

News article for Haddington's History Society website

From Haddingtonshire to New Jersey in the 1680s

A new resource from Derrick Johnstone



Figure 1 Area of Scots settlement relative to New York and Philadelphia

Extract from Johann Baptist Homann, *Virginia Marylandia et Carolina in America Septentrionali Britannorum* (1714). Public domain (Gutman and Starin Map Collections, Talbot County Free Library, Maryland)

An early Scottish colony

In the early 1680s, a remarkable – but now little-known – colonial venture linked the East of Scotland with a fledgling settlement across the Atlantic. Known as East Jersey, this province occupied the north-eastern part of what is now New Jersey. Between 1683 and 1702, several hundred Scots, including a good number from East Lothian, crossed the ocean to begin new lives. Their successes provide a sharp contrast to the experiences of those who left for Darien ten or so years later. Many were drawn by economic prospects: land ownership, trade, or skilled work. There were Quakers weary of persecution and wishing to practise their ideals in a new community. And for another significant group, their journey was forced: Covenanters sentenced to transportation.

Their stories form a striking chapter in Scottish emigration, and one that connects communities across Scotland with descendants in the United States. These can be explored using a new website and genealogical database, [East Jersey Bound](#).

East Lothian connections

Much of the organisation of the emigrant voyages revolved around merchant networks in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Montrose, led at the start by the renowned Quaker leader, Robert Barclay of Ury. Merchants with East Lothian connections included James and John Johnstone, sons of the retired minister, Mr William Johnstone of Laverocklaw near Haddington, and Gawen Drummond from Prestonpans. Gawen was distantly related to James, Earl of Perth, the leading politician in Scotland as Chancellor and an investor in East Jersey.



Quaker gardener, John Hamton from Elphinstone, was appointed as one of two 'overseers' for the first settlement in 1683, responsible for managing the initial settlement, ensuring that provisions and resources were properly distributed, and supervising early agricultural activity. He was accompanied by his four children under six and probably his first wife.

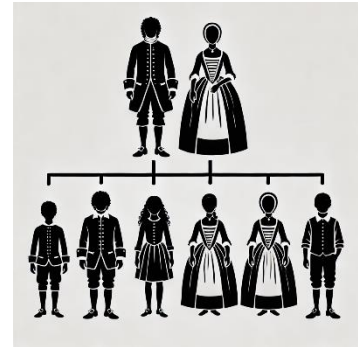
Husbandman James Edwards from Stevenson outside Haddington was another who emigrated with a very young family and soon had his own farm.

Several East Lothian emigrants were indentured servants under contract for a period, typically four years, in return for their upkeep and the award of 30 or more acres at the end of their indenture. This was the case of John Oliphant and Janet Gilchrist from Pencaitland, whose three teenage daughters were also indentured until they reached 21. John's son William was also an emigrant, though forced as a transported Covenanter.

East Lothian features in the story of Covenanters and East Jersey in another way, through the use of the Bass Rock as a prison. Both the field preacher Archibald Riddell and George Scot of Pitlochrie who led the 1685 voyage of the *Henry and Francis* had endured confinement there. The authorities were keen that they left Scotland and hoped that they would persuade other Covenanters to go with them. Many that did, including Scot, lost their lives aboard the ship when a virulent fever broke out.

Find out more and explore the records

I have created the *East Jersey Bound* website (<https://eastjerseybound.scot>) which summarises my postgraduate research at the University of Glasgow and provides pen portraits of some of the emigrants. It holds a genealogical database of 600 emigrants and over 2,500 of their kin and associates. This attempts to capture where the emigrants came from and what became of them, with details added of their previous and next generations.



My dissertation, *Scots Emigrants to East Jersey 1682–1702: Motivations and Outcomes*, provides more of the background, considers the motivations behind decisions to leave for the New World, and explores how they fared, socially and economically.

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/85247/>

I am continuing to develop East Jersey Bound, following research leads and adding pen portraits. If you have knowledge about any of the emigrant families, their kin or associates, please get in touch by email to info@eastjerseybound.scot.

 **East Jersey Bound** [Home](#) | [Background](#) | [Findings](#) | [Database](#)
[People](#) | [About](#)

Scots emigrants to East New Jersey in the 1680s

Why did they come, who were they, and what became of them?





About 'East Jersey Bound'

This website provides the background to these questions and holds a database with genealogical records for more than 600 emigrants and another 2,000 people: wider kin and associates in Scotland and children born in East New Jersey.

It is aimed at both researchers with an interest in these places and period and to genealogists looking at family connections.

[About the research and database](#)
[Using the database](#)
[Search the database](#)

Derrick is a Research Affiliate with the Department of History, University of Glasgow and Secretary of the Old Edinburgh Club.