

dawned upon West New Jersey, and in November, 1681, Jennings, acting as governor for the proprietaries, convened the first legislative assembly of the representatives of men who said THEE and THOU to all the world, and wore their hats in the presence of beggar and king. Their first measures established their rights by an act of fundamental legislation and in the spirit of "the concessions" they framed their government on the basis of humanity. Neither faith nor wealth nor race was respected. They met in the wilderness as men and founded society on equal rights. They levied for the expenses of their commonwealth two hundred pounds, to be paid in skins or corn or money; they voted the governor a salary of twenty pounds; they prohibited the sale of ardent spirits to the Indians; they forbade imprisonment for debt. The little government of a few hundred souls soon increased to thousands. The people rejoiced under the reign of God, confident that he would beautify the meek with salvation. A loving correspondence began with Friends in England; and from the fathers of the sect frequent messages were received.

In May, 1682, Burlington was erected into the capital of the province. In 1684 the assembly divided the province into four counties—Bergen, Essex, Middlesex and Monmouth.

These were the times and the places where the first ancestors of the Shreve family in colonial times are known to us. Quakerism was their religious and political creed, and its principles were so thoroughly instilled into them that for more than one century almost without exception their descendants followed in the same belief, and now, after a lapse of two hundred and fifty years, a large number have not departed from the early faith of their ancestors.

Thirty-five years before Rhode Island numbered 4,000 souls, during which period emigration was large, the name of Thomas Sheriff and his family occur in its annals, while within twelve years of the time Long Island is designated as regularly occupied, and within twenty-five years of the time the first family lived on it, the name of Areson appears on its early records.

To appreciate the lives of these early ancestors we should thus understand the times in which they lived and the motives that impelled them to seek new homes in a strange land and a final settlement in the mild climate on the fertile soil of New Jersey. It is unnecessary to further pursue the political and religious history of the early times.