

THE ALLENDALE AREA IN COLONIAL TIMES — 1694-1783 —

In addition to the civil, official, names of areas in northern New Jersey were the local names given and in use by inhabitants. These names often were derived from church locations and the surrounding area they served; thus, in these early times, if one was said to have been born or lived "at Hackensack," it really meant one was born or lived within the general area served by the Hackensack church, and in early colonial times, that description included a very broad geographical area.

As newer churches were established, to serve a growing population, the geographic area each served became progressively smaller. But even into the 19th century, people living in present day Allendale may have been described as, for instance, "of Paramus." John Fell, a Bergen County Revolutionary patriot who lived in Allendale in the house at 475 Franklin Turnpike, was considered to be "of Paramus."

In time, even small settlements and communities were given informal names used by local inhabitants. Some Bergen County and vicinity community names were derived from settler's names or names of important individuals (Debauntown, Franklin, Demarest, Godwinville, and Orvil to name a few).

Some settlements took the Indian name for the locality, such as Mahwah, Masonicus, Hackensack, Paramus, and Kinderkamack.

Other localities were named for a man-made landmark, such as Fort Lee, Liberty Pole, Old Bridge, New Bridge, and Three Pigeons.

Some areas were named after old world sites (Scotland, Brabant) or the places settlers came from: New Antrim and New Barbadoes (named for the island of Barbados — the Bergen County settlement is usually found spelled with the "e").

Still others were descriptive of geography or topography, such as Boiling Spring, Chestnut Ridge, and Glen Rock. And some communities got their names from memorable, and sometimes humorous, events (Pickletown; Sluckup).¹

Brabant (also found spelled Braband and Browbent) was a locality in the vicinity of southwestern Ramsey (Youngs Road area), the Fardale section of Mahwah, and perhaps into today's Allendale limits. It was probably named by early

Dutch settlers for the province of that name in the Netherlands. In a March 30, 1730 warranty deed for 100 acres from Lucas Kiersted* to Evert Van Zeyl, the land was described as "premises at a place called Braband." The quit rent was "2 good young and well grown fat fowls per every hundred acres." The locality name was in use at least as late as 1835 when the road that became Hillside Avenue in Allendale is labeled on a County Road Return map as "the road to Browbent."^{2,3}

When John Fell made Allendale his home, by 1766 and probably earlier, he named his estate "Petersfield" after his son, Peter Fell.⁴ Before long, the entire local area surrounding his estate was referred to as Petersfield. The area in which Fell lived may also have been known as "Felton."⁵

CHURCHES

In addition to the Dutch Reformed Churches at Bergen, Hackensack, and Acquackanonk, all organized before 1700, more and more localized congregations were forming in New Jersey as the years went by. Congregations organized churches at Schraalenburgh (present Bergenfield, organized 1724-25), Ponds (Oakland area; as early as 1710), at Paramus (in 1725), Pompton (1736), and Totowa (the Paterson area, in 1755). The settlers in our area at this time also traveled for services, baptisms, and marriages across the Hudson to the New York City church and north to the Tappan church.

The Dutch Reformed Church at Paramus was organized in 1725 and in 1735 the cornerstone of the first church building was laid on land donated by New York merchant and Bergen County landowner, Peter Fauconnier. Throughout much of the Revolution, the church building was used as a mili-

*also found written Kierstede, and other spellings. Throughout this book, spelling variations may be found in both family and given names, as well as place names, especially when quoting from contemporary documents. The colonial period was one of phonetic spelling — no one had a dictionary, and the colonists themselves spelled their own names differently, sometimes even using two spellings within the same document.

tary post, and the congregation worshipped in private homes and barns. The church building was damaged during the Revolutionary years, and plans were made after the war to restore the church. These plans were replaced by the decision to build a new church, which was done in 1800, using many of the stones and materials of the old church.

Apparently the only denomination other than Dutch Reformed represented in the area at this early time was the New York Lutheran church. Lutheran baptisms, marriages and burials took place locally at Hackensack, Saddle River and Ramapo and at Lutheran settlements in New York state from the early 1700s. The large German Palatine immigration in 1710 fed this Lutheran Church, and by 1713 Justus Falckner, the first Lutheran pastor ordained in America, was making trips to the congregation's meetings at church members' homes at Hackensack, Ramapo, and Saddle River.

EARLY SETTLERS AND THE RAMAPO TRACT

One of the earliest settlers in our immediate local area was a 48-year-old widow, Blandina Bayard, who received land by a deed from the Indians in 1700. She had a frame house (which also served as an Indian trading post) built for her within the bounds of present-day Mahwah. Her large tract of land was about 12 by 16 miles, and encompassed areas of present Bergen and Passaic counties in New Jersey and part of southern New York State as well. At that time all of the land was considered as being within the Province of New York. The land within present Bergen County included Remapough (Ramapo, part of which is today's Mahwah), Iapough (Yawpough, today Oakland), and Camque (Campgaw, a section of today's Franklin Lakes).

Blandina Bayard was the daughter of Sarah Kiersted, who had been an early translator for the Indians and the Dutch. Blandina seems to have lived part of the time in her Ramapo house, and part of the time in New York City, where she died in 1702. Her daughter-in-law, Rachel Bayard, and her nephew, Lucas Kiersted, took over the outpost at Ramapo. Lucas Kiersted, a farmer and Indian trader, married Jannetje Laroe, daughter of another early Bergen County settler, Jacques Laroe.^{6,7}

In the earlier days of colonization, it was necessary, in order to obtain clear title to land, to purchase it from the Indians as well as from the East Jersey Proprietors, or other patentees or owners. And even then, one's right to the property title might be contested. Part of the tract conveyed to Blandina Bayard in 1700 was, despite the earlier deed, sold again by the Indians on November 18, 1709 to a company consisting of John Auboyneau, Elias Boudinot (both

Huguenot merchants), Peter Fauconnier, and Lucas Kiersted. This same company of men then purchased the land from The East Jersey Proprietors through their agent, Peter Sonmans, who confirmed the deed (with the additional grantees John Barbarie, Thomas Bayeaux, Andrew Fresneau, and Peter Bard) on December 10, 1709.

This land was a tract of 42,500 acres, known as the Ramapock Tract (Romopock, Ramapo, various other spellings). It was surveyed by William Bond, at the order of Sonmans, and the survey map was filed in Bergen County on April 25, 1710. While conducting this survey Peter Fauconnier and Bond were threatened by Indians and settlers already living on land in the Ramapo Tract, including Samuel Bayard, Major Brockolst, Captain Brockolst, Rachel Bayard (the widow of Peter Bayard), and Albert Zabriskie and his two sons, one of whom wanted "to break their necks." Two unidentified houses are indicated on this map in the vicinity of what later became Allendale.

In 1702 Lord Cornbury had been named the royal governor of New York and New Jersey, and he surrounded himself with a group of influential men called the Cornbury Circle. Cornbury brought his secretary and accountant, Peter Fauconnier, to New York in 1702. Fauconnier became a member of the Cornbury Circle, and so did Peter Sonmans.⁷

Most, if not all, of the East New Jersey Proprietors did not live locally on their land here, but employed agents to negotiate sales and leases, collect rents, and manage other land transactions for them. Deeds and titles to lots in the Ramapo Tract were disputed for years. The Proprietors claimed that Peter Sonmans had not had the authority to sell their land in the Ramapo Tract, and after 1731 they too sold and leased these same lands. They also tried to prove their title in the courts, but their suits were unsuccessful because the juries were made up of settlers and their friends who sympathized with their neighbors when they were threatened with loss of their land rights. Richard Ashfield, a member of the Board of Proprietors who had visited the Ramapo Tract and dealt with settlers there, on June 24, 1742 reported to the Board concerning the outcome of their cases in court, "I am well assured that no jury can be found in Bergen County that will give it in favour of the Proprietors."⁸ At the same time their cases were being pressed in court, the Proprietors attempted to negotiate to reach a settlement with Fauconnier, his daughter Mrs. Magdalena Valleau, his associates and those who had purchased lands from them.

When Martin Ryerson tried to survey and mark off land on the northerly branch of the Ramapo River, he was interrupted and threatened by settlers, who had purchased or leased smaller grants within the

Ramapo Tract. They had made their acquisitions from the Indians and others who had represented themselves as owners.

The difficulties were compounded by the numbers of squatters and by settlers who took possession of more land than they had leased or bought.

The Board of East New Jersey Proprietors attempted, through their agents, who included William Ramsey, John Ramsey, Frank Ryerson, and George Ryerson (who became the first justice of the peace in the area), to obtain payment or releases from the various purchasers and lease renewals from the tenants and settlers of the tract.

During the years 1767 and 1768 the Board employed George Ryerson, Jonathan Hampton, and Benjamin Morgan to survey and make a map of the entire disputed tract, dividing the area into lots. After completion of the map, the Board of Proprietors decided to sell the lands, resurveying lots as they were sold. To further add to the confusion, the resurveying seems almost in every case to differ from the original survey and map.

By September 1768, according to the Alexander-Morris Survey presented to the Board of Proprietors of Eastern New Jersey, 28,627 acres of the Ramapo Tract were unsold and 3,468 acres had been sold. The tract then had 50 woodlots and 156 tenants.⁹

Not all of the purchasers and lessees lived on the land; some planted it and grew crops and others acquired their land as woodlots and cut and sold the trees growing on it. It is difficult and sometimes impossible for us to know whether the names associated with any particular lot of land represented people who actually lived there. Much of the land in the Ramapo Tract changed hands relatively often; some lessees may have been involved only for a year or two. A few settlers and their houses, outbuildings, crops, and orchards, however, are mentioned in contemporary journals. Some houses are shown on maps and surveys.

Peter Fauconnier had leased Ramapo Tract land (mostly in the Mahwah area) to a number of German Palatines who had come to England's North American colonies in a group of about 3,300 immigrants in 1710. These Germans had been disbursed, many to colonies north on the Hudson (near Newburgh) where they eked out an existence in the production of tar and pitch, for naval use, for about two years. When this work came to a stop, and the Palatines were left to fend for themselves, about a dozen families, including the Wanamakers, Fredericks, Maysingers, Streights, Carloughs, Millers, Storrs, Leins, and Schmidts leased and settled on Fauconnier's land beginning about 1713.¹⁰

John Labagh (Lauback, Lopoc, and numerous other early spelling variations) was one of the

German Palatines who came in 1710 with his wife and two sons over the age of ten, and settled in Bergen County. He was probably living in the Allendale area by about 1715. Beginning about 1741 he and/or his son leased land from the Proprietors.¹¹ His descendants continued to live in the area into the 20th century. John Lauback's descendant (probably his granddaughter), Ann Elizabeth Lauback, married, in 1848, Joseph Mallinson. Heirs and descendants of Joseph Mallinson still lived in the area well into the mid-1900s.

Peter Tebow had settled in or near what became Allendale by 1737 and had built a house. He had apparently purchased land from Peter Fauconnier or his representatives, but to be sure of his title, he also leased this land from the Proprietors and eventually purchased it from them. He bought more than 300 acres in what is today Waldwick and Allendale, including land in the neighborhood west of Chestnut Street and south of Brookside Avenue east of West Crescent Avenue. On May 28, 1742 Mr. Ashfield, representing the Proprietors, called upon "Peter DeBoye, and he is willing to purchase, but he is a very poor man, and has thirteen children, and should be considered as such."⁸

Farmers planted fruit trees from their earliest settlement in this vicinity. A 1737 road return mentions a locality where "Gerrit van Blerkum has planted apple trees" and a reference to "Vanblercum's" orchard appears in the minutes of the Board of Proprietors of East Jersey on June 23rd, 1746.¹²

Other settlers leased woodland and cut down trees for building purposes and fuel, and beginning in the 1740s, to send to Ringwood to fuel the furnace and forges there. William Ramsey reported to the Proprietors in 1742 that "Hannes Vansyle has this winter by pretence of a lease from Fauconnier, cut a great deal of timber near Van Syle's place, & elsewhere, and hurts the land."¹³

Peter Tebow's son Ryer Tebow married Abigail DeBaun and he, too, leased land in the Ramapo Tract from the Proprietors in 1757 and 1763.

Slowly, others bought and settled the area, including one who was perhaps Allendale's most illustrious resident. John Fell was a New York merchant whose business included trading by river boat on the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. By 1759, John Fell was the senior member of the merchant firm of John Fell & Co., in New York. At that time, the firm had several armed merchant vessels engaged in overseas commerce. Fell had moved to this area before 1766, at which time he was appointed judge of the Bergen County Court of Common Pleas. He was later a member of the Provincial Congress (1775); chairman of the provincial council (1776); a member of the Continental Congress (1778-80); and a member of the

state council (1782 and 1783).¹⁴

John Fell was said have been a descendant of Simon Fell, born in Dieppe, France, first of the family to come to America. John Fell was born in New York City February 5, 1721 and married December 2, 1749 in Trinity Church, New York City, Susannah Marschalk, widow of a man named Mackintosh. John and Susannah Fell had at least three children: Peter Renaudet Fell, born about 1752; Susannah Fell, who married Nathan Smith; and Elizabeth Fell, who married October 13, 1774 in New York, Cadwallader C. Colden, son of Cadwallader Colden and Elizabeth Ellison.

John Fell was connected (by family relationship, marriage, or business) to the Cuyler and Cousseau families, and all three families were merchants, traders, and in the shipping business in New York City. Henry Cuyler, Sr. and Henry Cuyler, Jr. (often referred to as "the elder" and "the younger") owned considerable land in the New York City area, including holdings in Bergen County, prior to the Revolution. Henry Cuyler, Sr. owned property in what became Allendale, which his son inherited. Henry Cuyler, Jr., married a granddaughter of Simon Fell.¹⁵

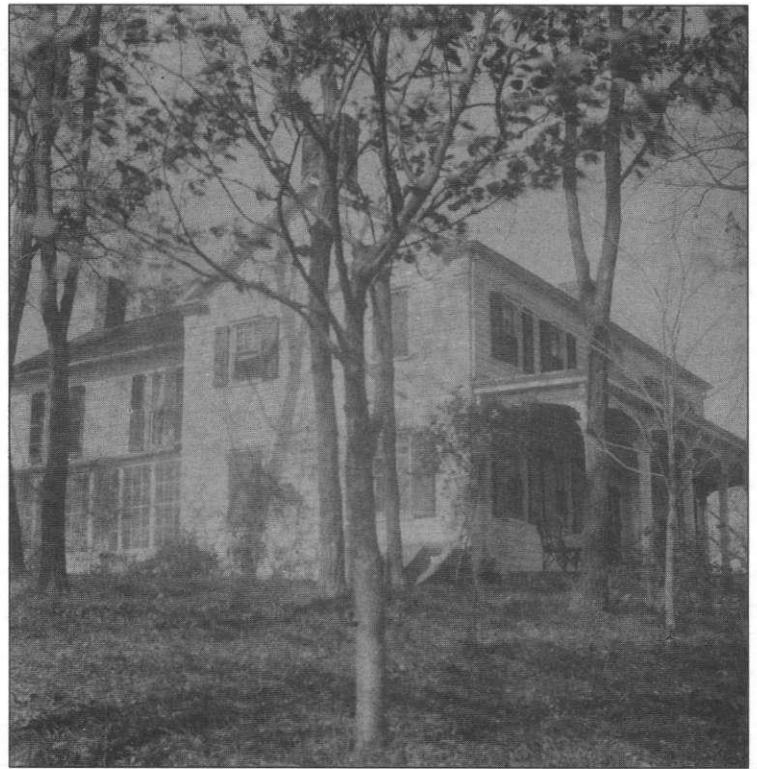
John Fell is listed in Franklin Township rateables (assessments for tax purposes) in 1778 and 1779 and his holdings include 220 acres, a slave (two in 1778), and a riding chair. A riding chair, a small two-wheeled vehicle drawn by one horse, was a mark of affluence at this time. The only other taxpayers in all of Franklin Township to own riding chairs in these tax lists were the Ringwood and Longpond iron works, James Cammel, James Provost (at the Hermitage, in Ho-Ho-Kus), and Jacobus Bertolf.

Albert Cornell, probably the son of Albert Cornell and Maria LaRoe (and a brother-in-law of Lucas Kiersted and Peter Labagh) was living in the Allendale area by 1778, when his name appears in Franklin Township rateables. He was probably here at the time of, or shortly after, his marriage in 1763, at Schraalenburgh, to Sarah DeGroot.

Wiert Banta lived at Allendale by 1778, when his house was shown west of Fell's meadows, on the Erskine-Dewitt map drawn from surveys made by Capt. John W. Watkins in August 1778.¹⁶

Other land owners, lessees, and settlers in the Allendale area before or during the Revolution probably included Abraham Johnson, Benjamin Geroe, Joost Degroot, John Conklin, Cornelius Van Horn,

Peter Van Horn, John Rose, Jacob Rattan, John Verwer, James Ackerman, George Fox, Albert Zabriskie, Jacob H. Zabriskie, H. I. Hopper, Benjamin Oldis, Cornelius M. Myers, John Rap, Conrad Rap,



The Fell-Ackerman-Cable House at 475 Franklin Turnpike as it looked about 1900. The oldest part is believed to be that shown at the left. John Fell lived here during the Revolution, in either this house or one on or near the site. Families who lived here during the two centuries after the Revolution include the John G. Ackerman family, the Stephen Cable Family, the William Taylor family, and the Fred Pfister family (today the house is owned by his son, Jean Paul Pfister). Across the road and slightly south was another pre-Revolutionary house, built of stone, which was owned and razed around 1894 by O. H. P. Archer (Dr. Dubois Hasbrouck lived in this house about 1850).

Catharine Hoffman, Weart Valentine, William Sutton, Abraham Hopper, and Henry Hopper.

ROADS, TAVERNS AND TRAVEL

What is now Franklin Turnpike was one of the earliest roads developed in this area, and probably part of the road from Albany to New York through Montgomery and Goshen. The road that became Franklin Turnpike existed by 1783 and probably earlier, although in some places it did not always follow today's exact route.

Before 1733 the King's Road (probably today's West Saddle River Road) through the Ramapo Tract had been laid out, possibly over an earlier Indian trail. The valley of the Ramapo offered the only road-site between southern New York State and eastern New Jersey before and during the Revolution. Land transportation of all private goods as well as munitions of war passed along these roads during this period.

The Demarest Inn at what is now Ramsey was authorized in 1756. Simon Demarest had leased the 108-1/2-acre tract on March 24, 1756, and is thought to have built the first of the series of inns at about this location. This first inn was thought to have been operated under the license of David Demarest, who ran an inn at Hackensack at this time. Public inns in colonial days were licensed by the Board of Freeholders. In 1779 the property was owned by Aaron Demarest, who was a British Loyalist. After the Revolution, the property was seized by the state and sold to John W. Christie and Wiert J. Banta. Banta was Christie's brother-in-law (and Banta's mother had been a Demarest). The Inn was later called the Mount Prospect Inn. It was a mile or two north of present-day Allendale in what later became Ramsey's and then Ramsey. The original inn building burned in 1840.

Christie and Banta got into debt and lost the inn, which was bought by a member of the Lydecker family, who owned it at the time it burned. A new building was erected and this was being operated in 1849 by John W. Ramsey when Hohokus Township was being organized; the Township's first meeting was held there. The inn burned again in 1909, was again rebuilt, and was named the Locust Inn. It changed ownership in 1921 and was renamed Ferncroft.^{17,18}

The LaRoe Tavern (or LaRue Tavern, which was later Bamber's) in what would become New Prospect and still later Waldwick, was also probably in operation during this era.

Part or all of what became Franklin Turnpike may have been a section of the route traveled by General George and Lady Martha Washington on their way from the Ridgewood area to Newburgh, New York, arriving there on April 1, 1782. At the General's request, they were escorted by a personal guard of 50 men, and Lady Washington traveled by coach.¹⁹

BUSINESSES

There were few businesses or industries in this area before the Revolution except for local grist and saw-mills, blacksmiths, tanneries, and the like, which were run as sidelines by farmers for their own benefit and for their immediate neighbors.

One exception was the thriving village and iron

industry at Ringwood, which was then in Bergen County. An ironworks was established at this locality in what is today Passaic County, N.J. by the Ogden family in 1742. Peter Hasenclever purchased the Ringwood Ironworks from David Ogden, Sr. and others in 1764 and brought more than 500 men from Germany to work the enterprise. Hasenclever ambitiously acquired about 50,000 acres, built furnaces, forges, roads, and dams, and purchased horses, oxen and implements in vast numbers. In 1767 new partners in the American Company Iron Works (of British ownership) discharged Hasenclever. Robert Erskine, known for his American Revolutionary era maps, became Ringwood's manager in 1772.

Erskine obtained land at Mahwah (today east of Route 17) from the Proprietors about 1773. This had previously been leased to Nathan Smith, and he had put up a number of buildings. Erskine used one of these as his Bellgrove store. The Bellgrove store sold and exchanged merchandise from his ironworks at Ringwood for farm produce used for the workers at the mines and forges. Also sold at Bellgrove were goods obtained from New York City merchants, including rum, coffee, sugar, earthenware, ribbons, silk, wool, and Dutch quills.

THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

This area was generally peaceful in the 18th century until the Revolution, except for a period of time beginning in 1753, when the declaration of war between France and England resulted in what was known here as the French and Indian War. Although no fighting took place in Bergen County, New Jersey men from this area fought under the command of Col. Peter Schuyler, whose home was on the east bank of the Passaic River, near Belleville. After the war ended in 1763, the English attempted to tighten and increase mercantile controls, and Bergen County people, along with other colonists, began to resist and rebel.

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP

About 1767 the Allendale area underwent another name and governmental change when part of New Barbadoes Township was set off as Franklin Township. Franklin Township (including Allendale and her neighbors) was formed on June 1, 1771 by Royal charter, and named for Governor William Franklin, the son of Benjamin Franklin. The township was not incorporated until 1798.

The eastern boundary of the new township was the Saddle River, its southern boundary was the old line of the Ramapo Tract, its western line was Sussex County, and its northern line was the New York-New

Jersey line. At the time the township was formed, it was said to have been "sparsely inhabited."

Some early Franklin Township meetings were held in Campgaw at Isaac Bogert's house (1777 and 1779; he was one of the township's first constables) and at Garret Blauvelt's house (1778). At these meetings, various offices were filled, including Town Clerk, Commissioners of Appeal, Freeholders, Assessors, Collectors, Constables, Poormasters, Surveyors of Roads, and Road or Highway Masters.

During the war years, because of the stresses and inconveniences imposed by the Revolution, township and county meetings were at times erratic and government was sometimes weak. In the day-to-day struggle just to maintain homes and farms, little time and effort was available for civic contribution. In addition, repositories such as churches and court-houses were commandeered or burned and many records from this period have been lost.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

When the Revolution came, our area became a "neutral ground" between British-occupied New York City and American forces here, to the west, and to the north. Families and friends were torn apart by difficult choices and strong conflicting allegiances, and the effects of this bitter feeling could be seen in this locality even 100 years after the Revolution. Bergen County was home to both American patriots and British Loyalists (also called Tories).

John Fell was an ardent supporter of the American rebellion. While many of his neighbors hedged their bets and tried to remain neutral, he was vociferously for completely severing ties with Great Britain. On June 25, 1774 Fell was the leader at a meeting of 328 Bergen County citizens who signed patriotic resolutions at the Court House in Hackensack. Through these resolutions, signers pledged their support of resistance to Great Britain. On May 12, 1775, a local Committee of Safety was organized, with Fell as its head. This committee was charged with gaining support for the American patriots and for resisting the British locally. It was in his position as chairman of this committee that he gained his reputation of being "a great Tory hunter."

John Fell was a member of the First Provincial Congress which met in Trenton in May, June, and August of 1775, and in 1776 he was chairman of the Provincial Council in the first state legislature.

Because of his great patriotism and his reputation as a Tory hunter, he was considered dangerous by the British. On April 22, 1777 Fell was taken prisoner at his Allendale home by a band of 25 armed Loyalist raiders, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Barton, a Sussex County Loyalist. Fell was carried to

Bergen Point, where Colonel Abraham Van Buskirk was in command of the British forces. Fell and Van Buskirk had known each other before the war, and when Fell was brought before Van Buskirk, the Colonel gave him a letter to General Robertson in New York, which Van Buskirk claimed would ensure proper treatment for Fell. Fell was then taken to New York and confined in the provost jail on either April 23rd or 24th. At the jail, he underwent harsh and severe treatment. According to one report, he was denied medicine and the care of a physician when he was extremely ill with a fever.

Apparently General Robertson did not personally see Fell until December 8, at which time Fell presented Van Buskirk's letter to the General. According to one account, Robertson read the letter with a curious smile and handed it back to Fell, who discovered that the essence of the letter was that "John Fell was a great rebel and a notorious rascal." Fortunately for Fell, he and Robertson had made each other's acquaintance years before, during the French War, and the General said, "You must be changed indeed, John Fell, if you are as great a rascal as this Colonel Van Buskirk." Still, even after his meeting with Robertson, and despite Robertson's promises of leniency, Fell's treatment in the jail did not improve.

When the State Committee of Safety received word of Fell's ill-treatment in the jail, they offered in October 1777 to exchange him for two of its British prisoners, but this offer was refused. Finally, after eight months imprisonment, Fell was paroled on January 7, 1778 but was required to remain in the city. He was finally permitted to return to his Bergen County home on May 11, 1778. On November 6, 1778 he was elected by the New Jersey Legislature to serve as a state delegate to the Continental Congress. He was reelected May 25 and December 25, 1779. He attended Congress steadily from December 5, 1778 to November 28, 1780, during which time he cast 265 votes. He served on various special committees, but his main work was on a standing committee of five whose function was to conduct the commercial affairs of the United States. He voted steadily for economy, sound finance, and the increase of national authority. Fell prided himself on being conscientious and dependable in his position of service, and his attendance at Congress surpasses the other New Jersey delegates (he often noted their absence in his journal).

While serving in Congress, Fell kept a journal from November 6, 1778 to November 30, 1779, the original of which is in the Library of Congress. During 1782 and 1783 Fell served as a member of the New Jersey Legislative Council, and he continued to serve as a judge of the Court of Common Pleas until 1786.²⁰

His name appears on the Tax Rateables Lists for Franklin Township in Bergen County in 1779, when his holdings included his 220 acres of land at what is now Allendale, 14 horses and a riding chair. His name is also found in the Rateable lists in subsequent years (in 1791 his holdings included 160 acres of improved land and 60 acres of unimproved land, 2 horses, 9 horned cattle, a riding chair, and a pleasure sleigh).

Because the British occupied New York City for such a long period of time, Bergen County was repeatedly subjected to predatory warfare, pillaging, and looting of all kinds, by both British and Tory raids, and by outlaw bands. One of the most notorious of the outlaws was Claudius Smith, whose gang had a den in the Ramapo Mountains near Suffern.

During the Revolution, many families hid or buried their pewter household serving ware to prevent it from being appropriated and melted down to make bullets and cannonballs. This occurred in Allendale near the main road, Franklin Turnpike, just north of what became the Allendale-Waldwick border. Nearly 90 years after the Revolution, in June 1861, while cultivating his farmland, Aaron Ackerman ploughed up two large pewter platters and eight pewter plates, all nested within one another, and, according to reports "still remarkably bright," except for corrosion around the edges. The smaller plates appeared to have been quite new when buried, and were stamped with a crown and the word "London" underneath. Ackerman, according to newspaper reports, recalled "being told by a Mr. Folly many years ago that such things had been buried on his farm by somebody he has forgotton who, who entered the service as a soldier and never returned."²¹

Washington's Continental Army was encamped locally at both Hackensack and Paramus at various times, and the Ulster County Militia were encamped at Sidman's Bridge in Ramapo, just outside of Suffern, N.Y.

John Fell's son, Peter Renaudet Fell, born about 1752, was a Lieutenant Colonel of the First Regiment of Bergen County Militia during the Revolution. His company was one of those called out to reinforce Washington in a battle at Monmouth Court House near Freehold, N.J. in 1778. During the last two years of the war he was an aide to Governor Clinton of New York, and was present at the taking of Stony Point. He later became hopelessly crippled with rheumatism, said to have been caused by the rigors of battle.

The Fells were neighbors and friends of Theodosia Prevost, who lived a few miles away in "The Hermitage" at what is now Ho-Ho-Kus. Peter Fell signed Aaron Burr's marriage contract to the widow Theodosia on July 6, 1782.²²

After the war Peter Fell retired to Coldenham, N.Y., where he died on October 6, 1789 at the age of 37. Peter and his wife Margaret had three children: Elizabeth Fell, born in New York (married her cousin, William Colden); John Fell, born in New York (married and had children); and Susan Fell, born "at Paramus" (possibly at her grandfather's Petersfield estate), who married Charles Rhind. Peter Fell's widow, Margaret Colden Fell, married as her second husband, Peter Galatian (Gallatin).