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SOME TRAVELER'S-EYE VIEWS OF THE JERSEYMAN

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TAKING a trip and writing a book about it have been conjoined and engrossing activities ever since the time of Xenophon, or maybe Moses. Along with almost any other part of the world one might mention, North America has been host to countless traveling observers who have contrived to place their printed records before the public for its instruction or entertainment, or, sometimes, annoyance.

For geographical reasons the itineraries of these tourists perhaps as often as not have included New Jersey (or the parcel of land we now know by that name). But being small and not dramatically different from its immediate neighbors, it has been accorded less attention than some of its friends might think it was entitled to. Nevertheless a great number of foreigners who sojourned in the state or settled here and many visitors from other parts of this country or merely from one section of the state to another have provided a rather surprising quantity of comments, usually brief, on the scenery, the farms, the towns, and the denizens they encountered.

People being the subject most people are most interested in, it is the purpose of this article to assemble in a broadly chronological order some of the more informative remarks these travelers have made concerning the Jerseyman and Jerseywoman. If these comments have a special value it derives from the fact that the views of outsiders looking in are likely to have a candor and a freshness of

vision that may not characterize the views of an established resident. By the nature of the case the visitor sees differently and often not less truly.

Contradictions among the commentators are very noticeable but should be no cause for surprise. Such contradictions no doubt sometimes indicate that the reporters saw what squared with their expectations or desires, but they may equally often indicate that what was reported was actually there to be seen if looked for in the right place. For both then and now New Jersey, though small, has been a greatly diversified state from almost any angle of inspection. A combining of these varied glimpses extracted from many visitors' accounts may do something toward creating, if not a composite portrait, at least some unfinished sketches of the more noticeable features of people who have been found in New Jersey during the last three centuries or so. In any event the following notes, though necessarily fragmentary and disconnected, give some indication of the way the Jersey folk, individually or in groups or in the mass, have looked to outsiders.*

The Seventeenth Century

The horde of scribbling travelers who have favored New Jersey with their attentions, complimentary or otherwise, were arriving in considerable numbers throughout much of the seventeenth century. Among them were explorers or settlers from the British Isles or promoters of settlement by their fellow-Britishers. In letters and pamphlets published in the home country they dwelt upon the living conditions and natural phenomena they found in the new land. Inevitably they had something to say about the original "Jerseyman," the Indian, whom they were inclined to look upon somewhat as upon the other natural phenomena, that is to say as something to be used or at least accepted. Between about 1638 and 1698 these newcomers habitually characterized the Indians as "gentle, tractable and docible," or "very kind and civil to any of the Christians" and respectful

* With a half-dozen exceptions the books and articles mentioned in these pages are available in the library of Rutgers University. The article is based on a small part of the material contained in my forthcoming *New Jersey in Travelers' Accounts 1524-1970: A Descriptive Bibliography*, to be published by The Scarecrow Press. In order to lessen a catalogue effect in this paper I have omitted from the text many names of writers and titles of books, especially very minor ones, and also numerous specific dates. The names and titles can be found in the footnotes, and the missing dates of visits can usually be assumed to approximate the dates of publication. The references in the notes have been abbreviated as much as possible.

toward each other, or "very loving to us," or "harmless," or serviceable and friendly—except an occasional one in liquor.¹

A more detailed and balanced estimate of the New Jersey Indians was presented by Peter Martensson Lindeström, a Swede who was in the New World in 1654-1656. Sailing up the Delaware he visited the mouth of many New Jersey streams and thus gained a chance to observe the natives, whose merits he characterized in these terms: well proportioned, straight as an arrow, skillful in handwork, willing, clever, ready to learn, brave, daring, charitable, wide awake, inquisitive, patient, industrious. At the same time they were, in his judgment, revengeful, mischievous, haughty, wanton, bestial, untruthful, thievish, shameless, unchaste. In sum he adjudged them to be "more inclined towards bad than towards good."²

This final estimate of Lindeström's might well have been protested by Jasper Danckaerts, a Hollander who came to these shores seeking a home for the Labadists, a rigid Calvinistic sect. The New Jersey Indians met with his approval partly in that they hated the Quakers for their alleged deceit and covetousness—and Mr. Danckaerts never squandered any love on those Quakers. A more personal reason for his good opinion was that while he and two associates were trekking through New Jersey in December of 1679, a village of Indians hospitably gave them a meal of boiled beans and bread served by their queen, no less. Thereafter an Indian man shouldered their sacks, escorted them to the Millstone River, and conveyed them safely across in a canoe, although the water was very high and running "like a sluice."³

The prevailingly favorable attitude of these early observers toward the Indian is no doubt explained in part by a desire to present the colony in as attractive a light as possible to prospective settlers. But it is a historical fact that the relatively unwarlike nature of the New Jersey Indians and the relative humanity of the white pioneers resulted in much less hostility between the natives and the newcomers than existed in some parts of America.

¹ Thomas Yong, "A breife Relation . . . 1634," *Narratives*, ed. A. C. Myers (1959), 48; Gabriel Thomas, *An Historical and Geographical Account* (1698), Myers, *op. cit.*, 340-341; George Fox, *A Journal* (1694, repr. 1924), 286; John Cockburn, "A Letter," George Scot, *The Model of the Government* (1685), 266-267; Thomas Budd, *Good Order* (1685, repr. 1902), 65; John Crips, A letter to England 1677, Samuel Smith, *The History of Nova-Caesarea* (1765), 103-104.

² Lindeström, *Geographia Americae* (1925), 191-192.

³ Danckaerts, *Journal* (1913), 155-160.

From 1700 to the Revolution

Because of its steady increase, the white population after the early years almost crowded the red man out of the travelers' books. In the years of the eighteenth century preceding the Revolutionary War, the comments on the people of New Jersey were at times pitying, disapproving, or patronizing and now and then mildly laudatory. A Quaker missionary from England who held a meeting in the court house at Freehold reported the people there to be ignorant and devoid of any profession of religion.⁴ But among those suffering disparagement for moral reasons were, somewhat surprisingly, some of the Quakers themselves. The noted Lutheran clergyman Henry Melchior Muhlenberg wrote of passing a New Jersey inn in 1749 from which arose a tumult as of "Sodom and Gomorrah" perpetrated by a group of Quakers from a nearby factory.⁵ Violence, profanity, and intemperance were conspicuous traits of another Quaker, a farmer to whom a young German was unhappily indentured, said farmer threatening to shoot him and finally swapping him for a yoke of oxen.⁶

At least as early as the first decades of the eighteenth century the dwellers in the Pine Barrens were being observed and commented on as a people apart. A ministerial Quaker from England journeyed through the "Dismal Marshes" in the Egg Harbor region extending the love of truth to "the poor dark people thereaway."⁷ To another minister, Anglican in this case, the people born and bred in the pine forests had "neither Religion nor Manners" and did not so much as "know a Letter of a Book."⁸ The Jersey-born Philip Vickers Fithian of Greenwich Tea-Party fame, an itinerant Presbyterian preacher, found his swamp audiences, though reputedly impertinent, to be civil to him and discerning critics of preaching, requiring not bluster but good speaking, good sense, sound doctrine, and neat appearance. Much less commendable were the settlers of low estate from New Jersey whom Fithian encountered in the Juniata Valley of Pennsylvania. His comment was: "A Jersey-Man & an impertinent, every-

⁴ Samuel Bownas, *An Account of the Life* (1759), 192.

⁵ Muhlenberg, *Journal*, I (1942), 227.

⁶ Johann C. Büttner, *Narrative* (1915), 28-39.

⁷ John Fothergill, *An Account* (1754), 101-103.

⁸ Thomas Thompson, *An Account* (1758, repr. 1937), 19-20.

Way troublesome Scoundrell seem to be Words of nearly the same Meaning.”⁹

When a missionary from Connecticut in 1744-1745 took up his work among the Indians in the Crosswicks area, he detected them on occasion to be engaged in idolatrous feasting and dancing, they having “met together to worship devils.” Eventually they became attentive listeners to his preaching, which moved them to sobs and groans and cries for mercy, and many were baptized.¹⁰ The Anglican clergyman referred to above found the Indians to be honest but cruel and vengeful. The gentry of the colony, as he saw them, lived in apparently substantial houses, in which the wife and daughters sat at work “like Minerva and her nymphs, without headdress, gown, shoes or stockings.” The people proved to be lively and democratic, and religious at least to the extent that many sects existed, choice of allegiance among which was determined by the wives. The poor were better off than in most places in that they were able to get their children into good families by the age of six or seven.¹¹ Andrew Burnaby, another clergyman from England and an admirer of New Jersey, saw the typical inhabitant as “good-natured, hospitable, and of a more liberal turn” than the Pennsylvanians. The women of New Brunswick were, along with those of Philadelphia, the handsomest he saw in America.¹² The accuracy of this ecclesiastic’s appraisal of feminine pulchritude was confirmed by a British naval officer who declared that New Brunswick was “celebrated for the number of its beauties.”¹³

Among the early reporters on the Swedes of South Jersey were certain fellow-Swedes who came on scientific or religious missions. Of these at least one, Peter Kalm, naturalist, is not unknown today. Devoting the years 1748-1750 to scientific investigation in this country, he spent considerable time among the Jersey Swedes. Though he recorded much of a historical nature that he learned from hearsay about these people, he made fewer personal observations than one might wish. His chief comment about those whom he actually met was that they were steadily substituting English for Swedish because,

⁹ Fithian, *Journal, 1775-1776* (1934), 251, 100.

¹⁰ David Brainerd, *The Life and Diary* (1949), 172-174, 215 ff.

¹¹ Thomas Thompson, *A Letter* (1756), repr. *Proc. N. J. Hist. Soc.*, LXXIV, 293-303.

¹² Burnaby, *Travels* (1775), 59, 55.

¹³ William Owen, “Narrative . . . 1766-1771,” *Bull. of N. Y. Pub. Libr.*, XXXV, 662.

English being the principal language of the land, they were ashamed to talk in their native tongue. Some born of Swedish parents were unable to speak Swedish, and others, when addressed in that language, replied in English. Such evidence convinced Kalm that the Swedish language was doomed to extinction in America within a half-century or so.¹⁴ This observation was in agreement with the testimony of the Reverend Abraham Reincke, who came from Sweden to New Jersey in the 1740s. By this time, he asserted, hardly a single genuine Swede was to be found in the Raccoon (now Swedesboro) district because of intermarriage with Dutch, Germans, and especially English, and the Swedish language had become so corrupt that it was unintelligible without a knowledge of English.¹⁵

Two decades later Pastor Wrangel, another visitor from Sweden, was distressed to discover that his fellow-countrymen, particularly in the Egg Harbor area, were very ignorant of the Christian faith for lack of a Lutheran minister over a twenty-year period. Naturally such evil practices as drinking and dancing were painfully common, pre-eminently in connection with three- or four-day celebrations of weddings. This depravity was owing in part, the good pastor averred, to the deplorable influences of Quakers.¹⁶ In and around Raccoon, however, conditions were apparently more creditable. At least the Reverend Nicholas Collin, who arrived from Sweden in 1770, was convinced that the people thereabouts were more moral than most of those of the old countries. He further testified that the ladies were not ugly except for the lack of teeth, which they lost before the age of twenty, probably, he opined, because of their great fondness for fruit and hot tea. Democratically the wealthy landowners did their own ploughing while their barefoot and carelessly dressed women-folk sat around sipping tea, coffee, and chocolate. When the war began many people who had been hot for battle lost all enthusiasm and took to the woods. In the forests east of Raccoon "the wild people" abounded.¹⁷

Peter Kalm also contributed a small bit about another national group. In New Brunswick he learned that the Dutch from Albany were nearly the sole residents of that town's Albany Street, so named for an obvious reason. These folk associated only with each other

¹⁴ Kalm, *The America of 1750* (1937), 683.

¹⁵ "Reincke's Journal," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XXXIII, 101.

¹⁶ "Peter Wrangel's Trip," *N. J. Hist.*, LXXXVII, 7-31.

¹⁷ Collin, *Journal and Biography* (1936), 25, 207-296.

and almost never mingled with their fellow-townsmen, "living as it were quite separate from them." It would seem that, unlike the Swedes, who hoped to be mistaken for English people, the Dutch were determined to prevent such an unflattering misconception.¹⁸ It is doubtful that they would have been gratified by the testimony of a ministerial English Quaker, who held a meeting among the Dutch of New Brunswick in the 1740s, which "answerd pretty well considering the Instability of the People."¹⁹ An amusing allegation concerning New Brunswick's near neighbor was made by a visitor from the West Indies to the effect that Perth Amboy, though possessing a fine harbor and other facilities for trade, would probably always be poor because of the laziness of its inhabitants.²⁰

The Revolution

The war inevitably brought hordes of visitors to New Jersey; some were refugees, most were soldiers. Among those whose recollections have been preserved for later readers was Eliza Susan Quincy (née Morton), wife of President Josiah Quincy of Harvard. As a young girl she was brought by her parents to Basking Ridge because of the British occupation of New York. The patriotic exiles were not well received by the country people near Basking Ridge, who, according to the writer, were too ignorant and selfish to understand their hardships and who required them to pay enormous prices for everything.²¹

Four days after the Battle of Trenton Captain Thomas Rodney of Delaware, who had been involved in the engagement, wrote his brother joyously assuring him that as a result of that success "Jersey will be the most Whiggish Colony on the Continent; the very *Quakers* declare for taking up arms."²² Somewhat less warlike were certain young ladies in the New Brunswick neighborhood, who, according to the Hessian Colonel Carl E. C. von Donop, a few months later attended a "sylvan fête" given by the Hessian officers.²³ Such sociability might have been taken to reinforce the statement of a British agent sent over in 1778 to work for peace, who wrote that most Americans he conversed with in the Jerseys and Philadelphia

¹⁸ Kalm, *op. cit.*, 121.

¹⁹ Samuel Hopwood, "Travels," *Bull. of Friends Hist. Assn.*, XXXIX, 93-94.

²⁰ James Birket, *Some Cursory Remarks, 1750-1751* (1916), 46.

²¹ Quincy, *Memoir* (1861), 17-36.

²² Rodney, "Letter to . . . Caesar Rodney," *American Archives*, 5th series, III (1853), cols. 1486-1487.

²³ Donop, "Letters," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, LXII, 497.

lamented the separation from England, deplored the Declaration of Independence, and detested the French alliance.²⁴

But the natives figured much more patriotically in the vivacious chronicle of Joseph Plumb Martin, a Massachusetts soldier, in which he recorded that on the torrid march across the state which culminated in the Battle of Monmouth the inhabitants of Princeton brought out some casks of toddy, which understandably slowed down the progress of the troops somewhat. The ladies concerned in this hospitable offering were, it seems, "all beautiful." In fact he insisted that the women of New Jersey and Philadelphia were the handsomest in the United States.²⁵ Further kind words about Jersey folk were uttered by the Marquis de Chastellux, who at Liberty Corner in 1780 found "tolerable lodgings and the best people in the world."²⁶ What especially impressed a military surgeon serving in the Paramus area was the "ease and happy competency" of the Dutch thereabouts in their one-story houses of rough stone. They were content with very ordinary furniture (apparently mere Queen Anne stuff!) and a general lack of superfluities, their ambition being "never to complain of an empty purse."²⁷

It might be doubted that the good folk of New Jersey ever withstood a shrewder rapier thrust from any visitor than that delivered by British-born Charles Lee in a letter to Major General Horatio Gates following Lee's misconduct at the Battle of Monmouth: "Pennsylvania and the Jerseys . . . are inhabited by the refuse of the Irish, the Descendants of the worst part of the Germans and by the first Hypocrites of the most hypocritical sects—stiff neck'd Presbyterians, Quakers, New Light Men and the whole family of the Devil." In his eyes their most conspicuous traits were thieving, lying, stupidity, avarice, and sordidness.²⁸ (It could be that General Lee was slightly prejudiced.)

From the Revolution to 1800

During the years following the Revolution America was a more controversial political entity than it had been previously. Naturally

²⁴ John Berkenhout, "Journal," *Travels in the Am. Colonies*, ed. N. D. Mereness (1916), 580.

²⁵ Martin, *A Narrative* (1830), 89-90.

²⁶ Chastellux, *Travels in North America* (1963), I, 185.

²⁷ James Thacher, *A Military Journal* (2nd ed., 1827), 154-156.

²⁸ Lee, "Letter," *Collections of N. Y. Hist. Soc. for 1873* (1874), 321-323.

the travelers, who were presumably gaining in sophistication, would arrive with varying shades of political and social conviction, and in the light of these personal philosophies they would be disposed to assay the recently formed states, including New Jersey. For example Francisco de Miranda, a Venezuelan soldier and patriot fleeing from his Spanish opponents, declared that he never saw a happier people or one on a more general level of equality than that of New Jersey. Physical robustness and religious toleration united with other virtues to make Jersey, "taken all together . . . one of the most delightful lands my eyes have seen."²⁹ An English girl, visiting in the Raritan Valley, in her own way subscribed to Miranda's opinion when she informed an English correspondent that she had received from the people of the region courteous attentions unknown to her in her home country. "America for ever then I say. I might have stayed a good while in old England before any of your flea bitten folks would have waited upon me."³⁰ At a Lawrenceville inn the French reformer Duc de la Rochefoucault Liancourt mingled with a large crowd drawn there by a horse race. Although they asked him many questions and borrowed his pen, he pronounced them the best people in the world. (Of course this phrase, already employed by Chastellux, was more likely to be used at this time by French noblemen than by British.)

Because of his concern with social problems La Rochefoucault was alert to the slavery issue, and he observed that while New Jersey's laws provided very little protection for the slaves, some blacks were as well treated as free laborers could be.³¹ According to Brissot de Warville, a French political figure later guillotined, the sentiment for emancipation in New Jersey was stronger in the western part of the state than in the eastern.³² About 1783 John Witherspoon, a Scottish-born clergyman who became president of Princeton, wrote that in New Jersey slaves were "exceedingly well used," especially by the Dutch, often being admitted to the table with the whites.³³ In the estimation of yet another visitor of French origin, Theophile Cazenove, the various categories of humble folk in the state earned a very humble rating. In North Jersey the free Negroes were, he

²⁹ Miranda, *The New Democracy: Travels 1783-1784* (1963) 70-74, 95.

³⁰ Ann Capnerhurst, A letter of 1788, *Proc. N. J. Hist. Soc.*, LV, 283.

³¹ La Rochefoucault Liancourt, *Travels* (2nd ed., 1800), II, 357-366.

³² Brissot de Warville, *New Travels* (1792, repr. 1964), 227-228.

³³ Witherspoon, *Works* (1800-1801), IV, 306.

insisted, quarrelsome, lazy, dishonest, their children uneducated, and were worse off than when slaves. A white farm hand got all of £30 to £40 a year, "and you must also treat him politely." In the Long Valley area the farm houses of the whites were kept in a slovenly state, the women having too many children and too much work, though surprisingly well dressed on Sunday. The lack of home comforts drove many farmers to heavy drinking at the taverns.³⁴

More reprehensible, supposedly, was the deportment of some inhabitants in the Penn's Neck section whom an itinerant Methodist preacher characterized as "a set of as hardened sinners as were out of hell." Almost equally deplorable to him were certain Methodists in Cape May who in 1789 refused to sit in class meeting with a well behaved half-breed Indian. When the preacher refused to expel him, two members withdrew from the society.³⁵ Another Methodist minister who found the going difficult in New Jersey was the noted Francis Asbury. Coldness and apathy, all too evident in his audiences, prompted the touching remark that in one week in 1786 he rode about 150 miles "over dead sands, and among a dead people, and a long space between meals."³⁶

The servant problem was a serious one in the Newark region, as a clothier from Wiltshire was given to understand. There it was usually thought necessary to separate the quarters of the slaves from the master's residence to prevent pilfering, and the white servants refused to work except by the month and at "very high wages" (\$8 or \$10 a month), and they generally stipulated that they were to sit at table with master and mistress.³⁷

Unimpressive was the cultural level in New Jersey in the judgment of a Santo Domingan musician known only as Puech, whose Elizabethtown audience in the 1790s mistook the instrumental tuning up for an overture, the ensuing program inducing chiefly slumber on the part of the masculine auditors. Puech further noted that a formal tea at Burlington was a very stiff and grave affair with politics and the weather as the chief subjects of conversation. In New Jersey as elsewhere in the United States Sunday was the saddest day of the week. Bible reading was the sole recreation; even mending a hole in a

³⁴ *Cazenove's Journal, 1794* (1922), 1-17.

³⁵ Benjamin Abbott, *Experience and Gospel Labours* (1830), 60, 148.

³⁶ Asbury, *The Journal and Letters* (1958), I, 184, 520-521.

³⁷ Henry Wansey, *The Journal* (1796), 99.

stocking was considered a sin. As for "the less orthodox of these peasants," they sat on the rail fence and yawned at the blackbirds.³⁸ An almost equally unsympathetic opinion was expressed by William Dunlap, playwright and painter, who traveled a short distance from New York to Elizabethtown, where he heard a Methodist sermon on possession by devils, apparently well adapted to the small audience of what he considered to be ignorant and stupid people, "except for some youth."³⁹

Interesting confirmation of the remark by the man from the West Indies previously mentioned was provided by Julian Niemcewicz, a temporary resident from Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, in his statement that Perth Amboy's "inhabitants are famous for their indolence."⁴⁰ (If we may trust these two gentlemen, this condition prevailed for at least fifty years. What a nice long rest!)

A more welcome impression certain Jersey people had already made on several travelers was reemphasized by a New England clergyman in whose chivalrous opinion as large a proportion of "industrious, discreet, amiable, genteel and handsome women" existed in New Jersey as in any of the thirteen states.⁴¹ A balanced appraisal of the New Jersey character was that made by a widely traveled Englishman who in 1796 saw the Middle States, including this one, to be in general a modification of Northern prudence, morality, and industry and Southern generosity, improvidence, and dissipation.⁴²

From 1800 to the Civil War

In the decades of the nineteenth century preceding the Civil War visits to the United States by foreigners, especially English, armed with pen and paper, became increasingly common, and to an extent very annoying to Americans, they found more to disparage than to approve. Even the mild and England-loving Washington Irving denounced this tendency when he wrote in his essay "English Writers on America" (1819): "It is with feelings of deep regret that I observe the literary animosity daily growing up between England and America. Great curiosity has been awakened of late with respect to the United States, and the London press has teemed with volumes

³⁸ Puech, "Odyssey," *Proc. Am. Antiquarian Soc.*, LXVII, 34-42.

³⁹ Dunlap, *Diary* (1930), I, 94-97.

⁴⁰ Niemcewicz, *Under Their Vine and Fig Tree* (1965), 32.

⁴¹ Jedidiah Morse, *The American Geography* (1789), 292.

⁴² Thomas Twining, *Travels in America* (1894), 90.

of travels through the Republic; but they seem intended to diffuse error rather than knowledge. . . ." These writers "forget their usual probity and candor, in the indulgence of splenetic remark, and an illiberal spirit of ridicule." As late as 1869 James Russell Lowell's "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners" protested that "People came hither for scientific and not social ends. . . . We were cross-examined as a chemist cross-examines a new substance. Human? yes, all the elements are present, though abnormally combined. Civilized? Hm! that needs a stricter assay. No entomologist could take a more friendly interest in a strange bug."

Perhaps New Jersey, in so far as it was noticed, fared rather better at the hands of these inspectors than did the nation as a whole. For instance John Davis, a very minor British writer, observing several New Jersey families that had settled in Virginia, made the probably valid comparison that the Virginian supervised the work of others, was gregarious and talkative, and lived beyond his means, while the Jerseyman worked hard, kept to himself, and practiced the strictest economy.⁴³ Hospitality was sometimes set down as another Jersey virtue.⁴⁴ Achille Murat, son of the French king of Naples, considered the people of the state as well as of Pennsylvania and Delaware to consist largely of peaceable Quakers and Germans, distinguished by good nature, tranquility, and industry.⁴⁵

The inhabitants of Salem as seen by Charles Joseph Latrobe, English author of several travel books, displayed homely, hearty simplicity and hospitality; and the Swedish families thereabouts had discontinued intermarriage, to the betterment of the stock.⁴⁶ To a British naval captain, though New Jersey was poor and primitive, swamped between "two awful go-ahead neighbours," it was a quiet and religious state, Trenton's citizens being "great Dissenters, quiet Quakers, sober-sided, sober-minded," who did not want "a great, proud, corrupt city."⁴⁷ (And now look at it.) Several foreign witnesses, rejecting the "poor and primitive" diagnosis, spoke of the evident comfort and prosperity of the Jersey way of life.⁴⁸

⁴³ Davis, *Travels during 1798-1802* (1909), 401-402.

⁴⁴ Isaac Candler, *A Summary View* (1824), 146.

⁴⁵ Murat, *A Moral and Political Sketch* (1833), 10-11.

⁴⁶ Latrobe, *The Rambler in North America* (2nd ed., 1836), II, 86-88.

⁴⁷ John W. Oldmixon, *Transatlantic Wanderings* (1855), 29, 40.

⁴⁸ John D. Lewis, *Across the Atlantic* (1851), 47-48; William H. Russell, *My Diary* (1863), 31-32; Eduard de Montulé, *Travels in America 1816-1817* (1950), 21.

At least one European, Napoleon's brother Joseph Bonaparte, who took up residence in Bordentown where he built himself a conspicuous villa, bore testimony to Jersey honesty. During an absence in 1820 his house was destroyed by fire. His fellow-townsmen, at considerable risk, managed to rescue a good deal of his furniture, money, plate, jewels, etc., all of which was scrupulously returned to him, to his recorded amazement and admiration.⁴⁹

Among the highly favorable comments on the state was that of a young Massachusetts aristocrat, Elbridge Gerry, Jr., son of Madison's Vice-President. On a horseback trip he was making in 1813 he felt, as he rode from rural New York into New Jersey, that the past had yielded to the present. Impressively neat houses and skillful farming were the product of a people different from any others he had ever met: easy and decent of behavior, obliging, ready with information but not inquisitive like the Connecticut people.⁵⁰ Another American admirer of the state was the South Carolina novelist William Gilmore Simms, a frequent visitor in New Jersey. In *Southward Ho!* (1854), a combined travel book and short story collection, he remarked that the Jerseyman, when a gentleman, was of the best model, and even when not that was a good fellow. Not a conceited Gothamite or prim Philadelphian, he had a character of his own that was "not made up of the odds and ends of all sorts of people."⁵¹

There were detractors, however. The farmers in the northwest corner were described by a Connecticut man in 1817 as "a rough Sett in general" living in "quite mean" houses.⁵² A Scottish farmer saw a militia muster apparently in Middlesex County. The horses were beautiful, the soldiers "mostly small, thin, miserable-looking creatures."⁵³ Isaac Holmes, a temporary resident from England, had his doubts about local honesty when he saw a criminal, twice imprisoned for forgery, who on his release was welcomed by his fellow-townsmen as a "smart man" who had been unfortunately found guilty.⁵⁴ A book agent from Connecticut about 1823 discovered that cock-fighting and drinking were favorite Jersey pastimes.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Bonaparte, A Letter, Miriam V. Studley, *Historic New Jersey through Visitors' Eyes* (1964), 73-74.

⁵⁰ Gerry, *The Diary* (1927), 49-59.

⁵¹ Simms, *Southward Ho!*, 60.

⁵² Silas Cheseborough, "Journal of a Journey," *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XXXVII, 68-69.

⁵³ Patrick Shirreff, *A Tour* (1835), 18.

⁵⁴ Holmes, *An Account* (1823), 214.

⁵⁵ Peter Chandler, *A Biographical Sketch and Diary* (n. d.), 10, 16.

Probably unprejudiced were the findings of two English clergymen, who noted that the Presbyterians and Episcopalians at Morristown showed little interest in the church service and that at the Methodist church, where the men and women were separated, the spitting was continual, "like the drippings from the eaves on a rainy day." Here the sermon was shouted from beginning to end by a minister whose salary was \$500 a year for the support of himself, his wife, and three children.⁵⁶ Harriet Martineau, English writer and reformer, in certain parts of the country was given to understand that the people of New Jersey were all heathens, though she doubted that the report was entirely trustworthy.⁵⁷

If we may judge from the testimony of two visiting musicians, New Jersey's musical literacy had not advanced greatly since the days of Puech, quoted above. Sol Smith, a once prominent actor and theatrical manager and incidental musician, stated that around 1825 he and his wife in a program of comic and sentimental songs succeeded in drawing an audience of seven at Perth Amboy and of five at Elizabethtown. While residing at New Brunswick he gained favor with the townspeople by serving as organist at the Episcopal church and by other similar activities, but he realized that his reception there would in all probability have been widely different had he not kept his connection with the wicked stage a dark secret.⁵⁸ Some twenty-five years later it was the discovery of Louis Moreau Gottschalk, a highly gifted American pianist and composer, that "New Jersey is the poorest place to give concerts in the whole world except Central Africa." But "the Negro minstrel performers always draw the crowd."⁵⁹

New Jersey women continued to receive their share of attention, not all of it as favorable as that bestowed by the gallant gentlemen of the eighteenth century whom we have met. Around 1810 a Britisher dropped in on a commencement ball at Princeton. Among the young ladies, most of whom probably came from this state in those early days, he saw a number of handsome faces, but their dress though showy was in bad taste. When they danced they and their partners sprawled.⁶⁰ The noted British actress Fanny Kemble, going by stage coach from New York to Philadelphia, considered all the women

⁵⁶ Andrew Reed and James Matheson, *A Narrative* (1835), I, 44-49.

⁵⁷ Martineau, *Society in America* (1837), I, 184.

⁵⁸ Solomon F. Smith, *Theatrical Management* (1868), 34-40.

⁵⁹ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist* (1881, repr. 1964), 163.

⁶⁰ John Melish, *Travels* (1818), 109-114.

passengers to be pretty but incessant chatterers.⁶¹ (Maybe the worst chatterers were New Yorkers who were merely going through.) A Swedish naval expert spent some time in the hospitable Morristown area where he was surprised to see that the girls were busy sewing fine clothes but did no knitting or carding, and the women eschewed farm work entirely and showed no interest in home crafts. Perhaps, however, they did spend time reading Henry Fielding and similar authors, whose volumes he saw in some of the homes where he was entertained.⁶² An amusing attitude toward the propriety of certain social practices was encountered by Isaac Holmes, already mentioned, who was assured by a tavern keeper that the young ladies of his neighborhood, especially the Dutch, would absent themselves from home for three or four days at a stretch sleighing and bundling, but "the females" insisted that "the Dutch boys would never think of acting improperly," and the girls, 'twas said, never permitted any liberties.⁶³

Some American sight-seers gave their countrywomen even lower marks than did the foreigners. A Rhode Islander crossing the northwestern part of the state was convinced that Jersey horses were much more to be admired than Jersey women.⁶⁴ Even less flattering was the description of at least a limited parcel of Jersey women by a fellow-female, Mrs. Anne Royall, an outspoken woman from Maryland. In Philadelphia she saw a so-called Jersey market where twice a week the produce was minded by great overgrown shapeless New Jersey women, often far gone in liquor. "These females are a great curiosity, being rather thicker than long, and their faces like lady moon at the full."⁶⁵

As late as the 1820s the Dutch still attracted some notice as a distinctive group. An English geologist, visiting Communipaw, could find no inhabitant who would speak English.⁶⁶ And a Scottish author saw numerous Dutch in North Jersey, some of whom could hardly speak a word of English. But he reported that the Dutch were respected for honesty and uprightness though less enterprising than other groups.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Frances Kemble Butler, *Journal* (1835), I, 132.

⁶² Baron Klinkowström's *America, 1818-1820* (1952), 9-12.

⁶³ Holmes, *op. cit.*, 346-347.

⁶⁴ Rowse Taylor, "A Journey . . . 1811," *Bull. of Friends Hist. Soc.*, VIII, 94-95.

⁶⁵ Mrs. Royall's *Pennsylvania* (1829), I, 85-86.

⁶⁶ John Finch, *Travels* (1833), 13-14.

⁶⁷ James Stuart, *Three Years in North America* (1833), II, 23-28.

During the period we are now concerned with the Pine Barrens continued to be explored, with the already familiar emphasis on the extreme primitiveness of their inhabitants. The young Edward Shippen, later Admiral, about 1835 was taken by his mother on a trip that extended into this region where he was struck by the half-wild appearance of the natives and by the timorousness of the children generally clad in a single garment, who at their approach ran and hid "like wild rabbits."⁶⁸ A New York contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly* on a sightseeing trip about twenty-five years later was convinced that the natives, whom he called "Pine Rats," were a thievish, besotted lot, brutish in their ignorance and superstition.⁶⁹

The visitors of these pre-Civil War years were not unmindful of the Negroes they encountered in the state. An Englishman about 1818 considered them "sorely oppressed,"⁷⁰ and a man from Connecticut about five years later dubbed New Jersey "the land of slavery," in which land he saw a Negro chicken-thief given twenty lashes on his bare back a week after he had received thirty lashes. But he also reported that farm Negroes were generally well treated and that slaves were free here at age twenty-five.⁷¹ Fredrika Bremer, a Swedish novelist, noticed some ill treatment of Negro servants about 1850 at the Cape May hotels.⁷² At much the same time a Hungarian couple traveling with Louis Kossuth learned of 222 ex-slaves in the state still "in the intermediate condition of apprenticeship."⁷³

The one reference to white servants that I have picked up for these years was a statement by Frances Wright, a Scottish liberal, that she had met with instances of indentured servants being retained for wages after the expiration of their term and in time saving enough to buy a few acres of land.⁷⁴

From the Civil War to the Present

Throughout this period of a hundred years and more, travelers continued to visit New Jersey and continued to include the state in

⁶⁸ Shippen, "Reminiscences," *Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, LXXVIII, 210-211.

⁶⁹ Anon. "In the Pines," *Atlantic Monthly*, III, 560-569.

⁷⁰ Henry B. Fearon, *Sketches of America* (1818), 133-134.

⁷¹ Peter Chandler, *op. cit.*, 13, 15.

⁷² Bremer, *The Homes of the New World* (1854), I, 531.

⁷³ Francis and Theresa Pulszky, *White, Red, Black* (1853), II, 140.

⁷⁴ Wright, *Views* (1821, repr. 1963), 241.

their records. But from the evidence available to me it appears that they expressed a less frequent interest in the people than formerly. The prevailing stress was now on natural features and landscape, agriculture, cities and towns, summer resorts, educational institutions, travel conditions, and the like, with less attention to the human beings resident in such surroundings. Perhaps the majority of these travelers were more widely experienced than most of their predecessors, and consequently were reaching the conviction that a Jerseyman was too much like a New Yorker or a Pennsylvanian or whatever to justify an effort at individualizing him. A minority of visitors, however, more perceptive or more sociologically minded than their fellows, took special pains to characterize the people either as a whole or as a regional part of the population, and some of their analyses are among the most interesting and substantial I have come upon.

As noteworthy as any comment was that made by Walt Whitman. Born on Long Island and living mainly in Brooklyn and Washington until 1873, he spent his last years in Camden. In 1879 he journeyed across the state to Atlantic City and back and commemorated the trip in an essay that contains his appraisal of the people of New Jersey. Admitting that all human character is much the same, Whitman yet went on to describe the New Jersey brand as materialistic and obstinate, "but good sterling ore . . . good material for the future." In a moral and intellectual evaluation its standing would be neither the highest nor the lowest. "Thrift, wariness, stolidity prevail. The women are the best, as everywhere. There is a quality in the men analogous to open air, to barns and earth-fields and sea-shore—on a low plane, but real and breezy—most welcome and delightful to me." (This he found especially true of the middle and southern parts of the state.) "The Jerseyite has neither the sharpness of the New Englander nor the enterprise of the West . . . the common ranges of the people are sluggish, content with little, and hard to rouse. With all this I like them much. . . . Character is, indeed, on a low key, but it is fresh, independent and tough as a knot. . . . In a good many points they are like the Scotch, only not so *canny*."⁷⁵

The country folk appear with prevailing naïveté in some presentations made shortly before or after 1900. Several amateur mineralogists from Jersey City on a trip to the Franklin-Sterling zinc mines to collect specimens stayed at a very neat old Dutch farmhouse in the

⁷⁵ "Walt Whitman on New Jersey," Miriam V. Studley, *op. cit.*, 151-161.

area. The hospitable family offered the visitors a series of entertainments consisting of a prayer meeting in a schoolhouse, a husking bee, square dancing, and a song service of Moody and Sankey hymns accompanied by a reed organ.⁷⁶

Rather less engaging are the farm people to be encountered in a novel set in a small New Jersey country town, "*Doc.*" *Gordon* (1906), by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, who lived most of her life in Massachusetts until she came to Metuchen in 1902. The doctor's handyman is a "tall, lank Jerseyman, incessantly chewing." The patients, "stiffened with hereditary ideas," insist on large drafts of medicine, much of which is actually nothing but colored water. Living dull, hard working lives, they find being sick one of their few ways of attracting notice. These country people are either saturnine or effusively hospitable. One of them is described as "a genuine son of the New Jersey soil," his chief features being poor clothes, skin of "a clayey hue, as if he had been really cast from the mother earth," and a nasal drawl. The typical Jersey country person is depicted as ignorant and harsh, even with a streak of malice.

Another of Mrs. Freeman's novels, *By the Light of the Soul* (1907), has as its setting a New Jersey town within commuting distance of New York (perhaps Metuchen?). The heroine's mother, New England born and reared, has an abnormally active conscience; her father, a Jerseyman, possesses a conscience which, though not defective, "did not in the least interfere with his enjoyment of life." One character comes of a poor white family, a type flourishing in this state as well as in the South, according to the novelist, though less numerous here. The common people are made to speak in an excruciatingly ungrammatical way; for example: "I hadn't never saw her afore," "I ain't eat sence noon." (I wonder if New Jersey people ever really talked like that.) Mrs. Freeman's summarizing appraisal of her new home state was that the "red soil and the lapse towards Southern ease and shiftlessness of New Jersey" were a contrast with New England.⁷⁷

Village and rural people abound in the books of that tireless explorer of New Jersey, Henry Charleton Beck, journalist, folklorist,

⁷⁶ Arthur Chamberlain, "A Trip," *Exchangers' Monthly*, II, Nos. 1-12.

⁷⁷ Freeman, "*Doc.*" *Gordon*, 59, 60, 62, 154, 267-268; *By the Light of the Soul*, 3, 42, 146, 170, 253.

and clergyman. Mr. Beck repeatedly journeyed the length and breadth of the state, especially the southern half, seeking out forgotten towns, neglected nooks and corners, and little known legends and episodes, all of which went into the making of his very individualistic travel books. The local residents from whom he gleaned much of his information, were largely simple elderly people, who, loving their countryside, did not want to be anywhere else, and who, though usually of humble status, were content with their lot. Because of these qualities the reader senses in them an unassumed dignity that is very attractive.⁷⁸

An interesting glimpse of the average Jerseyman was obtained by a Delaware man who took his bride on a honeymoon by trolley to Maine. In New Jersey from Trenton northward a village-like or rustic atmosphere seemed to pervade the passengers and the towns except for Newark and Jersey City.⁷⁹

A quite different social and economic level was presented by Henry James in *The American Scene*, based on an extended journey he made in 1904 after a long absence from his native land. Taking a steamer from New York to the Jersey shore, he found himself surrounded by affluent young business men returning to their homes, and while driving along a road near the shore he was struck by the residences of these or other prosperous men—big villas that made a “loud” yet “benevolent” confession of “extreme expensiveness” without any sense of privacy or retirement. Everything and everybody seemed to have but one objective—to look and be looked at. The German Jews of the area tended to “the stout, the simple, the kind . . . the patriarchal.”⁸⁰

One of the bleakest representations of the people of New Jersey was that sketched in 1922 by her native son, Edmund Wilson, who turned into an outsider by virtue of his residence in New York, where he became a leading literary critic. To him the cities were dingy, the people “seedy and dull,” the life of the wealthy unbrilliant and stolid. The more enterprising citizens were drained off by New York and Philadelphia. Even the climate dulled the life. The state once

⁷⁸ Beck, see especially *Forgotten Towns* (1936, repr. 1961); *More Forgotten Towns* (1937, repr. 1963); *Fare to Midlands* (1939, repr. as *The Jersey Midlands*, 1962); *Jersey Genesis* (1945).

⁷⁹ Clinton W. Lucas, *A Trolley Honeymoon* (1904), 38-47.

⁸⁰ James, *The American Scene* (1907), 5-13.

had a charm but, except for Princeton (Wilson graduated from Princeton University), the inhabitants had murdered it.⁸¹

As blithely different a picture as one might wish was supplied in 1925 by Jennie Margerie Bly, an itinerant book agent with experience in many parts of the Union. To her the citizens of New Jersey "are a merry people and their little state . . . is a fairyland." (She must have sold scads of books in the "little state.") Coarseness was not in evidence at the shore resorts, which she preferred to those of the Pacific coast. As she saw them the people of South Jersey tended to be short, stout, and swarthy, but admirable. Concerning the state as a whole: "The air of care-free happiness and innocence . . . is what lends its charm." It is not "backwoodsy, but quaint and old-fashioned."⁸² (Who could resist such a book agent?)

But for Peter Kavanaugh New Jersey about 1950 was no more a fairyland than it had been for Edmund Wilson. This former professor from Trinity College, Dublin, characterized the state as a bog physically and culturally, a place without either relaxation or reflection. A Puritan state, it had become a hideaway for criminals.⁸³

A traveler who found at least one happy island in the midst of the bog was James Morris, an English journalist living for a time around 1954 in Cranbury. Here life centered largely about the fire-station, the Presbyterian church, and the over-indulged but friendly and well-mannered children. The favorite activity for nearly everybody on winter evenings was skating on the village pond. The homes were mostly comfortable, trim, and clean. The town contained numerous do-gooders, who performed "works of active good," especially among the migrant Negroes brought to the district to help harvest the potatoes. Such distinction as existed between whites and blacks was purely economic. To Morris Cranbury was an anachronistic village that "defied the powerful influences of modern Americanism."⁸⁴

During the period we are now examining, traveling investigators with a sociological bent gave particular attention to two segments of the state's population which, because of their environmental isolation and perhaps their origin, developed some distinctive characteristics that seemed to set them apart from their fellow-Jerseyans. These two

⁸¹ Wilson, "New Jersey: The Slave of Two Cities," Ernest Gruening, *These United States* (1923), 56-66.

⁸² Bly, *Adventures of a Book Agent* by Audrey Allison (*pseud.*) (1925), chap. 2.

⁸³ Kavanaugh, "Report on New Jersey," *American Mercury*, LXXV, 54-60.

⁸⁴ Morris, *As I Saw the U. S. A.* (1956), 10-17.

groups are of course the so-called Pineys of South Jersey and the so-called Jackson Whites, who would more properly be styled the Ramapo Mountains people.

As we have seen, from about 1725 the dwellers in the Pine Barrens, when noticed at all, were usually denominated "the poor dark people," "the wild people," or "Pine Rats." In the last decade of the nineteenth century a magazine writer who had traveled widely in the United States considered them among the most benighted of Northern whites.⁸⁵ This attitude of denigration reached a peak about 1913 when Elizabeth S. Kite of the Vineland Training School published a field study of the Pineys based on her personal investigations. Miss Kite affirmed that the typical inhabitants of the Pines avoided labor at all costs, were lustful, sometimes incestuous, generally moralless, frequently of a mental age of about nine. She saw them as "barnacles upon our civilization," all their higher functions having been "atrophied through disuse." She was more than a little disposed to believe that they had permanently fallen below the possibility of improvement, and so were spreading a contagion through society.⁸⁶ It was chiefly as a result of Miss Kite's article that there emerged the widely accepted image of the Pineys as a degenerate group, typified by a subnormal family of inbred "Kallikaks."

A quite different impression was conveyed by the essays of Professor Cornelius Weygandt of the University of Pennsylvania, who had had many outings and vacations in South Jersey from his boyhood down to the time of his writing (about 1940). In his experience the Pineys were almost always well mannered, friendly, quiet, optimistic, untroubled by envy or an inferiority complex. Not very steady workers, being "a gypsy hearted lot," they "must have a free foot to be happy."⁸⁷

Herbert Norman Halpert, a widely experienced folklorist, wrote his doctoral dissertation at the University of Indiana on *Folktales and Legends from the New Jersey Pines*. This work involved numerous extended visits to the Pine Barrens between 1936 and 1940, out of which grew an exceptionally intimate acquaintance with the people. He found them at first very reserved and suspicious of strangers, partly as an expression of their resentment of the contempt commonly

⁸⁵ Julian Ralph, "Old Monmouth," *Harper's New Monthly Mag.*, LXXXIX, 337.

⁸⁶ Kite, "The Pineys," *The Survey*, XXXI, 7-13, 38-40.

⁸⁷ Weygandt, *Down Jersey* (1940), 53, 283, 288-289.

bestowed upon them by outsiders. But once accepted he discovered them to be "extremely friendly and hospitable." Two things they especially prided themselves on: their capacity for doing hard work and doing it well, and their honesty. Getting anything for nothing was contrary to their basic morality. In their simple way of living emotional outlet was gained largely through fighting, religion, sex, drinking, some sports, dances, singing, and story-telling, in which activities, as in their work, competition often played a major part. The educational level was, not surprisingly, low, few having gone beyond the fifth grade. Most of the older people, whom Dr. Halpert especially respected, accepted the supernatural element in their folktales as simple fact which helped to explain the moral nature of the universe. In general this folklorist was persuaded that the Pineys' way of life, which was gradually yielding to technological encroachment, had cultural and human values that were worth preserving.⁸⁸

Of considerable interest is the testimony of a former Rutgers student, Miles Rogers Feinstein, a Henry Rutgers Scholar of the Class of 1963. In his research for a thesis on "The Origins of the Pineys of New Jersey" Mr. Feinstein traveled through the Pines area and talked with many of the inhabitants. He learned to admire these people and to see them as victims of many misconceptions, some of them attributable to Elizabeth Kite, who had presented only one segment of the reality. His contacts convinced him that the Pineys were mainly a "good hard-working people" and that they had a right to be proud of being Pineys.⁸⁹

Further important testimony concerning the dwellers in the Pines has been provided by John McPhee of Princeton in a recent book based on his many visits to the region in the late 1960s. As have some other observers, he has found the Pineys a mild, shy people, still suspicious and resentful toward outsiders, especially snooty ones, because of the stigma resulting from the work of Miss Kite and her interpreters. They know they are different from the run of their fellow-Jerseyans and are proud of it, and Mr. McPhee feels their pride is justified. They don't mind the unpainted condition of their houses—it helps keep the tax assessment down. They are willing to work hard, but they relish frequent changes of job—it prevents bore-

⁸⁸ Halpert, Dissertation unpublished, available in microfilm.

⁸⁹ Feinstein, Thesis available in typescript, Rutgers U. Libr.

dom. They value their aloneness—"nobody bothers you," and "it's more quieter." Among their other appealing qualities are hospitality, generosity, tolerance, a sense of security, unbookish picturesqueness of speech, and essential freedom from crime (when it does occur it is usually the work of outsiders). Mr. McPhee quotes a Pines woman as saying to him: "It's a privilege to live in these woods."⁹⁰

Before leaving the Pines people we should note a poem called "The Pineys" by Gerald Stern. A long, often difficult piece of description, self-analysis, and speculation, it grew in part out of its Philadelphia author's trips to the Barrens in 1963. He unsparingly denounces the Kite report, which represented the Piney as "lazy and cunning, / A degenerate creature who has learned to provide for himself / Only the stupid necessities of life / Without entering into the stimulating struggle." His approval goes to Feinstein and McPhee for their "kinder, and saner, look at the Pineys." His special sympathy for them is revealed in his lines: "Myself I am a phantist finding in their lives / An intense connection with my own severance," which might almost be an echo of a comment by one of Mr. McPhee's Pines-dwelling friends that the people like to get "well away from everybody."⁹¹

The people of the Ramapos in both New Jersey and New York have appeared in travelers' accounts less frequently and less early than have the Pineys. The earliest discussion of them I have met made up a magazine article of 1872 entitled "A Community of Outcasts." This anonymous visitor, hailing probably from New York, saw these folk, though living in beautiful natural surroundings, as a race marked by "brutal manners," "savage natures," and "foul corruption." Their language was almost unintelligible to outsiders. Their children were dwarfed and drowsy. The shiftless adults had but little intelligence and, although not dangerous, were terrifying to look upon.⁹²

In the present century one of the earlier commentators on these folk was Albert Payson Terhune, noted writer of dog stories, whose life-long home was in the Pompton region and who as a youthful hunter roamed the country of these people. In his novel *Treasure*

⁹⁰ McPhee, *The Pine Barrens* (1968), passim.

⁹¹ Stern, "The Pineys," *Journ. of Rutgers U. Libr.*, XXXII, 55-80.

⁹² *Appleton's Journal*, VII, 324-329.

(1925) he set down his impression of them as "dull-minded" and "to a great extent . . . as primitive as savages."⁹³ Again in *The Book of Sunnybank* (1934), a collection of essays centering about his home, he remembered them as a lawless, sinister race far back in the Ramapos, who yet allowed him to hunt unmolested in their territory. Unbelievably primitive, with traces of Elizabethan usage in their speech, they lived in wretched hovels, sharing their hills with savage wild dogs.⁹⁴

In 1938 George Weller, a far-traveled journalist, reported a visit from which he derived the idea that these mountaineers were mixed white, Negro, and Indian with an unusual proportion of albinism. Indian features and carriage were in evidence, but it seemed to him that the "Jackson Whites" were by way of being absorbed by the colored race. In his view they were quiet, earnest, honest folk, wanting only their land and their freedom, both of which were being threatened by modern civilization. Not savage or terrifying in any way, they impressed him as simple, friendly, self-respecting mountaineers, who were of necessity emerging from their stony hills and becoming job-holders or at least job-seekers, often recipients of relief, sometimes owners of cars.⁹⁵

Far otherwise was the picture drawn by Frances Ensign Greene, a newspaper woman living in Park Ridge. "Dull-witted, moral-less, law-less," they made the inhabitants of the traditional Tobacco Road "seem cultured and effete by comparison." So degenerate were they that they sullied the blue Ramapo Mountains and polluted the very air. The incredibly primitive, ruinous shacks and lean-tos in which they lived were "like unwholesome fungi," and if a stranger made an unwary approach he might find himself facing a shotgun. But the people were well satisfied with a way of life devoid of even the least of human decencies. Reproducing like jackrabbits and steadily increasing in numbers, they presented a definite social problem that threatened to get worse.⁹⁶

Another woman commentator saw things differently. Josephine Emerson, a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, had walked repeatedly in the Ramapos and, writing in 1945, declared that, while

⁹³ Miles M. Merwin's thesis as a Henry Rutgers Scholar, "The Jackson Whites," called my attention to this item.

⁹⁴ Terhune, *The Book of Sunnybank*, 15, 210.

⁹⁵ Weller, "The Jackson Whites," *A New Jersey Reader* (1961), 69-83.

⁹⁶ Greene, "The Tobacco Road of the North," *American Mercury*, LIII, 15-22.

the inhabitants' housing was mostly miserable, they themselves were rarely savage or dangerous. Indeed she considered them to be somewhat stolid but kindly and not mentally deficient.⁹⁷

A few years after Miss Emerson's account, John C. Storms, a newspaper editor and local historian of Park Ridge, brought out a pamphlet on the "Jackson Whites," whom he knew at first hand. He depicted them as ignorant and traditionally suspicious of strangers, partly because of the distaste with which the residents of the surrounding region looked upon them. This suspicion was apparently intensified by what Mr. Storms called a "lurid account" published in a "sensational" New York magazine (undoubtedly Frances E. Greene's article). He declared that this "vicious fabrication" in no way applied to the contemporary mountaineers, among whom there was comparatively little major crime. In spite of the ignorance of the older generations, their children were going to school regularly, making excellent records, and some of them had gone on to college at Rutgers and elsewhere.⁹⁸

Certainly no one has ever made a study of these folk which for intimate knowledge and good will could compare with that by David Steven Cohen, Rutgers 1965. His doctoral dissertation (University of Pennsylvania), recently completed and accepted, was based in part on a residence among them from August, 1968, to September, 1969. A letter he was so kind as to write me on April 8, 1971, sums up the major results of his investigation in this way:

... I have come to the conclusion that they [the Ramapo Mountains folk] are probably the most maligned group of people in New Jersey. Their true history has been lost and forgotten, and it was replaced by an extremely derogatory folk legend. The legend, which is associated with the offensive name 'Jackson Whites,' is based on a negative stereotype of them as the descendants of outcasts, renegades, and degenerates. In contrast to the legend, the true history reveals that they are descendants of colored pioneers who owned farms in the upper Hackensack River Valley as early as 1687.

Just about every previous account of these people has been tainted by this derogatory stereotype. Not that these writers always

⁹⁷ Emerson, "The Jackson Whites," *In the Hudson Highlands* (Appalachian Mt. Club, 1945), 45-47.

⁹⁸ Storms, *Origin of the Jackson Whites* (1958), 28-29.

intended to slur the mountain people, but their perceptions were distorted by visits too brief to gain valid understanding and by mistaking folklore for history. Contrary to popular misconception, these colored mountain people have a rich and thriving culture, containing survivals of the Jersey Dutch culture of that region.

Unlike most of our travelers Mr. Cohen has made, not a mere trip of a few miles or many from one place to another, but, something far more difficult, a journey of sympathetic understanding from a familiar culture to an alien one.

* * * * *

This article doesn't pretend to have exhausted the available material. For instance a good deal might have been done with the Princeton students and the vacationers at the various shore resorts and the experimenters with communal living at Red Bank and Perth Amboy, but it would be hard to say how many of these people were Jersey residents and how many were imports. Perhaps enough has been said to suggest the conclusion that the traveler, if equipped with curiosity and a notebook and a publisher, has sometimes served as that power, for which the poet longed, that could give us the probably salutary gift of seeing ourselves through other people's eyes—a conceit as applicable to New Jersey as to most other parts of the world.