

New Jersey

County Formation

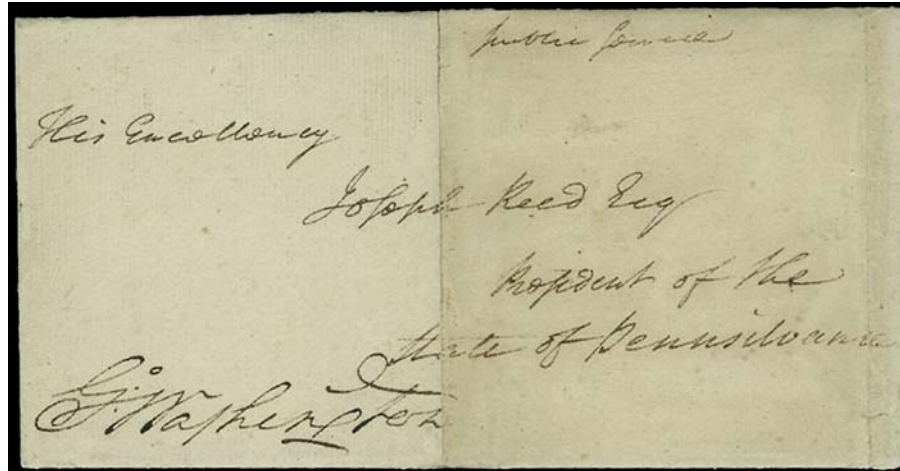


By Jean R. Walton



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GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE!



Letter sent from George Washington at Morristown NJ to the President of the State of Pennsylvania.

FOREWORD

New Jersey is a unique state – long in history and full of possibilities. It has existed from Colonial times, and has been a crossroads between New York City to Philadelphia from that time. The Post has crisscrossed it for all that time, from towns that existed then and perhaps no longer exist.

Counties formed over time. This is intended to give the reader an idea of which counties were formed when, and out of what territories – a necessary tool when dealing with post offices that have existed for a long time, first in one county, then in another – without moving an inch.

We hope you will find it useful.

THE CAPITAL QUESTION!

For Starters, where is the Capital of New Jersey?

This is a question not easily answered in a few words.

Trenton was made the Capital of New Jersey in 1790 – then in Hunterdon County. What was it before that?

Perhaps it is better to start at the beginning: New Jersey's first Capital was Elizabethtown (now simply Elizabeth), so declared in 1668, when New Jersey was a proprietorship.

Then the proprietorship of New Jersey was split (in 1674) in two proprietorships – East and West Jersey, often referred to as "The Jerseys." The Capital of East Jersey was moved to Perth Amboy (then just Amboy) in 1683. Burlington, founded in 1677, was named Capital of West Jersey in 1681.

In 1702, these two proprietorships were combined into one Crown Colony, but the two Capitals were maintained until the Revolutionary War, with the Governor sharing his time between each.

During the Revolution, and until 1790, the State Legislature met in Princeton – a point somewhat midway between the two Capitals. Although not actually named as Capital, Princeton certainly functioned as such during the Revolution. New Jersey became a State on December 18, 1787, and Trenton was declared the official Capital on November 25, 1790, replacing Perth Amboy and Burlington.

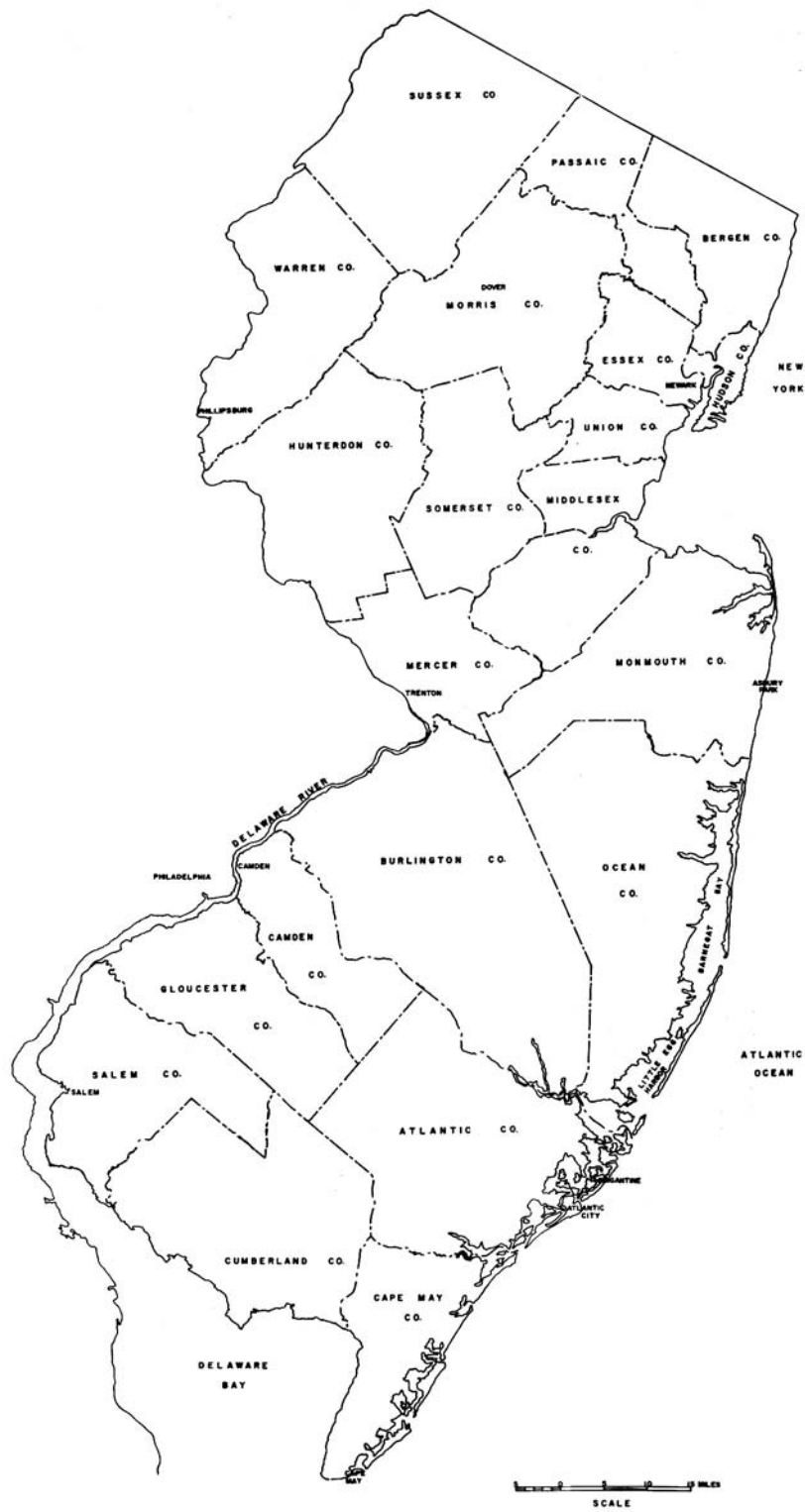
With the formation of Mercer County in 1838, Trenton, which had been in Hunterdon County, was now located in Mercer County – as it still is today.

Thanks to NJPHS member Ed Siskin for help with this information. Additional information also found on the web site, NJ History's Mysteries at <http://www.njhm.com/> with a specific article at <http://www.njhm.com/statecapitals.htm>.

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Mercer County	1838-02-22
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Passaic County	1837-02-07
Salem County	1694-05-17
Somerset County	1688-05-00
Sussex County	1753-05-16
Union County	1857-03-19
Warren County	1824-11-20



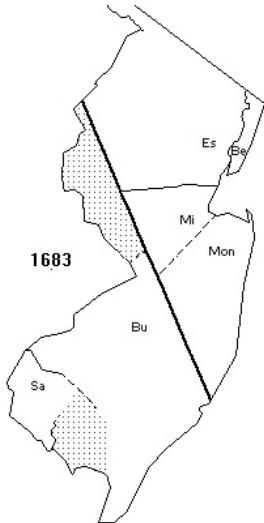
From Smith & Kay, *New Jersey Postal History*

NEW JERSEY, SHOWING PRESENT COUNTIES

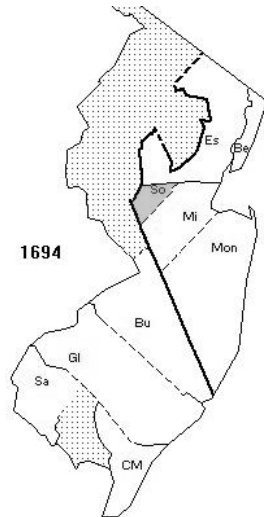
New Jersey County Formation

New Jersey, as a colony, was originally East and West Jersey, divided by a line drawn from a point in the NW along the Delaware River to a point on the Jersey shoreline near Little Egg Harbor.

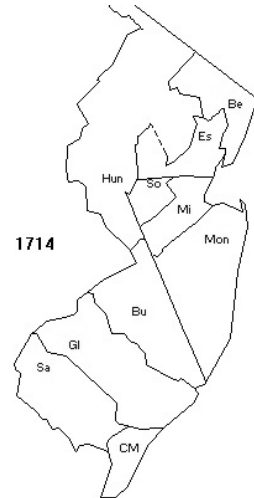
New Jersey did not always have 21 counties. It began – as a colony – with only 4 in 1683 [Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, and Monmouth], soon to expand to 9 in 1694, with the addition of Gloucester, Cape May, Burlington and Salem in West Jersey, and Somerset in East Jersey. But it has evolved over time and here are the broad strokes:



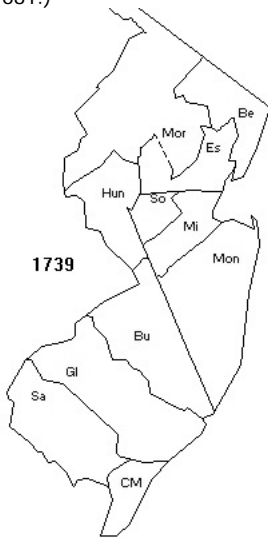
1683 4 original counties
The original 4 counties, Bergen, Essex, Middlesex & Monmouth in East Jersey, were established in 1683. (This map shows Burlington & Salem in West Jersey because courts were established there in 1681.)



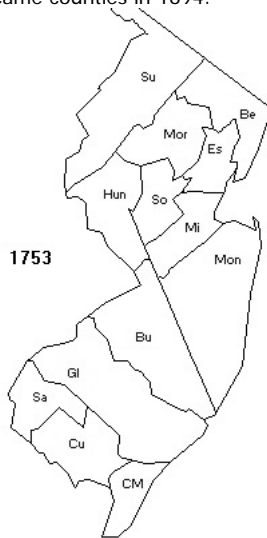
1694 4 becomes 9
In West Jersey, Gloucester was created in 1686; In East Jersey, Somerset was established in 1688. Again in West Jersey, Cape May County was formed in 1692, and Burlington & Salem formally became counties in 1694.



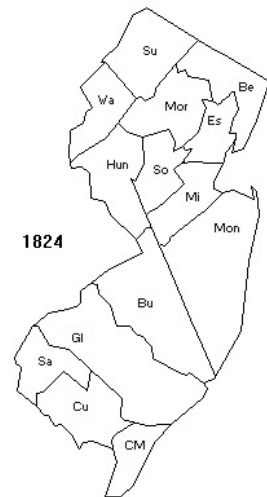
1714 9 becomes 10
In 1702, the two Jerseys – East and West – have consolidated. Hunterdon (in 1714) is added to the others.



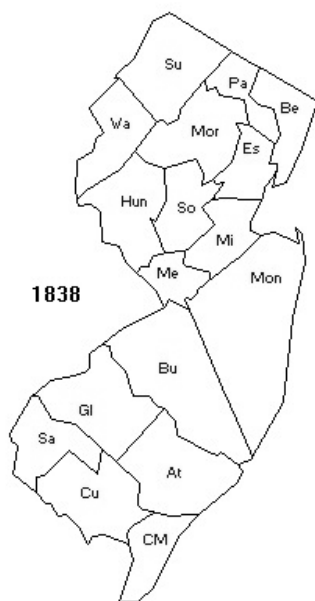
1739 10 becomes 11
Morris County is formed in 1739, from Hunterdon County.



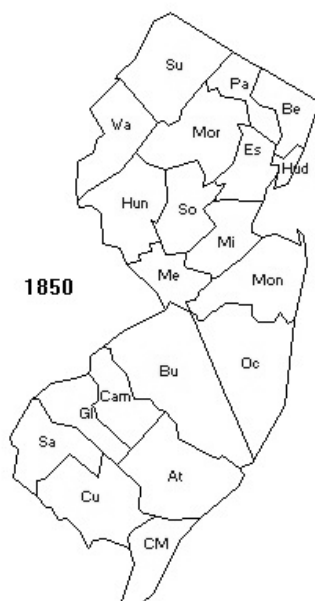
1753 11 becomes 13
In 1748, Cumberland is formed from parts of Salem. Sussex is formed from parts of Morris in 1753.



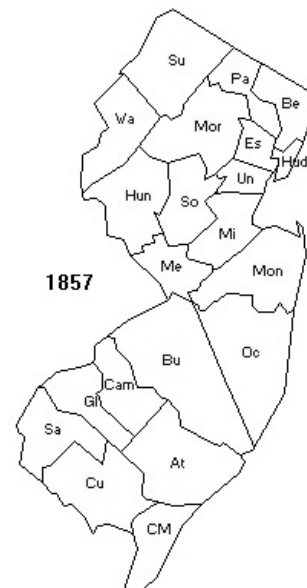
1824 13 becomes 14
Sussex is divided to form Warren County in 1824. (Note the northern border with NY, redrawn in 1773.)



1838 **14 becomes 17**
 In 1837, half of Gloucester becomes Atlantic. Passaic is formed from parts of Bergen & Morris, and in 1838, Mercer is established, and includes the Capital of Trenton.



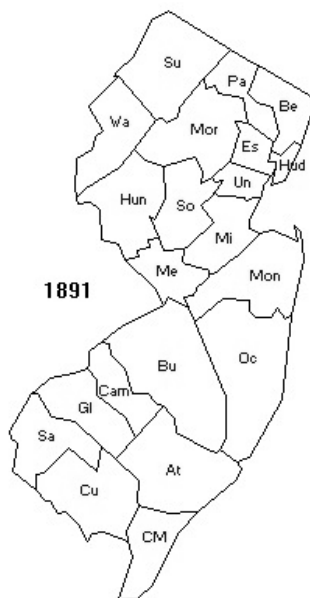
1850
 Hudson (1840), Camden (1844) & Ocean (1850) are carved out of neighboring counties. Gloucester has become but a shadow of its former self.



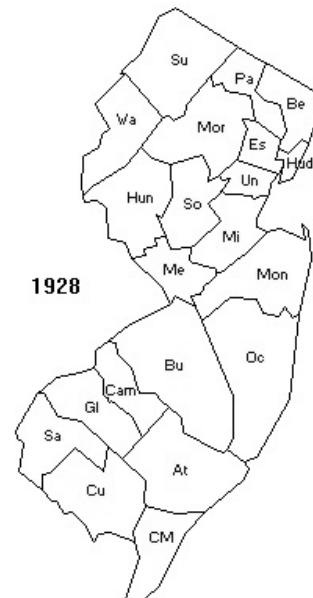
1857 **20 becomes 21**
 The last county to be formed in New Jersey [so far!] was Union, cutting Essex in half and taking a bit of Middlesex in 1857.

So by 1857, New Jersey had all 21 of its current counties. Minor changes occurred after that - some shifts in territory occurred, barely noticeable on a map of this size, except for the notable change in Burlington County; the one county that still spanned the State from the Delaware River to the Atlantic Ocean lost its ocean access to Ocean County in 1891, ceding Little Egg Harbor Twp. To Ocean Co.

Otherwise this map has remained largely the same since that time.



1891



1928

These great maps are from <http://www.mynewjerseygenealogy.com/index.htm#4> and http://www.familyhistory101.com/maps/nj_cf.html

Hence we end up with an historical list of New Jersey's 21 counties, as follows:

County	date formed	from
Bergen Co.	1683-03-01	East Jersey
Essex Co.	1683-03-01	East Jersey
Middlesex Co.	1683-03-01	East Jersey
Monmouth Co.	1683-03-01	East Jersey
Gloucester Co.	1686-05-28	Burlington
Somerset Co.	1688-05-00	Middlesex
Cape May Co.	1692-11-12	West Jersey
Burlington Co.	1694-05-17	West Jersey
Salem Co.	1694-05-17	West Jersey
Hunterdon Co.	1714-03-13	Burlington & West Jersey
Morris Co.	1739-03-15	Hunterdon
Cumberland Co.	1748-01-19	Salem
Sussex Co.	1753-05-16	Morris
Warren Co.	1824-11-20	Sussex
Atlantic Co.	1837-02-07	Gloucester
Passaic Co.	1837-02-07	Bergen & Essex
Mercer Co.	1838-02-22	Burlington, Hunterdon, & Middlesex
Hudson Co.	1840-02-22	Bergen
Camden Co.	1844-03-13	Gloucester
Ocean Co.	1850-02-15	Monmouth
Union Co.	1857-03-19	Essex & Middlesex

List courtesy Kay & Smith, *New Jersey Postal History*, Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, MA, 1977.



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