



Cohansey, New England Town, Fairfield, Antioch!?

In 1964, the Cumberland county Board of Freeholders published a booklet presenting the history and virtues of Cumberland County. Early in this work, there is a map that was originally reproduced in a 1698 book that proclaimed the advantages of a new life in West Jersey to British citizens. The book, by a Gabriel Thomas, displays a map that inadvertently identified Fairton as "Antioch." Looking north and west of the Prince Maurice River, you will note the town "Antioch" at the ninety-degree bend of an unidentified river (the Cohansey, alias the "Caesaria" River as designated by John Fenwick).

New Jersey gets its name from the largest of the English Channel Islands, Jersey, called Caesarea during the time of Roman rule of the British Isles; New Jersey was known by the early colonists as "New Caesarea."

The map caption in the Freeholder's publication, speaking of Gabriel Thomas, reads, "The towns shown hereon were largely products of the imagination of this 17th century public relations man."

A descendant of one of the early Pastors of Fairfield Church, Lucius Q. C. Elmer, published a history of the region in 1869; he mentions the imaginative chart published by Gabriel Thomas. Scanned and pasted below is an excerpt from his book, *History of the Early Settlement and Progress of Cumberland County, New Jersey, and of the Currency of This and the Adjoining Colonies, pages 20-21**.

A map annexed to Thomas's description of Pennsylvania and West Jersey, before referred to, contains on it the names of two towns, viz: Dorchester, on the east side of Maurice River, and Antioch, on the south side of Cohansey, the only towns within the bounds of Cumberland which are named. Dorchester was surveyed and returned as a town plat of 2500 acres, and although no town was built until after 1800, it retains the name. Antioch was probably surveyed in a similar manner, but never recorded, unless, as is most probable, the map places it on the wrong side of the river. The original map of Hancock's survey for Gibbon, refers to the boundaries of Antioch or Greenwich town. No town called Antioch ever existed in the county.

The Connecticut immigrants called the place most thickly settled New England Town, by which name, or that of New England Town Cross-roads, it was long known. The first road from Salem to Maurice River was laid out in 1705, through Greenwich, crossing the river there, and then along by the meeting-house at New England Town, up to the neighborhood of the present Fairton, and then through the woods towards Maurice River, without stating precisely where it was to go or where to end. The road from New England Town to Burlington—the seat of government of West Jersey—was no doubt the first road used in the county. It passed over the north branch of the Cohansey, called Mill Creek, at a place where the mill was first erected, somewhat below the present mill-dam, and then along the Indian path about a mile east of Bridgeton, through the Indian fields, passing by the Pine Tavern, then over to the road from Salem, near the present Clarksboro in Gloucester County, then through Woodbury and Haddonfield. The bridge and road at Carpenter's Landing were not made until the forepart of the present century.

Fairton was not so called until the post-office was established,

about the year 1812. It was previously called by the nickname Bumbridge, a name said to have originated from the circumstance that a constable—then often called a Bum-bailiff, which is a corruption of the word bound bailiff, that is, a bailiff bound with a security—in attempting to arrest a person, fell into the water, owing to some defect in the bridge over Rattlesnake Run, and thus occasioned the bridge to be rebuilt, and to acquire a name. For many years the road over this run crossed considerably above where the bridge was made. When the country was first settled, what is now called Mill Creek, at Fairton, was known as the north branch of the Cohansey.

Cedarville became a place of some local importance directly after the Revolution, but was not known by this name until the post-office was established. It was settled at an early period; but when the mill was erected is not known.

Gouldtown—partly in the northern part of Fairfield, and partly in Bridgeton townships—although never more than a settlement of mulattoes principally bearing the names of Gould and Pierce, scattered over a considerable territory, is of quite ancient date.

In his 2006 “**Ebenezer Sunday**” sermon, Pastor Schuelke called attention to Thomas’s map and reminded us that at Antioch the disciples were first called “Christians,” people who emulate Christ (Acts 11:26). The church at Antioch would later send out the Apostle Paul and Barnabas as church planters to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Pastor Schuelke called the Fairfield congregation to be like the Church at Antioch and commit ourselves to being disciples of Jesus Christ—living like Him and for His Kingdom, and making disciples who will go forth to plant churches in South Jersey.

*A reprint of Elmer’s book, originally published by George F. Nixon of Bridgeton, NJ, in 1869, was published by Heritage Books Inc., 3602 Maureen Lane, Bowie, MD 20715

****Ebenezer Sunday** – Hebrew for “*Stone of Help*,” the first Sunday in the New Year wherein Fairfield Presbyterian Church is reminded of God’s faithfulness; the church raises a figurative stone of help, an “Ebenezer.” This was a recommendation of Pastor Schuelke’s approved by the Session of Fairfield Church in the early 1990’s.

1 Samuel 7:12 – *Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it **Ebenezer**, saying, “Thus far has the Lord helped us.”*