

An Account of East Jersey's Seven Settled Towns, circa 1684

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IN JUNE 2005, the State of New Jersey acquired a remarkable cache of colonial manuscripts, maps and imprints at Christie's auction house in New York City. Most prominent among them was the record book of Robert Barclay, governor of the province of East New Jersey from 1682 to 1690. Barclay, a Quaker religious leader, was selected by the proprietors of eastern New Jersey to receive a gratis twenty-fourth share of the province and lifetime appointment as its chief executive. To prepare the governor for his new role, the proprietors presented him with a volume of transcriptions of key patents and legal documents, maps of the colony, and a record of their own proceedings. This book, which contains an official seal bearing the date 1684, was passed down in the Barclay family. It remained in private hands for over three centuries.

The effort to compel the State to bid on the volume and ten other lots of colonial New Jerseyana to be auctioned by Christie's began with telephone calls by former GSNJ trustee Joseph J. Felcone to the heads of several research institutions, including the contributor as chief of the State Archives. This resulted in conversations between Mr. Klett, Ronald L. Becker of Rutgers, and Chad E. Leinaweaver of New Jersey Historical Society relative to whether or how these treasures might be purchased by a New Jersey institution. Christie's estimated that the eleven lots could sell for \$385,000. The consensus was that only one funding source was available for possible acquisition of the pricier items—the New Jersey Public Records Preservation Fund. Created in 2003, this fund established a reserve for the administration and preservation of records relating to the government of New Jersey.

Subsequent contact with David A. Cowell, President of the Advocates for New Jersey History, and a posting by him to the New Jersey History e-mail list-serve led to intense public and media interest in the auction. New Jersey's historical community, including members of this Society, campaigned vigorously via letters, e-mails and telephone calls petitioning legislators and Acting Governor Richard E. Codey to pursue State acquisition of the documents. The campaign proved successful and the State Archives was authorized to bid at the auction. At Christie's on June 21st, the State prevailed on all eleven lots. The people of New Jersey not only acquired a hitherto inaccessible colonial record book, but also reunited with it five maps that had been removed from the volume and offered as separate auction items. The hammer price for the sale was \$547,300 (plus Christie's 20% commission).

Analysis of the newly discovered material is just commencing, following public unveiling of the acquisition in September 2005. Of the seventeenth-century documents contained in the Barclay record book, now at the State Archives, some are known from other contemporary recordings. Many,

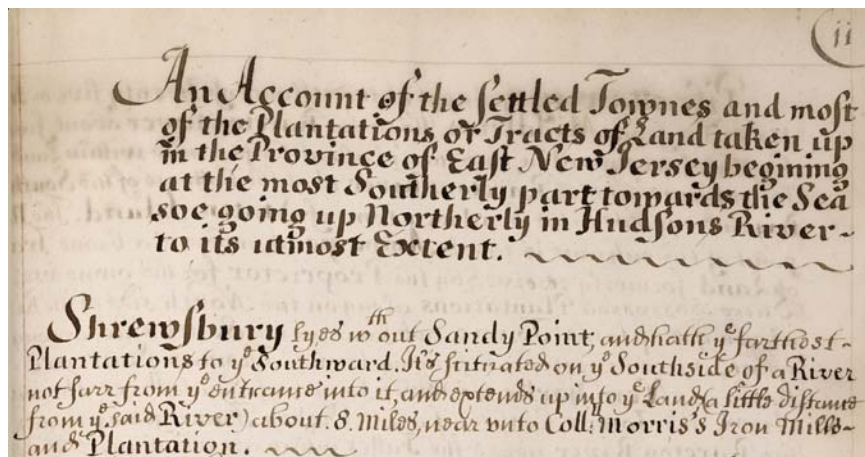


photo courtesy of New Jersey State Archives

however—including the account published here—are believed to be previously unseen by New Jersey’s historians, past and present.

While historical interpretation of the documents can now continue in perpetuity, the account transcribed below was deemed worthy of *immediate* publication given its value to local historians and genealogists interested in the first European settlers of East Jersey. The manuscript will undoubtedly spark enthusiastic investigation into what was previously known or not known by scholars. For example, references to use of slave labor in Shrewsbury, Newark and Bergen, or to peaceful and hostile interactions with Native Americans, or even to the “brave mill” of the Walloons, certainly merit further study. But such analysis is beyond the intent of this article and, moreover, no doubt best left to historians of these localities.

It is appropriate, nevertheless, to provide—at least briefly—the historical context of the document. By the time of the sale of East Jersey by the Carterets to William Penn and his partners in 1682, seven towns had been chartered in the province by Col. Richard Nicolls. Nicolls, who had been appointed governor of the Duke of York’s territory in North America in 1664, granted these settlement rights without regard to the Duke’s conveyance of the land to be known as New Jersey to John, Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. The conflicting interests in East Jersey would result in long-lasting disputes between the proprietors and the early settlers, and their respective successors, for generations. The controversy over outlying lots in Elizabethtown, ultimately resulting in the 1745 Bill in Chancery, is an example.

The following “Acco^t of the 7 settled townes and tracts before our purchase,” as the document is called in the book’s index, was presented to the new proprietary governor for his edification. It is the eleventh numbered section in the volume and consists of six beautifully scripted pages. The unsigned narrative refers to itself as “a Cursory Computacon of a Nieghbour to that Colony,” who set down the account “as being a good part of his knowledge,

the rest hee hath guessed at.” Further study may reveal more about the authorship and purpose of the account, but in the interest of expediting access to the information, such research has been postponed. It is hoped that the reader will excuse the lack of a thorough investigation into these questions for the present introduction.

Finally, the transcription presented below provides a fine lesson in seventeenth-century orthography. Note that the suffix “tion” is often written as “con”—normally with a diacritical mark over the “c.” These and other minor markings (e.g., superfluous colons and dashes) have been omitted. Otherwise the text is transcribed as written, retaining original spellings, with only an occasional “[sic]” when the spelling significantly deviates from a normal rendering.

An Account of the settled Townes and most of the Plantations or Tracts of Land taken up in the Province of East New Jersey begining at the most Southerly part towards the Sea soe going up Northerly in Hudsons River to its utmost Extent.

Shrewsbury lyes wthout Sandy Point, and hath y^e farthest Plantations to y^e Southward. It’s scituated on y^e Southside of a River not farr from y^e entrance into it, and extends up into y^e Land (a little distance from y^e said River) about 8 miles, near unto Coll^l Morris’s Iron Mills and Plantation.

That w^{ch} is called y^e Towne Consists of about 80 Familyes. There is wthin its Jurisdiccon Coll^l Morris’s Manno^r being of [blank space] Thousand acres wherin are his Iron Milnes, his Manno^r house & divers other Buildings for the Servants and depend^{ts} there, together with 60 or 70 Negroes about y^e Mill or husbandry in y^e Plantation.

There are divers Out Plantations accounted to belong to y^e Jurisdiccon of y^e Town, some in Necks of Land by y^e Sea Side, others wthin Land & towards Middleton Bounds, and others on y^e North Side of y^e River below Collonell Morris’s Iron Milnes. The computacon of Acres taken up by y^e Town may be Ten Thousand Acres, And of w^t is taken up by Coll: Morris and y^e other Out Plantations: 20 Thousand. The Number of y^e Inhabitants belonging to y^e Town, Men, Women & Children. Foure hundred.

Middleton is y^e next Town, about ten or 12 Miles over Land, Northward, is Coll: Morris’s Iron Millnes, the said Iron Milnes being about 9 or 10 Miles up from the entrance of y^e River. That w^{ch} is properly the Town may consist of about One hundred Familyes; This was y^e Second Place settled in Coll: Nicholls time Anno 1664.

But there are many considerable Out Plantations wthin y^e Jurisdiccon of y^e Town: viz^t: Cap^t Jn^o Boune, and others of y^e first Settlers, who removed out of y^e Town, and Settled greater Plantations abroad, Ric^a

Hartshorne a Plantation wth a considerable quantity of Land belonging to it, part wthin and part wthout Sandy hooke, wth w^{ch} a Point of Coney Island on Long Island opposite to it make entrance into y^e Bay y^t goes up to New Yorke, and also to y^e Lands of East New Jersey. The Towne is about 5 Miles up from y^e entrance of y^e Creeke or River that comes up to it from y^e Bay. There was a Plantation on y^e North side of y^e Creeke at its entrance first Settled by Nic^o Davies having a large Tract of Land belonging unto it, of 2 or 3 Thousand Acres, since divided, besides severall Out Plantations. And there is a great deale of Wast Land, and other improveable, betweene this and Pascattaway, for above 20 Miles, There was a Court of Sessions held there twice or thrice a yeare for these 2 Townes and their Jurisdictions; The computacon of Acres taken up to y^e Town may be about 10000: And of what is taken up for y^e severall Out Plantations. Twenty Thousand.

Piscattaway lyes next at the distance of Twenty five or Twenty Six Miles from Middleton, It's up the Rareton River about five or Six Miles westward in, and then is about halfe a mile within Land; The entrance into the Raretons River is at the bottome of the Southern Bay and opposite to the Southwest Point of Staten Island. The North point of the entrance is called Ambo point, where is a brave Tract of Land formerly reserved by the Proprietor for his owne use; There are severall Plantations along on the North side of the River as you goe up to the Town, and some on the South side, amongst which, One considerable belonging to one Thomas Laurence a Baker at New York his wives Sonne; of about Three Thousand Acres, The Towne Consists of about Eighty Families up higher in the Rareton River neare the Falles which are about three Miles over Land from the Towne, there is Doctor Greenland's and severall other Plantations. A good bigg vessel Loaden may goe up to the Falles, and so may above it for severall Miles in the River, And at the Falls it is fordeable for horses and other cattle, unles upon great Flouds, when, Men may goe over in Boats or canoes and the horses may be Swomme over, although the River be of a good breadth.

Above the Falls there are severall Tracts of Land some on one and some on the other side of the River viz^t: a place called by the Indians, Rackahava walla by Cap^t John Pallmer of Staten Island together wth M^r Jn^o Coddington, M^r Jn^o White &c Merchants of New Yorke in part Seated, their quantity of 6 or 7 thousand acres.

Another Tract of Land purchased by Consent of the Governo^r and Councill by Cap^t Brockhols, M^r John Robinson, M^r Sam: Edsall and Company of New Yorke of about 6 or 7 thousand acres.

Another by Cap^t Palmer, M^r White, Cap^t Cornelius Corsen and Company of 5 or 6 thousand acres, Some other Land taken up by Millstone River w^{ch} comes into y^e Rareton River and is neare the Middle

bounds between the two Provinces of East and West Jersey. You must passe Millstone River to go over land from Pascattaway to Mattinseeme Island in Delaware River w^{ch} is neare Burlington. The computacon of acres taken up for y^e Town may be about 10000 and for the severall Out Plantations. Thirty Thousand; the number of the Inhabitants: Foure hundred.

Woodbridge is over land from Pascattaway about Seven or Eight Miles. it lyes up a River, the entrance wherof is about 5 or Six miles to y^e North up Ambo point, the Tide ebbing and flowing between the Main Land of New Jersey and Staten Island on the west side as it doth on the East side of the said Island and Long Island.

The Town consists of about One hundred & Twenty Families, y^e Inhabitants p^rtend to have more priviledge then any oth^r Town in y^e Province and have a Charter of Corporacon. Here is a Court house and a Prison built at y^e Proprieto^rs charge, On the South side of the Entrance into the River or Creeke. M^r DelaPraire Survey^r Gener^l hath a neat Plantation, and he hath severall Tracts of Land in y^e Province. There are other Plantations on y^e South side of the River or Creeke within Land, and divers on the North side lying along y^e water side opposite to Staten Island untill you come to a Creeke or River, that divides their Bounds from those of Elizabeth Towne, the mouth of it being 8 or nine Miles from Woodbridge.

There are severall Plantations up the Southside of that Creek or River to the Road, that goes along from Woodbridge to Eliz:Towne and passeth over that Riv^r (it being Fordable) over the Plantations on y^e North side seling to Eliz:Towne, It is reckoned from one Towne to the other about 15 or Sixteene miles over Land, but 'tis more by Water; The Computacon of acres taken up by the Towne may be about Ten Thousand. And for the Out Plantations Twenty Thousand. The number of y^e Inhabitants Six hundred: There was a Court of Sessions betweene these Townes.

Elizabeth Towne is the first New place that was settled by vertue of a Patent from Governo^r Nicholls to Cap^t John Baker and Company before the Lord Berkley and S^r Geo: Carterets title was knowne. There was no place in New Jersey, that had been Seated before unles Berglin [*sic*] and some Plantations on that Neck by the Dutch. The Towne lyes up 3 miles wthin a Creeke, the Entrance whereof is almost opposite to the Northwest end of Staten Island. The Towne is built on both sides of the Creeke and consists of about One hundred & fifty Familyes. There is a house Orchard and Farme wthin the Towne in Partnership betweene the Proprietor and Governo^r Philip Carteret, It being one of y^e first houses built there, and hath all along beene y^e Residence of the Governo^r untill of late hee hath finished his new house.

There are severall out Plantacons on the North side of y^e River or Creeke w^{ch} divides the bounds betweene this Towne and Woodbridge (as before menconed) particularly where the Roads passe over, to w^{ch} place is about 7 or 8 miles.

There are other Plantacons at the point or entrance in at the Creeke on the North side of it, comonly called Governo^r Carterets point, where there is another Farme between y^e Proprietor and Him. It is but a narrow passage there over to y^e Meadows of Staten Island, Then on the Northward there are other Plantacons fronting to the Bay that lyes to y^e North of that part of Staten Island besides some other wthin land from y^e Towne and to Newarke Bounds.

The Computacon of Acres taken up by y^e Towne may be about Ten Thousand, and for the out Plantations Thirty Thousand.

The Number of the Inhabitants Seven hundred and Fifty.

Newarke als **Millford** is the most compact Town in y^e Province and consists of about one hundred Familyes, 'tis distant to y^e Northward ov^r land from Eliz:Towne about 6 or 7 Miles. And it lyes upon a River called Newark Riv^r w^{ch} empties it selfe into the Bay about 4 or 5 miles downe opposite to y^e Towne; On y^e Northside of y^e Riv^r is a great Tract of Land belonging to Major Kingsland & Cap^t Sandford the quittrent whereof is purchased. There is another Tract of Land taken up higher in y^e River by Cap^t Berry, who hath disposed of part thereof, and there are sever^{ll} Plantations Setled, The quantity of his land there is said to be about ten thousand acres, Further up y^e Riv^r is an Island about a thousand Acres belonging to M^r Chr^{'or} Hoogland of New Yorke, If this be not an Island, 'tis Joyned by a very narrow Slip of Land to the Continent. Above that againe is a greater Tract of Land of about 8 or 9 Thousand Acres purchased by leave of y^e Governor^r and Councill according to y^e Concessions by Cap^t Jequis Cortelyan and Company who have begun some Settlem^{ts}. All these Tracts of Land are wthin y^e Jurisdiccon of Newark. There was a Court of Sessions held at y^e former betweene this and Eliz:Towne; The computacon of Acres taken up by y^e Towne may be about ten thousand. And for y^e severall out Plantacons over and above besides Major Kingslands and Cap^t Sanfords fourty Thousand, The number of the Inhabitants computed Five hundred.

At the bottome of y^e Bay upon Overpeek Creek side near Hackinsack River there is a Village setled by severall Walloones having a brave Mill belonging to it. they have taken up a piece of Land into their Plantations for y^t w^{ch} M^r Nicholls of New Yorke hath a Patent, but gave leave to their Settlem^t at y^e request of Governo^r Carteret, upon promise of as much or more in a better place. Neare unto Snake hill is a brave Plantation upon a piece of Land, almost an Island containing about a Thousand or 12 hundred acres belonging to M^r Penhorne a Merch^t of New York and one Edw^d Earle, It's well improved and Stockd. M^r

Penhorne paid for his Moiety or halfe Five hundred pounds. There are other plantacons upon Hacksinsack Neck neare that River w^{ch} goes a great way up into y^e Countrey almost Northwest, there are also others on the East side of another Creek or River and Hacksinsack River. There is a large Neck or Tract of Land, one M^{rs} Sarah Kirkstead of New York hath a Patent for a great piece of Land there given her by an old Indian Sachem in recompence for her interpreting y^e Indian Language into Dutch as there was frequent occasion, there are some Familyes settled thereon. Betweene 2 or 3 Leagues up there is a great Plantation settled by Cap^t Berry where hee now lives, there's a good house thereupon, and a good quantity of Land cleared and improved by twenty or more Negroes w^{ch} hee hath, about two hundred acres of Land there. There's another Plantacon adjoining w^{ch} belongs to his Son in Law M^r Michael Smith who hath about fiftene hundred or two Thousand acres of Land and Sixteene or more Negroes who have improved a good quantity of Land also ... And there is one Plantation more neare Cap^t Berrys belonging to one Mr. Barker who came from Barbados and bought y^e Land of Cap^t Berry being about seven or Eight hundred acres, part of w^{ch} he hath improved by seven or eight Negroes.

On the west side of y^e Creeke opposite to Capt Berry's &c there are alsoe other Plantations, but none other more Northerly up above these Plantations on that side of y^e neck of Land that is betweene Hudsons River and it. The Neck of Land is in breadth from Cap^t Berry's new Plantation on y^e West where hee lives over to his old Plantacon on y^e East at Hudsons River side about 3 Miles w^{ch} distance and sometimes lesse serves to Constable Hook upwards of 20 Miles.

To goe back to y^e South part of Berghen Neck that is opposite to Staten Island where there is but a narrow passage of water, w^{ch} Ebbs and Flowes betweene y^e said Island and Berghen point called Constables Hooke. There is a considerable Plantation on y^e said Constables Hooke, extending y^e breadth of y^e Land there being somewhat above a mile over from y^e Bay on y^e West side of y^e Neck that leades to New Yorke to that on y^e West w^{ch} goes to Hacksinsack and Snake hill, the neck running up betweene both from y^e South to y^e North up Hudsons River to y^e utmost extent of their Bounds.

There belongs to that Plantation about twelve or Fiftene hundred Acres of land and 'tis well Stockd and improved, it was first Settled by Samuel Edsall in Collon^l Nicholls time and by him sold above three yeares agoe for Six hundred Pounds. There are other small Plantations along y^e neck of the Neck to the west betweene it and a little Village of twenty Familyes called by y^e Indian name Pemplipo [*sic; i.e., Pemrepau, now Bayonne*].

And then further on to another Cottage there are more wth M^r Lawrence a Draper lives a Dutchman who was one of y^e Councill, and

there may be 16 or Eightene Families. Then on to Goneunipan [*sic; i.e., Communipaw, now Jersey City*] w^{ch} is over ag^t New Yorke where there about fourty Families. Within w^{ch} about the Middle of y^e Neck, w^{ch} is here about 3 miles over is the Towne of Bergin w^{ch} gives the name to y^e Neck, and under whose Jurisdiccon all y^e Plantations on both sides of y^e Neck to its uttmost extent as alsoe those at Hackinsack, There's a Town Court held by y^e Constable and Select Men or Overseers who use to be foure or more as they please to choose annuall to try small Causes as in all the rest of the Towne and two Court Sessions in y^e yeare from w^{ch} if above twenty pounds they may appeale to y^e Governour and Councill and Court of Deputyes in their Assembly who meet once a yeare, and they call that Court sometimes their Court of Assizes in y^e Towne, w^{ch} is compact and hath bene Fortified ag^t y^e Indians, and there are not above Sixty or Seventy Families.

Then againe Northward to y^e Water side, going up Hudsons or y^e North River there lyes out a point of Land wherein is a Plantation and a Water Mill for y^e use of y^e Nieghbourhood belonging to Gulane Overplank Merch^t at New Yorke.

So onwards there's a small Village called Hasseme [*i.e., Harsimus*] wth about five or sixe Families w^{ch} is comonly called the Dukes Farmes, and have alwayes paid a small annuall Rent to his Lieuten^t or Deputy y^e Governo^r of New Yorke, who first granted it out for 2 lives, but Supposed to be new Leased out for some yeares, yet is under y^e Jurisdiccon of New Jersey for Governm^t.

Farther up is a good Plantacon on a Neck of Land almost an Island called Hobuck, it did belong to one Nicholas Vaclet a Dutch Merch^t, who formerly in y^e Indian warr had his Wife and Children murdered by y^e Indians, and his House Cattle and Stock burnt and destroyed by them, its now settled againe and a Millne erected by M^r Nicholas Bayard a Trustee for the Estate, who lives at New Yorke. Up Northward along y^e River side are other Plantations to M^r W^m Lawrance w^{ch} is 6 or Seven miles further up. Then on, there is a Plantation of M^r Edsalls, and above that Cap^t Berry's old Plantation, both wthout Tenn^{ts} this last is almost opposite to y^e Northwest end of Manhattans Island, on y^e South side whereof is New York Towne and Fort. There are other small plantations up y^e River, to Havershaw neare y^e Highlands, betweene w^{ch}, the River leades up to Esopus and Albany, here are y^e utmost extents of y^e Norther[n] Bounds of East New Jersey as it hath alwayes bene Computed.

There was taken up here a great Tract of Land by Governo^r Philipp Carteret for himselfe, and another for one Campaigne and Company, But supposed, That Little is improved, yet some plantations are sayd to be there.

The Computacon of Acres taken up by Berghin may be about ten Thousand and for the severall Out Plantations Fifty Thousand, The

numb^r of Inhabitants Computed to be in the Towne, Three hundred and Fifty, but many more abroad, the greatest part of y^e Inhabitants which are within this Jurisdiction are Dutch, of which, some have beene settled there upwards of Fourty yeares.

Patents have beene given out by the Governour and Councell for the greatest part of the Land here described, And Lands Patented are to pay the Quittrents whether it be improved or not.

What is set forth here relating to East New Jersey is only a Cursory Computacon of a Nieghbour to that Colony, who doth not positively declare every thing to be just as he hath written, but setts it downe as being a good part of his knowledge, the rest hee hath guessed at, as is to the best of his remembrance particularly about the quantity of Acres and number of Inhabitants.

Shrewsbery Towne	}	and out plantations	}	acres
Middleton				30000
Piscattaway				30000
Woodbridge				40000
Elizabeth Towne				30000
Newarke				40000
Berghen				50000
			60000	
			280000	

Shrewsbery	}	Famillyes	}	}	
Middleton					80
Piscattaway					100
Woodbridge					80
Elizabeth Towne					120
Newarke					150
Berghen					100
				70	
				700	

By accounting five to a Family the number of y^e Old Inhabitants belonging to y^e severall Townes are } 3500 Persons

The Out Plantations cannot be soe well guessed at for Famillyes as the Townes

e