



## **The Reading and Howell Family 1660-1750**

### **A Time-Line History of the historic Prallville Mills complex prior to John Prall Jr.**

**1657-** John Reading born in Pipe Hill, Lichfield, Staffordshire, England

**1677-** John Reading, at the age 20 years, purchased proprietary share in the new Colony of West Jersey.

**1684-** John Reading came to West New Jersey with his wife Elizabeth and daughter Elizabeth and settled in the city of Gloucester in Gloucester County, along the Delaware River. This was part of the settlement of Quakers, organized by William Penn. Daughter Elizabeth died in 1692, age 8; a second daughter, Sarah, died the same year, age 1.

**1685-** John reading elected to the first of several terms in the West Jersey Assembly. He was elected Clerk and Recorder for Gloucester County.

**By 1686-** Reading was a wealthy and influential man and a member of the Council of Proprietors of West Jersey. He was a captain of the county militia, the first recorder of deeds for West Jersey and a justice on the colonial Supreme Court.

**1687-** Reading was one of the first commissioners of the Council of Proprietors of West New Jersey. He was elected to the Governor's Council, and was reelected every year thereafter until his death in 1717.

**1693-** Reading obtains the ferry rights for both the Delaware River and Gloucester River crossings

**1699-** John Reading Jr. and his sister Elsie were sent to school in England accompanied by his mother; for seven years. John Reading Jr. would become a governor of New Jersey in 1757 at the age of 73.

**1702-** Reading made his first purchase of land in Hunterdon. (A section of northern Burlington County was set off and established as Hunterdon County.)

**1708-** Creation of Amwell Township, probably at the instigation of John Reading.

**1709-** Reading bought 1440 acres, which was the heart of his plantation called Mount Amwell, after a town in England. He is thought to have left Gloucester and settled on his plantation sometime between 1709 and 1711. A deed of 1709 identified him as "of Mount Amwell" located in what is now known as Stockton. Due to the Ferry operation, this section of the Delaware Valley was referred to as Reading's Landing, first mentioned in a petition to the PA legislature for a road the begin on the Delaware river opposite of Reading's Landing, to run to Philadelphia (later know as Old York Road). His ferry operation was at the site of the present day Ferry Street in Stockton Borough.

**1710-11-** Reading's daughter, Mary, married Daniel Howell, of Bucks County, PA. He presented his daughter and her husband with a tract of land about a mile square on the south side of the Wicheckeoke Creek and constructed a sawmill and a gristmill for them; the first establishment of that sort in the area.

**1711<sup>1</sup>-** Reading's house in Gloucester City was accidentally burned in this year and he eventually establishing his residence at Wichecheoke, a desirable spot on the site of an Indian Village under a fold in the hills, protected from the winter storms.

**1713-** Reading was appointed o the Governor's Council, which served as an advisor to New Jersey's highest court.

**1714-** Gov. Hunter commissioned John Reading Captain for the militia company of Amwell and the upper part of Hopewell, Hunterdon County. In 1715 Reading was promoted to Lt. Colonel in the regiment of Col. John Hamilton.<sup>2</sup>

**1717-** Colonel John Reading dies leaving his land to his son John Reading Jr. and his daughter Mary and her husband Daniel Howell

**1719-27** Daniel Howell served on Hunterdon County's first grand jury. 1721 he was named the first coroner of the county. 1722 he was one of the county's first assessors. 1725 he was named a Justice of the Peace. 1727 he was named to the Court of Common Pleas for Hunterdon County and named a captain of the Amwell militia under his brother-in-law Col. John Reading.

**1733-** Captain Daniel Howell bequeathed a grist mill and saw mill, which had been built by his father-in-law, John Reading, and 73 acres of land fronting on the Delaware River and Wichecheoke Creek, to his two eldest sons Daniel Howell, Jr. and John Howell.

**1744-** A confirmation deed was made to Daniel and John by their mother's brother John Reading Jr. because it appears that previous deed on the land had not been recorded.

**1750-** Reading's grandson, Daniel Howell sold the Mill property to Charles Woolverton.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the burning of Mr. Reading's house is mentioned in a confirmation deed, which he executed March 15, 1711, for one, which had been burned in the house fire. Recorded, Burlington deed book BBB-12 Page 93, State Archives, Trenton.

<sup>2</sup> Leach, pg 21