



# JERSEY JOURNEYS

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## Caribbean People in New Jersey

Today, about one half-million people who once lived on the islands of the Caribbean, or in the West Indies, call New Jersey home. Most of them have come to this state within the last 50 years. They are one of many groups who made New Jersey their home, and they have added their art, stories, religion, and history to the rich culture of this state.

The New Jersey Historical Society opens a new exhibition, "Moving through Memory: Caribbean Folk Arts in New Jersey" next month, and there will be special programs for kids and families to go along with it. It is the first exhibit in a museum to show the art work of Caribbean people from all over New Jersey.

The exhibit will show a Puerto Rican guitar, called a *cuatro*, that a craftsman now living in East Brunswick made. An artist will lend a painting of the Haitian seaside that he painted and hung in his living room in Rutherford to remind him of his home. There will be photographs of the colorful walls in a restaurant in New Brunswick that is owned and operated by people who came to this state from Jamaica. There will be masks and costumes that people in Paterson



The Irizarry family of Kearny makes *capias*, souvenirs that mark important events and celebrations that are traditionally made in Puerto Rico. Some of these *capias* will be shown in the Society's spring exhibit. Courtesy Tony Velez.

wear in the annual Dominican Day Parade.

These works of art and craft all carry on traditions that started in the Caribbean. And they show how art objects change depending upon where people live now. Many Caribbean people in New Jersey came from islands that were mostly rural. In New Jersey, many live in urban areas. These art objects show both things—the traditions of the rural areas in the Caribbean where people grew up, and the ways of urban life in New Jersey.

It is true that most Caribbean residents of New Jersey have come here since the 1940s. But Caribbean people of African descent have been settling in New Jersey since New Jersey was first settled. The stories of some of these earlier West Indian people are in this issue of *Jersey Journeys*. ★

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# Planters from Barbados Move to New

No one knows when the first people of African origin came to New Jersey. But before 1750, nearly every person in the United States who had originally come from Africa had lived for a time, sometimes for many years, in the West Indies.

The West Indies are really an archipelago between North and South America (see the map!). Since Columbus first came upon some of the islands there in 1492, many world powers have tried to control the West Indies. People from Spain, Portugal, Holland, England, France, and Denmark all set up large plantations to grow sugarcane, cotton, and tobacco on these islands. And they brought indentured servants from Europe and people from Africa across the ocean to work on these plantations.

From the islands many people of African descent later came to the American colonies, including New Jersey. Some of them came with plantation owners from the island of Barbados.

When English people first came to settle Barbados in 1627, no one lived on the island at all. The native people of Surinam, on the coast of South America, and Dutch traders from Brazil taught these English people how to grow cotton. Then they set up cotton plantations on Barbados. After a plague killed thousands of people, mostly Caucasian people, in the middle of the 1600s, plantation owners turned away from the indentured servants they had been using to work their large farms. They began to buy slaves from Africa instead. Then Dutch planters who had sugar plantations in South America began to settle Bar-

bados. Big sugar plantations developed, and more African people were imported to work on them.

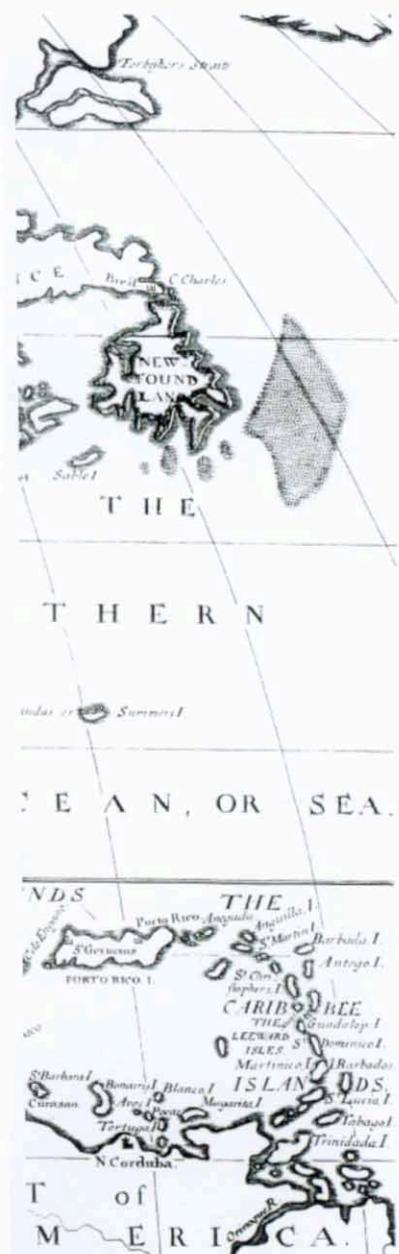
But Barbados was a small island, and soon there were too many people on it and not enough food to feed them all. There were about 4,000 Caucasian people (2,300 of them indentured servants) and almost 44,000 people of African descent there in 1680.

Many planters began to leave the island. Some settled in New Barbados Township, now part of Hackensack, Fairmount, and Cherry Hill, after 1670. One early New Barbados settler from Barbados, John Berry, was the captain of a vessel that traded New Jersey produce and lumber for West Indian sugar and molasses. Records such as ship registers and censuses tell us that



Drawn in about 1722, this "New Map of North America Shewing its Principal Divisions, Chief Towns, and the most remarkable Parts of the world of the western Atlantic Ocean" shows the region of the West Indies and the eastern coast of North America.

# Jersey



ities, Townes, Rivers, Mountains, etc." shows the  
itic. Collections of New Jersey Historical Society.

## Where We Came From

**Y**ou can use newspaper notices and censuses to figure out where people who have lived in New Jersey came from.

One article from New Brunswick in August 1768 mentioned that two black men came from St. Christophers, an island inhabited by English and French planters and African people that is now called St. Kitt's. One newspaper notice noted that a man of African descent living in Hanover, New Jersey, could speak "English, Dutch, Spanish, and Danish." He probably came from the West Indies, because each of those countries had colonies on the islands. Another newspaper notice claimed that an African American man "in . . . seafaring dress" in Trenton had come from Barbados and had refused to return to the island.

Censuses also tell us where people came from, and sometimes they tell us when. In Newark in 1850, a six-year-old African American girl who had been born in the West Indies lived in the home of an African American man named David Morse. That means she must have come to New Jersey after 1844. Another African American man named Richard Thomas, who had been born in New Jersey, was married to a twenty-six-year old woman named Rosannah, who had been born in Santo Domingo. Santo Domingo once was called Hispaniola, and today part of the island is called the Dominican Republic and part is called Haiti.

In the first census district of Princeton in 1900, there were

three African American people who had been born in the West Indies out of 302 African American people in that district. One was an insurance agent who had come to New Jersey from the West Indies in 1897. One was a cook, and the third was a school teacher born in Dutch Guiana, on the northeast coast of South America and part of the Caribbean world. His name was Ferdinand Spurling, and he was a lodger in the home of Paul Robeson, who became a famous African American actor, singer, and intellectual.

African American people who lived in Princeton in 1900 came from many other places, too. More than half had been born in New Jersey. Eighty-seven had been born in Virginia, 42 had been born in North Carolina, and 12 had been born in Pennsylvania. A few came from the midwestern states of Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, and Ohio. One hack driver, only 14 years old, had been born in New Jersey, but his father was born in England. One vendor (a salesman), 86 years old, was born in Maryland, but his parents had been born in Africa. And the father of one woman, a laundress who had been born in Virginia, had been born in France.

Some people whose ancestors came originally from Africa settled in many places all over the world before they came to America. And they might have settled in any part of America—South America, the Caribbean, or North America. There are people from the Cape Verde

some of these men brought people of African descent with them to New Jersey.

Other West Indian people settled other New Jersey places. Richard and Anthony Pierce were of African descent but came to southern New Jersey on a vessel from the West Indies. People say they were two of the founders of Gouldtown, New Jersey. ★

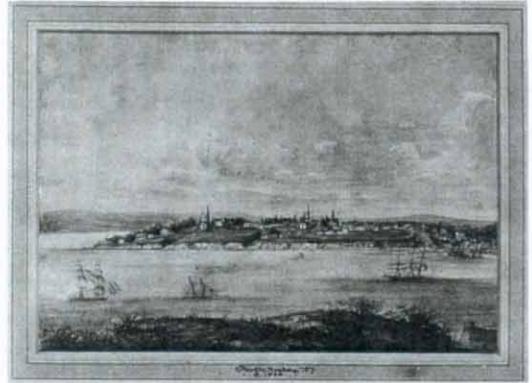
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Islands who have both African and Portuguese ancestors. There are many people from Haiti whose ancestors are both African and French. Many people who came to this country from Cuba and Puerto Rico have Spanish, African, and Amerindian ancestors. The "maroons" or "Cimarrones" of the mountainous parts of Jamaica are descended from both African and Amerindian people. Other Jamaicans have English and African ancestors. Many "creole" people in Louisiana and South Carolina are descended from Caucasian (usually English or French) and African people. ★

NEW JERSEY AND THE CARIBBEAN

After the Revolution, more than seven percent of the people in New Jersey were African American. Of the northern states, only New York had a higher African American population.

The state traded very often with the West Indies. New Jersey farmers sold salted pork and beef, onions, lumber, and other goods in exchange for molasses and, sometimes, slaves. Vessels bringing slaves into New Jersey came into the ports of Perth Amboy and Camden, then called Cooper's Ferry. Look at this chart, which is a record of Africans "imported into the Eastern Division of This Province" between 1698 and 1728. How



Collections of New Jersey Historical Society.

many African people came to Perth Amboy during this time? And where did they come from? Find these places on the map inside. ★

Year	Month & Day	Vessel Name	Masters Name	From Whence and Number of Slaves		
				West Indies Islands	Affrica	Malagascor
1718	Septem <sup>r</sup> 22 <sup>d</sup>	Brigitine Tempennes	Benjamin Sherman	Barbadoes 8		
1719						NH
1720		Sloop John & Mary	Peter Gandy	Barbados 8		
1721	Octo <sup>r</sup> 23 <sup>d</sup>	Sloop George	Mathew Wolfe	St. Vincent St. Martins 50		
1722	September 3	Sloop John & Kathrine	John Tmler	Barbados 17		
1723						NH
1724						NH
1725	April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Sloop Brunswick	John Musket	Barbados 5		
1725	July 24 <sup>th</sup>	Sloop Dove	John Webb	8		
1726	April 30 <sup>th</sup>	Slooper Ann & Judith	Samuel Vincent	Cape Fransway 4		
	May 15 <sup>th</sup>	Sloop Mary	Denis Lawrence	Jamaica 4		
	June 27 <sup>th</sup>	D <sup>r</sup> Seaflower	Alexander Phoenix	Antigua 7		
	July 29 <sup>th</sup>	D <sup>r</sup> Anne	Garretts Garbids	Jamisco 3		
	August 13 <sup>th</sup>	D <sup>r</sup> Lark	James Toy	Jamisco 1		
Total				115		

DID YOU KNOW...

that the Society is celebrating its 150th anniversary in 1995? As part of the celebration, the Society will open an exhibition called "Moving through Memory: Caribbean Folk Arts in New Jersey." This exhibition highlights the folk arts made by people from Haiti, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba who are now living in New Jersey. What traditional skills are involved in making this art? What roles do their creators' lives in New Jersey play? Be sure to visit the Society when this show opens in April 1995.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SOCIETY?

The Society is open to the public Tuesday through Friday and the first

and third Saturdays of the month from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Families are encouraged to visit and explore our museum and library. Admission to the Society is free.

*Drop In Art continues in March!* Please join us every Friday from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Children of all ages are invited to drop in to the Society and do workshops in our hands-on museum and create works of art in our art room. Parents must sign a permission slip. **FREE.**

For information on the Society's programs, please call the Education Department of the Society at (201) 483-3939.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

*A Family in Jamaica*, by John and Penny Hubley. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis, 1985. The story of a child named Dorothy who lives in a small village on the north coast of Jamaica. Reading level: 3rd and up.

*Visual Geography Series*. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis. Books describing countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Discover the Caribbean

nations described in this *Jersey Journeys* by reading books from this series.

**WAYFARERS' WORDS**

- Am-er-in-di-an** a person native to the Americas
- an-ces-tor** someone who came before you in your family
- ar-chi-pel-a-go** an expanse of water with many scattered islands
- de-scen-dant** someone who comes after you in your family
- fu-gi-tive** a person who flees or tries to escape
- in-den-tured** to be bound to work for someone without pay for a period of time in exchange for travel, room, clothing, and food
- plan-ta-tion** a farming estate that is usually worked on by people who live on the estate



Written by Kathryn Grover  
 Designed by Anna L. Geraghty  
 For more program information call the Curator of Education, Erin Dougherty, at 201-483-3939