

BENAJAH (Be-Nay-Ah) THOMPSON was born in England in 1739. His motives for coming to colonial America are unknown.

After making the passage, it appears his first landfall was Virginia. This more than likely was just a way stop and he was soon on to colonial New Jersey. Once in NJ, Benajah settled into the area then known as "Maurice River Neck". The area is now known more specifically as Heislerville, NJ, but in colonial times the rural area straddled Cumberland and Cape May Counties and in addition to Heislerville, included such places as Port Elizabeth, East Point, Delmont and Leesburg. Here, Benajah found like minded English colonists that were mostly farmers, fishermen and boat builders.

Differing accounts said that Benajah was a "missionary". Other accounts, more likely, reported him as a farmer, but with a "mission" to also teach English to the local Native Americans of Cape May County. These Native Americans would be the Ketchameche Clan of the larger Delaware Nation of Lenni Lenape. The name of the Ketchameche Clan leader is widely known and reported in this area as "King" Nummy or "Chief" Nummy or Nummis. Even in modern times, his name is memorialized on a variety of local landmarks, roads and businesses in the area.

At some point, Benajah fell in love with King Nummys sister, Toudl-Hkilligo, which translates as Princess Snow Flower. Once she was baptized and given the Christian name Prudence Eldridge / Eldredge they were married in 1760 and had eight children:

Anson

Christina

James

Richard (1768-1824) *

Constant (1770-1793)

Manly (1775-1848) **

Nehemiah (1776-1796)

Warren (1778-1853) ***

When the call to arms came, Benajah enlisted in the Cumberland Militia and was made captain in Col. Enos Seeleys Battalion. The date of entry into the service is not known. ***“The first chronological reference to him appears on a “mileage bill” for the company of foot militia, belonging to Col. Enos Seeley’s Battalion from Cumberland County, bound to the flying camp, made at Brunswick, ye sixteenth day of October, 1776. Eight days mileage due, the receipt signed, Benajah Thompson, Capt.”*** (Taken from GENEALOGY of John Williams and Thankful Barlow, Benajah Tomson and Prudence Eldredge by Charles Tomlin and Clarence R. Brooks-1931)

Further stated by Tomlin and Brooks is that ***“it is certain this man was in service in the Cumberland County Militia prior to and at the time of this tour with the militia detached under ordinance of August 11, 1776. These detachments were “state troops” of course, but were not so designated. An election held on February (3rd or 13th), 1777, shows this officer chosen as captain of the Eighth Company, designated Lower, from the Maurice River Township, in the Militia of Cumberland County. Pay and bounty rolls show him in active service in Salem County, under Colonel Hand, in March 1778, which is the last authentic reference”.***

Benajah died in 1780 in “Maurice River Neck”. His burial site is unknown.

* Richard Thompson’s son, Richard S. Thompson served in the Civil War as a Union Army Lieutenant Colonel, 12TH New Jersey Volunteers. His war experiences, documented in letters, journals and diaries are published as “While My Country is in Danger”, Edmonton Publishing 1994, ISBN 0-9622393-6-4

** Manly Thompson and

*** Warren Thompson (my 5th great grandfather)

During the War of 1812, Manly and Warren served as American spies. Their job was to station themselves at East Point and report on British shipping as it entered and left Delaware Bay. For their efforts, they were fired upon by a passing British frigate and fortunately escaped unharmed. This story was also reported in the Tomlin and Brooks genealogy of the Williams-Barlow-Thomson & Eldredge publication, referenced above.

Respectfully submitted,
Sumner Bruce Lippincott
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