

JERSEY JOURNEYS

YESTERDAY'S
NEWS

PUBLISHED BY NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • 52 PARK PLACE, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102

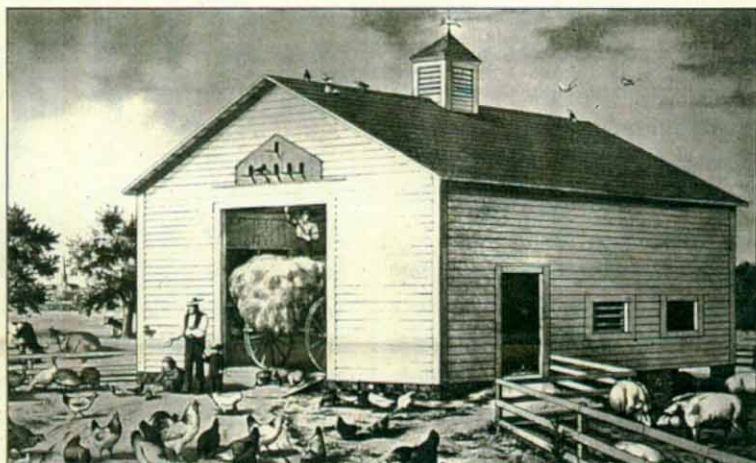
The Farm Life: Agriculture in New Jersey

If you look at New Jersey today, you may wonder why it is called the Garden State. Indeed, it has the highest density of population of any state in the country and is known for its urban areas, industries, and highways. But from its very beginnings, New Jersey was a state known for its agriculture.

A fortunate mix of geography, climate and soil fertility makes New Jersey an excellent place to farm. Before the first Europeans came to New Jersey, the Lenape were cultivating their crops. The Lenape's early farming techniques prepared the agricultural environment for the Europeans, who practiced their own methods.

By 1684, an atlas published in Scotland called New Jersey "the garden of the world." The colonists thought of the region as the "bread basket" of the New World, because grain was one of the biggest crops. In 1776, the seal of New Jersey was designed using symbols of agriculture: a plow, a horse's head, and a picture of Ceres, the ancient greek goddess of grain.

New Jersey's fertile crescent squeezed between the Pine Barrens to the southeast and Piedmont range to the northwest enclosed what became the major



An illustration of a farm yard from Prang's *Aids for Teaching Trades and Occupations*.
(Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society)

transportation/communication pathway between New York and Philadelphia. Farmers used this network to distribute diverse products to urban areas.

The Europeans' main crops were grains and livestock, but as methods of transportation became more efficient, New Jersey farmers shifted toward producing tender fruits and vegetables that needed quick transportation to market.

Over time, corn and wheat were replaced by tomatoes and eggplant, egg farms replaced cattle farms, and New Jersey became known as the "Garden State." While there are still a number of farms active in New Jersey, much of the land farmed by first Native

Americans and then New Jerseyans for hundreds of years is now prized for suburban development. In response, in the mid-1980s the state began the Farmland Preservation Program to try to slow suburban sprawl and keep some farmland for farming.

This issue of *Jersey Journeys* presents the diary of a farmer in New Jersey from the 1700s to illustrate what farm life was like and discusses recent efforts to preserve New Jersey farmland for farming. ★

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An Early Account of Life on a New Jersey Farm: Calvin Green's Diary

"I arise at 4 oclock in summer and went to plowing. It was wholesome to smell of the ground when I ploughed. The smell of the ground before sunrise would cure fits of ague. Sometime I believe I am more healthy for rising and ploughing before sunrise. I always took delight in plowing."—Calvin Green, 1818

Editor's Note: Calvin Green's account of his life (who lived from 1765 to 1847), gives us a glimpse at what life was like on a New Jersey farm during that time. He made yearly entries and marked down what he thought most important. The following are excerpts from Calvin Green's diary. We have kept his original spelling of words and punctuation.

I am about to write of some things that took place in every year of my life. I, Calvin Green, was born of christian parents July 25, 1765, in Hanover, New Jersey. I was 11 years old in the year 1776 the war began. In the year 1778 my father hired John Roberts to work for him a year. I worked with him what I could. In 1779 William Ball moved here and worked with me on the farm some of the time. In the spring of 1780 my father hired John Roberts to work for him another year. Now I was 15 year old and able to do a good deal of work and we carried on the farm at a great rate. The war held on this summer. The Brittish came over from New York and burned Springfield and did much damage.

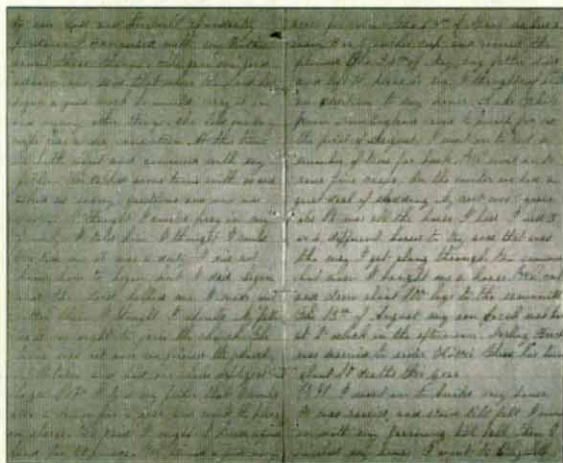
In 1781 my father thought that I must learn a trade. A shoemaker and tanner was thought a good trade. John Smisson had learned one of the neighbors boys a trade. My father got him to learn me. I had to work on the farm. I did not do much at

the trade. In 1782 I worked on the farm part of the time and at my trade part of the time. In 1783 the war broke up and peace was declared.

In 1784, I went to Mr. Wards and began to work. This was something new to me. I never went from home to live

before but I got along very well. Mr. Ward had a great deal of tanning to do. It kept us very busy. In 1786 the first of April was training. *[This seems to refer to militia training.]* I went. There was a good deal of mud and snow. I got my feet wet and cold and like a fool I must go off to see the girls and got at night a great cold and had the pleurisy and was laid up for six weeks. I was bled. This was the only time I was bled. I was sick till within five or six weeks of being 21 years old.

When I was of age my father said I must pay him for my board which was a dollar and he would pay me for my work. I thought it hard at first but I soon found it was for the best. I worked for my father shoemaking and farming about ten months. I paid him for a horse and a watch and cost 20 pounds besides a saddle and bridle. I bought me some clothes.



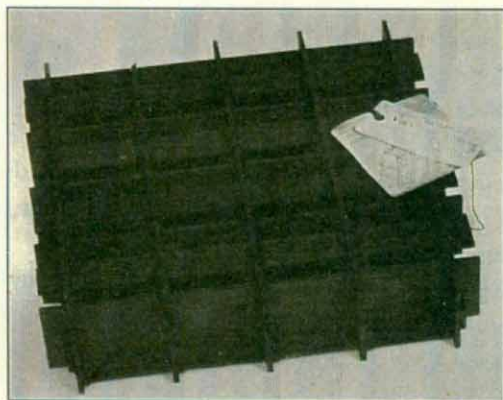
Pages from Calvin Green's diary. (Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society)

In the year 1787 my brother Pierson and I and my fathers boy John Woodruff worked the farm together. Each had one third. We went on and raised fine crops but buckwheat the greatest. The Lord saw fit to prosper us in our labors. In the fall I began to think about getting me a wife. I went to see 20 different girls. I had a good deal of corn. I went on to court my wife and was married to Hannah Beach the 27th of December 1787. On the 9th of December 1788 my daughter Nancy was born.

In 1789 I did what I could at farming on shares. I had a good piece of flax and other grain. My mare died. In 1790 I told my father that I would hire a man for a year and work the place on shares. He said I might. I hired a good hand for 25 pounds. We plowed a good many acres for corn. The 24th of May my father died and left the

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New Jersey Tries to Save Farmland for Farming



A patent model for a reusable egg and fruit crate submitted by John Mercette Jr. in October 1879. (Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society).

For much of the time since Europeans first came to New Jersey, the state has had farms and farmers such as Calvin Green. Over time, the growing of grain crops gave way to fruit and vegetable production. New Jersey's location between the major urban centers of New York and Philadelphia, where there is always a demand for fresh produce, has allowed New Jersey farmers to thrive. Yet with increasing industrialization and the need for suburban housing, much of the land that was once farmed is now home to housing developments and shopping malls. In an effort to maintain some of New Jersey's prime farmland for farming, in 1983 the state adopted the Farmland Preservation Program.

In its most recent purchase, on Dec 29, 1999, New Jersey officials announced a deal to buy more than 1,000 acres of fields and orchards in a fast-growing region of South Jersey—the largest single purchase under the state's Farmland Preservation Program.

The state and Gloucester County will pay \$4.4 million for

three tracts totaling 1,064 acres. Most of the land is located in Elk and Franklin Townships, in Gloucester's southeastern corner, and 153 acres is in Upper Pittsgrove, an adjacent town in Salem County.

The state plans to subdivide the land, then sell the smaller plots with deed restrictions that allow their use only for farming. The property is currently leased to farmers, mainly to grow field crops like soybeans and corn.

The buyer is actually the State Agriculture Development Committee, using money from the Garden State Preservation Trust. The Trust now oversees the Farmland Preservation Program. The Trust is financed by up to \$200 million a year in sales taxes and bond issues under a plan by Governor Whitman to preserve 1 million acres of open spaces (of that 500,000 acres are targeted to be farmland) in 10 years, approved by voters in 1998.

Conservationists and local officials welcomed the deal. "You've got to remember that New Jersey's the most densely populated state in the nation, so open space is extremely important," Art Brown, the state agriculture secretary said after the announcement. "They call it the Garden State and we're going to keep it that way." ★

Source: *The New York Times*, December 30, 1999.

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place to me. I thought of building an addition to my house. I went on to cut a number of trees for bark. We went on to raise fine crops. We cut and drew about 100 logs to the sawmill. The 13th of August my son Jacob was born.

In 1791 I went on to build my house. It was raised and stood till fall. I went on with my farming till fall then I finished my house. Not much farming this year (1793). I had fine crops and desire to thank God. In 1794 I gave up my trade and went on with my farm. I cleared about 4 acres of low land for meadow and seeded it. It made a very good meadow. The 10th of September my son Gabriel was born.

In 1797 I built an addition to my barn and built a new cowhouse. I laid my barn floor so well I believe it will not want any thing done to it in 40 years. In 1798 I went on with my farm and the Lord prospered me in my work.

In 1800 Jacob began to study latin in our Academy. I prospered in my farm and kept Jacob at school. In 1802 Jacob went to Morristown to school. On February 15, 1803 my son Willis was born.

In 1804 I bought me a windmill to clean grain. I put part of the place out to raise broom corn on shares. Gabriel was now 10 years old. He and I worked to till the other part of the land Jacob was always willing to work during vacation. I made more than \$100 this year in brooms. In 1806 Jacob continued his studies. My son John Calvin was born in January. I told Gabriel I would raise 8 acres of broomcorn besides the other work. Our brooms and broom seed come to \$300. That paid for the

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men and helped to keep Jacob along. In 1809 my daughter Elizabeth was born. In 1810 Jacob went to Brunswick to college. My dear Mother died aged 84. I hired \$50 to keep Jacob along at College.

In 1811 Gabriel was now 17 years old and went away to learn the painters trade. Willis was large enough now to weed broomcorn and was quite a help to me. In 1812 Willis and I went on with our work as well as we could. We raised 400 or 500 brooms. Jacob got through College and went to Newark to assist Mr. Whelply in a latin

school. There he obtained a hope that he was born again. This gave me new life. Now I thought he would be a minister which I had always desired. My daughter Nancy died aged 24.

Calvin Green's diary continues through 1846. He begins to write that he is old and infirm starting in 1824, when he was 59 years old. Yet he lived another 22 years, and his farm and his family prospered. He lived to see some of his children married and have children of their own. The inscription in the Hanover Old Burying Ground reads

"In memory of Calvin Green who died February 3, 1847, in the 82nd year of his age." Also "Hannah Green, widow of Calvin Green, died July 13, 1847, in her 79th year." ★

Think About These Questions:

- What might a 15 year old do today in preparation to learning a trade?
- What do you think about paying an adult in your family for your room and board?

DID YOU KNOW . . .

the Society has an iron hoe from about 1760 that was originally found in a shipwreck off the coast of New Jersey?

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SOCIETY

Come visit the New Jersey Historical Society at 52 Park Place in downtown Newark. Look for the Society's exhibition opening in the fall called *Resource-Full New Jersey*. Find out more about agriculture in New Jersey.

Sat., April 1, 2000; 12:30-1:30 p.m. AND 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Sounds of the Past—How did New Jerseyans in the past listen to music? Visit our exhibition *History's Mysteries* and take a look at the Edison multiphone. Find out how it works and make your own imitation cylinder.

Sat., April 8, 2000; available 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Exploring Architecture—Pick up a kit at the front desk to discover and experiment with shapes, patterns, and lines throughout the Society's historical building. Use what you learn to design your own building. Turn in your architecture kit at the front desk and receive an NJHS Junior Architect Award.

Sat., April 15, 2000; 12:30-1:30 p.m. AND 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Scout it Out: Sneak Preview of NJHS Baseball Exhibition—Take a look at our soon-to-be completed exhibition, *Pride of Newark: Baseball's Bears and Eagles*. Learn the steps of designing and building a museum exhibition, then design your own.

Sat., April 22, 2000; available 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Be a New Jersey Historical Society Detective!—Pick up your detective kit at the front desk and try to figure out what our building was used as and who used it before it became the New Jersey Historical Society. Solve the mystery and receive a badge and certificate.

Sat., April 29, 2000; available 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Exploring Architecture—Discover and experiment with shapes, patterns, and lines throughout the Society's historical building. Turn in your architecture kit at the front desk and receive an NJHS Junior Architect Award.

Schedule subject to change; for updated information, call (973) 596-8500, and press "3."

NJHS Hours

*Office hours: Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Public hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Library hours: Tues.-Sat., 12 p.m.-5 p.m.
Closed Sunday and Monday
Admission to the Society is free.*

For more information on Education Programs for grades Pre-K-12, after school and scout groups, family and adult programs, and Teachers' Services at the Society, please call the Education Department at (973) 596-8500.

SOURCES

Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, "Calvin Green's Diary," volume 69, 1951.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Early Farm Life. By Lise Gunby and Bobbie Kalman. 1983, Crabtree Publishers. Through illustrations and clear text, this book provides a glimpse of 18th century farm life. Reading level: Grades 3 and up.

Applejack for Breakfast. By Helen and Alfred Campbell. 1946, Scribner's Sons. The true story of a New Jersey family's ups and downs as they turn from city folk into farmers in the 1930s. Reading level: Grades 5 and up.

To order a subscription to *Jersey Journeys* call (973) 596-8500 and press "0."

Costs: Large classroom subscription (35 copies per issue, one Teacher's Guide) \$65. Small classroom subscription (25 copies per issue, one Teacher's Guide) \$50. Annual resource packet (2 copies per issue, mailed at year-end) \$25. Individual subscription (1 copy) \$10.

PLOWING PRONUNCIATIONS	
Ague	fever; a fit of shivering
Raise (a house)	to help to rise to a standing position
Pleur·i·sy	inflammation of the lung area, usually with fever and difficult respiration
Share	the part allotted to one of a number owning together property or interest

Jersey Journeys is funded, in part, by Public Service Electric & Gas Company; The Whitney Houston Foundation for Children, Inc.; Charles Edison Fund; and J.H.D. Fund.



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Designed by
Font & Center Press
New Jersey Historical Society
52 Park Place
Newark, New Jersey 07102
973-596-8500



Upon Request

Printed on recycled paper