

ditional folkways, beliefs and customs have been transplanted. Participants in the Great Migration, for example, have noted that a broad range of southern foods (for instance, collard greens, yams, and mullet fish) were not available in black neighborhood markets at the time of their arrival but eventually appeared because of their presence. They have also mentioned their continued use of traditional cures ("home remedies") in treating injuries and illnesses. And in 1941, when the folklorist Herbert Halpert studied the Pinelands, he collected folklore including Br'er Rabbit stories from migrants living in South Toms River. These tales, he said, represented a "living tradition that has recently been brought into South Jersey."

There were five southern black movements to New Jersey after the colonial period. Before the Civil War the migrants were free blacks and runaway slaves. Between the Civil War and World War I a larger number of Afro-Americans arrived. World War I set in motion the Great Migration; 1.5 million blacks uprooted themselves before 1930 and many came to New Jersey. World War II set off another sizable movement northward, and New Jersey again received an appreciable number of newcomers. The last major period of black southern movement to the north occurred between 1945 and roughly 1970, and again many migrants came to New Jersey.

The following pages contain a brief account of the long Afro-American past in New Jersey, from the colonial era to the 1980s. It is impossible to include every phase of this past, but it is hoped the account will present its main features and reveal the uniqueness of Afro-American life in New Jersey over the years, as well as the major circumstances that have shaped this life.

Colonial Period to 1790

It is not clear when blacks first appeared on New Jersey soil. Probably the Dutch—who were among the foremost slave traffickers of the seventeenth century—were responsible. One can speculate that Fort Nassau, erected by the Dutch West India Company in 1623 near present-day Gloucester City and occupied intermittently until 1651, probably had slaves, since the Dutch customarily used slave labor to fortify posts of this kind. Recent scholarship suggests that the few slaves in the colony of New Netherland were all in its capital, New Amsterdam (present-day Manhattan). Still, one can speculate that slaves may have been used on the scattered farmsteads of Pavonia,

New Jersey's first permanent European settlement, which existed between 1630 and 1655 in parts of what is now Jersey City and Hoboken.

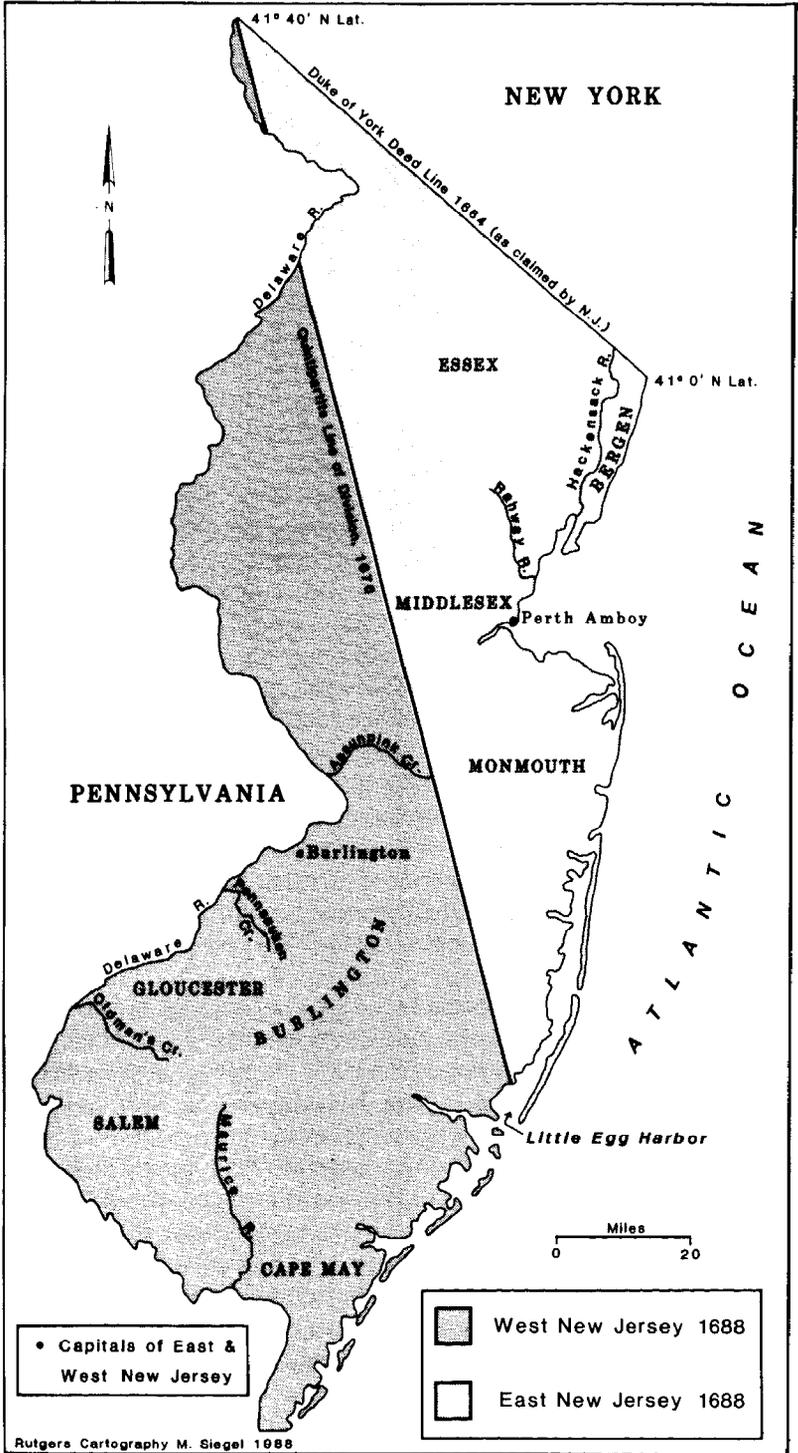
The Dutch led in introducing slaves in large numbers after the English took control of the region in 1664 and established a proprietary regime in New Jersey under John, Lord Berkeley, and Sir George Carteret. Indeed, many Dutch farmers, swearing allegiance to the new government, moved to New Jersey with their slaves. Most of these settled in Bergen, Middlesex and northern Monmouth counties.

Under the proprietary regime, which lasted until 1702, black enslavement was encouraged by law. The proprietors' *Concessions and Agreement* offered an additional sixty acres of land for every slave imported during 1664, forty-five acres for each slave imported the following year, and thirty acres for each one brought in during 1666. These inducements helped spawn a rapid increase in the slave labor force, and by 1680 slavery was well established in New Jersey.

In 1676 the colony was divided into two provinces. East Jersey, lying northeast of a straight line that ran from Little Egg Harbor to the northwest corner of New Jersey, contained the counties of Bergen, Essex, Middlesex and Monmouth. West Jersey, situated southwest of this line, consisted of Burlington, Gloucester, Salem and Cape May counties. (See Map 1.) East Jersey had the greater number of bondsmen, about 120 in 1680 out of a total population of roughly five thousand. It also enacted most of the slave laws of the proprietary period. Such laws established and protected the rights of slave ownership, provided for the maintenance of slaves, prohibited the sale of strong drink to blacks and Indians, imposed restrictions on the handling of guns by slaves, and set up a legal system adjudicating crimes committed by blacks.

After the two Jerseys became a united royal province in 1702, harsher penalties were enacted for slave infractions. In addition, the slave trade, which had continued through the proprietary period, received strong official support and became one of New Jersey's preferred branches of commerce. Since the trade was a royal monopoly and a lucrative source of revenue, this support came mainly from the crown. Queen Anne (1702-1714) urged Lord Cornbury, the first governor of the royal colony, to promote the importation of slaves "so that the colony might have a constant and sufficient supply of merchantable Negroes at moderate rates in money or commodities."

The colonial legislature hoped to meet the colony's labor needs by encouraging the importation of white servants, who were deemed



MAP 1

more assimilable. As a result it generally sought to restrict the slave trade. The crown usually prevailed, however, and between 1721 and 1769 New Jersey allowed the duty-free importation of slaves. The colony even became a haven for smugglers running slaves into neighboring New York and Pennsylvania, where tariffs on slaves were in effect. It is not surprising that the black population grew rapidly in the eighteenth century. New Jersey blacks numbered nearly five thousand by 1745 and over fourteen thousand by 1790 (see Table 2).

New Jersey's black work force, located mainly in the countryside, made a vital contribution to the colony's economic development and was remarkably diverse. Male slaves, who outnumbered females throughout the colonial period, worked chiefly in agriculture, many tending stock and raising crops for export to the West Indies. They also labored in mining, lumbering, nautical pursuits, and domestic service. Some were even skilled craftsmen: blacksmiths, millers, carpenters, shoemakers, coopers, millwrights and tanners. Most slave women were domestic servants—nannies, cooks, maids, wash-women—or farmhands.

New Jersey slaves frequently resisted their bondage. Some ran away. Others worked slowly, destroyed tools, animals, crops and other property, and sometimes physically harmed their masters. Individual acts of vengeance, as well as slave plots both real and imagined, contributed to a widespread white fear that was expressed in severe forms of punishment designed to crush slave resistance. As early as 1695 two blacks were hanged and another was burned alive for conspiracy and the murder of a prominent Monmouth County

TABLE 2

BLACKS IN THE POPULATION OF NEW JERSEY,
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	BLACKS	
		Number	Percentage
1726	32,442	2,581	8.0
1738	46,676	3,981	8.5
1745	61,383	4,606	7.5
1790	184,139	14,185	7.7

slaveholder. The discovery of a slave plot near Somerville in 1734 led to the arrest of several hundred bondsmen. Two were hanged, another had an ear cut off, and many others were flogged. And in the wake of the hysteria triggered by the New York slave conspiracy of 1741, three New Jersey blacks were burned alive after being convicted of setting fire to seven barns in Hackensack.

Little is known about the precise African origins of the slaves brought into New Jersey. It appears, however, that before 1750 relatively few were imported directly from Africa. New Jersey had too little slavery to absorb full shiploads of African slaves easily. In addition, slaves newly arrived from Africa were often thought by slaveowners to be dangerous and difficult to control. New Jersey therefore tended to import bondsmen from the West Indies, especially Jamaica and Barbados; Barbadian planters even settled in New Jersey with their human property during the proprietary period. Because West Indian slaves were familiar with Western customs and work habits, they were highly prized in New Jersey, where master and slaves usually worked and lived in close proximity. After 1750 increasing numbers of slaves were shipped to North America directly from Africa. At the same time, their overall importation into New Jersey declined after that year, and by the time of the War of Independence it had virtually ceased.

Those slaves that did come to the colony fresh from Africa probably contributed to the retention of African culture in New Jersey during the slave era. Certainly an African style marked the way some danced, sang, played instruments, and paraded. Well into the early 1800s New Jersey slaves did the "shingle dance" in holiday festivities at the Catharine Market in New York City. The rhythms of this dance were said to resemble those of the ring shout, an African-influenced circle-dance style seen in southern black churches as late as the mid-twentieth century.

In 1786 New Jersey reached a milestone in the struggle against slavery by outlawing its slave trade. The fear of slave rebellions may have encouraged this development, many whites believing their security would be jeopardized by adding fresh African slaves to a black population already menacingly large. Another influence was the crusading work of early foes of slavery like John Woolman, a Quaker from Mount Holly, whose writings sparked efforts to eliminate slaveholding among his coreligionists. As a young man in 1743 he first voiced his opposition to black bondage. By 1775, three years after his death, the antislavery sentiments he represented were being promoted

among non-Quakers as well. In that year a group of Quakers from Chesterfield submitted the first petition ever to the legislature for an abolition law. Three years later, William Livingston, New Jersey's first state governor, also asked the assembly to require the manumission of slaves.

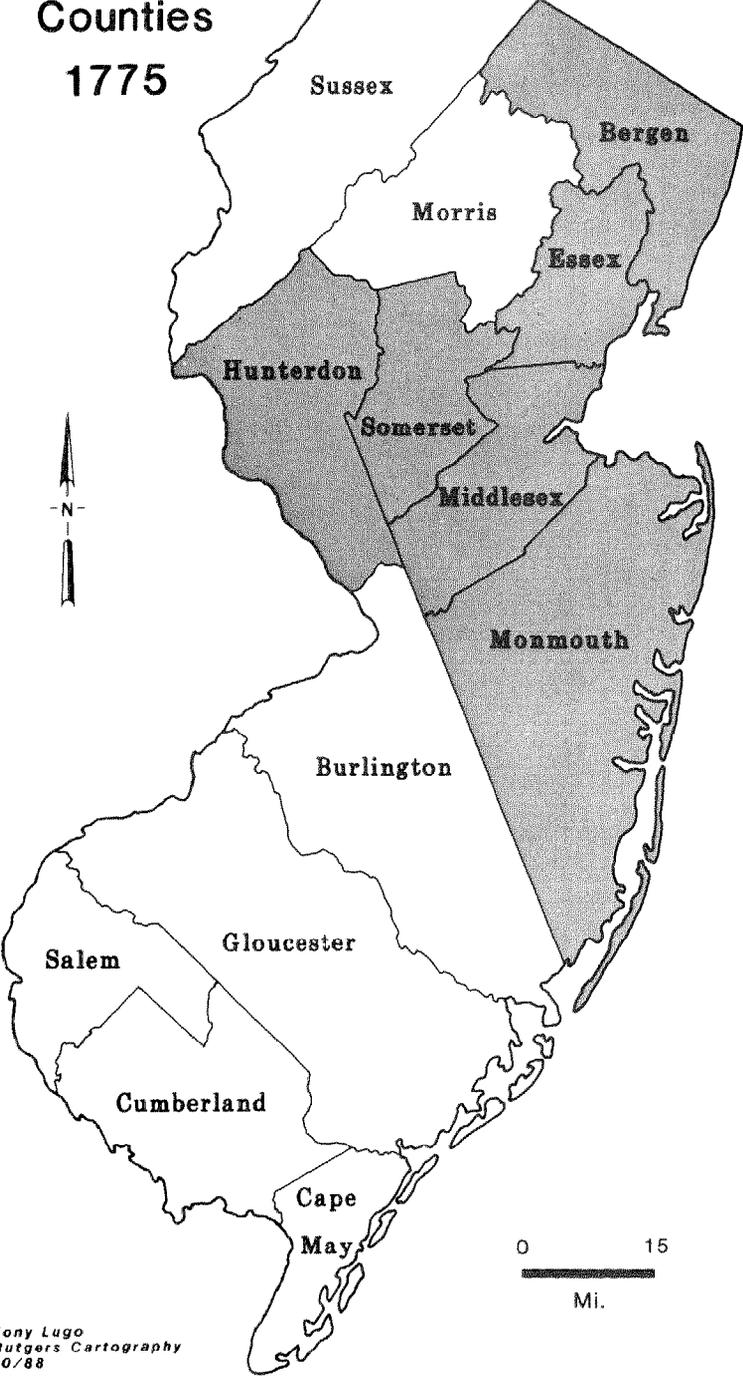
Throughout New Jersey's early history its black population was unevenly distributed. During much of the slavery period about 75 percent of the bondsmen were found in the counties of Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, Hunterdon, Somerset, and Monmouth (see Map 2). These counties tended to be more economically developed and to have labor scarcities. They also had more Dutch, German, and non-Quaker settlers. Perth Amboy was the principal slave entry port for these counties. Along with New York and Philadelphia, it was a leading slave port for the Middle Colonies. Cooper's Ferry (now Camden) was its counterpart in the southern counties that had mainly constituted West Jersey. Largely because of the opposition of Quakers and because the region had a more sufficient number of white settlers than East Jersey, slavery was much less extensive here.

A north-south dichotomy also developed in the distribution of the free black population, which appeared as early as the 1680s. The Quaker-settled counties of South Jersey tended to have the highest absolute and relative numbers of freedmen, while North Jersey counties, especially Bergen and Somerset, contained the smallest.

In 1790 roughly 20 percent of New Jersey's 14,185 blacks were free. The Revolutionary War helped liberate many New Jersey slaves. Some took advantage of its chaos and fled their masters. Others joined the New Jersey militia or Continental army and were manumitted. Still others served with the British, spurred by the "Emancipation Proclamation" issued by Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, in 1775, which promised freedom to any slave who fought for the crown; some of these departed with the British at the war's conclusion. And occasionally owners set their slaves free, in accordance with the ideals advanced to justify the war. For example, Moses Bloomfield of Woodbridge, whose son Joseph later served as the state's fourth governor, freed his fourteen slaves on July 4, 1783, at a public ceremony. Pointing to them, he said:

As a nation we are free and independent—all men are created equal—and why should these, my fellow citizens, my equals, be held in bondage? From this day they are emancipated, and I hereby declare them free and absolve them of all servitude to me, or my posterity.

**New Jersey
Counties
1775**



*Tony Lugo
Rutgers Cartography
10/88*