

Rec. 3/10/46  
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from O. C. West Society  
Dennis Creek, N.J.

SOMERS FALKINBURGE  
OF  
DENNIS CREEK, N.J.

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1992

Somers Falkinburge was the ninth and last child of John and Mary Falkinburge. His birth was the only one of the nine children not to be recorded. The best guess at his birth date would be between 1780 and 1785. He was certainly alive in 1787. Unfortunately the only census enumeration he has been located on (1830 Federal Census of Cape May County, N.J.) does not indicate his age bracket. However his wife was posted in the of 40 but under 50 years of age bracket.

In 1785 he left Little Egg Harbor Township and removed with his family to Warrington Monthly Meeting at York County, Pennsylvania. No record of him has been uncovered regarding his years in Pennsylvania.

In 1806 he returned to New Jersey. He was following in the heels of his brother Joseph and sister Talitha who had returned separately in the 1790's. Somers joined his brother and sister at Dennis Creek, Cape May County where Joseph was a successful tailor, merchant and politician. Joseph's enterprises were well under way by this time and it may well have been at his behest that Somers came to Dennis Creek to help his brother manage some of these ventures. Somers too was a tailor and the records indicate that he was engaged in that work from the time of his arrival. It would be fairly safe to conclude that he took over management of Joseph's tailoring business.

Aside from his tailoring, Somers Falkinburge was pretty much of a "jack-of-all-trades." He hooped barrels, shod horses, set wagon tires, etc. He was able to perform most any task that needed to be done. In lieu of money, he often paid his debts by performing some service. In 1815 the Dennis Creek South Branch Meadow Company began construction of a sluice across the creek. The day book of that enterprise states that Somers Falkinburge was hired to help in the sluice construction at the rate of \$1.50 per day.

Reared in a family and community of Friends, Falkinburge was a free thinker by the time he arrived at Dennis Creek. He was single then and fancied quarts of rum, pints of beer, and cider. He was a smoker too. His foot-loose life style appears to have come to an abrupt halt when he married Elizabeth Sullivan in 1809. He continued to hunt with his shot gun, but his social habits became confined to an occasional quart of gin or brandy; though these were few and far between. Tea and coffee became the standard beverages of the Somers Falkinburge household.

He performed his militia service and was a member of the 1st Regiment - Cape May. The organization was active until 1835. Falkinburge was appointed captain of the 1st battalion light infantry on April 9, 1816 and received his commission on May 20th. The ledger book of Jonathan Johnson, storekeeper, mentions that Falkinburge was given a militia fine in 1822 of \$2.00. Fines were levied for nonattendance as opposed to exemptions which were purchased for a fee of \$5.00.

According to the "Falkinburg file" at the Cape May County Historical and Genealogical Society, Somers Falkinburge wrote a letter to his sisters and brother in care of his sister Mrs. Hannah Haire dated September 26, 1825. Hannah (Susanna) moved to Centre County, Pennsylvania in 1812. Hannah married Joseph Haire a veteran of the Revolution. Judith married Jesse Williams and also moved to Centre County in 1812. Judith may have died in 1825. The letter previously mentioned, was sent from Dennis Creek. The letter is no longer on file with the society and its contents are unknown. An inquiry to the Centre County Historical Society would probably shed some light on these branches of the family.

In the early 1800's Dennis Township was part of Upper Township. The 1806 tax ratables for that township show Somers Falkinburge for the first time. At that time he was a singleman. The following year's ratables he was listed as being single and owning a horse. The 1809 and 1810 ratables show him as a house holder and owning one head of cattle. His marriage was recorded in the County Clerk's book of marriages for Cape May.

Regarding his tailoring, this is borne out in the Nathaniel Holmes Day Book on file at Alexander Library, Rutgers University, Special Collections. Information about his other occupations was derived from numerous sources, primarily ledger and day books from Nathaniel Holmes, Jonathan Johnson, Dennis Creek Store\*, Dr. John Dickinson and Dr. Maurice Beesley. His military information came from Stevens' History of Cape May County.

The Somers Falkinburge House and Lot are referred to several times in those documents pertaining to the will and division of the estate of Joseph Falkinburge.

Most of the early Falkinburgs at one time or another were referred to by the surname Fortenberry or some similar spelling. The tax ratables for various townships make this designation. Around 1830 and thereafter a family of Fortenberry's settled at Texas. A David Fortenberry fought the native Americans and helped his town defend itself from an attempted massacre. I know that Somers west in 1837 and a check of census indexes for the states of the union do not show him or his family in 1840 or thereafter. However the lack of any enumeration does not mean anything. A examination of Texas records done in some depth would probably reveal some enlightening information.

I intend to make copies of and deposit all my notes regarding Somers Falkinburge, with the Cape May Historical and Genealogical Society. If desired, I will do the same for the Ocean County Historical & Genealogical Society.

\*This store is believed to be Joseph Falkinburge's store at Dennis Creek.

Somers Falkinburge and Elizabeth Sullivan were married by Shagmar Hewitt at Cape May on April 23, 1809. Elizabeth Sullivan is believed to have come from Cumberland County, New Jersey. She was born between 1781 and 1790. The records of Philadelphia Conference (Methodist) for Dennis Creek No. 3 mention the name of Eliza Falkinburg as a member in 1835-36. Somers and Elizabeth Falkinburge were the parents of four sons and three daughters. Their names are unrecorded. Somers and his entire family left Cape May County and went west in the summer of 1837. I am of the opinion that they went to Texas and settled there.

In 1813 Joseph Falkinburge and Samuel Laycock purchased the Jeremiah Ludlam tract of 369 acres beginning at Sluice Creek and running along presentday Delsea Drive and continuing to South Dennis. Falkinburge bought out Laycock's share in 1817. From that large tract of land the elder Falkinburge set off one acre two quarters and twenty - five perches along the road to Dennis from Goshen. This lot was conveyed to Somers Falkinburge and was known as the Somers Falkinburge House and Lot. I believe Somers hired a team, cleared the woods and constructed the house in the summer of 1820. Except for a trace of the old lane (still visible in 1933) nothing remains to remind us that anyone ever lived there.