

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW JERSEY SOCIETY

by JOEL SCHWARTZ



NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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by JOEL SCHWARTZ

TRENTON

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INTRODUCTION

I have tried to write a brief history of New Jersey society—a social history—from its beginnings on a forest frontier to its present metropolitan sprawl. Many historians argue about what social history should cover, but they tend to agree about two basics. First, they generally concur that it should deal with the lives and experiences of common men and women. Such people made up the bulk of society in past times. Their relationships and daily routines created the fabric, the structure of past society. In this sense, the lives of ordinary folk were more important than those of the kings and politicians whose exploits we usually read about in history books. Consequently, this history of New Jersey will focus on everyday people, on their families, their children, their working day, and their community life. It will contain little about people who made headlines, but a great deal about those who never made the newspapers, not even the obituary pages.

Second, social historians are interested in how and why that fabric changed over the centuries. The changes are startling: three hundred years ago, most New Jerseyans worked on the land and were simple, unsophisticated people. Though New Jersey was blessed with good land, life in any developing society is often harsh. New Jersey was sparsely settled; there were few towns. Dwellings were frequently primitive and offered little space for large families. Today, the most typical New Jerseyans are suburbanites who commute to jobs in the manufacturing, sales, or service departments of large organizations. They and their 1.85 children live in single-family, ranch-style houses. They think of themselves as citizens of state and nation.

Most social historians would agree with a general, shorthand description of these changes. Over the past three hundred years, society has gone through three major stages of development;

from (1) rural and preindustrial to (2) urban-industrial to (3) postindustrial. During the earliest stage, when New Jersey was first settled, people lived as they did in Old Europe. New Jersey was a land of scattered farms and small villages. Most people's lives revolved around rural, farming routines. Family, church, and, to some extent, deference to the most prominent local landowners tied society together. During the second stage, which began between the 1780s and the 1820s, people started to crowd into cities, where they found themselves tied together by economic markets and factory discipline. The third stage, postindustrial society, began to arise around the 1950s (although we can see signs of it decades earlier). People moved from congested cities into dispersed suburbs and traded work on rigid assembly lines for careers in business offices. They exchanged cramped city quarters for the roomier, more leisurely suburbs.

As we shall see, however, not all people and communities fit into such neat stages. Nor did these stages change with clockwork precision. Many New Jerseyans still live and work on farms; still more live in the inner cities and work in factories. Furthermore, stages are just categories and cannot explain *why* one kind of social structure gives way to another. Why did New Jerseyans leave their farms for towns and cities? Why did they later trek to the suburbs? Why did they end up working for large organizations? Why did they have fewer children?

As these questions suggest, social historians tend to be curious about many things that they can never answer with certainty. How, exactly, can we find out about the lives of common people? Or why they acted as they did? Few, if any, people left records about their lives. They did not bother to keep diaries or write detailed letters. Many, in fact, were illiterate. Their everyday behavior, their innermost thoughts must remain unknown. Historians have been able to use indirect means to find out how people lived and how they related with others. Some property-tax records and probated wills reveal who was rich and who was poor. Marriage certificates and baptismal records indicate when people married and how they "spaced" their children. Old property maps give clues to who lived where and how communities were organized. Even physical remains allow us to reconstruct what workplaces and households must have been like. Nevertheless, doing social history is like trying

to fit together a giant jigsaw puzzle without having most of the pieces.

With even the best evidence, social historians have to engage in a lot of inferences, a kind of educated guessing about where the evidence leads rather than what it proves. They tend to use phrases like “probably,” “it is likely that,” and “no doubt”; and I will use my share. They also rely on a lot of statistics to try to describe the “average” person or family, or the way the “typical” community looked. There are, of course, no typical communities and no average persons. But reasonable averages can be figured from tax returns and birth records, and such numbers provide important indicators of how people generally behaved. Still, you should remain skeptical. You should ask, “How can he be sure what happened if he was not there?” “What is his evidence?” “Where did he get his numbers?” Such questions are natural. They have been posed by historians themselves still trying to get at the mysteries of everyday life during the past three hundred years.

For the most part, only direct quotes have been footnoted. The sources for each chapter are listed after the notes.

My colleagues at Montclair State University Helen E. Royer and the late Robert R. Beckwith, gave early versions of this essay a close reading, and I benefited greatly from their knowledge of New Jersey history. I also benefited from the research of my students: Michael Ferrett, Telmo G. Nunes II, Marcia Olave, Gary S. Pych, John Tavares, and Victor V. Velazquez. Richard Waldron of the New Jersey Historical Commission, Stanley Worton of Jersey City State College, and Dr. Barbara Petrick, Dickinson High School, Jersey City, read each version carefully and were encouraging at every stage of the work. I am also deeply indebted to Historical Commission staff members Mary R. Murrin and Lee R. Parks, who provided meticulous criticism of the final draft, and to Nancy H. Dallaire for the elegant design of the book. Any errors of fact and interpretation are mine alone.

CHAPTER ONE

Society in a Traditional Province, 1660s to 1770s

For a thousand years, European society rested on two enduring traditions, land ownership and hierarchy (social position). In the century when New Jersey was first settled by white men, these traditions came into conflict.

For generations, the lives of Europeans revolved around the need to own land and to have a surviving male heir, a son, to keep land in the family. With land, the poorest peasant could marry and perhaps have sons—strong boys to help with the endless toil and look after their father in his old age. But so many lads died in childhood that a wife had to bear many children and pray for sturdy boys. Many children—and many small coffins—were part of an endless cycle of life.

European society also respected hierarchy, the arrangement of the world in which society's "betters," a few aristocrats and gentlemen, lived off the sweat of their "inferiors," the great mass of peasants and artisans (craftsmen). Hierarchy was thought to be ordained by God. Beginning in the mid-1500s, hierarchy changed patterns of land use, with tragic results. In England, gentlemen landowners demanded increased acres to raise new money crops, such as wheat, and to keep sheep for their even more valuable wool. Claiming God and the law of England on their side, they seized hundreds of thousands of acres of fields that peasants had farmed in common, leaving them without livelihood or dignity.

Most struggled to stay on the land. Peasants and artisans tried to place their sons as servants in the households of the rich or scrimped for dowries to marry off their daughters. The poorest had few prospects. They struggled to work the little land they had, knowing it was not enough to provide for all their children who remained (alas, unmarried) at home. They might “indenture” (contract) their sons to learn a trade in an artisan’s household. But thousands lost their land and traveled the roads of England, Wales, and Scotland to beg for work. Sometimes, their dreary wanderings took them as far as the port towns of Bristol, Plymouth, or even London (a city that was so crowded and disease-ridden by 1700 that it killed off more than were born into it), whose merchants were seeking desperate people to labor in the “plantations” they were trying to develop in the New World. So England’s excess—bewildered peasants, servants, and artisans—boarded ships, stowed their knapsacks below deck, and set out for the long journey.

If they made landfall off a point soon to be called Sandy Hook, they found a pleasant place that seemed ripe for quick, dense settlement. Further north, brutal Massachusetts winters made life harsh for Pilgrims and Puritans. At Jamestown, Virginia, starvation stalked the English in their stockades, and malarial fevers made the Chesapeake region a vast graveyard. But New Jersey’s climate, except for coastal swamps and vicious mosquitoes, proved moderate, even invigorating. The Hudson and Delaware rivers teemed with fish and provided easy access to rich soils further inland. New York and Pennsylvania were exposed to attacks from the dangerous Iroquois, but New Jersey contained perhaps three thousand Lenape, who preferred to trade beaver pelts rather than go on the warpath. The most frightening thing they did was to burn forest underbrush so they could plant corn on the fertile ash. White men soon realized that fires in the woods meant fertile places for future settlement.

Still, New Jersey remained a barren backwater. Sweden established a plantation of Swedes and Finns on the Delaware near Raccoon Creek, but their numbers were too few and many died. A few Dutchmen, working the fur trade, crossed from New Amsterdam to settle on large estates, called “patroonships,” in Pavonia (present day Jersey City), Edgewater, and Bogota in the Hackensack Valley. One estimate put the number of white

inhabitants between the Hudson and the Delaware at 548 when warships brought an invasion from England in 1664.

Frontier Disciplines

After the English seized these outposts, the province remained nearly empty, because its new proprietors, Sir George Carteret and John Lord Berkeley, were unable to attract many settlers. They were favorites of the English king, who granted them title to New Jersey's millions of acres. Title would bring them no benefit, however, until they could bring in settlers to work the soil, dig its reputed minerals, and pay "quitrents," the annual dues owed to the proprietors. But Carteret and Berkeley soon discovered that their property had no gold mines and no bonanza crops (like tobacco in Virginia and Maryland); they would get no rush of fortune seekers. Nor were they able to organize the migration of religious believers such as the Quaker leader William Penn would later use to fill his province of Pennsylvania.

There was continual friction between New Jersey's few settlers and the proprietors over land titles and quitrents. Berkeley took little interest in the colony and eventually sold his share to two Quakers, Edward Byllynge and John Fenwick. In 1676 New Jersey was divided into two provinces, East Jersey and West Jersey. The two Jerseys were very different. East Jersey continued its tradition of land disputes; West Jersey, settled and dominated by Quakers, was much more peaceful. Neither grew very rapidly. East and West Jersey together had only about fourteen thousand inhabitants in 1702, while Penn's colony, founded in 1683, had already surpassed it.

While New Jerseyans never quite respected rule by proprietors, they could agree on some rule by society's "betters." The colonists who settled Essex County* were Puritan migrants who had left New England because they believed town government was too loose and ungodly; they swore not to repeat that mistake in New Jersey. They divided Newark, Elizabethtown, and other villages into individual lots arranged around a town square, with churches located at either end of

*East Jersey was divided into four counties in 1683—Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, and Monmouth.

town. In the 1680s and 1690s, West Jersey was settled by English, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish Quakers, who remembered the isolated farms of their beloved homeland. The Burlington Quaker Meeting, which dictated terms of settlement—and nearly everything else—for local Friends, allowed them to spread across the countryside in farms of upward of 600 acres. While the Burlington Meeting expected that the Quakers' "Inner Light," a steely force of conscience, would keep scattered farmers on the righteous path, it carefully located central meeting houses and common burial grounds to reinforce Quaker authority.

The most ambitious attempt to impose European controls on new settlers took place on land in Essex County and what later became Morris County, owned by Scottish partners of the East Jersey proprietors. Scotland in the 1600s was dominated by great feudal lords, who owned thousands of acres worked by tenant labor. Like most Europeans, the Scots tried to transplant what they knew to their East Jersey grant. They set up huge estates, shipped in several hundred indentured servants, and refused to sell land to independent farmers. In these early years, hierarchy remained a powerful force in controlling the New Jersey countryside.

Labor on a Raw Frontier

To live like feudal lords on this frontier required the labor of many strong young men. A few, including Scottish rebels sentenced by English courts to hard labor in America, came as convicts in chains. The Dutch brought the first African slaves to work their Bergen farmsteads. Some of these were apparently treated as indentured servants—obliged to work for a set term of years, then set free. By the 1680s, however, East Jersey laws began to be affected by slave customs in Virginia and by an influx of English slaveowners from Barbados and other islands in the West Indies. Servitude for Africans was made perpetual on the grounds of their race. The number of slaves, imported from convenient markets in the city of New York, grew slowly. It never reached great numbers because the Bergen Dutch could not pay the prices set by rich Virginia tobacco planters. East Jersey's labor needs would be met by white indentured servants—single men and women who contracted to work for four

to five years in exchange for their passage to the New World. Hundreds of Scots, both prospective land purchasers and indentured servants, came to East Jersey in the 1680s.

There is no doubt that life as an indentured servant in East Jersey was severe. It was far worse for those shipped to the Chesapeake tidelands to sweat on the mosquito-infested tobacco plantations of Virginia and Maryland. East Jersey had few places as harsh, although the charcoal makers and iron masters of Sussex were said to be ruthless exploiters of indentured men. The typical male servant in East Jersey worked on a Middlesex or Bergen estate, ploughing or threshing wheat alongside his master, while the female servant churned cream or wove flax alongside the mistress of the house.

A Scot boasted that servants worked less than in Britain but enjoyed hearty rations of beef and pudding and "good beer and cyder for drink."¹ A Welsh yeoman claimed that in the country around Burlington "Men or Women that have a Trade, or are Labourers, can, if industrious, get near three times the Wages they commonly earn in England."² While masters had great authority to discipline, even whip, their servants, they were reluctant to mistreat a valued source of labor. If anything, they had to induce them to stay. By 1700, the typical service had slipped to four years, sometimes three. When the term was over, the servant was entitled to "freedom dues," usually tools and clothes, often money, occasionally land. For young men, tools and land meant great opportunity.

Generally, female servants were forbidden to marry before their indentures were up. Servant marriages complicated the master/servant relationship, and pregnancy reduced the amount of work which might be obtained from a female servant. Male servants did not marry because they could not support independent households. (The great majority of married couples in Western Europe and in colonial America lived not with their parents, but as they do today, in separate, "nuclear" families consisting of husband, wife, and unmarried children.) Even though New Jersey seemed to offer large tracts of land for settlement and the settlement pattern was familial, indentured servants married later than we might think. For indentured servants, the basic requirements of freedom and land delayed the age of marriage to around twenty-six for men and twenty-three or twenty-four for women—close to the European norm.

But once free, marriage was probably more a matter of calculation than of romance. Women were at a premium on this frontier, particularly in female-scarce Hunterdon and Cape May counties. They could have their choice of eligible suitors, even wealthy land owners. In turn, men probably valued women more as economic producers than as sexual partners. Wives sometimes labored in the fields alongside their husbands, but usually herded animals and tended gardens. They made cheese, fermented beer and "cyder," mixed soap from hearth ashes, boiled animal fat for candles, and spun flaxen thread. They had some control over what they produced, bartering or selling surplus eggs, cheese, and vegetables, and keeping part of what they earned.

A Diverse Society

The Census Bureau's estimates of colonial population figures put New Jersey's at around one thousand in 1670. In twenty years it had increased to eight thousand, a figure which suggests considerable in-migration. New Jersey's healthy climate and the availability of land made it an attractive spot for settled families. From fourteen thousand in 1700, the number of inhabitants doubled to over thirty thousand by 1726, and, by 1745, nearly doubled again. Immigrants poured into the colony from New York and Philadelphia, giving New Jersey a polyglot or multilingual character, typical of the middle colonies. Hollanders continued to trek into Bergen County, dotting the valley of the Hackensack with Dutch Reformed congregations. The small Swedish population in Salem County was soon joined by a great influx of Irish Quakers and Ulster Scots, who made up almost one quarter of Salem's population by the time of the American Revolution. Large numbers of peasants from the German Palatinate drifted into Hunterdon and Sussex. As a result, by 1776 the English province of New Jersey was probably only half English in ethnic origin. Counties like Hunterdon, Middlesex, and Salem were probably only about 40 percent English. Bergen and Somerset must have seemed like extensions of the Netherlands; it has been estimated that they were 53 and 67 percent Dutch at the time of the Revolution.

As great as this immigrant flow was, the real surge in New Jersey's numbers came from what demographers, those who

study population, call "natural increase": the excess of births over deaths. William Penn was astonished by the Swedish families he had seen while traveling through Burlington County. They had "fine children, and almost every house full; rare to find one of them without three or four boys, and as many girls; some six, seven, and eight sons."³ Penn may have exaggerated, but New Jersey women *were* having more children than their counterparts in Europe. Some demographers have estimated that the number of births may have been around fifty per thousand people, an extraordinarily high rate. Still this remains a guess because the provincial government did not take a reliable population census until the 1770s.

Some historians have tried to work around this problem with "family reconstitution" studies, the painstaking examination of marriages and births in communities, particularly religious congregations, that managed to keep exact records of such events. The result is not a full census, but rather a "slice" of a population. Robert Wells has reconstructed one such slice from the records of Quaker families living in Rahway and Plainfield. It indicates that among marriages that occurred between 1730 and 1739, the average age of marriage was 20.5 years for women and 24.0 for men. (Only one third of the women married under age 20, by the way, and just 2.4 percent of the men.) Because females married younger, these Quaker couples had an average of six or seven children in comparison to the four or five children that couples in England and France were having during this time period.

But some demographers are not convinced that increased fertility by itself could explain the great increase in the colonial population. They emphasize an equally important factor, the number of newborn who survived. Demographer J. Potter has claimed that New Jersey's infant mortality rate (the number of deaths among children under five years of age) in 1771 was about forty per thousand children, far lower than in England. Abundant land and favorable climate were having a dramatic impact on New Jersey society. The swarms of children that Penn glimpsed in Swedesboro were becoming a reality throughout the colony.

More than anything else, children were an economic asset on farms where work meant survival. Families lived in large, barnlike structures that faced south to get the winter sun. Adults

worked, cooked, and slept in the single, open room around the hearth, while children and servants slept in alcoves or attics. In this crowded space, the newborn were delivered, usually by a midwife, while adults and children milled around. The sight of women at the hearthstone and the sound of a spinning wheel were the child's earliest impressions. But childhood was only a short span before little ones became small adults in a world of work. At age six or seven, boys were sent to follow their father in the fields and girls were set to household chores alongside their mother. A boy learned to mimic his father's rhythm with a scythe and the hunch of his shoulders. If he was the second, third, or younger child, he fell in step behind brothers and sisters who showed him the ropes. Education was largely unorganized except for the few catechism schools set up by churches, like the Essex Puritans or the Bergen Dutch Reformed, that valued exact doctrine. Most children learned from their mothers at hearthside, with the Bible as text. From Scripture, they heard of their tiny existence in the Lord's universe and that they would live only so long as He permitted.

Discipline, obedience, and hard work were the watchwords of family life. While parents were affectionate, they believed that they showed true love for their children by making them obedient, disciplined, and ready to receive God's word. The father directed the activities of each family member. A good wife meekly accepted her husband's authority, served him faithfully and industriously, and taught his children to fear the Lord. Many children did not survive the diseases that were childhood's constant companions. Parents mourned, but only briefly. Extended mourning was regarded as unseemly and a questioning of God's will. God had taken the little one for His own mysterious reasons.

In the forest wilderness, family discipline as much as church or the government kept people steadily at work, the countryside developing and society stable. Without roads, markets or even currency, families labored mostly for subsistence; they produced to survive, not sell. Ministers ordered members to be in church on the Lord's Day, but it was family Bible reading that kept religion sturdy. The family was also the center of government and what passed for law and order. Fathers were expected to take a birch branch to unruly children and servants. Families, not asylums or other institutions, looked after those who could

not care for themselves. Town officials, called overseers of the poor, took care of orphans by indenturing them to work for respectable families. The insane and senile were expected to live in households that paid them no special heed. At a time when people were valued more for domestic work than for clear thought, the crazed could very well live out their lives doing rough chores around the house. By and large, the family was a self-sufficient little community in a self-sufficient world.

A New Confidence

Between the 1730s and the American Revolution, the royal colony of New Jersey and the rest of the North Atlantic world were transformed. A tangle of factors profoundly altered the everyday lives of common people and the way they thought.

First, a general improvement in agricultural production turned New Jersey farms, like those of Pennsylvania and New York, into the breadbasket of the thirteen colonies. The production of wheat, corn, oats, and rye rose substantially by midcentury. The increase in population made farm labor more plentiful. Flatboats, rafts, Durham boats, and inland roads took New Jersey's agricultural products to other colonies. The growth of seaports and market towns encouraged farmers to increase their yields and to raise surpluses. Greater production improved the diet and lessened the toll of disease. Mortality rates dropped.

Second, urban contacts brought to farmers' doorsteps the bustling life of London, Philadelphia, and New York, though New Jersey had no large city of its own. Local merchants tried to establish Perth Amboy as a busy port, but as early as the 1690s, New York merchants had captured the freight business of East Jersey. By 1700, Philadelphia's merchants were the major outlets for West Jersey's wheat, beef, mutton, and timber. Because produce had to be carted around the falls of the Delaware River, Trenton became an inland mart. But the flour ground at Trenton's water mills was bound for the Quaker city down the river.

Elizabeth, Perth Amboy, and New Brunswick remained little more than villages, where buyers of cattle, hides, timber, and barrel staves arranged transport to New York and Philadelphia and reshipment to the tobacco colonies on the Chesapeake and the sugar plantations of the West Indies. In turn, the great ports

supplied the farms of Morris, Essex, Middlesex, Burlington, and Salem counties with salt, iron nails and clasps, bolts of cloth, and pewter mugs. By the 1740s and 1750s, pack wagons lumbering up the rutted roads of Middlesex and Morris counties were beginning to carry porcelains, crystal, silks, and other city fineries to prosperous New Jersey farmers who wanted to mimic the lifestyles of a developing colonial elite.

General prosperity and well-being made many New Jerseyans welcome new attitudes toward human life and the future, though the belief in the insignificance of man and the omnipotence of God was still prevalent in the eighteenth century. The religious revivals that swept the New Jersey countryside in the 1730s made this belief a centerpiece.

But much had happened since the 1630s. Then, most people were fatalistic about life and death; they assumed that human beings existed according to God's unknowable plan. Women died in childbirth and infants were struck down by disease because that was God's will. Churches could ask God's mercy, not question His purpose. But the world had changed a great deal over the last century. Religious orthodoxy now had to compete with the principles of the Enlightenment. Englishmen had executed one king—God's anointed—and thrown out another. Scientists like Sir Isaac Newton had studied the heavens and worked out the mathematical principles on which the universe ran. Americans familiar with the work of Newton and his contemporaries concluded that nature was governed by rational laws created by a God of infinite wisdom. He expected mankind to grasp these laws through study and experimentation and then to invent and progress. Benjamin Franklin, the Philadelphia printer whose *Poor Richard's Almanac* was well known by New Jersey farmers, was the best example of this matter-of-fact belief. Franklin regarded nothing as undoable. He experimented with lightning rods and newfangled stoves, and he expected his countrymen to strive tirelessly to master their own destinies. And everywhere around them—in their better lives, in their children who grew to strong adulthood, and in the countryside dotted with tidy farms—New Jerseyans could see that this was possible.

Love and Individualism

With this Enlightenment came new attitudes toward love and family life, some of them imported from overseas and some homegrown. In earlier times, as we have seen, women and children were as much considered economic assets as objects of love and affection. By the 1730s and 1740s, this attitude was also changing, although historians are not certain how. Some argue that a new tenderness towards wives and children grew naturally out of the improvement of life in the countryside. Others believe that such thinking may have emerged from the religious piety of the merchant classes of the cities of England and America.

Quakers, for example, believed that anyone could have the "Inner Light"; it would show in a sweet disposition and soft words. Their households seemed filled with gentle love for family members as individuals, which historians have even tried to measure. One examined Quaker and non-Quaker households of roughly similar income in Burlington County, and found that Quaker households contained more separate bedrooms and more beds per room. Quakers apparently insisted upon a degree of personal privacy and respect for individuals that was unusual in the 1720s. Over the next two generations the general populace began to find these qualities increasingly attractive.

The birth rate was affected by improved health, by growing confidence about the survival of children and increased emotional attachment to those that did survive, and by a new sense that human beings could control their lives. That demographic slice examined earlier among Rahway and Plainfield Quakers revealed that married Quaker women born before 1730 had 6.7 children, those born between 1731 and 1755 had 5.7, and those born between 1756 and 1785 had 5. Their fertility dropped 25 percent during the century.

Perhaps these women were having fewer children because they were marrying later, but the increase in marital age was too slight to explain such a large drop in fertility. Early death could shorten childbearing years, but death rates were going down throughout this period. With these explanations ruled out, it seems apparent that these women were limiting their pregnancies. The American women born between 1731 and 1755 were perhaps the first who tried to limit their family size. They did

so apparently with traditional measures: extended breast-feeding (which suppressed menstruation) and avoidance of intercourse at times during their monthly cycles.

But this still does not explain *why* women began to limit their pregnancies. Perhaps many sensed that the traditional reasons for having large numbers of children had become obsolete. By the mid-1700s, if not earlier, many parents could be certain that most of their sons would survive them. They no longer needed housefuls of children to guarantee an heir or a supply of farm labor. They also may have sensed that the diminishing supply of land made children more a liability than an asset. The more densely settled areas of the middle colonies had begun to resemble crowded Europe. Historian Peter Wacker has calculated that Hunterdon County had just three inhabitants per square mile in 1738 but thirty-seven to the square mile in 1784. In Middlesex, the figure was thirteen in 1738 and thirty-four in 1784. Essex County had a population density of just thirteen inhabitants per square mile in 1738, but by 1784 the figure had reached fifty-six. This was not overcrowding by modern standards. But figuring 6.4 members to a household, it is evident that by 1784 the average household in Middlesex could occupy just 121 acres, in Hunterdon 111, and in Essex only 73.⁴ Already, the Essex countryside had passed a crucial threshold. The typical farmer no longer had enough land to pass on to more than one son, and was approaching the point where he would not have enough to support the family he had.

These conditions may have led the common people to challenge the rule of the more privileged. As early as the 1730s, economic hard times combined with population growth narrowed the opportunities for many families. Perhaps in response, some bitter farmers were attracted by religious attacks on their more successful and privileged neighbors. Spellbinding preachers led by Presbyterian ministers William Tennent and his remarkable son Gilbert crisscrossed Bergen, Essex, and Hunterdon counties beginning in the 1730s. Their hellfire sermons caused wayward Protestants to shiver for their souls and repent their sins. The Tennents also preached that the Lord's salvation would reach anyone who believed.

Whole communities proclaimed what believers said was God's miraculous work, but this first revivalism, known as the "Great Awakening," left churches in turmoil. Those newly saved at-

tacked stodgy ministers who would not thunder fiery sermons and walked out of churches that would not accept their conversion experiences as genuine. Within a decade, a countryside of neat, orderly denominations had become a chaos of jealous, competing sects. Religion as a controlling force had nearly disappeared in Sussex County, a minister complained in 1771: "The inhabitants are much divided in their sentiments about religion, there being at least a dozen denominations among them . . . [which] disables almost every sect from supporting the Gospel."⁵

Religious revivals were not the only occasions of strife in New Jersey. The problems with land patents and titles, a vexing issue since the colony's founding, resurfaced in the late 1740s. Thousands of farmers rebelled when their land titles were challenged as worthless. Some squatted on the land and defied efforts by sheriffs and militia units to evict them. When several were arrested, their friends stormed the jails in Somerset, Newark, and Perth Amboy and freed them. The many served notice to the privileged few that assaults on the legality of land titles would be resisted.

Social Class on the Eve of the Revolution

By the time of the American Revolution, New Jersey's 130,000 inhabitants had developed distinct social layers: a wealthy landed and merchant class, a broad stratum of middling farmers and artisans, and an emerging layer of poor, landless folk. Historian Jackson Turner Main, sifting through tax-assessment records of the 1770s, concluded that the province had developed an upper class of merchants, commercial farmers, and lawyers. Those with wealth of two thousand pounds or more amounted to 14 percent of the population. But at the very pinnacle stood wealthy landowners and merchants connected with the East Jersey proprietors, like the Lyells, who owned thousands of acres in central New Jersey, or like William Alexander, or "Lord Stirling" as he preferred to be called, whose family controlled a huge, baronial estate at Basking Ridge. Many of these grandees also owned elegant townhouses in Perth Amboy; there they dominated the governor's council, which alternated between Perth Amboy and Burlington. They sought marriages for their daughters and placement for their

sons with the leading merchant families of New York and Philadelphia. In West Jersey, particularly in Burlington, Salem and Gloucester counties, property was accumulated in large commercial estates of five hundred acres or more. Ten percent of the taxpayers owned half the land.

In 1748, New Jersey Governor Jonathan Belcher called the province "the best country I have seen for people who have to live by the sweat of their brows."⁶ The governor did not exaggerate, as the middle-class owners of property worth between two hundred and two thousand pounds made up two-thirds of New Jersey society. Bergen, Morris, Essex, and Monmouth counties were centers of small, yeoman farmers. Franklin Township in Bergen, for instance, contained no farmers with more than 400 acres of land, and only one person in ten was landless. Alongside these middling farmers were skilled artisans, who supplied many of the articles needed by this agricultural society. Historian Thomas Archdeacon, who worked with a sample of probated wills, found that wheelwrights left an average of £145 in property, weavers £153, cordwainers (shoemakers) £160, carpenters £236, and blacksmiths £256. Throughout the colonies, tailors were among the poorest artisans, yet New Jersey tailors left estates valued at £214, a fairly tidy amount.

These middling farmers and artisans were bound together by a dense network of rural institutions, particularly in older counties like Bergen, Essex, and Burlington. Church and ethnic ties made for close communities among the Dutch Reformed, Swedish and Finnish Lutherans, and Scots-Irish Quakers. Because they were cash poor (most of the valuable hard currency, called "specie," was used to pay for English imports), they bartered and exchanged services of all kinds. Farmers offered bushels of wheat to local merchants in exchange for iron for ploughs, or traded cordwood for bolts of damask cloth. Groups of neighbors usually supported local gristmills, cobblers, ministers, or even local schoolmasters, who lived on whatever farmers offered. Most farmers labored not for great fortunes, but to gain what they called a "competence," enough land to provide for each son plus a dowry for each daughter. They were inclined to charge only what they thought their produce was worth in a "just" market, not what they could squeeze from desperate neighbors. For many, this reluctance to gain fortunes

extended to a refusal to hire additional hands or to buy slaves, even when they could afford them. For many farmers, land was less a means to make money than a way to protect one's old age and perpetuate the line.

At the bottom of New Jersey society was a large and perhaps growing number of unfortunates. Their number was larger than has been conceded by those historians who have claimed that poverty was virtually unknown. The province contained nearly ten thousand black slaves and a number of free blacks denied the right to hold property. It is anyone's guess how many indentured servants labored as charcoal makers, loggers, and bog-iron miners in the Pine Barrens and in Sussex County. But the great majority of the poor lived in New Jersey's prosperous central agricultural belt. In Trenton Township 10 percent of the largest landowners owned 69 percent of the improved land, but 54 percent of the residents owned none. In Elizabethtown, the landless amounted to one-quarter of the population. So much of southwestern New Jersey, particularly Burlington and Gloucester counties, was controlled by large estates that in some townships half the adult male population owned no land.

Examining probated wills, one historian has concluded that between one-fifth and one-fourth of the province population owned scant amounts of property. When indentured servants are included, the figure is probably one-third. "We have no such things as orders, rank, or nobility," boasted one Bergen County baron.⁷ But the wills show the great distance that had come to separate the poor from their wealthy neighbors. The lowest 10 percent contained just two-thirds of one percent of recorded wealth, while the highest percent contained nearly one-half.

By the time of the American Revolution, New Jersey society had developed the conditions that would lead to an era of deep social change. In the settled agricultural counties, many inhabitants, particularly young men, owned little farmland and had few prospects of ever becoming independent yeomen like their fathers. An increasing number had no choice but to hire themselves out to other farmers, find seasonal work cutting timber, or learn the weaver's or shoemaker's trade.

Many families were still satisfied with a tidy "competence," but some were drawn to markets in New Brunswick or Trenton, where merchants offered specie for flour, pork, firewood, or linen cloth. The colony's most prominent families were already

connected with the merchant elite of New York and Philadelphia. They itched to tap the productive potential of the countryside, the cheap farm labor so close to expanding city markets. Some promoters had even bolder dreams. While serving with the Continental Army in New Jersey, a young aide to General George Washington became intrigued by the commercial possibilities of harnessing the water power at the falls of the Passaic River. Alexander Hamilton would soon approach some merchants eager to develop a manufacturing town, something entirely new in North America.

CHAPTER TWO

Preindustrial Society Unravels, 1780s to 1870s

In 1791, Alexander Hamilton organized merchants in New York and New Jersey into the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures to build a great dam at the Passaic River Falls. The diverted stream would turn waterwheels and drive looms that would weave cotton cloth. At “Paterson” they planned an entire manufacturing city, complete with factories, workers’ cottages, and even dormitories for single men and girls, who would flock from nearby farms to earn wages tending the power looms. These bold plans for an industrial society depended on the little changes occurring in a thousand country households: farmers were tiring of chopping firewood for the winter, daughters now

needed "finishing" to catch a beau, county tax bills were higher than anyone could remember, and men were getting used to the jingle of hard coins in their pockets. In the years after the American Revolution, New Jersey society was transformed by great visions and the search for humble comforts.

Pressures on the Countryside

The New Jersey countryside was becoming a place where farmers needed extra cash to continue their traditional way of life and pass it on to their children. The typical farmer felt the squeeze from every direction. As the country filled up, land prices rose and so did taxes. Farmers trying to haul crops to market cursed at the rutted ditches that passed for roads. In the old days, roads were repaired, if at all, by farmers who "volunteered" on a rotating basis. But townships now collected taxes to hire paid road contractors, and some entrepreneurs even built "plank" roads made of logs and charged a toll. Farmers muttered about the cost, but they had to pay, one way or another, to move their crops. Wealthy neighbors founded county agricultural societies that urged farmers to rotate crops, buy newfangled fertilizers, and invest in exotic breeds of cattle or "milch" cows for dairying. The advice was sound, but all these improvements meant added expenses.

The farmer's wife and children wanted the same comforts that they saw in the homes of prosperous neighbors. These improvements both made the family's life more comfortable and advanced the farmer's own social status. In the early 1700s, his grandparents may have lived in a rude, drafty one-room hovel; his grandmother tossed logs on the hearth fire for heat and for cooking, spun flaxen thread, and made soap from hearth ashes. His grandfather worked from sunup to sunset in the fields. Staying warm and well fed were the primary interests. But *he* would provide his family with more gracious surroundings. Probably he hired a mason to turn the rear scullery into a kitchen and build a sitting room and parlor. Then he added dormer windows to the attic and made separate bedrooms for each child. With coalburning stoves, rugs, curtains, wallpaper, and pictures, these rooms became cozy, private places. But such domestic improvements came at a price and ended the farm family's self-sufficiency.

As expectations rose, the wealthier farmers spared no expense to hire experts to provide the services which they felt were beneath the dignity of the family to perform. Like parents in Philadelphia or New York, they sent their daughters to finishing schools and packed their sons off to expensive academies, where a fancy Latin curriculum might turn them into “gentlemen.” By the middle third of the nineteenth century, rural folk were demanding public schools to give children sound teaching. Schools soon became the townships’ heaviest tax burden, and before long, some townships added more to it by hiring professional teachers trained at the new Trenton Normal School. Childbirth itself was becoming too delicate an occasion to be handled by midwives. The most fashionable women had their babies delivered by physicians and, in the cities, at “lying-in” hospitals.

The approach to society’s unfortunates began to change. By the mid-nineteenth century, the pressures of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization had contributed to an increase in the numbers of orphans, the poor, and the deranged. The traditional ways of dealing with these groups—within the family or through church charity—were no longer adequate. Responsibility shifted to government. In earlier times, orphans at best received individual charity and more often were considered a source of cheap labor in the home. By midcentury many counties had constructed orphanages to keep them in a proper environment. Felons that used to be whipped, branded, or hanged were now sentenced to the new state penitentiary at Trenton, where they could be rehabilitated by trained professionals. Even the demented were sent off for care by professional “alienists.” Many women were sent to the new Trenton State Asylum because they were simply too peculiar or troublesome to keep in homes devoted to bringing up children. Expressed another way, a wave of “institutionalization” was sweeping the state, as the public agreed that children, the poor, the orphaned, and the insane should be placed in schools or asylums where they could receive special, if not loving care. But many of these were also pushed out of households because of changing attitudes about what the home was for. In the countryside wealthier farmers led this trend, but their demand for expensive services put everyone in a cash squeeze.

Gradually the struggle for cash altered the look and tone of

rural districts. As early as the 1820s, every prosperous farming community had its water-powered gristmills, tanneries, blacksmith shops, and similar establishments that depended on the raising of crops and animals. They gave work to extra hands, particularly younger sons who had little chance to inherit land and otherwise might head for the Ohio country. As the cash squeeze tightened, many took part-time work in timber cutting, charcoal burning, and road repair. At the Barnegat shore, men eked out a living shipping salt and cutting firewood for Manhattan steamboats. At Batsto, the Howell furnace in Monmouth, or the Hanover furnace in Gloucester, hundreds of men mined bog-iron and smelted it with charcoal from the piney woods. In Glassboro, Gloucester County, a complex of glass factories relied on the silica and charcoal provided by nearby cheap farm



Oxford Iron Furnace, Hunterdon County. Reportedly built in 1743 and using charcoal as fuel, this smelter was an example of the small operation that survived in rural areas—in this case, until 1882. HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY ARCHIVES, COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

labor. Years passed, and part-time work expanded to full-time labor as rural people struggled for cash to hang on to the land.

The Urban Web

We can see this process going on in Essex County, where part-time work like shoemaking was gradually transformed into an intensive operation. For centuries, cordwainers had made shoes by hand in small batches for known customers among their neighbors, and often for barter. By the 1790s, Newark leather merchants had figured they could profit as wholesalers by ordering the manufacture of large numbers of ready-made shoes for an estimated future demand in a growing market like New York. What they lacked was a labor supply, but they found that among hundreds of nearby farmers who needed extra cash.

This was the usual origin of the “cottage” or “outside” system of manufacturing. Merchants supplied leather at the beginning of winter, and the farmers finished them by spring, when they received cash payment. The whole family pitched in under the father’s direction. Fathers cut the leather for soles and uppers, wives did the stitching, and even children could help with the finishing. Soon they came to specialize in individual tasks, developing what economists call “division of labor.” By the 1820s, the Newark countryside had become a shoe-production center without a factory in sight. Farmers had been lured into a powerful, if invisible, market network. If they spent long winter evenings stitching leather by a flickering oil lamp, it was because a total stranger, some New York or Philadelphia merchant, had calculated the price that ready-made shoes would command in the spring.

During the next generation, the countryside’s need for cash increased and the market network tightened. By the 1820s, 555 miles of toll roads had been built across central and northern New Jersey. The new Erie Canal brought the products of the rich grain regions of western New York State and Ohio within the reach of New Jerseyans, while the Delaware and Raritan Canal permitted shipment of anthracite coal from the Lehigh Valley. Overnight, cheaper, better grades of wheat and corn from the Great Lakes region threatened the income of New Jersey farmers, while the supply of Lehigh anthracite made it more difficult for farmers to make money cutting firewood or

burning pine for charcoal. To keep up with Midwestern competition, New Jersey farmers bought labor-saving but expensive equipment like iron moldboards to replace wooden moldboards on plows, and scythes, which were easier to use than sickles. In 1839, one commentator estimated that the typical farm could be worked with only half the labor that was needed forty years before.

But greater efficiency left a growing number of idle and impoverished hands. Some farmers realized that they had to specialize in products that the Midwest could not produce. Many began raising vegetables for nearby city markets, while others became connected to urban "milksheds." They contracted to provide milk for the rapid suburban trains that made pickups each morning. Such enterprise took money that few farmers possessed. In the 1850s, the *New Jersey Farmer* noted an increase in farm tenancy in the Camden area: many farmers could no longer afford to own land, only rent it.

The destruction of their livelihoods by distant merchants infuriated many New Jersey farmers, who lashed out at the canal and railroad companies which showered money on their towns and seemed to grab all the valuable land. In the 1820s and 1830s, many Methodist and Baptist churches in depressed farming towns were swept by a Second Great Awakening. Mule-riding preachers warned about eternal hellfire, baptized thousands in nearby creeks, and harvested a generation of reborn Christians. They preached against greed and the decadent, haughty rich. They founded temperance societies whose members pledged to give up drink, and organized Bible societies to spread Old Testament sternness and condemn fancy behavior, like dancing, playing cards, or horseracing. They took up anti-Masonry, an attack against members of Masonic lodges, which was really rage at the wealthy who could afford to join such exclusive clubs. Inevitably, these resentments against the rural rich and distant companies spilled over into politics, with the formation of the Anti-Masonic Party in the 1820s and the Whig Party in the 1830s. Churches and Bible and temperance societies turned to politics as the way to restore tradition to country life.

Market Towns Become Manufacturing Cities

More and more, the countryside saw the city as the enemy, a foreign wicked place that somehow lured thousands of country folk. In 1820 only Trenton was important enough to be counted as an urban place, and it claimed just 3,942 inhabitants. Twenty years later, Trenton was joined by Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Camden, and Elizabeth, which had a combined population of 39,548, or nearly 11 percent of the state. By 1860, these six cities had grown to 163,906, one-quarter of New Jersey residents. That year, when Newark became the tenth largest city in the United States, one out of every ten New Jerseyans resided there.

Cities mushroomed because their wharves and factories provided jobs for thousands of farm boys and thousands more European immigrants. The cities grew because they were key transport points connected by canals and railroads with the two largest markets on the continent, New York and Philadelphia. With no way to bridge the Hudson River, the Pennsylvania, the Lehigh, and other railroads turned Jersey City into a huge freight yard for shipments of goods awaiting barges across the harbor. In the 1850s, Newark's wharves were piled with Pennsylvania iron and coal, New Jersey flour, and ship timber sent down the Morris Canal to be hauled across the bay.

But these cities also became manufacturing centers. In Newark, shoe wholesalers gradually brought Essex cottage workers into newfangled factories, where foremen could scold stitchers to speed up the work. Besides hides and shoes, Newark businessmen soon branched into the making of leather trunks, clothing, jewelry, cutting tools, and wagons. By 1830, Paterson had seventeen cotton mills, employing five thousand men and women. Since water-driven looms required constant repairs, machine shops opened to supply iron fittings. Several began fabricating steam engines, and the more ambitious, like the Rogers Works, turned to locomotives. Within a generation, small crossroads towns had become centers of commerce and industry.

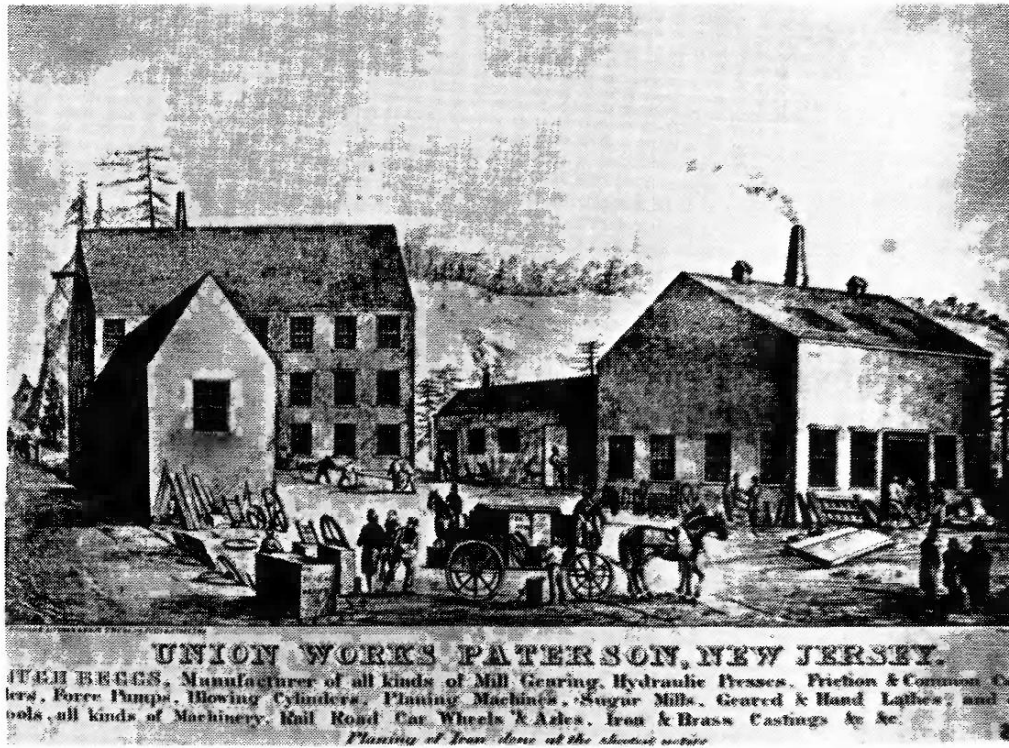
As places where merchants could make fortunes while thousands of newcomers were arriving penniless, cities quickly developed great social extremes. At the top of a steep economic pyramid stood a handful of families with great fortunes. His-

torians sifting through old tax records have been able to estimate the "wealth shares" of residents in New York, Philadelphia, and even Poughkeepsie. They found enormous inequality, instances where the richest 2 or 5 percent of families owned 70 to 80 percent of assessed wealth, and the poorest third owned barely 1 percent.

The results would probably be the same for Paterson, Trenton, Newark, or Jersey City. A glance at the federal census for Newark in 1850 or 1860, for instance, reveals that families like the Quimbys, Penningtons, Wards, and Goodyears reported fortunes of hundreds of thousands of dollars, while the mass of laborers had little more than the clothes on their backs. In Paterson, industrial leaders like Morgan Colt, governor of the Society for Useful Manufactures, and the Danforths, Smiths, Pralls, and Raffertys, who owned the cotton mills and locomotive works, dominated the city around them. Newark's wealthy bankers, lawyers and businessmen controlled the city's major industries and its cultural life. The founders of the Howard Savings Institute also sponsored the New Jersey Historical Society, the Newark Female Charitable Society, the Newark Library Association, and a long list of other institutions.

This wealthy elite was bound to its communities by many strands. The typical manufacturer lived near the city center, close to his mill or shop. He attended his business in a small office where a bookkeeper kept ledgers, a few clerks scrawled with quill pens, and an office boy filled inkwells and ran messages. In his factory he could mingle with the workers, many of whom he knew by first name, because manufacturing was still on a small scale. In the late 1850s, the biggest Paterson cotton mill employed only 180 men and women. Newark's machine shops contained twenty-five to forty men; coach makers averaged twenty-three, and leather firms only nineteen. Manufacturers liked to believe that they were mere artisans who had prospered through hard work and sober habits, which any man could do. They agreed with a Newark paper's boast in 1853 that "The city in which we live was built by industrious mechanics."¹

Nevertheless, their wealth did set them apart. On fashionable streets like Newark's Park Place, businessmen built brownstone mansions after the latest European style. The houses contained smoking rooms for themselves and parlors for their wives. These



Union Works, Paterson, c. 1865. Typical of Paterson's machine shops and foundries, the Union Works turned out all kinds of gears and pumps for the city's growing industries. Note the small scale of operations and the large number of men who worked outside. COURTESY PATERSON MUSEUM.

were private places run by servants who were supervised by the lady of the house. It was the only “work” a woman of privilege was supposed to do. Increasingly, the world of work was separated from the home. The home was a safe haven where women and children were protected from the corruptions of the world of work. The struggling farmer of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries needed his child's labor for family survival; his child had only a brief period without responsibilities. Even prosperous folk viewed children as small adults. Nineteenth-century Americans, at least those who could afford to do so, sentimentalized childhood. What better sign of a nineteenth-century businessman's affluence than extending his offspring's childhood, separating the child from the adult world, and prescribing a world of play and not work?

While the children of artisans were apprenticed at an early age, the wealthy kept their loved ones in an idle period of

“growing up,” in which they were expected to play with toys, mind their manners, and learn the social graces. Eventually they would enter the adult world, but not before they attended the best boys’ academies and girls’ finishing schools. Some of the wealthiest boys would even be kept for several years at college. Understandably, the death of a child struck a terrible blow. Parents took daguerreotype pictures of the child in his coffin, preserved a lock of hair, and rarely got over their loss.

Not surprisingly, some businessmen looked for ways to protect precious family members from the grime and disorder of the city. As early as the 1840s and 1850s, they began to take advantage of the new coaches and horse-drawn cars to commute to work while their families were lodged in safe, isolated suburban homes, like Clinton Hill and Woodside in Newark or Llewellyn Park in West Orange. The families of merchants began to move far beyond the dangerous industrial environment which they had helped to create. They helped start a strong suburban trend.

Below the rich on the social pyramid were the middle classes, hundreds of shopkeepers and clerks and thousands of skilled artisans. Most clerks and bookkeepers were young men who apprenticed with businessmen to learn enough to start businesses of their own. Like the merchants they worked for, most were native New Jerseyans or British-born, with legible handwriting and a knack for figures. A wide variety of artisans made up the largest element of the middle class.

The industrial city depended on these groups of skilled, proud artisans. Many still labored at home with their own tools. As their own bosses, they decided their work pace. Even if they worked at some boss’s shop, carving coach bodies, polishing jewelry cases, or grinding edge tools, their skills still enabled them to control what was done on the shop floor. Perhaps they took orders from the “old man,” but they, in turn, could tyrannize their crew of young apprentices and “gofers,” who hoped some day to be artisans in their own right. Artisans took pride in the fact that they were not yoked to machines in airless factories or mills like so many women or newer immigrants, such as the Irish.

In their workrooms and neighborhoods, artisans possessed an elaborate pecking order, which depended on their success at keeping their skills and dignity from being eroded by tedious

factory labor. Newark jewelry makers, trunk makers, coach makers, bricklayers, and carpenters were artisan aristocrats. They earned \$1.75 or more a day, enough to support their families, and, just as important, to avoid the shame of needing to send their wives to work. They often worked outdoors. They maintained some control over their work pace and decided their own break times, which they frequently took in nearby saloons. They belonged to artisan societies, which provided both fellowship and reinforcement for the belief that craftsmen, mostly Protestant American-born craftsmen, enjoyed special privileges. They believed they were entitled to a just wage and claimed the right to determine how they would work, because only they, not the bosses, knew the special skills of the trade. Occasionally they struck to reinforce their claims. They scorned the confining factories and cursed the idea that machines operated by women, children, or Irish immigrants could make their skills obsolete.

At the bottom of this urban world lay a mass of unskilled, low-paid workers—perhaps one-half of the city population. Some came from New Jersey farms, but an increasing number were Irish and German immigrants. The Germans were decidedly better off. Many were artisans from Rhineland towns, who brought skills as piano and instrument makers, furniture carvers, brewers, and bakers. By contrast, most of the Irish were unskilled peasants. On Newark's streets and Jersey City's wharves, three-quarters of the unskilled workers were Irish. They were the stevedores, wagon loaders, and day laborers who moved the freight and dug the sewers. Their brute strength earned barely a dollar a day, half what skilled artisans made. Such jobs lasted only a few weeks, so most Irish laborers trudged around the city in constant search of more work. When times were hard, the search might take them across the state to canal and railroad construction sites. With luck, they might make \$250 or \$300 per year; their families needed twice that amount to survive in a New Jersey city.

Immigrant districts were a world apart from the mansions of the rich or even the homes of native-born artisans. On a laborer's wage, families could only afford rooms, not whole apartments, in tenements that soon became crowded slums. Wives had to take in washing or sewing at piece rates or serve as scrubwomen in the homes of the wealthy. To spread the rent,

families had to accept boarders, mostly single male immigrants. Children were expected to scrounge for pennies or coal as soon as they learned the way of the streets. The Irish household was a crowded jumble where people lived, ate, scrubbed, sewed, and slept. Many Irish women remained single and took jobs as live-in servants. Understandably, they considered drudgery for pay, however low, in the homes of the well-to-do much more attractive than the dire poverty of marriage. Exclusive Clinton Hill and Woodside were quiet zones, only disturbed by the clip-clop of carriage horses. The immigrant district was filled with noisy young men tramping to work, saloons and "grog shops," gambling joints, and brothels. The neighborhood resounded with the clang of triphammers, teamsters whistling at horses, and peddlers hawking their wares. In the summertime, the noise must have been deafening and the smell of horse manure and human waste overwhelming.

Civil Wars in the Cities

The gap between native-born New Jerseyans and immigrant newcomers divided cities into tribal camps, and from the 1840s to the 1870s, brawls and riots flared between them. Boundary lines between the camps remained uncertain, and native-born Protestants refused to let the newcomers live in peace. On Sunday, the immigrants' one day off, Germans flocked to lager beer gardens and the Irish found solace in whiskey saloons. But Newark Protestants called this "vice and immorality" and "Sabbath desecration." When they demanded that city constables shut down "haunts of intemperance," fights were inevitable.² But far worse, the economies in these cities depended upon small groups of men who wore proudly their tribal identities—their religion and ethnicity. Since they often worked outdoors and took breaks at nearby saloons, any street event, like a parade or a ceremony, could bring hundreds from nearby workshops and construction sites. When festivities crossed a tribal boundary, the confrontation could get ugly. The event could have been a race to a fireplug between two volunteer fire companies, one native-born and one Irish; the crossing in the line of march between German and native-born militia companies; or a procession by Irish Protestants ("Orangemen"), that

swung too close to a factory that employed Irish Catholics. In the 1850s, cities were places of murderous feuds.

Native-born, upper-class New Jerseyans with property to protect led demands for law and order that was “sure, stable, unthreatened, and permanent.”³ They felt that their streets were being overrun by gangs of lawless young men. Beginning in the 1840s, they created institutions of social control run by stern administrators who imposed rigid, by-the-book regulations. Facing demands for protection, city and state governments professionalized local police and state militias. They transformed lazy night watchmen into full-time, paid cops, put them in uniforms, and ordered them to patrol regular beats. When local police proved unwilling to shut down Irish saloons, as in Jersey City, the state established a police force of Protestant outsiders to do the job.

In addition, native-born Protestants saw the public school as the agent to turn unruly immigrant children into law-abiding citizens. Routine, discipline, and punishment were the watchwords at the new city schools, all of which were administered by Protestants. In the 1840s and 1850s, most cities followed Newark’s lead and built schools that looked like fortresses and kept students in lockstep like the inmates (most of whom were Irish) at Trenton State Prison. The attempt by the Protestant upper classes to make the lower-class Irish into “acceptable” citizens made education a profession and imposed a new bureaucracy on urban life.

The native-born, however, rarely noticed that the newcomers were gradually transforming crowded immigrant quarters into stable ethnic neighborhoods. Protestants despised the Roman Catholic Church, but it was the front line in the war against the saloon. Newark’s first Catholic bishop, James Roosevelt Bayley, tirelessly attacked the Irish attraction to the saloon, “this horrible vice responsible for all the social evils and discomforts under which they labor.”⁴ Every Irish quarter had its heroic priest, like Paterson’s Father William McNulty, who scolded his flock out of the saloons and into the church.

Irish immigrants—particularly Irish servant girls—had little money to spare, but when priests called, they contributed their pennies to build stone churches—physical symbols that Catholics were there to stay. Inside these edifices gathered the mutual-aid societies, Hibernians, and building-and-loan associa-

tions which reinforced the parish community. In Elizabeth, the Young Men's Father Mathew Total Abstinence and Benevolent Society, which recruited Catholics who pledged not to drink, became a fixture among the Irish. As late as 1917, when it met in a clubhouse outfitted with billiard tables, a bowling alley, and an auditorium, it boasted a membership of 540 men and an auxiliary of two hundred women. There were three hundred in the Junior Total Abstinence and Benevolent Society, and there was also an eighty-five-piece drum-and-bugle corps.

As newcomers gradually gained ground, native-born Protestants retreated, but not without a fight. Usually, the Irish achieved a first beachhead in the building trades. Starting out as bricklayers and carpenters, some made modest fortunes as builders. Political influence, which came from squads of workers who could vote, proved crucial in gaining city construction jobs for favored contractors. Irish and German workers who built tenement houses and laid sewer pipe also gathered in their own saloons, formed their own volunteer fire companies, and supported their fellow ethnics in neighborhood politics. It was only a matter of time before these cronies demanded their own fire-engine houses and acquired political patronage in the local ward. In the 1850s, Paterson's Irish Catholics gained control of several volunteer fire companies and managed to elect the city's first Irish Catholic fire chief in 1853. But native Protestants refused to accept that outcome and tried to change the rules of the game. They had the city government create two more Protestant fire companies, tipping the balance back in their favor. But the Irish population was large enough to sweep the Paterson elections in 1854. With that new power, Irish Democrats on the city council turned the fire-company volunteers into a paid city department packed with Irish Democrats.

Paterson had reached its "tipping point," the moment when there were enough Irish and German voters to enable the newcomers to seize political power and divide the spoils of office. For most New Jersey cities, that point came between the 1850s and 1870s. But Protestants rarely gave up power without a bitter last stand or a last-minute maneuver to change the rules. When such gimmicks failed, they were inclined to pack their families off to the suburbs.

The Protestants never really accepted the Germans and Irish as fellow citizens. In the late 1860s, while Paterson's Irish dug

deep into their pockets to create a parish orphanage and St. Joseph's Hospital, the Protestant clergy sniffed about the behavior of "bog-trotters." Germans honeycombed their communities with voluntary associations, reading rooms, building-and-loan societies, turnverein (athletic clubs), and their own parochial schools. They climbed into the hardworking artisan class far more quickly than the Irish. Their devotion to hard work and family values should have satisfied anyone's definition of "solid citizen." But for all their achievements, the Germans still annoyed native-born Protestants. As a Newark Methodist minister complained about a German singing festival in 1891, "what have the Germans done? They walk around the streets, sell beer and gamble as though they owned the whole country and the Constitution. They march through the streets as though nobody had a right but they. We have some rights, too, and they are going to be respected."⁵ The Protestants might complain to the heavens, but the newcomers were in New Jersey to stay.

CHAPTER THREE

The Urban-Industrial Order, 1880s to 1950s

Upper-class, native-born New Jerseyans who had lived through the turmoil between the 1840s and 1870s believed their world would never be the same. They felt like the ancient Romans who tried to hold back the barbarians from the gates.

They had tried to impose order on these tribal invaders and given up much for lost. But by the 1880s, the outline of a new society was emerging. And the bedrock for this remarkably stable society would last until the mid-twentieth century.

The Countryside Modernizes

During the 1880s the cities and suburbs (where most of New Jersey's population lived) began to dominate the state, and even the countryside felt their impact. In tilled acres, agriculture reached an all-time high in 1879. Scores of iron mines in Morris and Sussex counties yielded their greatest output, and thousands of laborers worked rock quarries, timber stands, and salt ponds. But within two decades this production sharply declined. Quarries that blasted out Belgium block pavement closed when cities switched to asphalt for their streets. Iron mines were abandoned and charcoal burning became a memory, as iron smelting shifted to huge, cost-efficient steel mills in the Midwest. Isolated settlements became ghost towns, and brush grew over villages that people once inhabited. The Pine Barrens became truly barren when big-city markets would no longer pay the price for old-fashioned, inefficient production methods. Gradually, thousands of acres of marsh and woodland were given a new role. They were preserved as wetlands and watersheds needed for city reservoirs. They provided fishing and duck-hunting opportunities for businessmen getting away from the office for the weekend, and they made good settings for tales of haunted houses to delight readers of city newspapers.

New Jersey agriculture was greatly transformed by big-city markets. From 3,250 square miles tilled in 1879, cultivation steadily dropped to 1,800 square miles by 1929. Yet the number of agricultural workers remained roughly the same. During those fifty years, farming did not so much decline as grow more intense. Surviving family farms became rural factories with substantial investments in outbuildings and machinery. The production of hogs, cattle, and sheep was largely replaced by the production of poultry and eggs, fruits and vegetables, and milk for nearby city markets. By 1900, Union County farmers were specializing in pumpkins, squash, string beans, and tomatoes. Large dairies sprang up, including one that would emerge as a brand name, Tuscan Farms. Growing flowers for market

was virtually unheard of earlier, but by the 1890s huge greenhouses were built in counties within wagon distance of the cities. Morris County became a center for rose culture, while Bergen and Passaic horticulturists raised pot-grown plants and cut flowers.

There was also “agribusiness,” large-scale farming by corporations. Campbell Soup operated a vegetable farm and canning factory in Moorestown, and the two-thousand-acre Del-Bay Farms in Bridgeton employed seven hundred hands (housed in its one hundred tenant houses) in peak season. This efficiency depended on expensive, modern machinery and cheap, unskilled laborers, many of them migrant workers. Large numbers of blacks and immigrants, including many children and mothers with babies, picked, sorted, and packed New Jersey’s vegetable crop.



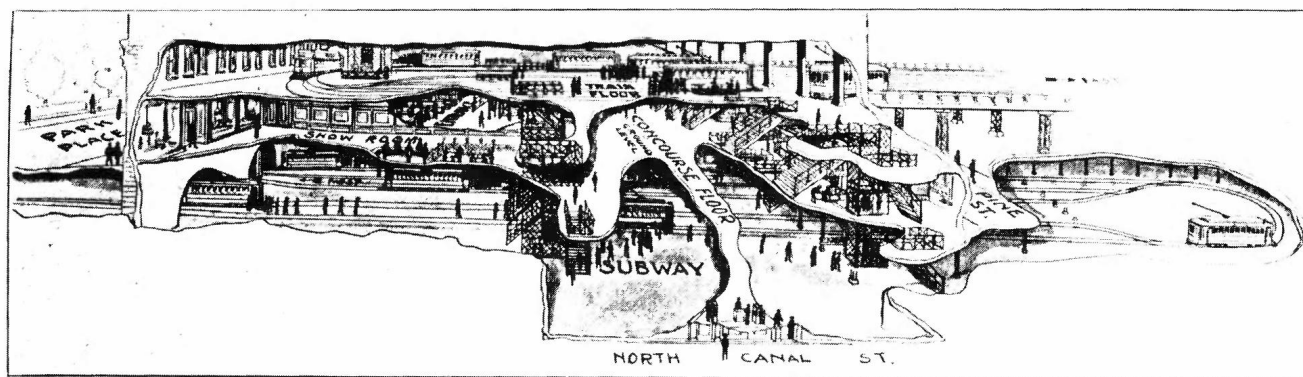
*Picking Beans Near Port Morris, late 1920s. This southern New Jersey corporate operation was a far cry from the family farm. Men, women, and children are shown here harvesting a vegetable crop under a foreman's eye. This view is taken from Irving S. Kull, ed., *New Jersey: A History* (1930).*

Metropolitan Sprawl and Order

By the 1880s, the new metropolis seemed to sprawl across the landscape, but it operated with a new logic and order. Rapid steam railroads and electric cars ("trolleys") enabled thousands of middle- and upper-class New Jerseyans to commute between suburban homes and downtown offices. Because businessmen no longer lived close to work, the centers of town changed into "central business districts," filled with railroad terminals, office buildings, and department stores. Ten- and twelve-story "skyscrapers" were constructed for large enterprises like Prudential Insurance and Public Service and their lawyers, accountants, and bankers. These buildings were immense beehives, where secretaries, clerks, and bookkeepers typed memos, filed reports, and sent out bills. Clerical workers would have been buried under blizzards of paper had not messengers, pneumatic tubes, and mail chutes kept things flowing. Trolley terminals, department stores, building lobbies, and all other downtown features were designed for office crowds in rush hour. Without new controls, such as traffic police, time clocks, and exact railroad schedules to handle the crush, center city would have shut down in gridlock.

Suburbs, exclusive shelters for the middle class and rich, grew at the end of the commuter route. Since rail and trolley fares ranged from fifteen to seventy-five cents a day, commuting acted as an economic filter. Only middle- and upper-class men could afford it (or the two-thousand- to five-thousand-dollar price tag on a house), which explains why outlying neighborhoods and suburban towns like Llewellyn Park in West Orange and Montclair became separate residential districts for the families of white-collar and professional men. In the small city of the 1840s, the well-to-do lived uncomfortably near the poor, and Protestant artisans and Irish-Catholic laborers fought over neighborhood turf. Now the trolley helped spread the metropolis out into particular neighborhoods that were often bounded by rail lines, parkways, and recreation grounds. Urban dwellers were separated from each other by income. Neighborhoods began to be defined by what people did and how much they earned, by economic class rather than by religious or ethnic identity.

Left behind in the suburbs each morning, middle-class women devoted their time to their children. Miles from the disorderly city, the suburban home remained a tranquil place, where



Proposed Street Railway Terminal, Newark, 1912. *Downtowns meant crowds which needed to be handled with scientific ingenuity. This sketch in The Newarker of February 1913 shows a underground station with subway lines on two levels. The station formed the basement, main, and first floor of a building intended to house offices and showrooms for Public Service Gas, Public Service Electric and their railway companies. Patrons would enter on the concourse level and ascend or descend to their waiting subway cars. COURTESY NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY.*

(thanks to the work done by servants and modern conveniences) mothers could lavish care on their children. By the 1880s, sentimental attachment had been affected by new concerns for discipline and perfection. Some upper-class women had attended college. Most were aware of the latest scientific thought on how to nurture their offspring with proper exercise, fresh air, and disciplined learning, all leading to a life of purpose. Mothers understood the importance of adequate training to prepare young men to enter downtown business and the professions. At the same time, fathers busied themselves at the office, so that their success in the company would translate into opportunity for the sons.

Parents consequently reached an understanding on family planning, although they would have blushed to speak of it. They would have sex on fewer occasions, produce fewer children, and focus their attention on providing advantages that would lead toward a career. It seems certain that such decisions were taken by a broad stratum of New Jersey families in the middle and upper classes. The most sensitive index to such trends, the fertility ratio—showed a sharp decline in the number of births. The ratio, which had hovered a little above 600 per thousand in the 1850 and 1860 censuses, slumped to 492 in 1880 and to 424 by 1890. For urban and suburban parents, having fewer children and providing them with greater opportunity had become the fashionable middle-class way.

Because the home neighborhood became so important, women plunged into public life—politics of a sort—even though they could not vote. They founded parent-teacher associations, women's clubs, and neighborhood associations to keep their environs secure and middle-class. The Montclair Citizens Committee of 100, typical suburban guardians, fought saloons along Bloomfield Avenue and the cheap, nickel trolley which it feared workingmen could afford. Its spirit was expressed by a Protestant minister, who warned: "By so much as Montclair is brought nearer to Newark, by so much is Newark brought nearer to Montclair, and the character of the town would be changed."¹ The test of a safe, middle-class community was a godly Sunday, and in the suburbs, middle-class Protestants had the votes to impose it. The Essex County Sabbath School Association demanded the closing of local saloons and the end to Sunday bicycling. In Bergen County, Englewood citizens' groups called

on the police to enforce "Silent Sunday," which prohibited not only saloons and lager beer gardens, but baseball games on the streets.

Upper- and middle-class, native-born New Jerseyans were convinced that only their intervention could save immigrants from their own ignorant, vicious behavior. Confident about the quiet, controlled upbringing of their own children, they were shocked that immigrant fathers sent their boys into saloons to fetch buckets of beer, that nickelodeons showed "evil" pictures on flickering screens, and that corner candy stores "seduced" children with cheap thrills like chewing gum. They believed fervently that outside institutions must limit the influences of uncouth parents and sordid neighborhoods. They developed state boards of children's guardians and societies for the prevention of cruelty to children, with power to take wayward boys and girls from their parents and place them in foster homes and "reformatories." To combat delinquency on city streets, reformers thought children needed wholesome recreation. Reform groups like the Woman's Club of Orange, regarded playgrounds "as one of the most effective ways of assimilating our vast foreign population."² As in the 1840s and 1850s, the ultimate weapon in this war to save immigrant children was the public school. Reformers demanded educational systems to keep children off the streets and drill steady work habits and "citizenship" into their heads. The widely admired Newark schools pioneered what one writer called "the platoon system or work-study-play plan," which regimented children every hour of the day.³ Most cities developed manual-training or industrial-arts schools on the theory that immigrant youths were headed for a life of crime unless they learned the skills required by factory work.

Immigrants and Families

Upper-class reformers were too distant from immigrant neighborhoods to see just how stable they had grown. Once the political tipping point had passed, the Irish and Germans used politics to settle into conservative habits. Gradually, ward politics and the street-contracting business absorbed the crowds of underemployed Irish men. It was true that the tenement districts remained overrun with saloons, but like the barbershop



Kindergarten Maypole, Newark, ca. 1908. Kindergarten combined group play and easy lessons in an effort to turn children into well-behaved students and might have been an immigrant child's first introduction to English. Kindergartens were a relatively recent introduction in New Jersey; the legislation making them an official part of the elementary school curriculum passed in 1900. COURTESY NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Boys Industrial School, Newark, ca. 1915. These boys are bent to their work in rigid rows of desks. The strict regimentation of the public schools was imposed to turn children into law-abiding Americans. COURTESY NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

and the firehouse they served as community institutions. A witness described the scene in Jersey City, where men crowded the bar “standing sometimes ten file deep, many of them not drinking, but congregated only for sociability.”⁴ Jersey City’s Irish were law-abiding, hardworking people. All they wanted was to be left alone to relax after work in their saloons and vote for the Democrats they trusted as neighbors. They did not care about great political issues; many still could not read. A succession of Irish “bosses,” like Robert Davis, James Nugent and Frank Hague, won great power on the votes of these Hudson county immigrants. But they used this power to gain a share of the economic benefits that native-born Protestants had long enjoyed.

This steady progress seemed threatened when waves of southern and eastern European immigrants—Italians, Jews, Poles, Slovaks, and others—flooded the cities after the 1880s. At the crest of the tide in 1910, 25 percent of New Jerseyans were foreign-born, the greatest number since the colonial era. Many commentators feared that the newest “stock” would never fit in. Jews, it was said, were clannish, tubercular, and radical. Italians struck Protestants as swarthy, ignorant peasants who carried knives in their belts and lived by blood feuds. Soon enough, young Jewish and Italian toughs began to crowd police lockups, while it became common knowledge that Italian children had replaced the Irish as the public schools’ number one problem: the kids saw no point to school, caused trouble, and, as far as teachers could tell, would not learn. Truant officers received little cooperation from parents, who needed the added income from their children’s work. Native-born Protestants again feared that they were being overwhelmed, this time by Jews and Italian Catholics.

Stereotyping these newcomers, they rarely saw the background conditions that were shaping them into solid citizens. The discriminatory laws of Czarist Russia had forced Jews to become peddlers and factory workers in cities before frightful “pogroms” (anti-Semitic riots) caused whole families to flee. They came to America with family units relatively intact, and their experience as urban workers and peddlers helped them to find their way on the streets of Newark and Passaic.

Family ties were even more intense among southern Italians, peasants trying to cling to their life on the soil. Many men came

to a Jersey City to work for a season or two, then they returned to Sicily with enough dollars to buy land for their families. For thousands of Italians, the New World was a revolving door they entered and left several times in the struggle to survive in the Old World. Consequently, the Italian quarters of cities like Paterson, Passaic, and Newark were filled with men who jammed boardinghouses and saloons and dreamed of home. But sooner or later, many brought their wives and children to join them in crowded tenements, and traditional family loyalties held this world together.

It soon became clear that these immigrants were causing far less turmoil than the Irish had fifty years before. The enlarged metropolis had more room for the newcomers and could accommodate them readily in separate neighborhoods. Public schools had been established, with many more under construction. The Catholic church was now large enough to handle the additional load of Italians and Slovaks, and to expand the parochial school system too. And Irish bosses, while suspicious of the newcomers, soon showed them how politics could get them into the system. Moreover, the process of assimilation received a sudden boost in 1914, when World War I cut the flow of immigrants from Europe. While immigration resumed with the war's end, it was finally halted when Congress passed restricted immigrant quotas in 1924.

With that, a historic era came to an end. Immigrant quarters no longer received fresh arrivals of Poles, Slovaks, Sicilians, Jews, and others. Eventually, there would be no more "greenhorns" to read immigrant newspapers, crowd the Yiddish or Italian theaters, and maintain social clubs and burial societies. The 1930 federal census reported that New Jersey's foreign-born had declined to 21 percent of the population; the tide was receding, and by 1944 there were fewer foreign-born than there had ever been.

Perhaps more important, immigrant restrictions allowed thousands of families to stabilize. Sooner or later cousins and *paisani* left the boardinghouses and married and established homes of their own. Although families remained closely linked, lending money and exchanging favors of all kinds, *within* each family the parents' authority tightened to control the children and the family budget. Everyone had to pitch in, including adolescents who were expected to sell newspapers, deliver milk bottles, or

work fruit stands to bring in a few nickels. The father dictated who worked where, but the money had to be handed over to the mother, and kids dared not hold out. She opened her purse for a few specific needs, like new shoes or school books. But she held onto everything else, because her husband still dreamed of owning property. Instead of a farm, however, he hoped to buy a two-family house further out of the city, where he could live "like an American" (with his daughter and son-in-law occupying the apartment upstairs). Sons and daughters grumbled, but as long as they lived under the same roof (which they would until they were married), they had to accept this family rule.

Factories and Communities

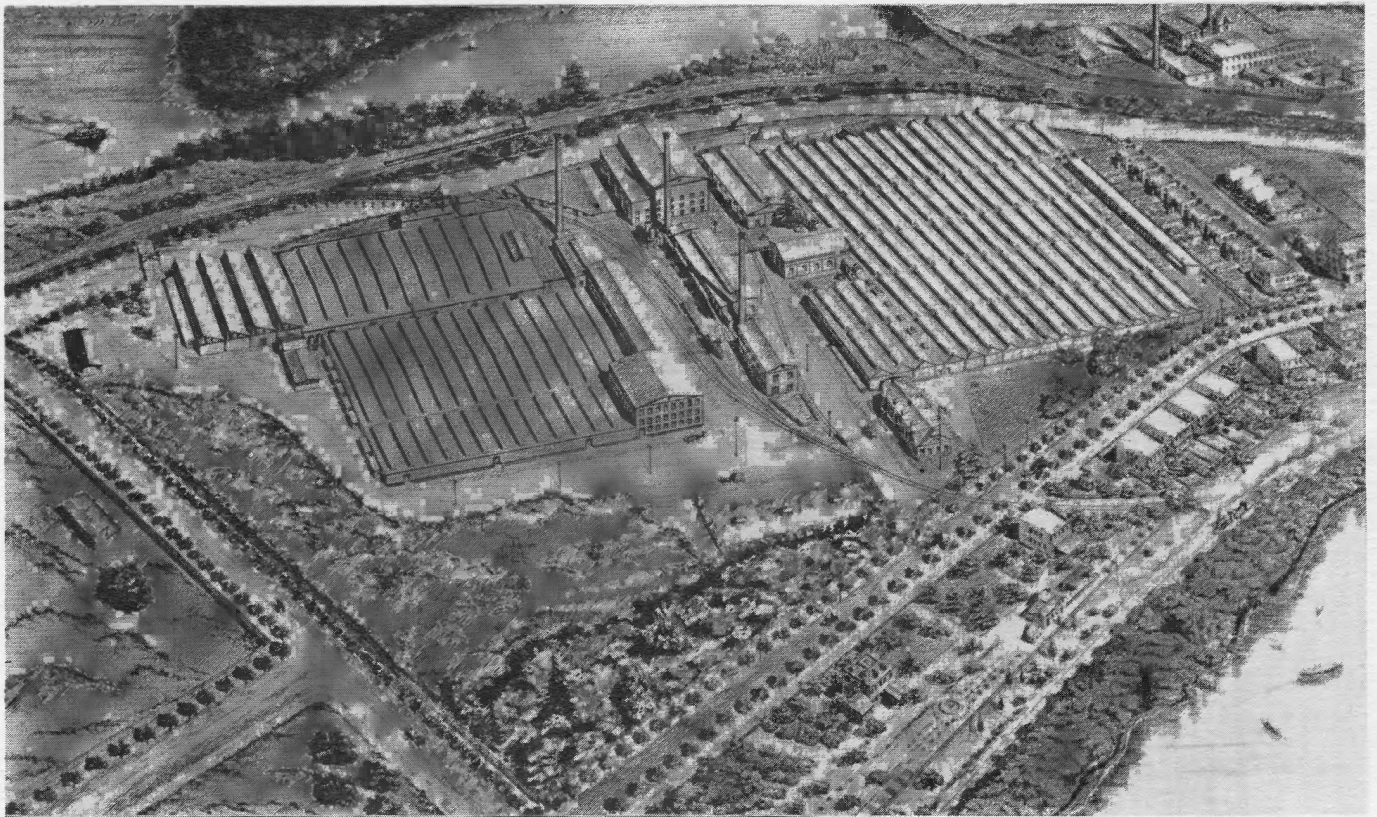
Above all, immigrants were acculturated by the worlds of work and spending. In the 1870s, many observers feared that they would form an angry proletariat that would turn socialist or communist like their European cousins. Certainly large-scale industry, the kind that could tyrannize and impoverish workers, made an early appearance. There was no better example than the Singer Manufacturing Company, which in 1873 consolidated thousands of jobs in the company's foundries, machine shops, and assembly rooms into one giant operation in Elizabeth. Many worked under the most rigid division of labor. A company guidebook (1880) described how a man varnished one particular part: "Spring and summer, fall and winter, that man did nothing but wipe that brush just so many times across the square foot of iron, and he did it with a precision and rapidity that was marvellous. . . . And this is but a type of several hundred different operations into which labor is subdivided here."⁵ It looked as if giant industry would reduce skilled, proud artisans into low-paid, unskilled drones.

This regimentation failed to occur to the degree that people feared. Countless trades resisted the application of such a demeaning division of labor, because the work could not be mechanized or because workers refused to allow it. New Jersey's largest industry, home construction and the building trades, remained an artisanal craft controlled by bricklayers, carpenters, and tinsmiths, who worked outdoors, set their own work pace, and made good wages. By the 1880s, the power loom and the

sewing machine had mechanized production of shoes, woolens, worsteds, and rugs in huge factories in Paterson and Passaic. But such power could not be applied to all spinning and weaving operations. The delicate nature of silk fiber, for instance, kept silk ribbonmaking a skilled handicraft and ribbon weavers proud, independent artisans. And although iron smelting and steelmaking were becoming dominated by heavy machinery, which dwarfed the human element, tool-and-die cutting, pipefitting, and welding, all essential for mechanization, remained skilled metal crafts. Paterson's locomotive workers stayed a proud, independent lot. At a 1979 "dig" at the abandoned Rogers Locomotive Works, archaeologists uncovered from the foundry floor shards of clay pipes, dishes, glasses, and meat bones. Apparently, while the crews finished one locomotive *every other day*, they also ate, smoked, and "noshed" as they wished.

A good deal of manufacturing, moreover, was controlled by men who tried to ensure the loyalty of their work force. Hezekiah Smith, who produced woodworking machines at Smithville, Burlington County, provided his men with cheap housing and garden plots, built them a reading room, and on holidays entertained them with ox roasts and brass bands. Trenton's Cooper-Hewitt iron works "encouraged" unions and provided decently for widows and orphans. Skilled iron puddlers could earn \$5 to \$10 dollars a day, and carpenters, machinists, and blacksmiths \$1.75, good wages for the 1890s. The Glassboro manufacturers were paternalist Quakers, known to pay standard wages and to keep oldtimers on. The Whitney Glass Plant was a complex of furnaces that also included a company store and one hundred homes for workers' families. The Temperanceville Works, as its name suggests, employed sober glassblowers, who in turn got low-rent housing. Owners of these businesses portrayed themselves as good neighbors who paid decent wages and dealt squarely with their men.

Bird's-eye Sketch of the Botany Worsted Mills, Passaic, 1899. At the end of the nineteenth century, many industrial plants reached great size. This one, arranged to meet the needs of rail freight traffic, employed about 1,600 people. This view is taken from William Pape, ed., Illustrated History of Passaic (1899).



From the 1870s through the 1890s, unions took root in many New Jersey industries, where artisans worked in small groups and kept their ethnic ties. Most guarded the pace of work and artisans' sense of dignity. Irish hatmakers in Orange and Welsh glassblowers in Glassboro staged occasional strikes to remind bosses to respect workers' pride, and they often enjoyed local public support. At times, differences between owners and craftsmen got out of hand. At Glassboro, the Whitney managers forgot their community obligations and considered employing immigrant strikebreakers; when the Glassblowers' Association threatened violence, management backed off. In Orange and even in Bayonne's refineries, bitter walkouts were cooled down by local politicians who jailed imported scabs, then reminded strikers that they had common interests with owners.

It is true that many workers, particularly in the cities, were developing a sense that they were a class apart. In the 1880s, socialists won strong support among Newark's typesetters, printers, cigarmakers, tailors, and brewers, and in city elections captured seats on the city council. But working-class socialism remained tied to immigrant loyalties, especially among certain Protestant Irish and Germans. Many Germans brought along their taste for socialism from the old country as they did their taste for lager beer.

Giant Corporations and Family Work

Nevertheless, it was hard to deny that corporate enterprise had grown to giant and often oppressive scale. Company managers claimed that to compete with Midwest firms they had to install new, expensive machinery. To pay off this great capital investment, they needed to run these machines continuously and drive their men to keep up the pace. Struggling for efficiencies at Whitney Glass, management in the late 1880s introduced a "Jumbo" oven that quadrupled output and had to be operated twenty-four hours a day. The main machine shop at Singer Manufacturing Company was enlarged into a cavernous building 600 feet long, containing hundreds of milling, boring, and grinding machines, each closely attended by a worker. Giant operations became the rule in the petroleum, electrical appliance, and food-processing industries. The Standard Oil refinery in Bayonne was the country's largest; RCA Victor in Camden

employed fourteen thousand workers; and another Camden firm, Campbell Soup, employed eight thousand in peak season. The trend toward bigness in manufacturing was overwhelming. By the 1930s, when New Jersey had nearly eight thousand manufacturers of all sizes, only fifty-seven firms had work forces larger than one thousand. Yet these few giants turned out one-third of the state's manufactured goods.

While many feared the corporate giants, most immigrant workers had reason to accept them on their own terms. For many, giant size meant security in the form of steadier work and family opportunity. Large firms, like the Dupont powder plant in Haskell, Johns-Manville near Bound Brook, Forstmann in Passaic, or Roebling in Trenton, became the employers of first resort for countless families. Usually an uncle or cousin "knew" the foreman in the spinning department or on the loading dock, and gradually pulled in family members, one by one, as they came of age. Family and neighborhood ties also softened the worst tyranny of machine production.

Certainly, many workers had to move at the frantic pace of machines. While the work day became shorter (by the late 1920s, it was eight hours on weekdays and four on Saturdays in most places), it also became more driven and intense. Mechanized operations rooted workers to a spot on assembly lines, and work flowed by. Hour after boring hour, they ran grinders, fitted sheet metal into stamping presses, or plugged vacuum tubes into radio chassis, and the line always delivered more. But if they could be heard over the racket, workers broke the monotony by talking or joking with one another. Eight hours of such conditions was numbing, but most working men and women made limited demands on their employers. They expected steady work, a chance to get family members employed, and freedom from the tyranny of the foreman. When manufacturers could not provide steady employment for these family networks, workers lost their patience with the industrial system and strikes broke out.

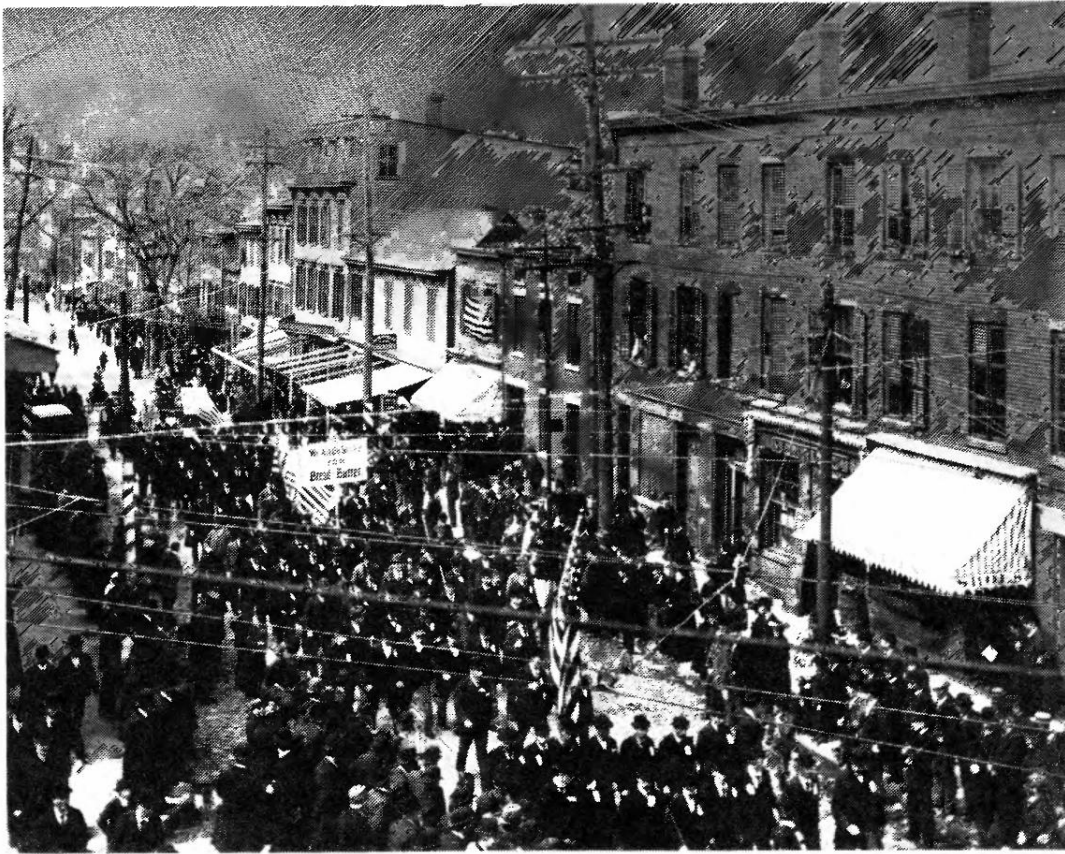
The worst flareups occurred in Paterson, Passaic, and Bayonne, making them notorious centers of working-class rebellion. But all the picketing, screaming, and fighting with the police masked a conservative reality. Working conditions were quite bad at Standard Oil's Bayonne refinery, and those who suffered most were the men who had to crawl inside tanks filled with

oil fumes and scrub them out. Yet it was not these grimy "still cleaners," but better-paid, skilled barrelmakers who touched off the infamous 1915 strike. Violence erupted only because Standard Oil brought in scabs. And even then, the rank-and-file remained less angry at the "big bosses" than at hated plant foremen.

To many radicals, the 1913 strike against Paterson's silk mills seemed the start of a workers' revolution. But the strike was only in part caused by the growing gulf between management and labor. Many middle-class Patersonians developed an almost racist fear of the Italian millworkers and demanded that the police go at them with nightsticks. For their part, immigrants were angry that owners had begun to move mills outside the city, denying them adequate family employment. Paterson's continued labor unrest in the 1920s was caused by a collapse in silk employment. Similar factors were also behind the longest strike of the era, the seven-month walkout by Passaic's woolen workers in 1926. It occurred during a severe slump in the industry, when firms like Forstmann and Botany could no longer provide overtime or hire additional family workers.

Some of the largest corporations turned to "welfare capitalism," providing social-welfare benefits to encourage a sense of worker community on the job and discourage unions. Improved worker morale meant steady profits, but workers' families benefited also from steadier employment opportunities. After the Bayonne strike, Standard Oil adapted an employees' pension plan and workmen's compensation for men injured on the job. Other firms developed pensions and profit sharing for long-term employees. At firms like Roebling outside Trenton and the Michelin tire plant at Milltown, management built housing, recreation halls, pool rooms, and cafeterias. Many companies took pride in their clean and safe working environments. Western Electric's huge plant at Kearny was called "practically a city in itself of the modern industrial type, well lighted, policed, with up-to-date fire protection and well equipped hospitals, attractive restaurants, cafeterias, club, and recreation centers."⁶

Improved work conditions, however, were always linked to assembly-line efficiency. The L. E. Waterman Company in Newark boasted that manufacturing fountain pens took "210 distinct operations," including eighty to produce the gold tip.



Italian Weavers March in the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike. Immigrants made up most of the workforce in the Paterson silk mills. A radicalized and exploited workforce and anti-immigrant sentiments and demands for a police crackdown by much of the Paterson population were two of the key ingredients for violence. COURTESY COLLECTIONS OF THE PASSAIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PATERSON, N.J.

In their modern plant, workers wore spotless uniforms and could even shower after work. But the company saved a hundred thousand dollars each year “in gold dust from the burned clothing of workers, the water in which they wash, and floor sweepings.”⁷

The Power of the Marketplace

By the late 1920s, the enormous market power of giant corporations had riveted family ambitions and finished the job of Americanization. Immigrant households still lived close to the margin. As the Passaic strike revealed, the typical breadwinner might earn \$20 to \$25 per week, and therefore counted on the wages of his oldest children. Most had no medical

insurance, and only long-timers could count on (meager) pensions. Any serious illness or accident was a family disaster that plunged all into poverty. Consequently, life ambitions were limited by family demands. Most boys were expected to quit school at fourteen or fifteen to work next to their fathers or uncles in the weaving room or loading dock. Their wages, however, often enabled younger brothers or sisters to stay in school, perhaps even to get a diploma from a commercial high school.

A clerk or secretarial job was possible, especially as opportunities opened downtown. Clerical jobs counting for less than one percent of Newark's employment picture in 1880, climbed to 13 percent by 1920 and 34 percent by 1940. In the 1930s, nineteen large Newark banks, insurance companies, and corporations, including Prudential and Mutual Benefit, employed more than thirty thousand office workers. Many were Italian, Jewish or Slovak women, because prejudices had softened against hiring "new" immigrants in downtown corporate headquarters.

Work downtown opened up new worlds, particularly for women, on and off the job. For eight hours it meant a chance to escape the nagging at home about money. Women could gossip over their work when the office manager was not looking, and at lunchtime grab a sandwich at the Rexall and window shop at Bamberger's. Whatever advice about men, lip rouge, and stockings they did not get from their fellow workers they learned in downtown movie "palaces," where Hollywood stars romanced each other with suave words and refined manners. Few women expected to make careers at the typewriter. Most worked for a few years, contributing money to their parents and living at home, until they met a nice neighborhood boy—one their parents approved. They hoped that he would be steadily employed and present a snappy appearance in a pinned collar, his hair slicked down with Brylcreem. The newlyweds would move into their own flat and have a few children, not the brood their immigrant mothers had. The fertility ratio reflected this changing attitude. In 1900 there were 439 children four years old and under per thousand New Jersey women between fifteen and forty-four. In 1920 there were 444. By 1930, it had plunged to 329 per thousand.

This steady family progress never was within the grasp of the



Broad Street, Newark, ca. 1921. The sixteen-story Firemen's Insurance Company building (background), built in 1910 was Newark's first skyscraper. It and the other large buildings pictured here held offices with thousands of jobs, many of them held by women in the workforce for the first time. COURTESY NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

cities' blacks, whose condition worsened. In the 1880s and 1890s, Newark's few blacks lived scattered and relatively unnoticed amid huge numbers of European immigrants. By 1900, their numbers had reached only 6,694, less than three percent of the city's population. As northern freedom and jobs beckoned, southern blacks flowed into New Jersey cities like Newark, Camden, and Trenton. They arrived in classic immigrant fashion, but by rail and bus rather than steamship to Ellis Island. Like earlier immigrants, they worked a few seasons, lived in crowded boarding houses with other black migrants, and tasted life in this new world before they sent for their families. And like the Italians, Jews, and Poles, they kept contact with the "old country." They joined Virginia or North Carolina clubs, sought out familiar Baptist and Methodist churches, shared memories of home cooking and celebrations. But as their

numbers increased to 45,790 in 1940, or 11 percent of Newark's population, racial tension grew and forced many of the newcomers to segregate into Newark's Third Ward. While white immigrants gradually moved into ethnic neighborhoods, blacks were squeezed into ghettos.

They never shared many of the work opportunities in factories or in downtown offices. Back in the 1850s and 1860s, when European immigrants entered tanneries and shoe factories, blacks, like the Irish, could only find jobs on the margins as laborers and servants. While the Irish gradually climbed the job ladder, blacks were kept on the lowest rung. Trenton's iron founders or potters would no sooner hire blacks than would the owners of Paterson's silk mills or locomotive works.

Dramatic change did come during World War I, when shortages of white immigrants forced factory managers to open the door to blacks for the first time. They found jobs at Newark's Carnegie Steel Company and the Swift meatpacking plant in Harrison. But opportunities always fell under the "job ceiling," the custom of reserving the dirtiest, lowest-paid work for blacks. Moreover, discrimination always kept black males struggling to find regular work. Chronic unemployment, poor wages, and tight ghetto boundaries meant that black families could never really gain a foothold or escape the crowding and disorder of immigrant life.

But blacks could participate as consumers of brand-name products and join a consumers' society that brought together most groups and classes. Whether in the two-family houses of Newark's Italian Ironbound section or the middle-class houses in suburban Montclair, families washed with Palmolive soap (manufactured in New Jersey). At breakfast they dribbled Karo syrup on their pancakes or spooned Nabisco shredded wheat. For lunch, their mothers warmed Campbell's tomato soup and doled out Oreo cookies. Perhaps in the afternoon, the kids sat on the stoop, sucking a Charms lollipop or a popsicle. At night families switched on their console radio-phonograph, an RCA Victrola, to hear their favorite network shows. By the early 1930s, family listening became an evening habit.

Millions of Americans were drawn into a radio community whose center happened to be New Jersey. In the 1930s, tragedies like the Lindbergh kidnapping and the explosion of the airship *Hindenburg* made towns like Flemington and Lakehurst

sources of news that gripped the attention of radio audiences nationwide. The Atlantic Highlands was also where short-wave antennae picked up grim political news from Europe. On Halloween night in 1938, radio dramatist Orson Welles scared a nation of listeners who believed that Martians had landed in cornfields just outside Trenton. Electronic waves crossed the boundaries of neighborhood, class, and ethnic group. Like the commercials they broadcast, they helped tie the country into one society.

Government Reinforces Community

To this steady progress of millions into the working and middle classes, the Great Depression after the 1929 stock market crash came as a family catastrophe. Within months people crowded unemployment lines and soup kitchens that neighborhoods struggled to run. The Red Cross doled out food in Elizabeth and New Brunswick, while the Community Chest coordinated charitable giving in Newark and the Oranges. Newark's Clinton Hill organized a barter system and cooperative vegetable gardens, while a Paterson "Exchange" allowed unemployed members without money to trade odd chores for groceries. But hard times turned people's lives back forty years. Steady wages became a memory, as workers shifted from job to job and then to idleness. Like so many immigrants, evicted tenants had to seek shelter with relatives. When Public Service shut off the electricity, families huddled around kerosene lamps. For many the future became a series of meaningless days. With jobs and careers down the drain, people postponed marriage; if they were married, they delayed having children. By the mid-1930s, the birth rate had dropped to a record low.

Out of this economic shambles, however, came institutions that would provide ultimate stability to New Jerseyans' everyday lives. After private charities collapsed, the New Deal in Washington gave relief to thousands in the state. By 1936, the famous Works Progress Administration was employing 120,000 New Jersey breadwinners. More important, the federal government installed the basis for a future of full employment. Washington's money built bridges, tunnels, and suburban highways. Federal agencies like the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation encouraged families to renew their trust in banks and to save for

the long pull. The Federal Housing Administration revived dreams about suburban homes by insuring thirty-five-year mortgages to finance them.

The New Deal also sided with organized labor and helped solidify Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) locals in numerous industries. After bitter strikes, the Electrical Workers landed a contract for twelve thousand RCA Victor workers in Camden; the United Auto Workers won recognition at General Motors in Linden, and the Machinists' Union became the bargaining agent at Wright Aeronautical in Paterson. For the first time, many blue-collar workers felt they had some control over their work lives. Soon CIO unions called on management to sign contracts with adequate retirement pensions and job security.

In giant industries, the union helped to humanize the scale of work. For the ranks, the union hall, like the bar near the plant gate, was another place where they could gather as well as get their relatives into apprenticeships. Even managers came to appreciate what unions meant. Bosses needed union grievance officers to soothe workers and head off strikes. Unions needed bosses to provide steady work and, with dues check-offs, a constant flow of membership funds.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the stable, community-building consequences of these institutions were felt as never before. Within months after Pearl Harbor, war production hit full tilt in New Jersey plants. Newark and Camden shipyards were crowded with Liberty ships, Paterson's silk mills ran overtime making parachutes, and the Westinghouse Lamp Division in Bloomfield refined one of the earliest samples of enriched uranium for the Manhattan Project. Unemployment fell to near zero, as high wages lured everyone, including married women, into the factories. Steady work and overtime became the new reality. In June of 1944 New Jerseyans of all backgrounds were grossing forty to forty-five dollars per week at war plants, buying E-bonds through payroll savings, and praying for the Allies at Normandy Beach. When victory came, New Jerseyans found that their incomes had nearly doubled since the Depression. Many had saved hundreds of dollars in bonds. Many never felt more confident about the future.

When GIs returned from overseas, they itched to get married and move out of their parents' homes. In doing so, they

launched the great boom in suburbs and babies. With money in their pockets, they married at younger ages than their parents and had their first children earlier. Taking full employment for granted, they also had more children than the Depression generation. They wanted to give them rooms of their own, so they flocked to the six-room Dutch colonials, ranches, and split-levels being mass-produced by builders like the Levitt brothers. Thanks to FHA-insured thirty-five-year mortgages (with the GI Bill of Rights), many could buy an \$8,900 ranch-style house in Clifton or Belleville for as little as \$100 down. By the late 1940s, industry was also suburbanizing. When Ford opened an automobile assembly plant in Edison in 1948, it touched off a residential boom that nearly tripled the town's population in a decade. Road, sewer, and school construction could not keep up with the crush of newcomers, and Edison residents packed town council meetings demanding that their taxes buy desperately needed services.

For many second- and third-generation American families, suburbia was the end of the line, the goal achieved by the early 1950s. They made it, thanks to family scrimping, steady factory work and union wages, government subsidies, and FHA insurance. They owned modest houses, or rather, they stretched their budgets to make monthly payments to the banks that held the mortgages. They muttered about the water bills and the school taxes and wondered whether they should attend school board meetings to complain about the cost of educational frills. Perhaps they were living on the edge, but it was farther out than their parents or grandparents. As they leaned on their lawnmowers on a Saturday morning and surveyed their patches of crabgrass, they could have not possibly have felt more American.

CHAPTER FOUR

Postindustrial Society Emerges, The 1960s to the Present

By the 1960s, the urban-industrial order that had taken three generations to build was beginning to pull apart. It was frayed by success at home and challenges abroad. Prosperity brought the enormous growth of “postindustrial” society, an economy less dependent on factories in crowded cities and more dependent on suburban corporations that processed financial data or developed high-tech products. At the same time, traditional family values were undermined by lifestyles in roomy suburban homes. This erosion accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s, as global forces brought inflation, overseas competition, and renewed waves of immigration. By the 1990s, New Jersey society was greatly transformed and on the edge of more sweeping change.

Passing Traditions

For three generations families had been held together by steady work habits learned in the shadow of smokestack industries. Assembly-line drudgery and limited ambitions kept children in check and parents in authority. After World War II, however, the steady growth of New Jersey’s white-collar sector pulled ahead of employment in manufacturing. The number of factory workers plateaued in 1969 at roughly 873,000, or 35 percent of nonfarm payrolls. Between 1958 and 1970, white-collar jobs rose from 894,000, or roughly 47 percent of

nonfarm payrolls, to 1,439,700, or 55 percent. White-collar workers were bank tellers, key punch operators, and sales clerks. They worked for government, processing Social Security claims, assessing property taxes, and teaching school; they staffed the wholesale and retail trade sector, inventorying merchandise, driving trucks, and servicing vending machines. A growing number were women, who constituted 30 percent of the state labor force in 1950 and 44 percent by 1986. Some white-collar employees enjoyed considerable autonomy, freedom to set their own work schedules, as long as they filed time sheets at the end of the day. The work required a high-school diploma and weeks of training, and, in growing numbers, the certification of a college degree. Many could make of it a career and even a profession.



*Coil-Winding at the Eclipse-Pioneer Division of Bendix Aviation Corporation, Teterboro, late 1950s. Stationed at their benches and watched by supervisors, these women experienced the extreme division of labor in the heyday of the mass-production system. This view is taken from James B. Kenyon, *Industrial Localization and Metropolitan Growth: The Paterson-Passaic District* (1960). COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS.*

Suburban living also began to undermine traditional family values. While suburbs grew as extensions of the cities, suburbia proved a place where city ways and ethnic backgrounds began to thin out. There were predominantly Jewish, Italian, or Irish suburbs. But suburban Jews were drawn to an Americanized kind of religious practice, Reform Judaism, while a "Catholic melting pot" emerged as intermarriage between Irish and Italians became common. Couples settled into single homes and left their parents behind in nearby cities (although they tended to live closer to the wife's parents). Daughters might phone their mothers daily, and grandparents visit for weekend barbecues, but the typical family moved into isolated space to enjoy a cozy togetherness.

That suburban togetherness, however, soon produced unexpected tensions. The house, after all, provided individual space, particularly separate bedrooms, where children guarded their privacy and warned everyone: "Please Knock Before Entering." Many marriages, moreover, hinged on the traditional authority of the husband as sole breadwinner. Most couples were kept together by love and sex, not, as in the old days, by family or neighborhood pressure. Daytime isolation, psychologists found in suburban Bergen County, was locking housewives into a suburban "trap." If love faded, there was little to keep marriages together, particularly after the kids had grown. By 1980, New Jersey marriages were ending at four times the rate they had just fifteen years before.

Suburbia also tended to cut people off from a sense of belonging to anything other than a broad middle class. When workers trooped out of the steel plants in Trenton or spinning mills in Paterson, they walked across the street to bars or nearby tenement homes. When suburban factory workers quit at 5:00 P.M., they slipped into their cars to fight the traffic on Route 1 or 46, just like everyone else. Suburban workers could hardly think of themselves as members of a struggling working class, when everything around them, from lawns to lawnmowers, signified property ownership. Suburban children, moreover, grew up on residential blocks that provided no work experience, except perhaps a paper route. They were not expected to work in any case, except to clean up their rooms. Work was something Dad did downtown, and children would not enter that world until they finished years of schooling.

With a long time to grow up and little responsibility with which to fill it, children followed whatever activities television and advertising said were correct for their age. While parents shrugged with amusement, seven- and eight-year old girls entered the fantasy world of Barbie and Ken, while boys collected baseball cards. Girls at thirteen giggled about boys and dabbed their pimples with Clearasil. Boys gave them long looks, flicked their ducktails, and debated what to do next. Parents had trouble keeping tabs on their children. Teenage boys hung out under street lamps, rankin' each other—or their mothers—out. If one of the group was old enough to drive, they spent hours at nearby shopping mall, the suburbs' new downtown. Malls were places where teens could watch each other spend money, the supreme form of weekend recreation. While work in the old cities once held families together, consumption now split the generations apart. Suburban children could not possibly imagine the scrimping and drudgery experienced by the older generation.

During the height of the baby boom, roughly around 1957, homeowners began to stagger under the contradictions of suburban life. The cost of raising a household of creative, individual children weighed heavily on parents. So did the property taxes collected by school boards to educate the baby boom and, particularly, to pay for modern high schools that prepared graduates for the white-collar economy. At the same time, the residential lifestyle ruled out concentrations of factories whose "ratables" (assessed value) might have eased the property tax burden. By the late 1950s, growing numbers of suburban families had become dependent on working wives.

Broken Cities, Broken Promises

The central cities meanwhile had gained substantial black and Hispanic populations, which faced far different problems than were ever faced by European immigrants. First, the number of jobs had shriveled in the private and public sectors. Thousands of jobs in manufacturing and retail sales moved to sleek, low-slung factories and shopping malls convenient to the white, suburban work force. Downtown construction of new office buildings and department stores ceased in cities like Newark, Camden, and Paterson, while the outward flow of factories and

homeowners robbed cities of their ratables and slashed the kind of construction projects that city governments undertook. Pick-and-shovel jobs, which had sustained four generations of European immigrants, disappeared when black newcomers needed them most.

In the 1960s, cities like Newark and Trenton reached their latest tipping point, when blacks, like the white ethnics before them, gained political power. But the expected benefits of political power never appeared, at least not as they had in the heyday of bosses like Frank Hague. The Irish, Jews, and Italians already occupied the best city jobs and used civil-service rules to lock themselves in. Moreover, major political benefits had migrated to suburban and county governments, dominated by older ethnics. When blacks finally inherited the cities, they had run out of political spoils.

The consequences were disastrous for family life in the inner city. Black employment had always been intermittent because of discrimination; but by the early 1960s, black joblessness had climbed over 10 percent, and the level of "underemployment," or casual labor, was close to 30 percent. Depression conditions bore down on black families, producing (as they did among whites in the 1930s) discouragement and apathy. Teenagers saw no point in finishing school, since whites got the best jobs anyway. Many turned to street gangs, then drugs, which seemed to offer relief from the hopelessness at home. Analysts began to find that marriage had little meaning to men without jobs or prospects; many black men entered into a series of relationships with women that failed to build durable families. When Washington intervened with federal aid as part of the Great Society in the 1960s, many blacks wondered whether they were being bought off by cheap, dead-end jobs. White racism, they concluded, had locked them in poverty, while suburban whites could take for granted careers and a future.

In the late 1960s, this rage boiled over. Black youths looted and torched neighborhoods in Newark, Jersey City, New Brunswick, and suburban Plainfield and Englewood. While some charged that the violence was organized by hoodlum gangs, most rioters seemed to have acted alone and on impulse. The riots were stark evidence of how black life and families had fallen apart in the jobless cities. In 1968 the Kerner Commission, which investigated the Newark riot and other disturbances across the

country, concluded that America was fast becoming two separate societies, one white and suburban, the other inner city and black.

A Suburban World

During the 1970s and 1980s, suburban New Jersey roared ahead, widening the separations of race and economic prospects. Highway construction boomed to handle the number of cars and trucks, which increased by 50 percent between 1960 and 1980. White families on two incomes fled decaying cities and inner suburbs and bought homes as a hedge against inflation. Spreading subdivisions finished the transformation of rural localities, making small town life a quaint backwater off the highway. Rising costs and environmental concerns closed down mines and quarries and brought about the near disappearance of farming in the Garden State. The number of farms dropped from 21,600 in 1955 to only 8,600 by 1970. Major processors like Seabrook Farms and Del Monte quit buying high-cost Jersey vegetables in the 1970s. Farmers concentrated on dairy products, eggs, perishable vegetables like tomatoes and escarole, and "ethnic" products raised by Chinese and Puerto Rican stoop labor from the cities. Competition from other Middle Atlantic states killed off poultry and turkey farms, and reduced cattle raising to a weekend hobby on farm properties arranged as tax writeoffs. By the late 1980s, the number of actual commercial farms was under three thousand.

During the 1960s, suburban population growth shifted from New Jersey's inner counties to the next ring of settlement. In that decade, Hudson County lost population and Essex grew by less than 1 percent; Union grew by only 8 percent. New home construction in the outlying areas lifted Bergen County's population by 15 percent, while Middlesex, Somerset, and Morris grew, respectively, by 35, 38, and 47 percent. The Morris-Middlesex growth corridor included the townships of Jefferson, Mount Olive, Parsippany-Troy Hills, Rockaway, and Roxbury. By the early 1980s, Interstates 80, 78, and 287, the Garden State Parkway, and the New Jersey Turnpike had opened up subdivisions in Ocean, Somerset, Sussex, Hunterdon, Gloucester, and Warren counties. Hopatcong Boro in Sussex County quintupled its population (to 15,531) between 1960 and 1980, while

Vernon grew eightfold to a population of 16,302. By the early 1980s, subdivisions were devouring scrub pine at the far ends of the metropolitan region in Brick Township in Ocean County and Dover Township beyond Morristown, swelling their populations to well over a hundred thousand. By then, the migration was fed by the "trading-up" plans of homeowners in Bergen, Essex, Passaic, and Union counties. As a journalist wrote, "Now even the suburbs are sprouting suburbs."¹

Fueling suburban growth after the 1960s was the two-income household that balanced white-collar ambitions against a family lifestyle that was less child-centered. Between 1960 and 1976, the birth rate per thousand New Jersey women plummeted from 21.8 to 12.4. College-educated women often preferred to launch careers before marriage, and they usually kept working afterwards. Typical newlyweds waited three or four years before having their first child, then waited three or four years before having their second, usually their last. Couples planned their parenthood as never before. Contraception was widely used, as much by Catholics as by Protestants and Jews. There was also widespread termination of pregnancies. By 1980, the state's abortion rate had reached 60 percent of the number of live births. Parents carefully spaced their few offspring to assure well-adjusted children with a sense of creative individuality. Suburbanized employment made it easier for mothers to pick up part-time work, and, when the youngest was in school, to continue with their careers.

Suburban employers increasingly reorganized the workplace to meet the needs of two-career families. Large-scale manufacturing turned more to small batch production of high-profit devices like ultrasound diagnostic machines, mainframe computers, or customized electronic controls. This sensitive work pulled many blue-collar technicians off assembly lines to work in "quality control groups," where it was possible to regain a sense of craftsmanship. White-collar personnel could be found at Bell Labs, publishing houses like Prentice-Hall, or financial giants like Prudential Insurance, where the air-conditioned, Muzak-heavy environment enhanced job satisfaction. Bringing welfare capitalism to new levels of togetherness, Mannington Mills in Salem opened "fitness centers," complete with child-care services, and Johnson & Johnson began a "wellness" program, which offered employees everything from weight reduc-

tion to stress management. Thousands enrolled in health maintenance organizations or HMOs, like the Rutgers Community Health Plan, which provided prepaid medical care to workers at Public Service, Squibb, Dupont, and New Jersey Bell. Such organizations were perfect for suburban couples who, an HMO official pointed out, were too mobile to connect with family doctors.²

At the heart of this suburban world were “edge cities,” shopping malls that had grown up to offer employment, entertainment, and services. Developed by real-estate promoters at the intersections of regional highways, huge corporate complexes mushroomed at Woodbridge, Paramus, Parsippany–Troy Hills, Meadowlands–Harmon Cove, around AT&T at Morristown and the Forrestal Center on U.S. 1 near Princeton. Grouped around access roads and parking lots, they became enclosed worlds of work, shopping and leisure for middle-class whites. While they were open to the public, their upscale retail stores and private security patrols sent strong signals against visits by blacks and Hispanics. In turn, with the array of activities hosted by edge cities, suburban whites had fewer reasons than ever to venture downtown.

Dual Cities

In the 1970s and 1980s, cities were afflicted by the industrial malaise and double-digit inflation that priced New Jersey manufacturers out of global markets. Imports of cheap, non-durable products like worsteds, rugs, draperies, and apparel closed down mills like Forstmann and Botany in Passaic, and landmark firms like Singer Sewing Machine in Elizabeth withdrew from manufacturing altogether. The story was nearly the same in Linden and Mahwah, as automobile manufacturers reeled from the onslaught of Japanese imports. “Deindustrialization,” the dismantling of expensive production, brought the state’s factory work force down to 666,000, or 18 percent of the work force, by 1988. Labor union membership also declined. In 1970, nearly one-third of agricultural workers belonged to unions, but ten years later this fraction had dropped to one-quarter.

Hard times in manufacturing were accompanied by the near collapse of inner-city economies. Between 1970 and 1980

Newark's population shrank from 381,930 to 329,248. In 1967 Newark had 3,869 retail establishments, and in 1982 only 1,794. During the same period, half its food stores closed, along with two-thirds of its drug stores and nearly three-quarters of its restaurants. The small businesses that had given immigrants a foothold and many youngsters their first jobs were gone. The closing of RCA and the shrinkage of Campbell Soup's work force to a skeletal 3,600 was only the last blow to Camden's industrial prowess. By the mid-1980s, half of Camden's residents existed either on public welfare or social security. Unemployment and idleness had staggering effects on black and Hispanic families. The number of out-of-wedlock births approached 50 percent in both groups, which meant that a substantial number of households with children were headed by unmarried females. They often had no alternative but to go on welfare; and with children to care for at home and schooling or job-training ruled out, they found it nearly impossible to get off it.

The inner-city poor benefited in only a marginal way from improvements that were designed for regional needs. Port Newark and Newark International Airport brought a surge of business along the New Jersey Turnpike and Interstate 280 to Meadowlands-Harmon Cove. Persistent discrimination in the port, however, severely limited job opportunities for blacks and Hispanics. Newark's Gateway Center, a complex of office towers linked by overhead walkways and highway ramps to parking lots, I-280, and mass transit, allowed suburban workers to avoid the city's streets. Huge areas of Newark's inner city were demolished to make room for the New Jersey School of Medicine and Dentistry and the local branch of Rutgers University, which employed skilled white technicians and hundreds of blacks, mostly female secretaries and males in menial job categories. The civic improvement that came to Atlantic City with casino gambling after 1976 was a variation of the pattern. Though they promised jobs to the largely black community, the casinos were self-contained entities that devastated local business, while luring white workers from across Atlantic and Ocean counties.

The fortunes of many cities turned on an unexpected factor, the return of large-scale immigration. The massive exodus from Castro's Cuba filled West New York, Union City and North Bergen. This influx revived local businesses, particularly in cigarmaking and silk embroidery, which depended on the dis-

ciplined labor of immigrant families. With added numbers from the 1980 Mariel boatlift, the Cuban population in southern Bergen County reached nearly fifty thousand, becoming the second largest Cuban settlement in the United States. The Immigration Act of 1965 encouraged scores of thousands of newcomers from Latin America: Ecuadorans and Chileans, who moved into Paterson and worked in the city's textile and purse-making factories; Paraguayans, who moved into North Bergen and organized their "Centro Paraguayo" social club and their Paraguayan Soccer League; and Portuguese, who filled Newark's Ironbound with restaurants, bakeries, and import businesses, and made Portuguese Day, June 10, a stunning regional festival. During the 1970s and 1980s, Indians and Pakistanis drifted into Fort Lee, Leonia, and Jersey City, which developed a Hindu and Islamic population of fifteen thousand. Some forty thousand Koreans gravitated to Bergen County, where they formed close-knit communities complete with churches and small businesses.

The newest arrivals repeated the classic immigrant patterns, with some 1980s variations. Churches, as well as real estate agents catering to particular Asian groups, steered them to particular suburban communities. "Each town is getting a unique Asian group," remarked one observer. "In Englewood Cliffs, it is Chinese; in Closter, Koreans are the largest group."³ Aside from the Cubans in West New York and the Portuguese in the Ironbound, the migration of Asians and Latin Americans was too diverse to recreate traditional immigrant "colonies." Many settlements like the Ironbound and North Bergen's Paraguayans were, in fact, focal points of regional communities linked by the immigrant media, the automobile, and business deals. Some groups suffered severe downward mobility. The Cubans and Koreans, for instance, came from urban and educated backgrounds, but were held back by language barriers, job credentials, and, in some cases, prejudice. They penetrated small business throughout the region, however, and nursed their ambitions for success by imparting a ferocious work ethic to their children.

New Jersey Society in the 1990s

New Jersey grew by nearly 5 percent in the 1980s. The birth

rate of 13.2 per thousand in 1980 climbed to 15.5 by 1990, but the modest increase, really an “echo” of the baby boom, did not change the fact that families still planned their children with an eye toward the costs of the postindustrial future. The abortion rate remained substantial: 591 abortions per thousand live births in 1980, and 553 per thousand in 1988, which was nearly 40 percent above the national average. While the state stemmed out-migration as the economy steadied by the mid-1980s, an equally important factor in population growth was the immigrant tide. By 1990, nearly 10 percent of the state was Hispanic in origin—some 740,000. Forty percent of these were from the Dominican Republic and from Latin America, diluting the large Puerto Rican element.

New Jersey had become the second most urbanized state, a blur of suburbs and edge cities. The urban places which showed the most vigor were Elizabeth, Paterson, Jersey City, and Newark’s Ironbound, areas that received most of the recent immigration. Jersey City grew by 2 percent in the 1980s, largely from the influx of fifteen thousand Indians and Pakistanis; Ecuadorans and other Latin Americans began to replace Cubans in Weehawken and West New York; and newcomers from Brazil and Ecuador contested the Portuguese in soccer, park use, and the rental of apartments in Newark’s Ironbound. Paterson’s population stabilized with the migration of Lebanese and Turks into the South Main Street neighborhood, not to mention a polyglot group of Chileans, Koreans, Dominicans, Vietnamese, and Mexicans.

Otherwise, New Jersey’s cities were gaunt places that hemorrhaged people. Newark’s population declined from 381,930 in 1970 to 275,221 in 1990, Camden’s from 102,551 to 87,492, and Trenton’s from 104,786 to 88,675. (State estimates for 1992 indicated continued population loss in all three cities.) According to the 1990 census, the suburban town of Edison, an agglomeration of garden apartments filled with Latin American immigrants from Guyana and Ecuador, has eclipsed Trenton as the state’s fifth largest municipality. Central cities clung to their functions as government seats or as the sites of museums and centers for the established arts, but New Jersey’s urban age was clearly over.

In the early 1990s, New Jersey’s work force was more likely to manipulate data than to make things, which helped to make

the state second in per capita income to Connecticut, another state with a suburbanized service economy. In 1991, only 560,000 out of nearly 3.5 million were employed in manufacturing, or just one in six; and, of these, perhaps three hundred thousand were actual production workers. Nearly 1.8 million women worked, constituting nearly 45 percent of the New Jersey labor force. While 57 percent of the women who could work did so, as compared to 77 percent among men, the gap was narrowing as women resorted to day care for young children. Three-quarters of all workers were employed in wholesale or retail trade, in finance, insurance and real estate, and in government. Deindustrialization took its toll on union membership among factory workers, whose ranks declined from 35 percent in the 1960s to 24 percent by 1991. As a fraction of a fraction, the blue-collar unions that championed the New Deal were now a remnant, perhaps 4 percent of all working men and women. The largest unions in the 1990s were organized among service workers with growing ranks of women: retail clerks and warehouse employees, public school teachers, and health and hospital workers.

Older suburbs were showing signs of age and disrepair. Passaic County's shopping strips, like Route 4 in Elmwood Park, were losing customers to larger retail chains and fast-food outlets. Bergenfield ran out of open space and new subdivisions, which were its lifeblood. The town fathers accordingly approved apartment construction on Washington Avenue, which only added to local congestion and cost the town shoppers, who switched to more convenient outlying malls. By 1990, Bergenfield demographically resembled the rest of southern Bergen County. The suburb was 9 percent Hispanic, 9 percent Asian, and 4 percent black. Teaneck had become 26 percent black by 1990. Some of the arrivals represented a spillover from largely black Englewood. Others were desperate refugees from Newark and other places, who could barely scrape by in the suburban economy. In the 1990s, 15 percent of Teaneck's black children lived in poverty households, and 11 percent of black adults were unemployed. Few residents had any illusions about suburban harmony. As one observer concluded: "In Teaneck separateness in small neighborhoods under the larger, town-wide umbrella of integration had become an accepted fact of life."⁴

Separatism was the most revealing fact about New Jersey

society in the 1990s. A society open enough for some Asian and Latin American newcomers had little room for large numbers of blacks and other groups from Latin America. Minority communities had not only failed to match the upward mobility of many immigrants; their living standards had gravely deteriorated. More than half of Newark was a poverty zone ravaged by unemployment, gangs, and AIDS, and many of its young men were cut off from the world of work. Camden was worse off than Newark. During the 1980s, the New Jersey prison population quadrupled; it exceeded twenty-one thousand inmates in 1990. By that time, an estimated one-third of young black men were in prison, on parole, or on probation. As New Jersey finished out the twentieth century, it had yet to create the kind of society that provided work and decent community for all its citizens.

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1. Cited in Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*, 253.
2. Thomas, "An Historical and Geographical Account," 350.
3. Wacker, *Land and People*, 170.
4. Wells, *Population of the British Colonies*, 300. Wells's figures for New Jersey in 1772 are based on the only census figures we have for that period, the West Jersey census of 1772. It is unlikely that the average household size would have changed a great deal by 1784.
5. "Letter From Reverend Uzai Ogden," 152.
6. Pomfret, *Colonial New Jersey*, 205.
7. Main, *Social Structure*, 223.

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1. *Newark Advertiser*, 13 September 1853.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 6 September 1854.
4. Yeager, *The Life of James Roosevelt Bayley*, quoted in West, "Patterns of Nativism in New Jersey," 6–7.
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Chapter Four

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on the New Frontier (New York, 1991); Frank S. Kelland and Marylin C. Kelland, *New Jersey: Garden or Suburb? A Geography of New Jersey* (Dubuque, Ia, 1978); Mike Kelly, *Color Lines: The Troubled Dreams of Racial Harmony in an American Town* (New York, 1995); New Jersey Department of Labor, *New Jersey Statistical Factbook* (Trenton, January 1990); New Jersey State Data Center, *New Jersey Population Trends, 1790–1990* (Trenton, 1990); *New York Times*, 25 March 1979, 17 May 1981, 10 May, 13 and 30 June 1986, 19 May 1996; Robert J. Samuelson, “New Candor on Race,” *Newsweek*, 10 February 1986; Grady Wells, “Healthy Growth for HMOs,” *American Demographics* 6 (March 1984): 23–25.

Jersey"; Valerie G. Gladfelter, "Power Challenged: Rising Individualism in the Burlington, New Jersey, Friends Meeting, 1678–1720"; and Barry Levy, "The Birth of the 'Modern Family' in Early America: Quaker and Anglican Families in the Delaware Valley, Pennsylvania, 1681–1750"; all in *Friends and Neighbors: Group Life in America's First Plural Society*, ed. Michael Zuckerman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

For understanding the course of social change in the eighteenth century, Carl Bridenbaugh's books on urban growth are indispensable, particularly *Cities in the Wilderness* (1938; reprint, New York: Capricorn Books, 1964). For estimates of provincial wealth in the Revolutionary Era, refer to Larry R. Gerlach, "Revolution or Independence? New Jersey, 1770–1776" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1968); Thomas Archdeacon, *New Jersey Society in the Revolutionary Era* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975); and Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965). Gary S. Horowitz, "New Jersey Land Riots, 1754–1755" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1966) provides useful details of this episode. For the mood of the eighteenth-century countryside, see the following: James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalite* in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 25 (January 1978); and Christopher Clark, "Household Economy, Market Exchange and the Rise of Capitalism in the Connecticut Valley, 1800–1860," *Journal of Social History*, 13 (Winter 1979).

For accounts on rural change, see Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600–1865* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976); Clarence H. Danhof, *Change in Agriculture: The Northern States, 1820–1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); *Farming in the New Nation: Interpreting Agriculture, 1790–1840*, ed. Darwin P. Kelsey, (Washington, D.C.: Agriculture History Society, 1972); and Hubert G. Schmidt, *Agriculture in New Jersey* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973). Changing country values can be glimpsed in Martha T. Blauvelt, "Society, Religion, and Revivalism: The Second Great Awakening in New Jersey, 1780–1830" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1974); and Joel Schwartz, "The Education Machine: The Struggle for Public School Systems in New Jersey before the Civil War," in *Jacks-*

nian New Jersey, ed. Paul A. Stellhorn (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1979). Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage; Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977) and Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin, *Facing Life* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971) are indispensable for tracking changing attitudes toward childhood.

There is a rich literature on urban growth and society: Susan E. Hirsch, *The Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Douglas V. Shaw, *The Making of an Immigrant City: Ethnic and Cultural Conflict in Jersey City, 1850–1877* (Salem, N.H.: Ayer Company Publications, 1976); John T. Cunningham, *Newark* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1966); and the articles in *Cities of the Garden State; Essays in the Urban and Suburban History of New Jersey*, ed. Joel Schwartz and Daniel Prosser (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1977). Paterson developments are taken from Joel Schwartz, “Paterson in the Civil War” (paper presented at the Civil War Round Table of Northern New Jersey, 1975). Analyses of other cities have pertinent implications for understanding Jersey urbanization: Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power before the Civil War* (New York: D. C. Heath, 1973); and Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

To the works on urbanization cited previously, I would recommend several studies of metropolitan developments: Clement A. Price, “The Beleaguered City as Promised Land: Blacks in Newark, 1917–1947,” and Paul A. Stellhorn, “Boom, Bust, and Boosterism: Attitudes, Residency and the Newark Chamber of Commerce, 1920–1941,” both in *Urban New Jersey Since 1870*, ed. William C. Wright (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975); and Dennis J. Starr, “The Nature and Uses of Economic, Social Power in Trenton, New Jersey, 1890–1917” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1979). Marilyn R. Kussick, “Social Reform as a Toll of Urban Reform: The Emergence of the Twentieth-Century Public School in Newark, New Jersey, 1890–1920” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1974) is an important study of urban education as efficiency movement. To these I would add a work of broad implication for understanding metropolitan New Jersey, Marjorie J. Davies, *Woman’s Place*

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the Paterson Police Helped to Spread the 1913 Strike," *New Jersey History*, 100 (Spring/Summer 1982); the very persuasive community portraits in James D. Osborne, "Italian Immigrants and the Working Class in Paterson: The Strike of 1913 in Ethnic Perspective," in *New Jersey's Ethnic Heritage*, ed. Paul A. Stellhorn (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1978); John J. Bukowczyk, "The Transformation of Working-Class Ethnicity: Corporate Control, Americanization, and the Polish Immigrant Middle Class in Bayonne, New Jersey, 1915-1925," *Labor History*, 25 (Winter 1984); and the superb evocation of an artisan's world in David H. Bensman, "Artisan Culture, Business Union: American Hat Finishers in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977).

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Modern New Jersey suburbs have been poked at and sampled to death. The best accounts of contemporary suburban life are Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press) and Peter O. Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981). Several analysts have tried to describe the new suburban outer city: Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); and Michael N. Danielson and Julian Wolpert, "From Old to New Metropolis," *Research in Community Sociology* 4 (1994). Michael H. Ebner, "Experiencing Megalopolis in Princeton," *Journal of Urban History* 19 (January 1993) describes the Route 1 growth corridor. One should also look at Richard E. Gordon et al., *The Split-Level Trap* (New York: B. Geis Associates, 1961), a psychologist's indictment of the pressures of suburban conformity, and contrast it with Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners*, a refreshing look at the Levitt brothers' mass development at Willingboro by a sociologist who was no worse for his stay. A must on the suburban family is Talcott Parsons's classic essay, "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States," in his *Essays in*

Sociological Theory, Pure and Applied (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), as qualified by the essays on the Italian- and Polish-American family by Francis X. Femmenella and Jill S. Quadagno and Helena Znaniecki Lopata in *Ethnic Families in America*, ed. Charles Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein 2nd. ed. (New York: Elsevier, 1981). For an understanding of workers' class perceptions see Ely Chinoy, *Automobile Workers and the American Dream* (New York: Random House, 1955) and Robert E. Lane, *Political Ideology* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1962).

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