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## **Rex Stout's Immigrant Ancestors**

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Rex Todhunter Stout was a ninth-generation American. In this paper, I will describe a few of his immigrant ancestors.

### Todhunter Ancestors

Rex Stout's mother, Lucetta Elizabeth Todhunter, descended from John Todhunter, who was born in 1657 near the village of Threlkeld in Cumberland, England, on the border between Scotland and England. When Todhunter was 30, he immigrated to America and settled near West Chester, Pennsylvania, at Westtown, a Quaker settlement. Thus began the early American Quaker roots of Rex Stout.<sup>i</sup>

Another English ancestor of Rex Stout was Joshua Hoopes, born in 1636 in Skelton-in-Cleveland, Yorkshire. He and his wife Ann got into trouble with local authorities in 1677 for attending a Quaker meeting. After Ann died in 1678, Joshua sailed to America in 1683 and settled in Makesfield, Bucks Co., Pennsylvania, where he was a member of the Falls Monthly Meeting (of Quakers). He was a long-time member of the Colonial Assembly in Pennsylvania, and died, at the age of 88, in 1723. His daughter Margaret had apparently come to America with her father, and married first Abraham Beakes. After Beakes' death, Margaret married John Todhunter around 1703. Their son John was Rex's great, great, great grandfather. In the intervening generations, the Todhunters migrated from Pennsylvania to Virginia, then to Kentucky, then to Tennessee, and finally to Ohio.<sup>ii</sup>

### Stout Ancestors

The first known ancestor of Rex Stout to come to America was Richard Stout, born about 1611 in Nottinghamshire, England. He left home in about 1632 after a family quarrel and joined the British Navy. After seven years of service he was discharged in New Amsterdam, the Dutch settlement on the southern tip of the island of Manhattan. In 1643 he was a resident of New Amsterdam and was employed by Governor Willem Kieft as a soldier. In 1646, he was one of 39 patentees at Lady Deborah Moody's colony at Gravesend, Long Island where he had lot #16, of 20 acres, of which 17 acres were under cultivation for tobacco.<sup>iii</sup>

Penelope Kent was born in 1622 to English parents living in Amsterdam, Netherlands. In about 1640, she married a Mr. van Princis in Amsterdam, and they sailed together to America in about 1640-1642. (Alternate versions of the family story say she was born Penelope van Princis or van Prince or van Princes or van Princin to Dutch parents and married Mr. Kent, an Englishman.) As they neared shore, their ship was stranded in a violent storm off Sandy Hook in present New Jersey. The passengers made their way to the shore and most set out overland for New Amsterdam. Penelope and her husband, who was either ill or injured, stayed behind, taking shelter in the woods near Spermaceti Cove on the inner curve of Sandy Hook. There they were discovered by Indians, who killed her husband and gravely wounded her, fracturing her skull,

injuring her left shoulder, and slicing open her abdomen. They assumed she was dead, and departed. Penelope crawled to a hollow tree, where she took shelter and subsisted on fungi and tree sap. After a few days, she was discovered by two Indians. The younger Indian wanted to kill her, but the older one insisted that they take her back to their village near present Middletown, NJ, where they nursed her back to health. At some point thereafter, Dutch settlers visited the Indian village and persuaded the Indians to let them take her to New Amsterdam. (Another version of the story describes how the Indians instead took her to New Amsterdam.) It was in New Amsterdam that she met Richard Stout. Richard and Penelope were married in 1644.<sup>iv</sup>

Some two decades later, in December 1663, Richard and about 20 other settlers sailed from his home in Gravesend to Monmouth County, New Jersey to purchase land from the Indians. On April 8, 1665, Richard was one of 12 patentees of Monmouth County (the famous Monmouth Patent), where he received 780 acres for himself and his family. He and Penelope and two of their sons moved from Gravesend to Monmouth County in that same year; the rest of the children followed later.<sup>v</sup>

Richard held a number of important positions in Monmouth County: surveyor of the town of Middletown, Overseer, and member of the Constables Court. Richard and Penelope established a plantation three miles west of Middletown, on Hop River; the Hop Brook still flows through the land around Holmdel, NJ.<sup>vi</sup>

Richard and Penelope raised 10 children, who were born between about 1644 and 1669. Their son Peter, born about 1654, was the ancestor of Rex. Richard lived to the age of about 94, dying in 1705. Penelope, however, lived to the age of 110, dying in 1732. At the time of her death, she had 502 descendants.<sup>vii</sup>

Richard and Penelope are among the most famous pioneer settlers of New Jersey. The artist Donald De Lue (1897-1988) crafted a bronze medallion in her honor. It is now the property of the Monmouth County Historical Association.<sup>viii</sup>

Penelope lived her last years in the home of her son David Stout. The home was located at the present address of 78 Crawford's Corner Road in Holmdel. A New Jersey State Highway Marker was erected at that address in 1964 to honor Penelope: "Penelope Stout. Famous pioneer woman. Survivor of Indian attack. Later wife of one of the founders of Middletown. Buried on this farm, 1732." Despite a long campaign by local area residents to save the old Stout house, it was demolished in 2009-2010 by the current owners of the land, who built a new house on the site. The location of the State Highway Marker is unknown, as is the location of a bronze plaque that had been on the façade of the old house.<sup>ix</sup>

Although the physical traces of these ancestors of Rex Stout are no longer visible, the impact they had on the early days of America was extensive, and the legacy they left will be with us for a long time to come.

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<sup>i</sup> McAleer, John. 1977. *Rex Stout: A Biography*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston. p. 2, 25-26.

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- ii McAleer, p. 2, 26-27.
- iii Stillwell, John E. 1916. *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany: Early Settlers of New Jersey and their Descendants*. Reprinted in 1970 by Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore. Vol. IV, p. 295-301.  
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Conklin, Emma Burke. 1941. *Allied Families of Corbin, Stout, Ownbey, and Walker*.  
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- iv Stillwell, p. 296-305.  
Stout, Herald F. 1951. *Stout and Allied Families*. Eagle Press, Dover, OH. p. xix, 1.  
Conklin, p. 29-30, 49.  
McAleer, p. 20.
- v Bailey, Rosalie Fellows. 1936. *Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York*. William Morrow and Co., NY. Reprinted in 1968 by Dover Publications, New York. p. 386, 410.  
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Conklin, p. 31.
- vi Stillwell, p. 304-305.  
Bailey, p. 410.  
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- vii Conklin, p. 28, 33.  
McAleer, p. 2.  
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- viii [http://ind.gmnews.com/news/2009-08-06/front\\_page/025.html](http://ind.gmnews.com/news/2009-08-06/front_page/025.html)
- ix Bailey, p. 410; photo p. 423.  
<http://history.wdgordon.com/album/jersey.htm> (image 23)  
[http://ind.gmnews.com/news/2003-04-16/Front\\_page/015.html](http://ind.gmnews.com/news/2003-04-16/Front_page/015.html);  
<http://genforum.genealogy.com/stout/messages/4127.html>  
Correspondence from Randall Gabrielan, executive director of the Monmouth County Historical Commission, Feb. 7, 2011.