



## RIGHT ON THE BARREL HEAD!

1692

*Jersey Justice In Olden Days*

1725

Milling was a leading occupation in the early days. Apple Jack was a home-made product and required more time than talent to give it authority. But flour and grist, the life of trade in the isolated farming communities, could not be properly milled or ground without a mill building and a competent miller. "So necessary was the mill that various inducements were offered to any one who would embark in the business. In some cases, land was given . . . or exclusive water rights granted, or part of the cost of the mill building assured by the inhabitants."

Where there was a good mill and an enterprising miller, the community prospered. The hamlet in the Watchung Hills, now known as the Deserted Village, was built around the mill which the adventurous and enterprising John Willcocks (Wilcox), son of Peter, built and operated for half a century. Here farmers from the back country brought their grain, the miller receiving "one-twelfth of the corn and one-sixteenth of the other grains which were ground."

In order to protect the ultimate consumer, the General Assembly, in 1725, passed an act standardizing the dimensions of the hogshead, tierce, barrel, half and quarter barrel. These dimensions applied only to "dry casks," that is, vessels not intended to hold liquid. The sizes of the "tite casks" were "regulated by the number of gallons, wine measure, they were to hold." If, for example, the shipper wanted to avoid a fine of five dollars, every time the in-

spector came around, he made certain that the barrel to be used held thirty-one and a half gallons and did not vary more than half a gallon over or under. The miller or packer had to be careful, too, when he shipped or stored a barrel of flour; "true weight together with his initials must be marked with a burning iron on the head of the barrel"; otherwise, he would have to pay a fine of six pence for every error of judgement.

There must have been some profiteering in meat, for the law provided that "beef and pork packers were not to pack anything but wholesome and merchantable meats, nor put more than four half heads in one barrel of pork, nor more than two shins in one barrel of beef, each barrel whereof shall be twice well trodden down, at least in the packing, and be salted with a sufficient quantity of salt, not less than half a bushel."

The Quakers in the West Jersey Assembly, expressed their indignation at "the inequality of beef and pork barrels, and ill ordering and management of provisions exported" that "hath been highly injurious to traders and the reputation of this province," by passing a law (November, 1692) which provided that all barrels should contain at least thirty-one gallons and have the cooper's mark thereon. Justices of the County Courts were empowered to appoint "a packer inspector who should also stamp each barrel with his mark." The penalty for violating this law was a fine of six shillings