

EARLY HISTORY OF NEW JERSEY AND BERGEN COUNTY  
— To 1693 —

When Henry Hudson and his crew stepped on the beach at Sandy Hook in September 1609, they were probably the first Europeans to have actually set foot on what was to become New Jersey. Other Europeans, including John Cabot in 1498 and John Verrazano in 1524, had sailed along the New Jersey coast, but until Hudson, no one had gone ashore in this area.

Hudson and his crew were not the first men here, however. American Indians had lived in the New Jersey area since before 6000 BC. These Indians were of the Eastern Algonquian Confederacy, and they gave themselves the name "Lenni Lenape," meaning "original people." The New Jersey Lenni Lenape included three subdivisions and the northern New Jersey Indians were called the Minsi (or Munsee), which meant "people of the stony country." The other Lenni Lenapes were the Unami, in central New Jersey, and the Unalachtigo, in southern New Jersey and Delaware. In 1648, the Indian population in the New Jersey area was estimated at about 2000 warriors. Within 25 years, the number had shrunk to only 1000, and it further dwindled to nearly none by 1700. The introduction to the new world by Europeans of diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis, and of intoxicants such as rum and brandy were among the reasons suggested for the decline in the Indian population.

The Indians gave the New Jersey area the name "Scheyichbi," meaning the "land of the shell wampum," or "land bordering the ocean." Within the Minsi of New Jersey, Indian subgroups included the Raritans, Hackensacks, Pomptons, and Tappeans. The Indian influence on our area can be seen in the trails they left (many of which were developed into colonial roads) and in the Indian names in use today (often in corrupted versions) for geographical entities such as rivers, mountains, and towns (for instance, Hackensack, Mahwah, Ho-Ho-Kus).

The Indians in this locality were generally peaceful. They were not nomads, but made permanent camp sites, where they hunted, farmed and fished. The Indians taught early European settlers survival skills adapted to this land and climate. One of the most prominent chiefs in this area was Oritani of the

Hacki Saks (Hackensacks). He was a great Indian leader and negotiated with settlers and land agents for the sale of various tracts of land east of the Hudson River. Oritani is thought to have lived about 100 years, from 1577 to 1677.

Many Indian artifacts, including arrowheads and tools have been found within Bergen County, and in Allendale itself, including relics found in the area of what became the Celery Farm acreage, and was originally Wolf Swamp, an Indian meeting ground. In 1895, Joseph Ware, while picking up some stone to put in front of his new house on East Allendale Avenue, found an Indian axe, reported to be "one of the most perfect found in this part of the country."<sup>1</sup> Frank Berdan wrote in 1929 that he had found numerous spears and arrow points, and had located several Indian camp sites within Allendale's borders. He felt that the Allendale vicinity must have been a favorite hunting ground for the Indians.<sup>2</sup>

In 1614 Dutch explorers were granted rights to visit and navigate lands described as "situate in America between New France and Virginia. . . which are now named New Netherland." In Holland, in 1621, a group of men formed the Dutch West India Company, whose purpose was to develop commerce with the new world, including fur trade. The Dutch West India Company considered the present New Jersey and Hudson River area of New York "New Netherland" or "New Netherlands." The northern and southern boundaries of this territory were not clearly known, and no one knew how far inland New Netherland extended.

In 1623 the Dutch West India Company sent settlers on a ship commanded by Cornelius Jacobse Mey to the New World, and they sailed along the coast from Cape Cod to the Delaware River. They called the Delaware "the South River;" and what became the Hudson River was called "the North River" and the "Mauritius River." They made an early settlement at Gloucester, New Jersey, but by 1631 that settlement had disappeared. Other early colonies in southern New Jersey and vicinity were settled by Dutch, Swedish and Finnish expeditions.

Within a few years after Hudson's discovery of the river that was later given his name, the Dutch erect-

ed a fort on the southern end of Manhattan Island. By 1623 this was surrounded by a thriving village, governed by Peter Minuit, and was known as New Amsterdam.

The first successful settlement of Northern New Jersey seems to have been organized by Michael Pauw of Amsterdam, who bought from the Indians land in the present Jersey City area on July 12, 1630. Pauw called the area Pavonia, meaning "the land of the peacock." The Dutch West India Company bought Pavonia in 1634 and attempted to settle the area, but these early settlements were destroyed by the Indians in retaliation for massacres and murders by the Dutch. Finally, in late 1660, the community of Bergen (now Jersey City), stockaded against Indian attack, became northern New Jersey's first permanently settled village.

English and Dutch claims on New Jersey and New York territories were made as a result of exploration. Many early European settlers, however, considered the Indians owners of the land, and bought from them tracts in New Jersey and New York. The Indians, however, did not understand the European concept of land ownership. They believed the land was for the use of all for all generations, so they sometimes "sold" the same land more than once. Conflicting claims and unclear boundaries became the basis for more than a century of territorial and boundary disputes.

English claims, based on John Cabot's coastal discoveries in 1498, on what became New Jersey included the 1609 charter of "Virginia" granted by King James I, which included portions of New Jersey. Early English claims, however, were in essence forfeited because of lack of settlement.

In March 1664, King Charles II of England deeded to his brother, James, the Duke of York (later to be King James II), a large territory including what is now New York and New Jersey. In May the Duke sent Col. Richard Nicolls to claim the area and Dutch governor Peter Stuyvesant surrendered on August 29, 1664. New Netherland thus became an English possession.

Meanwhile, the Duke of York had on June 23, 1664 granted to two of his court friends, Sir George Carteret and John, Lord Berkeley, a grant which included all of present New Jersey. The tract was named Nova Caesarea, or New Jersey, in honor of Carteret's defense of the Isle of Jersey in the English Channel.

English settlers on Long Island petitioned for and were granted by Col. Nicolls (by then deputy governor of New York) permission to settle in Albania, the name the local English used for New Jersey. Without knowing that the Duke of York had granted the area to Berkeley and Carteret, the settlers bought on Oct

28, 1664, from the Indians, the present area of Elizabeth. They chose the name Elizabeth-Town, in honor of Lady Elizabeth Carteret, wife of George Carteret. Elizabeth-Town became the first permanent English settlement in New Jersey, and the first capital of New Jersey.

Elsewhere in New Jersey, on May 17, 1666 a group of Congregationalists from Connecticut, led by Robert Treat, founded Newark, purchasing the land from the Indians, and the Dutch settlement at Bergen (Jersey City) received a confirmation charter from the English on September 22, 1668.

On July 4, 1668 Capt. William Sandford, of the Island of Barbados, purchased from the Indians the tract he called New Barbadoes Neck. This was part of the area later designated as New Barbadoes Township. The small Island of Barbados was a first stop and training ground for several men who later made Bergen County their home and became important early leaders in the county. On Barbados they learned about the management of plantations and the intricacies of self-government, techniques they would employ in their new country. Another Barbadian who came to Bergen County was John Berry, who was one of the county's earliest settlers.<sup>3</sup>

The Dutch recaptured, with no resistance, the former New Netherland area (including New Jersey) on August 1, 1673, but the following year, under a Westminster Treaty, they returned the land to English rule and it remained under English rule until the Revolution.

The Duke of York turned over the northern and central New Jersey portions of the 1664 grant to George Carteret, and a "Quintipartite Deed" was drawn up July 1, 1676 to divide New Jersey into East and West New Jersey. Five Quakers (Fenwick, William Penn, Gawen Lawrie, Nicholas Lucas, and Byllynge) became the owners of "West Jersey" (actually the southern part of New Jersey), and "East Jersey" (actually the northern part of New Jersey) was deeded to George Carteret.

When Carteret died in January 1679/80 his heirs, ordered in his will to pay his debts, sold East New Jersey on February 1-2, 1681/82 to twelve proprietors, one of whom was William Penn. These twelve on March 14, 1682/83 granted parts to twelve others, and these 24 became the proprietors of East Jersey.

The earliest designation of civil boundaries by county in northern New Jersey was on November 13, 1675, when the Legislature enacted "Bergen, and the adjacent Plantations about them, to be a County." No county name was given and no boundaries were cited. Finally, in March 1682/83, the General Assembly of East Jersey named four New Jersey counties: Bergen, Essex, Middlesex and Monmouth, all with vague boundaries. On October 31, 1693 the

designation of towns and townships (some of which were later designated as counties) in East Jersey was formalized into law. Included were Bergen, Elizabeth-Town, Newark, Woodbridge, Piscataqua, Nevysink, Hackensack, Acquackanonk, New Barbadoes, Essex, Perth Amboy, Somerset, and Freehold. The northern boundary of New Jersey had not yet been surveyed, and this would lead to decades of dispute.

Bergen County's boundaries were to change as its bounds were surveyed and disputes were resolved, and as it lost area to the formation of other counties. These later counties were created because of increased population, economics and politics.

The few square miles which now are called the Borough of Allendale were included within Bergen County, and if we were to give its earliest known civil township names, they would be "New Hackensack" and "New Barbadoes." In October 1693, the division of the original four New Jersey counties into townships resulted in the naming of three townships in this area: Hackensack, Bergen, and New Barbadoes, of which the present-day area of Allendale was but a very small part.<sup>4</sup>

The settlers in northeastern New Jersey during these early years were served by the Dutch Reformed Churches at New York City (church organized by 1628), Bergen (church founded in 1660 at what is now Jersey City), Hackensack (church organized 1686), and in Acquackanonk (church organized in 1693 in what is now Passaic).