

New Jersey Research: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy

Class 2: 18th Century Research

Kimberly Mannisto, Researcher, kim.mannisto@nehgs.org

History

Colonial New Jersey

- In 1702, Queen Anne united East Jersey and West Jersey into one royal colony:
 - 1702 marks the end of the proprietary period and start of the colonial period which lasted until about 1787
 - East Jersey Proprietors and West Jersey Proprietors still maintained control over their land
 - New York and New Jersey shared one royal governor until 1738
- Land disputes continued within New Jersey and with her neighbors for many years:
 - The location of the northern border between New Jersey and New York was not resolved until 7 October 1769
- For most of the colonial period, New Jersey was composed of the 13 counties which included: Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Salem and Sussex:
 - Utilize town and county histories and *The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries, 1606-1968* by John F. Snyder to understand New Jersey boundary changes

Statehood

- On 2 July 1776, New Jersey became the fourth colony to adopt a state constitution declaring they were an independent state
- In December 1787, New Jersey became the third state to ratify the U.S. Constitution
- On 20 November 1789, New Jersey was the first state to sign the Bill of Rights
- In 1790, Trenton was named the capital of New Jersey

The People

- East Jersey was comprised of:
 - English- Sussex and Morris counties
 - Dutch- Bergen and Sommerset counties
 - Puritan settled towns in Essex County
 - Mixed population, including Quakers, in Middlesex and Monmouth counties
- West Jersey was dominated by Quakers who settled Salem, Gloucester, and Burlington counties

Note: Use the “Catalog” and “Research Wiki” functions on Family Search to find records for ethnic populations.

Denominations

- Early churches included the Dutch Reformed Congregation, Society of Friends and Lutheran congregations, but by 1775, Presbyterian, Society of Friends, Dutch Reformed, Baptist, and Episcopalian were the predominate denominations:
 - Consult Family Search for different denominational record collections- https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_Jersey_Church_Records

Quakers

- West Jersey was populated by English Quakers who were influenced by William Penn and Pennsylvania
- East Jersey was populated by Scottish Quakers primarily from the lowlands of Scotland:
 - See *Scottish Quakers and Early America, 1650 to 1700* by David Dobson
- Quakers had monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings:
 - Yearly meetings for Quakers in the Delaware Valley alternated between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Burlington, and New Jersey for much of the 18th century
 - Monthly Meetings records included births, deaths, marriages, burials, removals and certificates and Meeting Minutes:
 - See American Ancestors *The Society of Friends: Research in Quaker Records* by Rhonda R. McClure for more information on Quaker research- <https://my.americanancestors.org/2244/2372>

Enslaved Persons

- By 1715, the number of enslaved persons in New Jersey was around 1,500 and by 1728, there were over 2,500:
 - A large concentration of enslaved persons in the state were located in the eastern portion of New Jersey, particularly Bergen County.
 - The western half of the state had half the number of enslaved persons and numbers would further decline at the end of the century due to Quaker abolitionists and manumission
- Several slave codes and laws made emancipation more difficult and expensive and contributed to the increase in slavery during the 18th century:
 - Consult Rutgers University for more information on slave codes and laws- <http://fas-history.rutgers.edu/clemens/NJLaw/slaverypage.html>
 - See the “United States Indenture and Manumission Records, 1780-1939” on FamilySearch or the “Freedom papers: 1776-1781” for manumission records
- An increase in slavery resulted in an increase of resistance and runaways:
 - Between 1711 and 1775, there were about 1,300 runaway advertisements posted in newspapers
 - Throughout the Revolutionary War, the British offered freedom to enslaved persons and indentured servants if they joined with the British to stop the rebellion uprising. The majority of Black Loyalists were from Bergen, Middlesex, Essex, and Monmouth counties:
 - *Carleton’s Book of Negroes* includes the names and descriptions of black loyalists who went to Nova Scotia- <https://archives.novascotia.ca/africanns/book-of-negroes/>



Indentured Servants

- Prior to the increase in slavery, colonial New Jersey relied on indentured servants primarily from Ireland:
 - See *The Complete Book of Emigrants in Bondage, 1614-1775* available on Ancestry

NOTE: Runaway notice for both indentured servants and enslaved persons can be found at:

- Genealogybank.com
- *Runaways of Colonial New Jersey Indentured Servants, Slaves, Deserters and Prisoners, 1720-1781* via Worldcat.org
- *Genealogical Data from The New-York Mercury, 1766* on Google Books

Record Collections

Primary records for New Jersey have not been shared with free or paid sites like Family Search or Ancestry and most records will need to be ordered from the New Jersey State Archives. However, there are several indexes, abstracts, and transcriptions available to help locate primary records. When it comes to the colonial period, records can be scarce and record substitutes are important resources.

Vital Records

During the 18th century, there was no authoritative source in charge of vital records which include birth, marriage, and death records:

- Resources for births include:
 - “1660-1931 New Jersey, Births ad Christenings” on Ancestry
 - “New Jersey, Church Records, 1675-1970” on Family Search
 - “New Jersey Vital Records, Historical Society of Pennsylvania” on Findmypast
 - “New Jersey Church Records” on Family Search
 - “Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1708-1985” on Ancestry
 - *New Jersey Biographical Card Index* on Ancestry
 - Also see specific denominational records available on Family Search
- Resources for marriages:
 - “New Jersey, Marriages, 1670-1980” on Family Search
 - “New Jersey, U.S. Marriage Records, 1683-1802” on Ancestry
 - “Colonial Marriage Bonds, 1665-1799” at the New Jersey State Archives- https://wwwnet-dos.state.nj.us/DOS_ArchivesDBPortal/ColonialMarriages.aspx
- Resources for deaths:
 - “New Jersey Deaths and Burials, 1720-1988” on Family Search
 - “Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1708-1985” on Ancestry
 - “New Jersey Vital Records, Historical Society of Pennsylvania” on Findmypast
 - *New Jersey Biographical Card Index* on Ancestry
 - *Index to Inquisitions on the Dead, 1700-1800* available to view at a Family Search library

Note: Also consult newspaper collections like *Extracts from American Newspapers Related to New Jersey* on Family Search

Probate Records

Probate records are one of the most helpful death record substitutes available for the colonial period. These include Wills, Inventories, Administrations, and Guardianship papers:

- Early wills and administrations were probated by the Prerogative court and the acting governor appointed officials to act on their behalf.
 - Before 1738, probate records may have been recorded in New York
- Until 1784, probate records for East and West Jersey continued to be filed in Perth Amboy and Burlington and after 1784, the Secretary of State handled probate matters
- Available resources include:
 - “New Jersey, U.S., Abstract of Wills, 1670-1817” on Ancestry (New Jersey Calendar of Wills)
 - “New Jersey, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1739-1991” on Ancestry may have original probate files
 - “New Jersey Index of Wills, Inventories, etc.” on Ancestry
 - “New Jersey, Probate Records, 1678-1980” on FamilySearch
 - New Jersey State Archive’s “Probate Record Search Request: ca 1660-1952
- For late 18th-century probate records you may need to search specific County Surrogate indexes available on most county websites
- For court related documents pertaining to estates see:
 - “East Jersey Will, administrations, and guardianships, 1715-1785” and “West Jersey Will, administrations, and guardianships, 1715-1785” on Family Search
 - Orphans’ Court records available at county Surrogate’s offices
 - *Supreme Court Case Files, 1704-1844* via the New Jersey State Archives

Land Records

East Jersey Proprietors in Perth Amboy and the West Jersey Proprietors in Burlington recorded land transactions until the Land Act of 1785 which then designated it to the counties:

- See “Using the records of the East and West Jersey Proprietors” by Joseph R. Klett for a history and description of the proprietor system for recording land records in New Jersey
- Available resources include:
 - Early Land Records, ca. 1650-1900 at the New Jersey State Archives
 - *Colonial Conveyances: Provinces of East and West Jersey 1664-1794* via Worldcat.org
 - *Index To Powers of Attorney, Surveyor’s Reports, Commissions, etc., Referring to Deeds* at the New Jersey State Archives is known as “Index of Names to Various Records in Various New Jersey Counties” on Family Search
 - *Index to Deeds, Grantee and Grantor* at the New Jersey State Archives is an index to help locate Secretary of State deeds for East and West Jersey
 - *East New Jersey Land Records* by Richard S. Hutchinson- includes abstracts of deeds for Bergen, Essex, Somerset, Middlesex and Monmouth counties available to view at a Family Search library
- Other resources for land records include:
 - New Jersey Surveyor General, *Perth Amboy Surveys for East Jersey, 1678-1814* available to view at a Family Search Library

- New Jersey, *East Jersey Deeds, 1667-1783* available to view at a Family Search Library
- Council of Proprietors of the Western Division of New Jersey, *Warrants, 1717-1754* available to view at a Family Search Library
- Council of Proprietors of the Western Division of New Jersey, *Surveys, 1681-1952*, available to view at a Family Search Library
- Council of Proprietors of the Western Division of New Jersey, *Land Records, various dates, 1700's-1800's* available to view at a Family Search Library
- Council of Proprietors of the Western Division of New Jersey, *West Jersey Deeds, 1677-1854* available to view at a Family Search Library

Biographies

- *A New Jersey Biographical Index: Covering Some 100,000 Biographies and Associated Portraits in 237 New Jersey Cyclopedias, Histories, Yearbooks, Periodicals, and Other Collective Biographical Source Published to about 1980* by Donald A. Sinclair, available to view at a Family Search library
- *New Jersey Family Index: A Guide to the Genealogical Sketches in New Jersey Collective Sources* by Donald A. Sinclair, available to view at a Family Search library
- *Memorial Cyclopedia of New Jersey* by Mary Depue Ogden on Internet Archives-
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/174049?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
- *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany: Data Relating to the Settlement of Settlers of New York and New Jersey* by John E. Stillwell on Family Search-
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/272412?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

Periodicals

Articles pertaining to New Jersey can also be found in periodicals for New York and Pennsylvania:

- *The Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey* available to view at a Family Search Library:
 - See the following index to aid in your search: *The Genealogical magazine of New Jersey Index, the first thirty five years : subject and author index to the articles and contributions in Volumes 1 through 35, 1925-1960* by Donald A. Sinclair, on Family Search-
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2142965>
- *New Jersey History* (first 10 volumes were known as the *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* available to view at a Family Search Library:
 - See the following index to aid in your search: *Subject-index to the thirty-six volumes (1845-1919) of the Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* by Abraham Van Horn on Family Search- <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2058261>
- *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* available to view at a Family Search Library:
 - See the following index to aid in your search: *The Pennsylvania magazine of history and biography; index volumes 1-75 (1877-1951)* by Eugene E. Doll on Family Search-
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1041365?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

- *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record (The Record)*. Some volumes are available on Family Search and others can be viewed at a Family Search Library-
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/161380?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
 - See the following index to aid in your search: *Subject index of the New York Genealogical and Biographical record; v. 01-38* by Florence Evelyn Pratt Youngs on Family Search-
<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/677406-subject-index-of-the-new-york-genealogical-and-biographical-record-v-01-38>

Census Records

There are no statewide census records for New Jersey for the colonial period. Use census substitutes like tax records and ratables;

- Resources include:
 - *Revolutionary Census of New Jersey: An Index, Based on Ratables, of the Inhabitants of New Jersey during the Period of the American Revolution* by Kenn Stryker-Rhoda on Family Search
 - *New Jersey Periodicals Register of New Jersey County tax ratables, abstracts and exempt lists, 1773 to about 1889*- locate a copy via Worldcat
 - *New Jersey Tax Lists, 1772-1822* edited by Ronald Vern Jackson available to view at a Family Search library
 - Also search for tax lists and ratable at the county level via Family Search
- Also see “Using Ratables for New Jersey Genealogy”- <https://www.njstatelib.org/using-ratables-for-new-jersey-genealogy/>
- A 1792 New Jersey Law required a “list of all and every free and able-bodied white male Citizen, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five” be recorded to determine who could be taxed for not serving in the militia or who was exempt so also search:
 - *New Jersey in 1793: An Abstract and Index to the 1793 Militia Census of the State of New Jersey* by James S. Norton on Family Search-
<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/297942-new-jersey-in-1793-an-abstract-and-index-to-the-1793-militia-census-of-the-state-of-new-jer-sey?offset=165453>

Military Records

French and Indian War (1754-1763)

- *Military Officers Recorded in the Office of the Secretary of State, Trenton, New Jersey: Colonial Wars, 1668-1774* available to view at a Family Search library
- *Index to Powers of Attorney, Surveyors' Reports etc., Referring to Deeds* contains military commissions via Worldcat

Revolutionary War (1775-1783)

- “Battles and Skirmishes of American Revolution in New Jersey”-
<https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/32739/>
- Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications at the National Archives only contain federal records, and they are digitized on Fold3:



- A fire destroyed all pension records that were filed before 8 November 1800.
- New Jersey pension files are available on fold3 in the searchable database “U.S. Revolutionary War Pensions, 1800-1900”
- “Revolutionary War Damage Claims, 1776-1783” at the New Jersey State Archives- https://wwwnet-dos.state.nj.us/DOS_ArchivesDBPortal/RevWarDamages.aspx
- You can also complete are Revolutionary War record request at the New Jersey State Archive- https://wwwnet-dos.state.nj.us/DOS_ArchivesDBPortal/index.aspx
- “Black Loyalist Directory, 1783-1788”– a searchable database on American Ancestors 10 Million Names project- <https://10millionnames.org>
- *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots of the Revolutionary War-* <https://www.dar.org/library/forgotten-patriots/forgotten-patriots-book>

Manuscript and Bible Collections

Manuscripts

- *New Jersey historical manuscripts: a guide to collections in the state* by Mary R. Murrin
- *Guide to the Manuscript Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society* compiled by Don C. Skemer and Robert C. Morris
- *A Guide to the Manuscript Collection of the Rutgers University Library or A Guide to Manuscript Diaries and Journals in the Special Collections Department, Rutgers University* by Donald A. Sinclair

Bibles

- Major bible collections are located at:
 - New Jersey Historical Society
 - Gloucester County Historical Society
 - Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington D.C.
 - Genealogical Society of New Jersey (GSNJ)
- *New Jersey Bible Records: Vol 1, Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May and Gloucester Counties* and *New Jersey Bible Records Vol 2, Salem and Cumberland Counties* both by Anna Miller Watring, locate via Worldcat

Other resources

- *Archives of the State of New Jersey, First Series-* 42 volume series also known as *Documents relating to the colonial, revolutionary and post-revolutionary history of the State of New Jersey*, on Family Search and the Library of Congress

Research guides and other helpful resources

- “New Jersey Go-To Published Resources” by Kimberly Mannisto available to purchase through American Ancestors
- *Guide to Family History Sources in the New Jersey State Archives, 2nd edition* By Bette Marie Barker, Karl Niederer, Daniel Jones, and Joseph Klett

- Handy New Jersey Genealogy handbook: All You Need to Find Genealogy Resources for New Jersey by Gary L. Morris
- New Jersey: Digging for Ancestors in the Garden State by Dr. Stryker-Rodda
- State Research Guide: New Jersey by James M. Beidler available from Family Tree Magazine
- “NJ County Offices Resources” with links on how access each county offices resources-
<https://libguides.njstatelib.org/genealogynjsl/county>