oct. 25, 1694, which is problematical. Burges' house is mentioned in the deed of John White to John Smith, cited above in note 62. The year of the deed to Burges was omitted in the court record when the deed was acknowledged in April, 1697. Bucks County Court Record, 314.
for official recognition of the town and the establishment of a market:
“It was Likewise presented as necessary and A petition drawn that
we might have a Town layd out at Buckingham neare the old ferry
and was presented to the govrnr and Council being Signed by all
the grand Jury and by about 20 psons more.” The petition pointed
out that the inhabitants of Bucks County, “being so farr from
Phil[adelph]ia we cannot attend that market so frequently as our
occations calls for it therefore are necessitated at such times to make
use of the market at Burlington and are often prevented of that
market also by reason of high winds frosts & want of convenient
passage boates. . . .” The petitioners stated that they had determined
that the ferry site opposite Burlington was a “natural scituation for
navigation & convenient harbouring . . . haveing now in the place
3 Corn mills & a saw mill Intended in some short time to be there
erected wch mills occations a considerable concours of people being
the principal place of this county for the delivery & Receiveing of
goods.” It was therefore requested that a market town be established
according to a draft that was submitted with the petition showing
the streets as they had already been laid out. Permission was also
requested to hold a weekly market, to make the end of each street
a public landing, to erect wharves out into the river at these landings,
and to lay out a street under the bank. The townsmen asked for
power to elect two or more persons to enforce a regulation against
buildings which would obstruct this street, and for the appointment
of an officer to regulate liquid and dry measures in the town.

Governor William Markham and four other members of the Coun-
cil, Samuel Carpenter, Joseph Growden, Caleb Pusey and Phineas
Pemberton, met at Pemberton’s house in Bristol Township on June
10. The only item of business was the petition from “the Inhabitants
& owners of Lands within the Countie of Bucks, but more especiallie
within the Township of Bucks.” The Council agreed to and granted
all the requests in the petition. Pemberton was appointed to survey
the town and submit a plan for the governor’s further confirmation.

68 Bucks County Court Record, 321-322.
69 Rough copy of the petition to Council, Pemberton Papers, I, 68, Etting Collection. The
grand jury of June, 1695, had presented the “necessity of haveing a standard in this County
for wett and dry measures and also for weights,” and a similar presentment had been made
in December, 1690, but neither of these previous recommendations seems to have been acted
upon. Bucks County Court Record, 285, 240, 242, 131.
John White was licensed sealer of liquid and dry measures. The Council then more clearly regulated the King’s Highway from the point of its entry into Bucks County through “Buckingham” and on to the crossing at the Falls of the Delaware. It was to run from the Poquessing Creek to the Neshaminy at Joseph Growden’s landing and thence to the new town. From there it was to continue to Joseph Chorley’s house below the Falls. Ferries were established at the Neshaminy, to be kept by John Baldwin, and at Chorley’s on the river in the old village of Crewcorne. A bridge was ordered built over the Poquessing. This road was thus to continue providing the principal overland connection between the new market town and the other settlements along the river. William Biles and Phineas Pemberton were appointed to consult with representatives of West New Jersey about continuing the road toward New York.  

A week after the Council approved the petition for the market town, Governor Markham wrote to Pemberton from Philadelphia concerning the settling of tavern licenses in the county: “Pray lett me have the Minute of Councill, and such recommend as yo’ Justices shall think fit to keep ordinary or sell strong Drink by retail or I had rather give power to ye Justices to grant them and you to write them a part of my ffee to be kept for yo’ pains.”  

Accordingly, at a court held by adjournment in October, licenses were granted by the justices to Joseph Chorley (at the Falls), Thomas Brock (at “Buckingham”), and Dunk Williams (at his ferry in Bensalem Township). The court ordered Phineas Pemberton to lay out the road from the Falls to John Gilbert’s, where it crossed the Poquessing into Philadelphia County, “and also the Town of Buckingham according to the warrant to him directed,” with the assistance of several citizens of the county.  

The difficulties attending the settlement of Samuel Clift’s estate, meanwhile, had still not been fully cleared up. On May 26, 1697, an action was entered in the Bucks County court by Peter White on behalf of himself and his wife Elizabeth, his father-in-law Joseph

70 Colonial Records, I, 513-514; a rough draft of the Council minute, dated June 11, 1697, is in Pemberton Papers, I, 67, Etting Collection.  
71 William Markham to Phineas Pemberton, June 18, 1697, Pemberton Papers, I, 66, Etting Collection.  
72 Bucks County Court Record, 326, 328.
English, and Thomas Green and his wife Rachel, against Richard Noble as administrator of Clift's estate. They charged that, as Clift's trustee for his son Jonathan, Noble had taken possession of the real and personal estate during the son's minority and had not distributed it properly nor rendered an account to the Register General's office. After Jonathan's death, they charged, Noble had still failed to distribute the estate among the plaintiffs as next of kin. When Noble, who was in England at this time, had not replied to the charges by December, an execution was granted by the court, to be levied on Noble's estate in Bristol Township.  

Sheriff William Beakes had Noble's land appraised at £200 by a jury and put it up for sale. In his return of the execution on August 29, 1698, he reported no buyers and indicated his readiness to deliver the premises to the plaintiffs. Noble's belated answer to the charges, dated December 10, 1698, stated that after Clift's death he "was allways willing to give an account thereof to any that had power to demand the same namely to Christophr Taylor who refused it seeing there was but a few sorre [sorry] goods and no money, the list account I would render to Samuel Genings [Jennings] and went to Burlinton w'th y* goods mentioned in ye Inventore but he allso refused to be concerned there with. . . ." The court, at any rate, must soon have discovered that Noble had sold his land several years before to William Penn for the use of William Penn, Jr., and if the cause was pursued beyond this point, no record has been preserved.  

After the market town was established, it is quite evident that it was indeed the "principal place of this county for the delivery & Receivnge of goods." In a letter written about 1700 to Phineas Pemberton concerning a debt which Pemberton owed him, Anthony Morris wrote, "I can make use of Wheat and It will serve mee as

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73 Ibid., 331-333. Rachel Green was perhaps another daughter of Joseph English.
74 Ibid., 349.
75 Pemberton Papers, I, 29, Etting Collection. Taylor was Register General of Pennsylvania, and Jennings held a similar office in West New Jersey.
76 Noble had sold his land in Bucks County to Moses Masley, who in turn rented it to John Allen. Allen later died and his widow married Ralph Boome, who testified in the case. Meanwhile, Masley had mortgaged the land to Noble, and was unable to pay. Noble, who was by now in England, foreclosed and authorized Edmund Bennet as his attorney to sell the land. Bucks County Court Record, 331-333. Noble then, through his attorney, sold the land on Feb. 21-22, 1695/6, to William Penn for William Penn, Jr., as recited in Deed Book 38, 501, Francis Rawle to Thomas Clifford, Apr. 5, 1760.
Well as mony . . . send it with as much speed as is possible to Bucks Mill. . . .” Pemberton, who was building a house at his plantation in Bristol Township, wrote from Philadelphia about materials for it that had been delivered to the town. Some of them he wanted taken directly to the building site, but, he added, “let the shingles stay at Buckingham until I come home. . . .” James Logan sent some casks of wine to Pemberton, and mentioned in a letter, “Our Smith left y e Wine at Brocks 4th day last.” William Penn wrote to Logan from Pennsbury on September 14, 1700, asking, among other things, that “if an hogshead of lime could be reasonably brought by any boat that comes to the mill at Brock’s, as Isaac Norris, etc., or to Burlington, we could send for it. . . .” George Haworth, writing to relatives in England on March 26, 1704, told them, “Direct your letters to Thomas Brooks [Brock’s] in Bristol, in the county of Bucks or to Samuel Carpenter, Philadelphia.”

Several of the town’s principal landowners and investors were not residents. Anthony Burton and Phineas Pemberton both lived on farms in Bristol Township, a few miles outside the village. Peter White moved across the river to Burlington County and by 1700 sold most of his land in Bristol. Joseph Growden lived at his estate, “Trevose,” in Bensalem Township, and Samuel Carpenter remained in Philadelphia, where he continued to manage his many commercial interests.

Nevertheless, a nucleus of citizens soon grew in the village. The tradesmen who formed the town’s populace came from the surrounding countryside of Bucks County, from the already well-established town of Burlington across the river, and from Philadelphia. Several trades were represented within a few years of the town’s founding,

77 Anthony Morris to Phineas Pemberton, undated, ca. 1700, Pemberton Papers, I, 90, Etting Collection. A similar arrangement is recorded in 1695 when Stephen Twining of Newtown was given the choice of paying an obligation to Job Bunting of the same place in cash or in “good and clean winter wheat delivered at the mill of Samuel Carpenter against Burlington . . . .” Deed Book 2, 52, Stephen Twining to Job Bunting, Dec. 11, 1695.

78 Phineas Pemberton to [Alice Pemberton], May 26, 1700, ibid., 93.

79 James Logan to Phineas Pemberton, Oct. 11, 1700, ibid., 93.

80 Edward Armstrong, ed., Correspondence Between William Penn and James Logan . . ., I (Philadelphia, 1870), 16.

indicating that there was perhaps a fairly lively economic and commercial life in the community. John White, generally designated merely as a yeoman, had a "malt kiln" on his property, which is mentioned in a deed of March, 1696/7. White lived in Bristol for the rest of his life, and left his lot with its dwelling house and "malt house" to his son George when he died in 1703.\textsuperscript{82} John Smith, who bought half of John White's land, was a blacksmith, but by 1703 he had moved to Burlington County.\textsuperscript{83} John Town, a resident of Bucks County for many years and purchaser of a lot in 1697, is described both as a laborer and a weaver.\textsuperscript{84} Samuel Oldale, one of the early settlers of West New Jersey, came from Burlington County and bought a lot in September, 1697, from Thomas Brock. He was a mason, and his son Lemuel was described in 1702 as a cooper.\textsuperscript{85} Michael Huff, son of the one-time innkeeper who had died in 1687, remained in Bristol and was a "charemaker" in 1711.\textsuperscript{86}

Other early craftsmen of the town, with their trades and the dates when they are first indicated as residents in deed records, were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Burges</td>
<td>Brazier</td>
<td>1697?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Mayos</td>
<td>Weaver</td>
<td>1697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Clough</td>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>1704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Collins</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>1704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Greaves</td>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>1704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Silverstone</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>1704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Borradale</td>
<td>Maltster</td>
<td>1705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hall</td>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>1707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Large</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>1708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Tomlinson</td>
<td>Cordwainer</td>
<td>1708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Hill</td>
<td>Cordwainer</td>
<td>1709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Marriott</td>
<td>Saddler</td>
<td>1713</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the dates given above represent purchases of real estate, it is quite likely that many of these men were living in the village for

\textsuperscript{82} Philadelphia County Will Book B, 335, microfilm at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{83} Deed Book 3, 128, John Smith to Charles Levally, May 20, 1703.

\textsuperscript{84} Deed Book 2, 120, John Smith to John Town, Mar. 8, 1696/7; and 2, 123, John Town to Samuel Carpenter, Mar. 9, 1696/7.

\textsuperscript{85} Deed Book 2, 167, Thomas Brock to Samuel Oldale, Sept. 1, 1697; and 3, 209, Samuel Oldale to Lemuel Oldale, Mar. 14, 1701/2.

\textsuperscript{86} Deed Book 4, 161, Michell Huff [sic] to Thomas Stevenson, May 10, 1711.
some time before they bought lots of land, as tenants or employees of earlier landowners such as Samuel Carpenter.

The largest and most ambitious commercial enterprise in the town was the complex of grist- and sawmills on Mill Creek at what was then the northwestern edge of the town. The three grist mills mentioned in the petition for establishing the market town were located on the two acres which Francis Rossill had bought from Joseph English on November 10, 1683, near the point where Mill Street crossed Mill Creek. As mentioned above, Rossill’s lands and mills were passed on to Samuel Carpenter, who subsequently bought two hundred acres of meadow land for use as a mill pond from John Otter on April 20, 1694, as well as several town lots.

Carpenter formed a partnership with Henry Baker on September 3, 1698, and sold him one-half interest in all the property he had accumulated at Bristol. Baker paid £450 in silver for his share and was to live at the mills and manage them during his lifetime, taking as his wage one third of “the toll or mulcture corn that shall be ground at the said mills. . . .”

Baker was a fairly well-to-do and influential man in the county. He had arrived in Pennsylvania on September 17, 1684, with his wife, six children, and ten servants, from Walton in Lancashire. He soon established himself as a prominent man in public affairs, representing Bucks County in the Provincial Assembly in May, 1685. He participated in a number of subsequent sessions, served as overseer of the highways for several years, and was a justice in the county courts from 1688 until his death, which probably occurred in 1701.87 At his death the mill property apparently reverted in its entirety to Carpenter.

Carpenter made a considerable investment toward the commercial development of the village of Buckingham and the improvement of the mills. James Logan, the Provincial Secretary, wrote to William Penn on March 3, 1702/3, that “Samuel Carpenter is upon a great project in Bucks, of building saw-mills, and making all other con-

87 The partnership agreement is recited in Deed Book 2, 199, Samuel Carpenter to Henry Baker, Sept. 3, 1698. For Baker’s biography, see Miles White, Jr., “Henry Baker and Some of His Descendants,” reprinted from Publications of the Southern History Association, V (1901), 388–400. Baker’s will, dated May 7, 1698 (before the partnership agreement), and proved May 24, 1705, does not mention the mills at Bristol. Philadelphia County Will Book B, 427.
veniences for shipping, which by their freight, 'tis hoped, will be the best returns, if sent to Maryland to be loaded. They are talking of a ship to carry 7 or 800 hogsheads of tobacco, which at £12 or £14 per ton will make between two and three thousand pounds freight home, if loaded from Chesapeake, and may afterwards be worth £800 or £1,000 there, and need not cost here above £3000, if built at the best hand, with materials from England, as cables, rigging, &c." From Logan's remarks it is clear that Carpenter intended to establish a shipbuilding industry at Bristol at least as early as 1702. Indeed, the name "New Bristol," which came to be applied to the town about this time, is a reflection of the name of the city in England which was one of the greatest shipping centers in the British Empire. The early years of shipbuilding at Bristol, Pennsylvania, remain obscure, but in the Philadelphia ship registers beginning in 1726 are entered numerous ships built at "New Bristol" or "Bristol" in Pennsylvania.

Financial difficulties, brought on by the War of the Spanish Succession and its disruption of Pennsylvania's commercial relations, hampered Carpenter's plans for improvements at Bristol soon after they were begun. Logan wrote to Penn on September 2, 1703, "He [Carpenter] has been much depressed of late in his spirits, about his incumbrances. . . . His undertaking in Bucks has oppressed him much." There was an amelioration of his circumstances a few months later, when Logan wrote, "Honest Samuel Carpenter finely recovered, and has almost finished his works at Bucks." The improvement, however, was not permanent. In the following February, he was "almost irrecoverably plunged in debt, unless times here mend." In the summer of 1704 he retired from the city to his plantation at Bristol and sold several of his other properties in the province.

88 *Penn-Logan Correspondence*, I, 180.
90 *Penn-Logan Correspondence*, I, 232.
Carpenter even offered his properties at Bristol for sale in 1705 and wrote a detailed description to Jonathan Dickinson, a prospective purchaser. The “parcel of Corn Mills and Saw Mills,” he said, were located “within a quarter of a mile from the River Delaware upon a Creek where a vessel of good burthen may come to the tail of the Mill to load and unload.” The grist mills consisted of two wheels and four pair of cutting stones, and Carpenter expected soon to finish “another wheel and one or two more pairs of stones.” The sawmill was thirty-two feet broad and seventy feet long and stood “on a bank somewhat like that of Philadelphia.” The water ran first through the sawmill and then to “the Corn Mill an under shot which grinds very well, so that we readily grind and saw with the same water.” The mill pond, covering two or three hundred acres, provided a water supply sufficient to drive the wheels of the grist mill except at the end of a dry summer. Carpenter estimated that the saw mill could be operated six or eight months out of the year. It could be supplied with timber from the plantation itself and adjacent land, but Carpenter had not yet tapped these resources; rather, he got his raw materials from his land along Timber Creek, New Jersey.

Carpenter described the locality of the mills as well suited for selling their products. “The next material Conveniency to the Mill, is that it stands in a town and is but one and one quarter miles from Burlington and about Twenty miles from Philadelphia and the Corn Mills well customed. The said town and country adjacent and Philadelphia, will take the boards and scantling for housework, ships and joiners. . . . For good Mills of both sorts with land and meadow situations and all things considered there is not the like in these parts.”

There were actually two mill ponds, the smaller one located just above the mills and bordered by Pond Street, Mill Street, and the Newtown Road (now Bath Street); the larger one lay farther north, part of its area now being occupied by Silver Lake. The “ditch that carries the water between the mill ponds” is mentioned as early as Aug. 1, 1698, Thomas Brock to Samuel Carpenter, Deed Book 2, 187. The topography of the area of the mill ponds has been completely altered by the construction first of the Delaware Division of the Pennsylvania Canal, and later of railroads and highways.
Although he was hard pressed financially, Carpenter did not sell the mills, but he did sell off a number of lots in the town over the next several years. The mills were still in his possession at his death in 1714.  

Soon after the village was established as the county’s market town, the inhabitants turned their attention to having the county seat moved to the new town as well. In one of the few minutes of early town meetings that have survived, it is recorded that “At a town meeting in Buckingham held at the house of Thomas Brock the 2nd day of the first month 1698,” it was “Agreed that it be presented to the next grand jury that A Court house may be erected in Buckingham.” It was also “Agreed that phineas pemberton Henry Baker Thomas Brock and willm Crosdel do take care to find out a Convenient place for the Court house & Burrying place and make report thereof & of theire doings therein to the next town meeting.”

There is no mention in the county court records of this proposal for moving the county seat, but the need to have the courthouse more centrally located in the county was certainly felt by this time. Settlements had spread up the creek valleys of the Neshaminy and Poquessing as far north as Southampton and Newtown townships. Crewcorne was no longer the central or focal point of the county. On March 13, 1699/1700, the grand jury presented the necessity “of placing a Court house Near the Middle of the County which wee esteem to be Near Neshaminy Meeting house,” or Middletown meeting house in what is now Langhorne.

Five years elapsed before the court decided upon a move, and the advocates of the town of Bristol prevailed over those who proposed the location in Middletown Township. At the conclusion of the session of March, 1704/5, the court “Adjourn’d till the 13th day of June next, and to sitt then at New Bristoll in & for the s' County

93 Carpenter may have made further improvements. When his son-in-law and heir William Fishbourn sold the mill land on Jan. 2, 1739, it included “Grist Mills Fulling Mills Saw Mills Boulting Houses Dye Houses and other Houses . . . Together with the Mill Stones Wheels Stones Gears Timbers Coppers Utensils & Implements Whatsoever to the said Mills boulting Houses and Dye Houses or to any of them belonging . . . .” Deed Book 6, 389, William Fishbourn to John Burke, Jan. 2, 1739.

94 Pemberton Papers, I, 60, Etting Collection.

95 Bucks County Court Record, 414.
of Bucks." The court convened as scheduled in June at Bristol, but the exact place at which it sat from this time until a new courthouse could be constructed is not known. It may have been at Brock's inn, which was most likely the only building that could comfortably accommodate a public meeting.96

The act authorizing the erection of a courthouse in Bristol was submitted to the Provincial Assembly on December 5, 1705, and passed on January 12, 1705/6. The money raised by the sale of the old county buildings at Crewcorne was to be used for the construction of the new courthouse on a lot given for the purpose by Samuel Carpenter. The lot, one hundred feet square, was located on the south side of Cedar Street between Market and Mulberry Streets.97

In spite of the impetus that might have been given to Bristol's economy by its becoming the county seat, the town's growth slowed almost to a halt early in the eighteenth century. The population level that it reached by about 1720 was the one at which it remained for the rest of the colonial period. Like other towns in the Delaware Valley such as Chester and New Castle, Bristol was overshadowed in its economic role by the metropolis of Philadelphia. A borough charter was obtained in 1720, with the privilege of holding two fairs a year, but even this measure does not seem to have brought an appreciable improvement.98 The town continued to be a local market center serving the nearby agricultural areas, but many residents of Bucks took their business directly to Philadelphia. It was not until nearly the time of the Revolution, when the Bath Springs on the edge of town became increasingly popular as a fashionable watering place, that Bristol began to grow again in population and in economic activity.

Bucks County Historical Society

TERRY A. MCNEALY

97 Pennsylvania Archives, Eighth Series, I, 536; The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801, II, 278–279; Carpenter, 23.