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Innkeeper, New Castle, Delaware

John Cann was born 1635-1645 in Bristol, England; died in Philadelphia, Pa. 2 May 1694. He married Mary (-). He emigrated to America on the Griffin in 1675.

John Cann is believed to have been the son of Sir Robert Cann, Mayor of Bristol, England, and his wife Deliverance Cann, daughter of John Cann, noted preacher, publisher and translator of the Bible.

The first record of John Cann in the colonies is on 21 November 1682 when he was granted a "lott of ground" in the town of New Castle.¹ He was also a Justice of the Peace and in 1684 was appointed the first Registrar of Wills in Delaware and became a member of the General Assembly.² He also served on the Town Council of New Castle.

One reference to John Cann and his descendants⁴ states that he served on many juries, was commissioned a Provincial Judge in 1686 and served as such until his death. He appears to have been an important figure in the economic, judicial and political life of the colony. He was never a follower, but an aggressive leader. In official records he was variously listed as Deputy Surveyor, Constable, planter, merchant, innkeeper and tailor.⁵

Cann is reputed to have owned some 900 acres of land. At the time of his death in 1694 an inventory of his estate listed a house and lot in New Castle, materials on the dock, and a plantation in White Clay Creek, land which presently is known as the Delaware Park Racetrack.⁶

-Katherine Parkins Robison

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REFERENCES

- 1 Records of the Court of New Castle on Delaware, Vol.III,
1681-1699 (Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, 1935)
- 2 Ibid., 23, 165
- 3 History of Delaware, by Bevan and Williams. 1929. Vol.III:
214
Inventory of County Archives of Delaware, No.1, New Castle
County: 76 (Public Archives Commission, 1941)
- 4 Story of John Cann, by Cann & Eliason, 1967. 10, 12, 21
- 5 Ibid., 12
- 6 Ibid., 12
Wills, Philadelphia Administration Book A:184 (cited in
Claypoole Family in America, by Bracken, 1971. p.23)

He who has not been at a tavern knows not what a paradise
it is! O holy tavern! O miraculous tavern! - holy
because no carking cares are there, nor weariness, nor
pain; and miraculous because of the spits, which of
themselves turn round and round!

- Aretino, quoted by Longfellow
in Hyperion, Book III, Chapter 2

No licensed Person shall suffer any to drink excessively
or at unseasonable hours after Nine of the Clock at night
in or about any their houses upon penalty of two shillings
six pence for every Offence if Complaint and prooffe be
made thereof.

- The Duke's Laws, 1 March 1664/5
from the Laws of the Colony of
New York.