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,
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 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 beginning at the most Southerly part towards the Sea soe going up Northerly in Hudsons River to its utmost Extent.

Shrewsbury lyes without Sandy Point, and hath ye farthest Plantations to ye Southward. It’s situated on ye Southside of a River not far from ye entrance into it, and extends up into ye Land (a little distance from ye said River) about 8 miles, near unto Coll’s Morris’s Iron Mills and Plantation.

That wch is called ye Towne Consists of about 80 Familyes. There is within its Jurisdiction Coll’s Morris’s Manor being [blank space] Thousand acres wherein are his Iron Milnes, his Manor house & divers other Buildings for the Servants and dependants there, together with 60 or 70 Negroes about ye Mill or husbandry in ye Plantation.

There are divers Out Plantations accounted to belong to ye Town, some in Necks of Land by ye Sea Side, others within Land & towards Middleton Bounds, and others on ye North Side of ye River below Collonell Morris’s Iron Milnes. The computation of Acres taken up by ye Towne may be Ten Thousand Acres, And of wch is taken up by Coll: Morris and ye other Out Plantations: 20 Thousand. The Number of ye Inhabitants belonging to ye Town, Men, Women & Children. Foure hundred.

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

But there are many considerable Out Plantations wch in ye Jurisdiction of ye Town: viz: Cap’ Jn’s Boune, and others of ye first Settlers, who removed out of ye Town, and Settled greater Plantations abroad, Ric’
Hartshorne a Plantation with a considerable quantity of Land belonging to it, part within and part without Sandy hook, with a Point of Coney Island on Long Island opposite to it make entrance into yer Bay y' goes up to New Yorke, and also to yer Lands of East New Jersey. The Towne is about 5 Miles up from yer entrance of yer Creek or River that comes up to it from yer Bay. There was a Plantation on yer North side of yer Creek at its entrance first Setled by Nic® 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, between 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 there Jurisdictions; The computacon of Acres taken up to yer Town may be about 10000: And of what is taken up for yer several Out Plantations. Twenty Thousand.

Piscattaway lies 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 Southwth 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 canooes 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: a place called by the Indians, Rackahava walla by Capt John Pallmer of Staten Island together with Mr John Coddington, Mr John 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’ and Councill by Cap® Brockhols, Mr John Robinson, Mr Sam: Edsall and Company of New Yorke of about 6 or 7 thousand acres.

Another by Cap® Palmer, Mr White, Cap® Cornelius Corsen and Company of 5 or 6 thousand acres, Some other Land taken up by Millstone River with comes into yer 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 wsh is neare Burlington. The computacon of acres taken up for your 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 lies up a River, the entrance wherof is about 5 or Sixe miles to your 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, your Inhabitants pretend to have more priviledge than any oth' Town in your Province and have a Charter of Corporacon. Here is a Court house and a Prison built at your Proprietor's charge, On the South side of the Entrance into the River or Creeke. Mr DelaPraire Surveyor General hath a neat Plantation, and he hath severall Tracts of Land in your Province. There are other Plantations on your South side of the River or Creeke within Land, and divers on the North side lying along your water side opposite to Staten Island untill you come to a Creeke or River, that divides there 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 Rivr (it being Fordable) over the Plantations on your North side seling to Eliz:Towne, It is reckoned from one Towne to the other about 15 or Sixteen 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 your 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' Nicholls to Capt John Baker and Company before the Lord Berkley and Sr Geo: Carteret's 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 Town lies up 5 miles wsh in 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 Farne wsh in the Towne in Partnership betweene the Proprietor and Governo' Philip Carteret, It being one of your first houses built there, and hath all along beene your Residence of the Governo' untill of late hee hath finished his new house.
There are several out Plantations on the North side of the River or Creek which divides the bounds between this Towne and Woodbridge (as before mentioned) particularly where the Roads pass over, to which place is about 7 or 8 miles.

There are other Plantations at the point or entrance in at the Creek on the North side of it, commonly called Governor Carteret's point, where there is another Farme between the Proprietor and Him. It is but a narrow passage there over to Meadowes of Staten Island, Then on the Northward there are other Plantations fronting to the Bay that lies to North of that part of Staten Island besides some other within land from this Towne and to Newark Bounds.

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

The Number of the Inhabitants Seven hundred and Fifty.

Newark als Millford is the most compact Town in the Province and consists of about one hundred Families, 'tis distant to the Northward of land from Eliz:Towne about 6 or 7 Miles. And it lies upon a River called Newark River which empties itself into the Bay about 4 or 5 miles down opposite to the Towne; On the Northside of the River is a great Tract of Land belonging to Major Kingsland & Capt Sandford the quittance whereof is purchased. There is another Tract of Land taken up higher in the River by Capt Berry, who hath disposed of part thereof, and there are several Plantations Setled. The quantity of his land there is said to be about ten thousand acres. Further up the River is an Island about a thousand Acres belonging to Mr Chr'or Hoogland of New York. If this be not an Island, 'tis Joyned by a very narrow Slip of Land to the Continent. Above that again is a greater Tract of Land of about 8 or 9 Thousand Acres purchased by leave of Governor and Council according to Concessions by Capt Jequis Cortelyan and Company who have begun some Settlemets. All these Tracts of Land are within Jurisdiction of Newark. There was a Court of Sessions held at the former between this and Eliz:Towne; The computation of Acres taken up by the Towne may be about ten thousand. And for several out Plantations over and above besides Major Kingsland and Capt Sanfords fourty Thousand, The number of the Inhabitants computed Five hundred.

At the bottom of the Bay upon Overpeek Creek side near Hackinsack River there is a Village settled by several Walloons having a brave Mill belonging to it. they have taken up a piece of Land into their Plantations for which Mr Nicholls of New York hath a Patent, but gave leave to their Settlemet at the request of Governor 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 Mr Penhorne a Merch of New York and one Edw Earle, It's well improved and Stocked. Mr
Penhorne paid for his Moiety or half Five hundred pounds. There are other plantacons upon Hacksinsack Neck near that River which goes a great way up into ye Countrey almost Northwest, there are also others on the East side of another Creek or River and Hackinsack River. There is a large Neck or Tract of Land, one Mrs Sarah Kirskhead 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 ye Indian Language into Dutch as there was frequent occasion, there are some Families settled thereon. Between 2 or 3 Leagues up there is a great Plantation settled by Capt Berry where he now lives, there’s a good house thereupon, and a good quantity of Land cleared and improved by twenty or more Negroes which he hath, about two hundred acres of Land there. There’s another Planter adjoyning which belongs to his Son in Law Mr Michael Smith who hath about fifteen hundred or two Thousand acres of Land and Sixteen or more Negroes who have improved a good quantity of Land also … And there is one Plantation near Capt Berry’s also belonging to one Mr. Barker who came from Berbados and bought ye Land of Capt Berry being about seven or Eight hundred acres, part of which he hath improved by seven or eight Negroes.

On the west side of ye Creek opposite to Capt Berry’s &c there are alsoe other Plantations, but none other more Northerly up above these Plantations on that side of ye Neck of Land that is betweene Hudsons River and it. The Neck of Land is in breadth from Capt Berry’s new Plantation on ye West where he lives over to his old Plantation on ye East at Hudsons River side about 3 Miles which distance and sometimes lesse serves to Constable Hook upwards of 20 Miles.

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

There belongs to that Plantation about twelve or Fifteene hundred Acres of land and tis well Stockd and improved, it was first Settled by Samuel Edsall in CollonNicholls time and by him sold above three years agoe for Six hundred Pounds. There are other small Plantations along ye Neck of the Neck to the West betweene it and a little Village of twenty Families called by ye Indian name Pemlipo [sic; i.e., Pemrepau, now Bayonne].

And then further on to another Cottage there are more which Mr. Lawrence a Draper lives a Dutchman who was one of ye Councell, and
there may be 16 or Eighteene Familyes. Then on to Gonneunipan [sic; i.e., Communipaw, now Jersey City] wch is over agt New Yorke where there about fourty Familyes. Within wch about the Middle of ye Neck, wch is here about 3 miles over is the Towne of Bergin which gives the name to ye Neck, and under whose Jurisdiction all ye Plantations on both sides of ye Neck to its utmost extent as alsoe those at Hackinsack, There’s a Towne Court held by ye 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 ye yeare from wch if above twenty pounds they may appeale to ye Governour and Councell and Court of Deputyes in their Assembly who meet once a yeare, and they call that Court sometimes their Court of Assizes in ye Towne wch is compact and hath bene Fortified agt ye Indians, and there are not above Sixty or Seventy Familyes.

Then againe Northward to ye Water side, going up Hudsons or ye North River there lies out a point of Land wherein is a Plantation and a Water Mill for ye use of ye Neighbourhood belonging to Gulane Overplank Merch't at New Yorke.

So onwards there’s a small Village called Hasseme [i.e., Harsimus] wch about five or sixe Familyes is comonly called the Dukes Farmes, and have always paid a small annual Rent to his Lieuten or Deputy of New Yorke, who first granted it out for 2 lives, but Supposed to be new Leased out for some yeares, yet is under ye Jurisdiction of New Jersey for Goverm'.

Farther up is a good Plantation on a Neck of Land almost an Island called Hobuck, it did belong to one Nicholas Vaclet a Dutch Merch't, who formerly in ye Indian warr had his Wife and Children murdered by ye Indians, and his House Cattle and Stock burnt and destroyed by them, its now settell againe and a Millne erected by Mr Nicholas Bayard a Trustee for the Estate, who lives at New Yorke. Up Northward along ye River side are other Plantations to Mr Wm Lawrance which is 6 or Seven miles further up. Then on, there is a Plantation of M' Edsalls, and above that Cap' Berry’s old Plantation, both wch out Tenn this last is almost opposite to ye Northwest end of Manhattans Island, on ye South side whereof is New York Towne and Fort. There are other small plantations up ye River, to Havershaw neare ye Highlands, betwene wch, the River leads up to Esopus and Albany, here are ye utmost extents of ye Northern Bounds of East New Jersey as it hath always beene Computed.

There was taken up here a great Tract of Land by Governo' Philipp Carteret for himselfe, and another for one Campagne 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' of Inhabitants Computed to be in the Towne, Three hundred and Fifty, but many more abroad, the greatest part of y' Inhabitants which are within this Jurisdiction are Dutch, of which, some have beene setled 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 sets 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towne</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Families</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shrewsberry</td>
<td>~30000</td>
<td>~80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middleton</td>
<td>~30000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piscattaway</td>
<td>~40000</td>
<td>~80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbridge</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berghen</td>
<td>~60000</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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By accounting five to a Family the number of y' Old Inhabitants belonging to y' severall Townes are 3500 Persons

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