

Daniel Wills, Jr. Account of the First Settlement of Burlington in the Year 1677

*The original account was given by Daniel in 1715 and is recorded in the Minutes Book of the West Jersey Council of Proprietors; A transcription was made and is included in the John P. Dornan Collection
Transcription of this copied document by Chad G. Nichols (9th great grandson of Daniel Wills, Jr.)*

The Commissioners for William Penn, Gawen Lawrie, Nicholas Lucas, and the rest of the Proprietors unanimously employed Richard Noble to divide the spot where the town was to be, which he did to a general satisfaction. Then his work was to divide it into Lots. After the street called High Street was laid out from both, the easternmost side of the street was to be divided among the Yorkshire Proprietors as they were then called; and all the land lying on the westernmost side bounded by the River and Creek was to be laid out by the unanimous consent of the Commissioners to those that was called the London ten Proprietys. So in order to begin a Settlement the Surveyor was ordered to Survey ten Lots of nine acres each all bounding on the western side of the High Street.

When that was done Daniel Wills my father in the month of October, I think towards the latter end, made what speed he could, winter coming on, to make a settlement there, so bought up Servants, also the two John Woolstons, Samuel Clift and his wife and son came up with us. I remember we had a northeast storm of wind and rain for forty-eight hours about the middle of which we came to the Landing. And when ashore the first thing to be done was to draw lots to find which of the ten was my fathers. So my father wrote down nine of the Proprietors names in lots of paper and rowled them up for the tenth he did know but he rowled up a blank paper for it an put them all in to a hat covered and caused an unconcerned person to draw them out. So the blank lot came out first, which was to be next the River, and in Two months after the Person arrived and produced his Right to it, which was Thomas Budd, first; second, Thomas Hooton; third, Daniel Wills; fourth, John Penford; fifth, Ridges O. Rudyard (sic); sixth, Thomas Olive; seventh, Benjamin Scott; eighth, William Peachy; ninth, John Smith; tenth, Richard Mew.

This being done we took up our packages and through the woods we went to find the third lot. When there arrived all in the rain we set up some forks and poles upon them and covered our tents with blankets but all that did but little good for it rained through upon us all night. So that betwixt the rain and the smoke of our fire and wet cloaths which never dried untill they dried on our backs we was very much benumbed. Had not my father more courage than either his Son or servants to go out in the dismal dark night to get wood to recruit the fire we might have perished. But to proceed, the Commissioners after all this betook themselves to dividing the Yorkshire part of the Island. And after Thomas Olive came up with his family the London Commissioners employed also the said Richard Noble to divide the remaining part of the Island that was yet unsurveyed between the ten Proprietors aforesaid.... All which Lots aforesaid by order of the Commissioners was surveyed and appropriated to the Proprietors in the year 1677. Thomas Olive and Daniel Wills, my father, was with the Surveyors always one or the other of them. John Penford and Benjamin Scott being gone for England before the whole was finished.

Sometime I think about two years after, the Commissioners appointed William Emley to be the Proprietor's Surveyor and considering it would be necessary fore firewood & to accommodate the Town they employed him to survey off so much Land adjoining to the said Town as might answer to each of the said twenty Proprietors four hundred acres which was called "Town-bound lands" for each Proprietor to take it up within the said bounds; and was not divided no otherwise than each Proprietor took it up, but was in general surveyed out for the source of those twenty Proprietors and no others.

We whose names are hereunto inscribed being Passengers in the ship aforesaid, and some of the first inhabitants in the said town do testify and declare that of our own knowledge the above Relations is true.

William X Matlack aged 68 years (Mark of William Matlack)

Daniel Wills aged 57 years