

Bergen County's Townships and Municipalities - Part 1

Compiled by Arnold Lang

Today, Bergen County is comprised of 70 municipalities - of these, there are 56 boroughs, 3 cities, 2 villages, and 9 townships. However, about 100 years ago, most of these did not exist. Previous to 1885, Bergen County was divided into sprawling townships, such as: Hackensack, New Barbadoes, Franklin, Harrington, Saddle River, Lodi, Washington, Hohokus, Union, Midland, Ridgefield, Palisades, Englewood, Ridgewood, and Orvil. This may present problems for those researching old vital records and deeds.

This article is the first in a series that will describe the history of Bergen County from the original two townships to the establishment of the existing 70 municipalities. A goal is to show the boundaries of the older townships in relation to the boundary lines of the existing municipalities. This may be especially helpful in understanding the deeds abstracted by Pat Wardell which begin in this issue of *The Archivist*.

Bergen's Beginning - 1682 to 1709

Townships of Bergen and Hackensack Formed in 1693

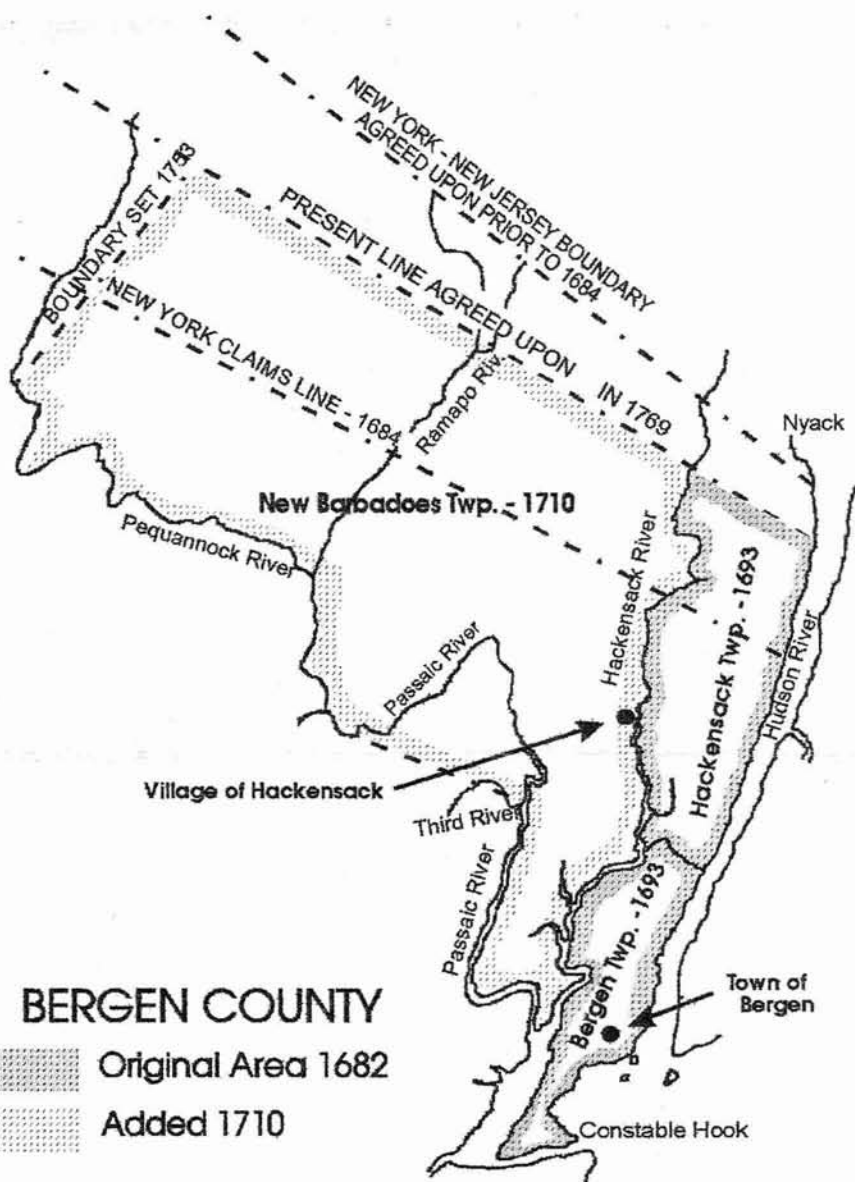
The East Jersey Legislature created the states first counties in 1675 mainly to provide "judicial districts" for the courts. A court was set up in the town of Bergen and two courts were held each year. Names were not given to the counties until seven years later when the counties of Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, and Monmouth were named by the Legislature.

So Bergen County came into being in 1682. The County then included all of the land between the Hackensack River and the Hudson River, extending from Constable Hook on the south to the province line (boundary with New York) on the north.

In 1693, an act defining boundaries of townships was passed by the General Assembly. Bergen County was then divided into two townships; Bergen and Hackensack.

The Township of Bergen consisted of the area from Constable Hook to the present northern boundary of Hudson County.

The remainder was defined as; "The Township of Hacksack (sic) shall include all that land between the Hackinsack and Hudson's Rivers that extends from the Corporation town of bounds of Bergen to the Partition line of the Province." (Note that this "partition line" was in dispute with New York for many years as shown by the map.)



New Barbadoes Township is added in 1710

The county was greatly increased in size in 1710 when the Township of New Barbadoes was broken off from Essex County and added to Bergen County. This extended the county west beyond the Passaic river and added the whole territory between the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers from Newark Bay northward to the boundary with New York State and also west to the boundary line of Sussex County. (This included the city of Passaic).

The settlements of Acquackanonk and New Barbadoes had been originally designated as a township by the Township Act of 1893 and was then included in Essex County. This township was defined as "...all of the land on the Pissiac River above the third River and from the mouth of the said river northward to the line of the province, including all the land in New Barbadoes Neck between the Hackensack and Pissiac Rivers, and thence to the partition of the province."

The map shows Bergen County in 1710 after New Barbadoes was added. At that time the community of Hackensack, located in New Barbadoes Township, was made the county seat "...because it was a thriving village more centrally located than the other" The courts were then moved there from Bergen Town.

Bergen County remained in this configuration for six years. Then in 1716, Saddle River Township was broken out of New Barbadoes Township. That was the beginning of many changes to be described in the next issue of *The Archivist*.

Bergen County's Townships and Municipalities - Part 2

Compiled by Arnold Lang

In the last issue of *The Archivist*, the birth of Bergen County in 1682, the formation of the original townships of Bergen and Hackensack in 1683, and the addition of New Barbadoes Township in 1710 were described. At that time Bergen encompassed all of the area that is presently Bergen County and Hudson County, and most of the area of Passaic County. This article continues from 1710, and describes the breakup of those three townships during the period from 1710 through 1836.

1710 through 1797

Townships of Saddle River and Franklin Set off from New Barbadoes

As mentioned in Part I of this article, the Township of New Barbadoes was set off from Essex County and added to Bergen County in 1710. This was the result of a 1709 Act passed by the New Jersey Legislature entitled "An Act for the dividing and ascertaining the boundaries of all of the counties in the Province". This described the overall boundary of Bergen County at that time:

"...that the eastern division of the county of Bergen shall begin at Constable Hook and so run up along the Bay and Hudson's River to the partition point between New Jersey and the Province of New York, and so run along the partition line between the provinces to the eastern and western division of the Province, and run along this division line south to the Pequaneck River, and so run down the Pequaneck and Passaic Rivers to the Sound, and so follow the Sound and Constable Hook to where it began."

Six years later, in 1716, a large portion of the Township of New Barbadoes was set-off to form Saddle River Township. This new township encompassed all of the area of Bergen County lying west of the Saddle River. As a result, New Barbadoes Township was greatly reduced in size to only include the area between the Hackensack River and the Saddle River. This original area of Saddle River Township is shown as the shaded area on the adjacent map.

The township boundaries then remained unchanged for 56 years. Then in 1772, by royal charter, the northern half of Saddle River Township was set off to form the Township of Franklin. Thus, Saddle River Township was effectively cut in half as shown.

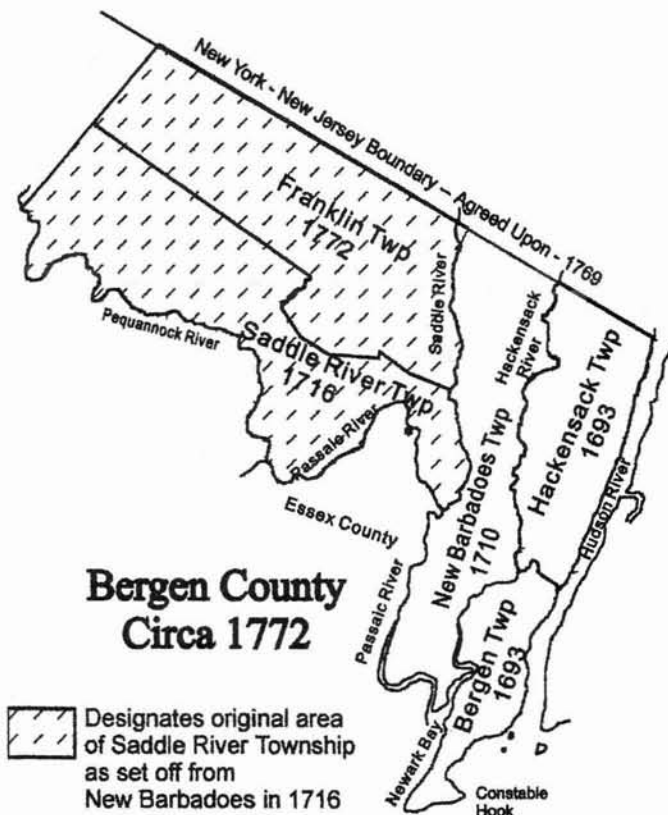
1773 to 1836

More Townships form in Bergen County

As people populated the more remote areas of Bergen County they became unhappy with the long distance to travel to the "town meetings". Also, at that time, each township had a representative in the County government. Thus, by forming their own township, they could have a more significant representation. These may have been the major issues to start the further breakup of the townships into smaller parcels.

Harrington was the next township to be set off. It was formed by royal charter from parts of Hackensack and New Barbadoes townships in 1775.

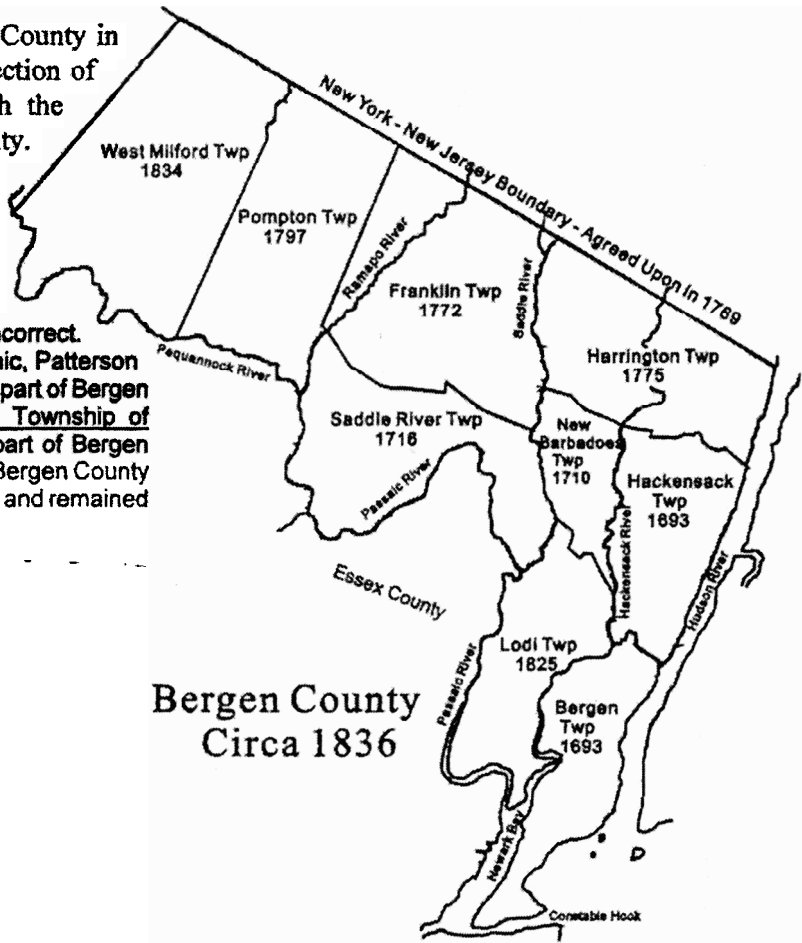
This was the last change until after the Revolutionary War. Many changes then occurred in the next few decades. First, Pompton Township was established in 1797 from parts of Franklin and Saddle River Townships. Then Lodi Township was formed from the southern section of New Barbadoes (1826). West Milford Township was next, being formed from the western sections of Franklin and Saddle River townships in 1834.



This map shows the resulting makeup of Bergen County in 1836. The next year (1837), the entire western section of Bergen County was set off (and combined with the Township of Acquackanonk) to form Passaic County. Then, in 1840, Hudson County was set off from the southern part of Bergen County. These events will be discussed in the next *Archivist*.

Correction:

The map included in the last issue of *The Archivist* was incorrect. The area that presently encompasses the cities of Passaic, Patterson and Clifton was shaded on that map, indicating that it was part of Bergen County in 1710. That area was part of the original Township of Acquackanonk and New Barbadoes, but it was never part of Bergen County. When New Barbadoes Township was added to Bergen County in 1710, that area became the Township of Acquackanonk and remained as part of Essex County.



Bergen County
Circa 1836

Bergen County's Townships and Municipalities - Part 3

Compiled by Arnold Lang

As discussed in the last issue of *The Archivist*, in 1836, Bergen County encompassed all of the area that presently includes Bergen and Hudson counties, and most of the area of Passaic County. Then, in 1837, the entire western section of Bergen County was set off to form part of Passaic County. Three years later, Hudson County was set off from the southern part of the county. These events reduced Bergen County to a fraction of its former size, and it was left with less than 50% of its previous population. The history continues with these and other events leading up to 1893, the year before 26 boroughs were formed in Bergen County.

Passaic County Formed - February 7, 1837

When New Barbadoes Township was added to Bergen County in 1710, it had been separated from the Township of Acquackanonk and New Barbadoes. At that time, Acquackanonk Township (which includes the present cities of Passaic, Paterson and Clifton) had remained as part of Essex County.

By 1831, the population of the Paterson area of Acquackanonk had grown considerably, and this area was then set off to become Paterson Township. This became Paterson City in 1851.

From the early 1820's, the people of

Acquackanonk had been actively lobbying to separate from Essex County. They had become increasingly unhappy being part of Essex County since Newark received preference. Finally, in 1837, the New Jersey State Legislature approved the formation of Passaic County. As shown by the following map, this new county consisted of:

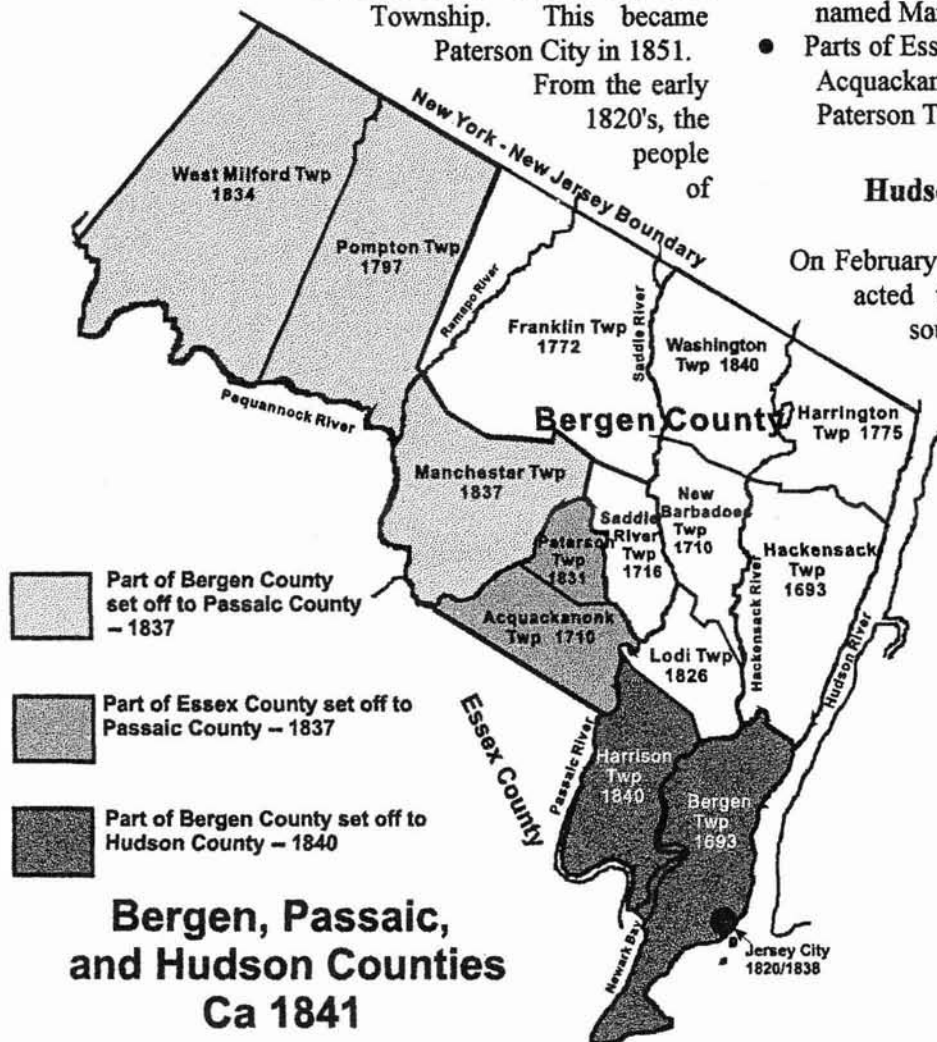
- Parts of Bergen County including
 - West Milford Township
 - Pompton Township
 - Part of Saddle River Township (which was then named Manchester Township in Passaic Co.)
- Parts of Essex County including
 - Acquackanonk Township
 - Paterson Township

Hudson County Formed - 1840

On February 22, 1840, the New Jersey Legislature acted to form Hudson County from the southern section of Bergen County. This new county was comprised of:

- Bergen Township
- Part of Lodi Township
- The city of Jersey City. In 1820, while still part of Bergen County, Jersey City was formed within Bergen Township. Later in 1838, Jersey City was reincorporated and made a city separate from Bergen Township.

The part of Lodi Township that was set off to Hudson County was named Harrison Township. The new boundary between Lodi Township (Bergen County) and Harrison Township (Hudson County) followed the New Barbadoes Turnpike, now called Patterson Plank Road.



Bergen County - 1840 to 1893

The remaining townships within Bergen County continued to be divided to form other townships. The significant changes, as shown by the map below, were:

- **Washington Twp** - 1840. All of the area of Harrington Township located between the Hackensack River and Saddle River was set off to form Washington Township.
- **Hohokus Twp** - 1849. The Township of Hohokus was set off from the northern part of Franklin Township and extended from Saddle River on the east to the western boundary of Bergen County.
- **Union Twp** - 1852. Some of the area that had been transferred to Hudson County 12 years previously was added back to Bergen County after people in the northern part of Harrison Township (which was in Hudson County) petitioned to be returned to Bergen

County. Union Township was thus set off from Harrison Township to be part of Bergen County.

- **Midland Twp** - 1871. Midland Township was set off from New Barbadoes Township.
 - **Englewood Twp** - 1871
 - **Palisades Twp** - 1871
 - **Ridgefield Twp** - 1871
- The original Township of Hackensack, which occupied the area between the Hudson and the Hackensack Rivers was divided to form these three townships.
- **Ridgewood Twp** - 1876. The Township of Ridgewood was formed from Franklin Township.
 - **Orvil Twp** - 1886. Orvil Township was set off from parts of both Washington and Hohokus townships. This area is designated by the dashed lines on the map.
 - **Boiling Springs Twp** - 1889. Boiling Springs Township was set off from Union Township. This later became East Rutherford and is shown by the dashed line on the map..
 - **Bergen Twp** - 1893. Bergen Township (in Bergen County) was set off from the lower section of Lodi Township as shown by the dashed line on the map.



Other changes that occurred during this period included:

- **Carlstadt Village** was formed within Lodi Township in 1860. (In 1894, an additional section was added and it was changed to Carlstadt Borough.)
- The **Hackensack Commission** was formed within the Township of New Barbadoes in 1868. (New Barbadoes Twp. remained until it was replaced by Hackensack City in 1921)
- In 1878, the New Jersey Legislature provided for the formation of a borough within a township not exceeding four square miles. Three years later, Rutherford became the first borough to be formed under that Act. **Rutherford Borough** was fully separated from the township form of government in 1890.
- **Ridgefield Borough** was next, being set off from Ridgefield Township in 1892, **Ridgefield Park Village** was formed within Ridgefield Township in 1892.

In the next issue of *The Archivist* —“**Boroughitis**”

Bergen County's Townships and Municipalities - Part 4

Compiled by Arnold Lang

Until the middle 1880's, Bergen County was divided into sprawling townships as described in the previous articles in this series. In 1885, the townships were Hackensack, dating from 1693; New Barbadoes, 1710; Franklin, 1772; Harrington, 1775; Saddle River, 1794; Lodi, 1825; Washington, 1840; Hohokus, 1849; Union, 1852; Midland, 1871; Ridgefield, Palisades, & Englewood, 1872; Ridgewood, 1876; and Orvil, 1885. Today, Bergen County is comprised of 70 municipalities - of these, there are 56 boroughs, 3 cities, 2 villages, and 9 townships. What brought this about was -----

"BOROUGHITIS"

Early in 1894, the New Jersey legislature passed a school act which wiped out the former subsidiary school districts and made each township a separate school district. Taxpayers were obliged to pay, pro rata, existing debts of the old districts in addition to all future debts of the township for school purposes. Exempted from this provision were "boroughs, towns, villages, and cities".

A rush was then made to form boroughs, and 26 boroughs were carved from those early townships between January 23 and December 18, 1894. The rush to form boroughs was slowed down (but not stopped) when the legislature quickly passed an amendment to the school act that stated that no borough could maintain a school separate from the township unless there were 400 children within its limits.

Before 1893, a number of laws had been passed by the New Jersey Legislature which enabled boroughs to be formed. The first was in 1878 when the Legislature provided for formation of a borough in a township or part of a township, not to exceed four square miles and a population of 5,000. As we saw in the last issue, only **Rutherford** and **Ridgefield** boroughs were formed as a result of that law. Subsequently, in 1891, an act was passed providing for formation of villages whose population was greater than 300 people per square mile and then **Ridgefield Park** village was formed.

Then, in 1893, an act was passed which brought about the sometimes bizarre borough boundaries that were eventually formed. That act provided that a borough could only have a chosen freeholder if the borough contained a portion of two or more

townships. As a result, most of the boroughs that were formed contained small parts of different townships within their boundaries.

The break up of the townships continued after 1894. In addition to the school issue, discontent increased as regions with factories saw their heavy tax assessments being used to support large townships. These split-ups of the townships continued until 1924, when the number of municipalities reached 70. (However, municipal name changes and a few boundary changes still occurred through 1955.)

You can refer to the map of Bergen County that was included in the previous issue of *The Archivist* to see the boundaries of the 70 present municipalities overlaid on the townships that existed in 1893.

The *Family Tree of Bergen County's 70 Municipalities* which appears on the following pages illustrates how and when these municipalities were carved out of the townships. (For purposes of simplicity, some minor divisions and set-offs have not been included in this tree.)

This concludes the four-part series; **Bergen County's Townships and Municipalities**.

Notes: The original *Family Tree of Bergen County's 70 Municipalities* was prepared in the early 1900's and was subsequently published in the Sunday Record Call and The Record. The family tree appearing in this issue of *The Archivist* has been completely redrawn to correct and add information omitted from that earlier tree.

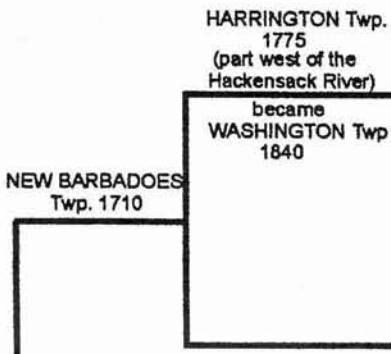
A number of references were used in compiling this series. However, most of the boundary information was extracted from: "*The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries, 1606-1968*" by John P. Snyder.

BOROUGHS	Allendale
	Alpine
	Bergenfield
	Bogota
	Carlstadt
	Cliffside Park
	Closter
	Cresskill
	Demarest
	Dumont
	East Paterson
	East Rutherford
	Edgewater
	Emerson
	Englewood Cliffs
	Fair Lawn
	Fairview
	Fort Lee
	Franklin Lakes
	Glen Rock
	Harrington Park
	Hasbrouck Heights
	Haworth
	Hillsdale
	Ho-Ho-Kus
	Leonia
	Little Ferry
	Lodi
	Maywood
	Midland Park
	Montvale
	Moonachie
	New Millford
	North Arlington
	Northvale
	Norwood
	Oakland
	Old Tappan
	Oradell
	Palisades Park
	Paramus
	Park Ridge
	Ramsey
	Ridgefield
	River Edge
	Rockleigh
	Rutherford
	Saddle River
	Tenafly
	Teterboro
	Upper Saddle River
	Waldwick
	Wallington
	Westwood
	Woodcliff Lake
	Wood Ridge
TOWNSHIPS	Lyndhurst
	Mahwah
	River Vale
	Rochelle Park
	Saddle Brook
	South Hackensack
	Teaneck
	Washington
	Wyckoff
VILLAGES	Ridgefield
	Park
	Ridgewood
CITIES	Englewood
	Garfield
	Hackensack

FAMILY TREE OF BERGEN COUNTY'S 70 MUNICIPALITIES

Sheet 1

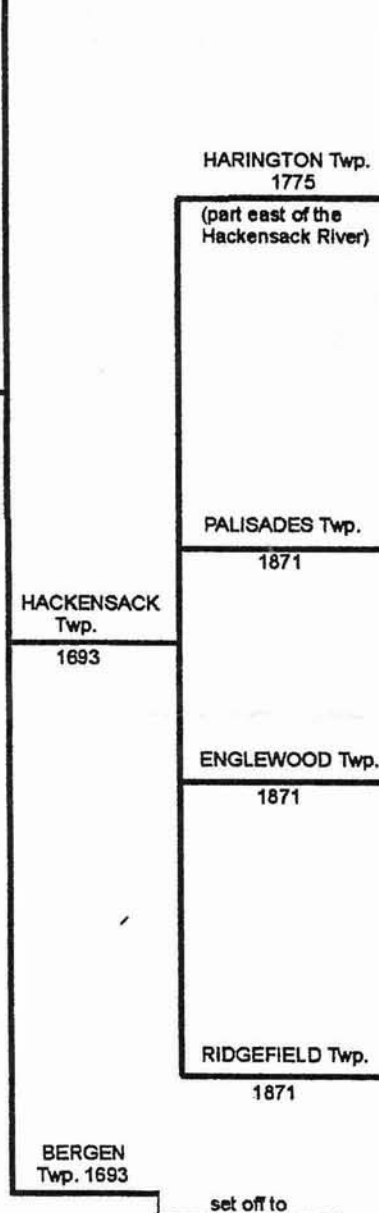
MONTVALE Bor.	part 1894	became	
WOODCLIFF Bor.	part 1894		WOODCLIFF LAKE Bor. part 1910
SADDLE RIVER Bor.	part 1894		
UPPER SADDLE RIVER Bor.	1894	part	
RIDGEWOOD Twp.	part 1902	became	RIDGEWOOD VI. part 1894
ORVIL Bor.	part 1905	became	HO-HO-KUS Bor. 1908



WESTWOOD Bor.	1894		
PARK RIDGE Bor.	1894	part added from	Washington Twp. 1858
EASTWOOD Bor.	part 1894		returned to Washington Twp. 1896
MONTVALE Bor.	1894		
WOODCLIFF Bor.	part 1894	became	WOODCLIFF LAKE Bor. part 1910
HILLSDALE Twp.	1898	became	HILLSDALE Bor. 1923
ETNA Bor.	1898		part to form RIVER VALE Twp. 1906
HARRINGTON PARK Bor.	part 1904		became EMERSON Bor. 1909
RIVER VALE Twp.	part 1906		part to Westwood Bor. 1909
WASHINGTON Twp.	1840		

NEW BARBADOES Twp. Continued on Sheet 2

BERGEN COUNTY
1682



DELFO RD Bor.	part 1894	became	ORADELL Bor. part 1920
EASTWOOD Bor.	part 1894		
OLD TAPPAN Bor.	1894		to Old Tappan Bor. 1896
SCHRAALENBURGH Bor.	1894	part	became DUMONT Bor. part 1928
DEMAREST Bor.	part 1903		
ALPINE Bor.	part 1903		
CLOSTER Bor.	1904		
HAWORTH Bor.	1904		
HARRINGTON PARK Bor.	1904	part	
NORWOOD Bor.	1904		
	became		NOTHVALE Bor. 1916
			part to form ROCKLEIGH Bor. 1923
TENAFLY Bor.	1894		
DELFO RD Bor.	part 1894	became	ORADELL Bor. part 1920
CRESSKILL Bor.	1894		
BERGENFIELD Bor.	1894		part to form ALPINE Bor. 1903
ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS Bor.	1895	part	
DEMAREST Bor.	part 1903		
SCHRAALENBURGH Bor.	1894	part	became DUMONT Bor. part 1928
			Part returned to Palisades Twp 1898
PALISADES Twp.			became NEW MILFORD Bor. 1922
BERGENFIELD Bor.	part 1894		
TEANECK Twp.	part 1895		
ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS Bor.	1895	part	
	became		ENGLEWOOD City 1899 part
RIDGEFIELD Bor.	1892		
RIDGEFIELD PARK VI.	1892		
OVERPECK Twp. (see note)	1897		became RIDGEFIELD PK Twp. 1938
BOGOTA Bor.	1894	1894	part to TEANECK Twp. 1895
LEONIA Bor.	1894		
UNDERCLIFF Bor.	1894		became EDGEWATER Bor. 1899
FAIRVIEW Bor.	1894		
TEANECK Twp.	part 1895		
CLIFFSIDE PARK Bor.	1895		
ENGLEWOOD City	part 1899		
PALISADES PARK Bor.	1899		
	became		FORT LEE Bor. 1904

NOTE: Overpeck Twp. formed coextensive with Ridgefield Park Village for Board of Education only

FAMILY TREE OF BERGEN COUNTY'S 70 MUNICIPALITIES

Sheet 2

