

The William Green House and its Economic Standing in Colonial Hunterdon County



Nick Wekselblatt – wekseln1@tcnj.edu

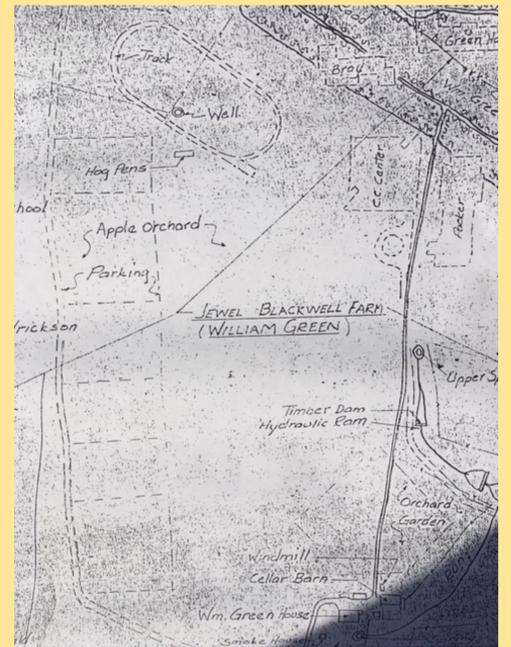


Figure 1: Map of the Green plantation in relation to the campus of TCNJ

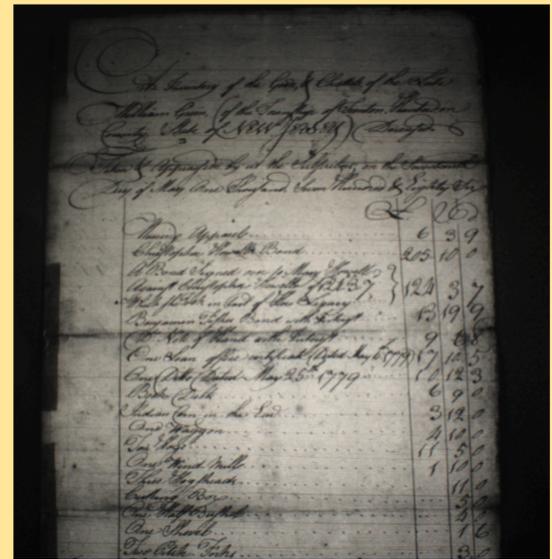


Figure 2: Part of the itemized estate of William Green II found in his will, ca. 1781

What is the wealth of the Green family leading up to the Revolutionary War?

Introduction

- ❑ The William Green House is a historic building on the campus of TCNJ dating to 1720
- ❑ Archaeological excavations were conducted in the 1990s and again in 2015.
- ❑ The Green family actively lived on the plantation up to the 1800s, spanning pre, and post-Revolutionary war economies

Methods

An archival process was necessary as the existing artifactual data does not contain a large enough sample to understand the wealth of the family.

- ❑ **Wills:** The main source of archival data came from the wills of William Green I, and his son William Green II. These span the period of the early 1700s when the Green's purchased the land to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War

Will of William Green I:

- ❑ Owned at least two properties, one being the 350-acre plantation that is now part of the TCNJ campus.
- ❑ 350-acres were divided equally between William Green II and Joseph Green
- ❑ 1/3 of the moveable estate was given to his surviving wife Joanna Green.

LANDHOLDING, 1778 TO 1780					
Category	Acreage	Total (N = 2479)		Farmer (N = 2074)	
		N	%	N	%
Commercial and Subsistent	301-500	34	1.4	26	1.3
	201-300	97	3.9	78	3.8
	151-200	108	4.4	91	4.4
	101-150	193	7.8	169	8.1
	76-100	248	10.0	219	10.6
	51-75	189	7.6	160	7.8
Totals		869	35.1	743	35.9
Marginal and Landless	26-50	350	14.1	282	13.6
	1-25	453	18.3	348	16.8
	0	807	32.5	701	33.8
Totals		1610	64.9	1331	64.2

Figure 3: Table displaying land ownership based on acreage in New Jersey from 1778 to 1780 (Ryan 1979)

Will of William Green II:

- ❑ Owned two properties including Green II's share of the 350-acre plantation
- ❑ Contained an itemized list for his estate
 - ❑ Came to a valuation of 535 pounds, 12 shillings, and 6 pence.
 - ❑ The itemized list was mainly made up of farming tools, some animals and household items.

Discussions/Conclusions

- ❑ William Green I was a prominent Judge in Hunterdon County starting in 1714
- ❑ The overall wealth of the Greens can be described as in the 1% of landowning farmers up to at least the onset of the Revolutionary War, however further research is required to understand the use of their plantations, and the size of their secondary plots of land.
- ❑ The size of the original plantation being 350-acres puts the Green family in the 1% of landowners in New Jersey during the mid 1700s.
- ❑ The size of the other plots of land owned by Green I and Green II remain unknown.
- ❑ Recent evidence suggests that some Greens were slave owners

References

- ❑ Leader, George M., and Jason Hammer, "The First Excavations of the William Green House, Ewing, New Jersey and its role as a Revolutionary War billet." 2019.
- ❑ Ryan, Dennis P. "Landholding, Opportunity, and Mobility in Revolutionary New Jersey." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1979): 571-92.
- ❑ Smith, S. D. "The Market for Manufactures in the Thirteen Continental Colonies, 1698-1776." *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 51, no. 4 (1998): 676-708.
- ❑ Woodward, Carl R. "Agricultural Legislation in Colonial New Jersey." *Agricultural History* 3, no. 1 (1929): 15-28.
- ❑ Woodward, Carl R. *The Development of Agriculture in New Jersey, 1640-1880*. New Brunswick: New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, 1927.