

FIRST SETTLERS OF PISCATAWAY  
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
THE BONHAM FAMILY.

Bonhamtown, in Raritan Township, derived its name from its first settlers, the Bonhams. The name and origin are English, and while spelled Bonham in New Jersey, its original form was probably Bonam or Bonum, Bonhame, Boneham.

The earlier etymology of the name must have been French - Bonhome or Bonhomme, meaning "good man". Several of the later names were in France before the eighteenth century. In England Thomas Bonham was a noted physician and writer in 1630. William Bonham was a young minister of the Pilgrim faith in 1572.

Edward Bonham is mentioned as a legate in the will of John Parmiter of Suffolk County in 1648. In the will of Richard Bentley of Hopton, Isle of Ely, 1648, Mary wife of William Bonham is mentioned. Thomas Bonham of Valence, Essex County, married in London in 1676, aged 28, Miss Elizabeth Jones of St. Swithin, London.

Nicholas, one of the early and prominent settlers of Piscataway is first recorded at Barnstable, Mass., as early as 1659, where he married Hannah, daughter of Samuel Fuller of the Mayflower, whose wife was Jane Lathrop.

In all probability Nicholas Bonham was a brother of George Bonham or Bonum of Plymouth Colony. George's name is in a shipping list of passengers for Virginia in 1635. His name appears in a list of those able to bear arms at Plymouth in 1643. His wife was Sarah Norton, dau. of George Norton, who came over in the ship, Ann. She was born in Leyden, Holland, 1617-18. A Ruth Bonham married Richard Smyth of Fannin, Mass. March 27, 1648. Plymouth Colony records appear to show that she and her husband died in 1684. It is noteworthy that George Bonham named his daughter Ruth. She married Robert Barrow. George Bonham, Nicholas Bonham and Ruth Bonham were brothers and sister, in all probability.

Another record of this family in New England is that Margery Bonham, a widow, married Richard Pritchard at Charlestown, Mass. in 1666 and their daughter Hannah married a second husband Nathaniel Norton, who no doubt belonged to the family of George Norton.