

## Somers Family

(A working document by Donald Falkenburg 3/23/19)

The Somers family connects with my Falkenburg family through my 5th great grandmother Mary Somers who married John Falkinburg, grandson of Henry Jacobs Falkinburg.

Mary is the granddaughter of John Somers b. 1643 in Worcester, England. The Somers family in England had aristocratic roots. John was a contemporary of another John Somers of Worcester— John Lord Somers (1651-1716). John Lord Somers, a cousin of our John Somers played a key role in England's Glorious Revolution. After the Restoration of the Monarchy, this John Somers was the chief architect of the union between England and Scotland (1707). He was Lord High Chancellor of England under King William III and with this post was appointed a peer as the 1st Baron Somers of Evesham.<sup>1</sup>

Although cousins (both born in Worcester, England) the two John Somers followed different life paths. John whose daughter married John Falkinburg became a religious dissenter, and a member of the Society of Friends founded by George Fox. Quakerism emerged during the English Civil War, a time of turmoil, between royalists and those who believed in parliamentary government. The conflict culminated in the Battle of Worcester<sup>2</sup> and led to the execution of King Charles I and the ascendancy of Oliver Cromwell who served as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Cromwell strengthened the dominance of the Church of England. Fox spoke against the established Anglican Church, finding himself accused of blasphemy and even threatened with a death sentence. He was imprisoned for fourteen months in Worcester Castle for refusing to take the *oath of allegiance and supremacy* to the Church of England. In a quest for religious freedom, many Quakers emigrated to the North American Colonies, among them was John Somers.

Our John Somers emigrated to the North American Colonies in 1681/2 and originally settled in Upper Dublin Township, north of current day Philadelphia in the Quaker Colony of Pennsylvania. John Somers' wife died on the voyage to America; after settling in William Penn's Quaker Colony, John remarried Hannah Hodgkin. John moved his family to the costal community of Great Egg Harbor, New Jersey and in 1695 he purchased several parcels of land along the northern shore of the Great Egg Harbor Bay. This settlement (eventually named Somers Point) is the oldest European settlement in what is now Atlantic County, New Jersey. John and Hannah had ten children. Son, Richard was born in 1693 at Somers Point. It was Richard who built the family home known as the Somers Mansion, a site added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Somers,\\_1st\\_Baron\\_Somers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Somers,_1st_Baron_Somers)

<sup>2</sup> Note this is the birthplace of John Somers



Map of Southern New Jersey (1795) from map collection at Rutgers University

OUR worthy Friend, John Somers, was born  
in the City of Worcester, in Old England, came into  
America, and settled in the Province of Pennsylva-  
nia, and after living there some time, he removed with his  
Family & settled at Great Egg Harbour, in the Western Di-  
vision of New Jersey. He was very serviceable in sev-  
eral Respects amongst his Neighbours, of an orderly Life &  
Conversation, agreeable to the Profession he made, and in  
the latter part of his Life he had a small Gift of the  
Ministry, unto which We believe he was faithful.  
He lived in Unity with his Friends, and died in the Year  
1723, being upwards of 80 Years of age, and was buried  
at a Burying-Ground, at Somers set. Plantation.  
At a monthly Meeting for Egg Harbour & Cape  
May, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> Month, 1759.  
The above Testimony was read & approved & ordered  
to be signed by Noah Smith, &c.

On the 7th day of the fifth month of 1759 the record (shown above) was entered into the minutes of the Monthly Meeting at Great Egg Harbor, Cape May.



*Historic Photograph of Somers Mansion 4/28/1938 (Archives of the Library of Congress)*

John and Hannah had ten children: Millicent (165-1762), John (1687- ?), Samuel (1688-1768), Hannah (1691-1737), Richard (1693-1760), James (1695-1761), Edmund (1702-1743), Brigit, Isaac, Job (?-1744).

Mary Somers who married John Falkinburg is the granddaughter of John and Hannah through son Edmund.

It is difficult to trace the John Somers' family and make the connection between the two John Somers described at the beginning of this paper. One of the difficulties stems from the reuse of first names within this family. There are several lines in which John begat John who begat John, and many were from the area of Worcestershire.

