

# STORIES of New Jersey

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NEW JERSEY WRITERS' PROJECT, WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

44 Chestnut Street, Newark, New Jersey

## ELIZABETH HADDON

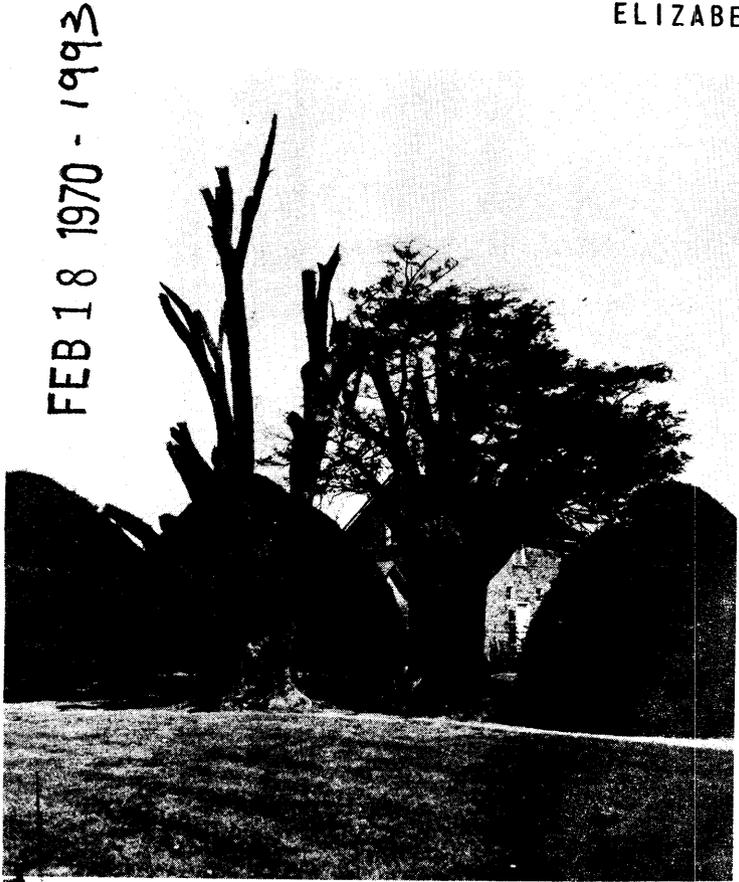
From England in 1701 a small wooden sailing ship set out on its two-month journey to America. On board was a young Quaker girl who was leaving her comfortable home in a London suburb to face the hardships of the long ocean trip and dangers of a strange new land where few white people lived. It was her plan to make a home in the wilderness where Quaker missionaries could rest from their travels and to be a nurse and teacher to the Indians. She decided this when she was very young, and Elizabeth Haddon did not change her mind despite the objections of her family.

John Haddon, Elizabeth's father, was a blacksmith who turned to the successful manufacture of anchors and ship supplies. Becoming more prosperous, he moved his family from Southwark, where Elizabeth was born in 1680, to the more healthy environment of Redriffe Parish not far from London. Three children, a boy and two girls, had been sacrificed to the diseases which bred in the dark, damp lanes of Southwark. In the new home, Elizabeth spent her girlhood in quiet play and study. Mrs. Haddon, who had been an accomplished musician on

the mandolin and spinet and a skillful embroiderer, did not teach these arts to her daughter. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, which Elizabeth's mother joined when she was married, considered such activities frivolous and forbade them.

The Society of Friends believed that men should not kill their fellow men even in defense of their country. Nor did they feel that they should raise their hats as a token of respect even to the King. One of their chief conflicts with the authorities arose over their refusal to pay taxes to support the Church of England, the official church of the kingdom. They disobeyed laws if their religion demanded and would never recognize the authority of the established church. The Quakers did not go unpunished.

John Haddon had seen members of his group dragged off to jail or flogged to death in the streets. He himself had been brought before the courts on several occasions and fined for attending Quaker meetings. In 1682, finally, the



*Yew trees and boxwood brought from England by Elizabeth Haddon.*

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BIOGRAPHY Haddon, Elizabeth

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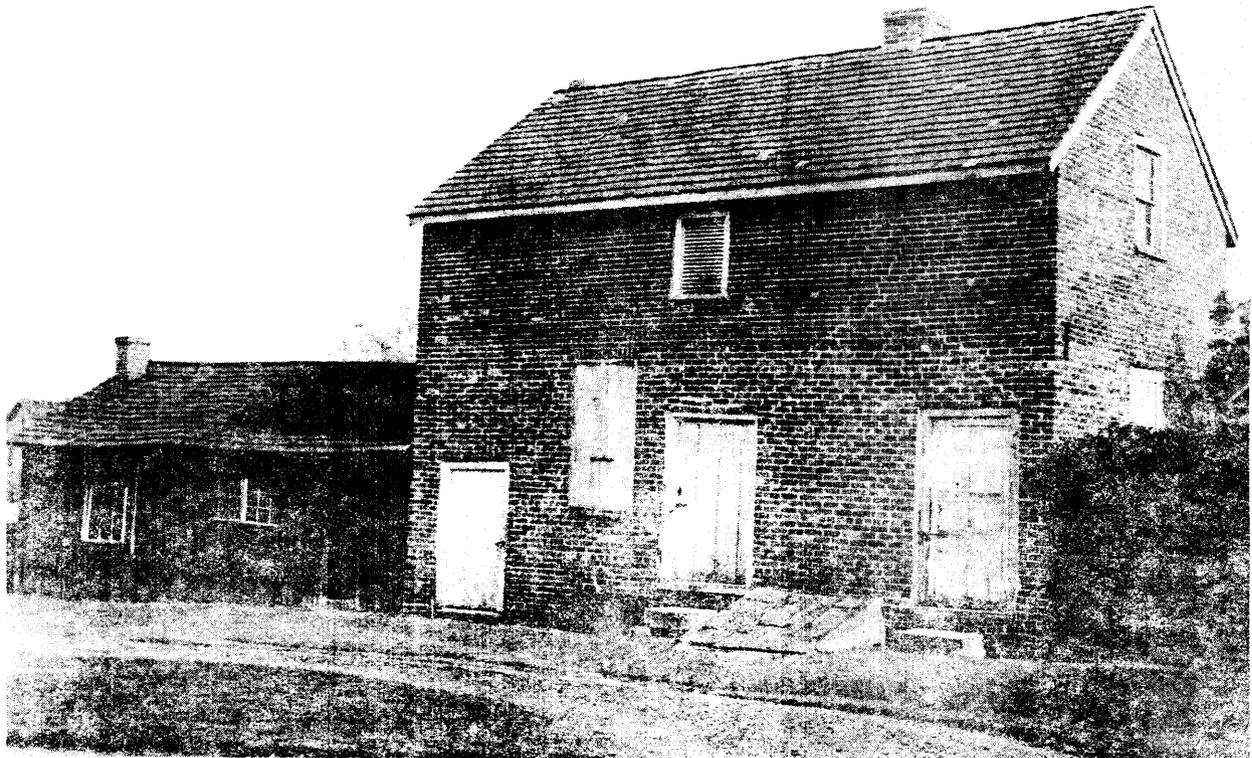
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Quakers were provided with a place of safety in the New World--the Colony of Pennsylvania founded by William Penn, a member of the sect. Three years later, with the coming of James II to the throne, the long, savage campaign of persecution against the Quakers approached its end.

In that same year, 1685, William Penn, who had returned from America several months before, visited the home of his friends, the Haddons. Elizabeth, five years old but more grown up than most children of her age, was enchanted by Penn's description of his remarkable experiences in America. His enthusiastic stories about the people with red skins, whose friendship he had won, made a lasting impression on her.

Ten years later another visitor, also returned from America, broadened Elizabeth Haddon's knowledge of conditions across the sea. He was John Estaugh, a 20-year-old Quaker missionary. Elizabeth's father had heard him speak at the London Yearly Meeting and had brought him home as a dinner guest. The tales Estaugh told the Haddons of the vast lands and great wealth of natural resources in America caused Elizabeth to decide that she would go to America if the opportunity arose.

In 1698, when Elizabeth was 17, John Haddon purchased 500 acres of land in West Jersey from the son of his old neighbor and customer, John Willis, who had gone to America and set up shop as a ship carpenter. Haddon, stirred by talks with Penn and Estaugh, thought of moving his family to the new world, but Mrs. Haddon and their younger daughter had no liking for crude, pioneer life, and the idea was abandoned. Haddon then offered the land to any relative who would go and live on it. Elizabeth at once asked if she might go to West Jersey, set-



*Elizabeth Haddon's distillery house.*

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tle on the property, and be both "friend and physician to the people of that region." Her parents, fearing that she was too young to take such a serious step without further thought, asked her to postpone the venture for awhile, and then, if she were still convinced of her mission, they would give their consent.

During the three years that followed, Elizabeth prepared for the future. She learned how to manage a home economically and read much about diseases and agriculture. At last, seeing that Elizabeth's decision could not be changed, her parents permitted her to depart. In the spring of 1701, accompanied by an older woman who was to serve as housekeeper and two reliable Quaker workmen, Elizabeth Haddon set sail on a two-masted ship for America.

The simple log house built for her by Willis became known throughout the province. She helped the needy and made friends with Indians who taught her the secrets of their medicinal herbs. These herbs she used on her nursing expeditions about the countryside. There were no roads, and the narrow Indian trails could be penetrated only on horseback. Elizabeth lived three miles from her nearest neighbor, yet the loneliness did not frighten her. She welcomed every stranger who asked for shelter at her door. John Estaugh, who had learned of her arrival in West Jersey, came to visit with a fellow missionary, but after several days duties elsewhere took him away.

When summer came to Haddon's fields, it brought John Estaugh back along the new King's Highway which stretched from Burlington to Salem. Together with a group of Quakers, he was headed for the Quarterly Meeting at Salem. That night the travelers stayed at Elizabeth's home, and she learned of Estaugh's intention to return to England within a few days. The news saddened her.

Next morning, preparing to accompany the party to Salem, Elizabeth waited until the others had mounted their horses, and then pretended that something was wrong with her saddle. According to Longfellow's story in "Tales of a Wayside Inn," Estaugh came at once to her side and

Then Elizabeth said, though still with a certain reluctance  
As if impelled to reveal a secret she fain would have guarded:  
"I will no longer conceal what is laid upon me to tell thee;  
I have received from the Lord a charge to love thee, John Estaugh."

But John, surprised by this proposal, would not give Elizabeth an immediate answer. Elizabeth guessed that he was troubled by the contrast between her father's prosperity and his own poverty. It was not long, however, before John decided.

Three months later he hastened back from England to tell Elizabeth that he had her father's approval for their marriage. They were married October 1, 1702, at Elizabeth's home in the presence of Quaker and Indian neighbors. John continued with his religious work, but now he was also employed as agent for the Pennsylvania Land Company and as overseer of his father-in-law's growing business interests on this side of the Atlantic. Hundreds of acres were added to the plantation which Elizabeth supervised as before. In 1705 she became Clerk of the Women's Meeting in the Society of Friends, an important position which she held for more than 50 years.

In 1713 Elizabeth and John built a splendid two-storied home on the Haddon estate, a mile from the old house, within the present limits of the town of Haddonfield. The year in which the new house was first occupied is considered the birth date of the town. Yew trees and box hedge, which still live, and bricks for the cellar floor and garden walks were imported from England; bricks for the house walls were made in the kilns in Elizabeth's brickyard. When fire destroyed the house in 1842, some of the fine English furniture was saved and is now owned by members of the family. To save the yew trees, wet rugs were thrown

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over their branches. One of the two still blooms each spring.

At the rear of the house was constructed a distillery where both Elizabeth and John made medicines and wine which was given free of charge to those who were ill. This was perhaps the first free dispensary in America. After Elizabeth Haddon's death, people continued to use her healing preparations for many years.

The Estaugh home and hospitality became famous throughout West Jersey. Food, herbs and clothing went to the poor. In winter, snowbound roads were opened up for less fortunate neighbors by the great oxen team which Elizabeth sent out. Over the years, the busy couple made three visits to England. On one of these occasions, Elizabeth obtained from her father the deed to a piece of his land to be used for a new Quaker meeting house and burial ground. A village had begun to grow up around Haddon's fields.

The happy marriage of Elizabeth Haddon and John Estaugh lasted for 40 years. Estaugh, at the age of 67 and in delicate health, felt it his duty to go as a missionary to Tortola in the West Indies. Here he became ill and died in 1742. Elizabeth wrote: "Few, if any, in a married state, ever lived in sweeter harmony than we did....My loss is far beyond my expressing, as is his worth." This "Testimony" to Estaugh's memory was printed in a book titled: *A Call to the Unfaithful Professors of Truth: Written by John Estaugh in his Lifetime; and now Published for General Service (1744)*. Elizabeth had this volume printed by Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia.

Elizabeth Haddon lived for 20 years after John died. She adopted her sister Sarah's son, Ebenezer Hopkins, and spent her declining years in the midst of numerous grandnephews and grandnieces. Not for one moment did she give up her position as head of the family. Up to her last day she ruled over the Haddon fields. In 1762, after three months of painful illness, which she bore without complaint, Elizabeth Haddon died at the age of 82.

Today in the town of Haddonfield there is a brass tablet dedicated to the memory of the only woman who ever settled alone on an American colonial plantation. The tablet is fastened to an old buttonwood tree about 20 feet from where she was buried. The plaque reads in part: "In Memory of Elizabeth Haddon... Founder and Proprietor of Haddonfield, N. J....A Woman Remarkable for Resolution, Prudence, Charity."