

# A Discussion of John Brown of Deptford, Gloucester, New Jersey

## Probate 1731

*by M. A. Schaefer, 8 August 2015, Boulder, CO*

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NOTE: This is a draft document and contains only my own analysis, conjecture, and opinion. It should not be considered proof of anything at this point.

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### ***Introduction***

This article is a discussion about the John Brown of Deptford who died in 1731, and whose administrator was Levi Pierce. According to TKO,<sup>1</sup> “He is the one who had only a daughter named Mary Brown who married Richard Pierce, then she died before her father. Levi survived.”

There were, however, other men of the name John Brown who were living in Gloucester County in the 1730s. Here is a summary of the three Brown's who we know about:

- John Brown whose administrator was his grandson, Levi Pierce, and who is the subject of this article. This person died intestate probably in August of 1731, and I refer to him as 1731-JB.
- John Brown who was a husband of Charity Chew. He owned a fulling mill, and was a merchant and a clothier. This person died probably in December of 1736, and I refer to him as JB-Clothier.
- John Brown who owned a plantation on Mantua Creek (and possibly also Woodbury Creek), and was married to Phebe Chatfield.<sup>2</sup> This person also died in December of 1736, and I refer to him as My-JB.

The question at hand relates to John Brown of Upton (JB-Upton), who died in 1699/1700 and whose heir and administrator was John Brown Jr. Any of the three men just listed could have been that son of JB-Upton, although it's also possible that the son of JB-Upton could have moved away or died before the 1730s. Making the connections in this story is a definite challenge.

But the question itself has become much more complicated by the appearance of the terms “Junior” and “Senior” in some records (but not all, of course). Genealogists generally have the understanding that these terms did not necessarily indicate a parent-child relationship or even, necessarily, a familial tie. It simply meant there were two people in the same area who had the same name, and one was older and one was younger. But this differentiator could change as soon as any John Brown either moved or died. This complication becomes evident in this article.

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<sup>1</sup> A good deal of the research on the subject of John Brown of Gloucester County, NJ has been conducted by and shared by T. K. O'Hare. Her work as well as her insights have provided a basis for my own observations, and I thank her.

<sup>2</sup> As of this writing, Phebe's maiden name is still an educated conjecture.

## Looking at Evidence for 1731-JB

### Probate

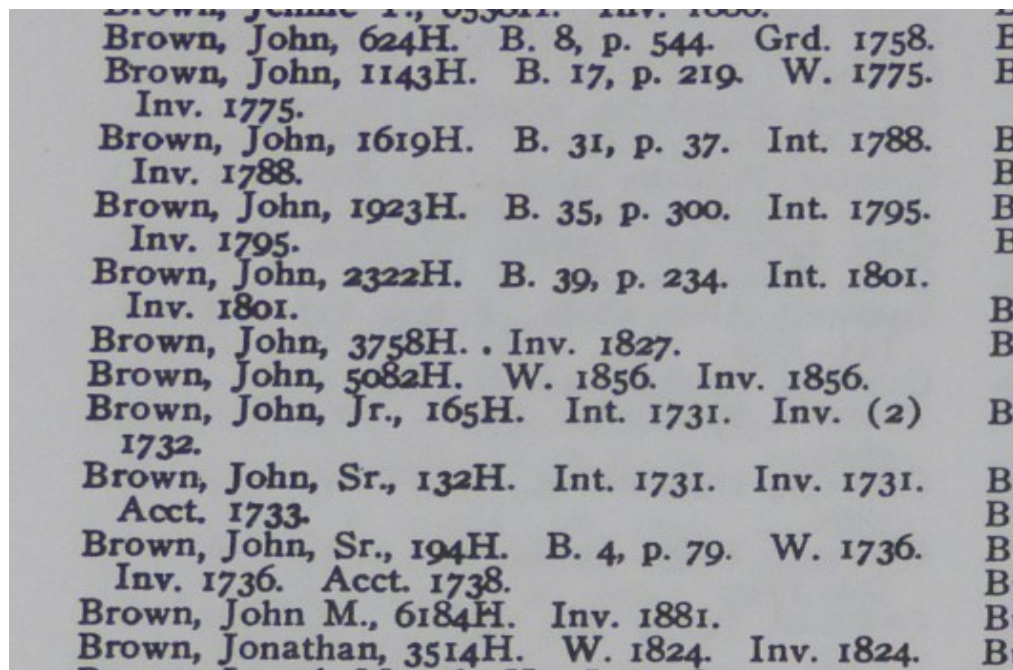
Prior to visiting the NJSA in late July, I had noted some questions about an abstract for 1731-JB who died in 1731 (exact date unknown) in Deptford Twp, Gloucester County, NJ. Here is that abstract:

1731, Sept. 23. Brown, John, Senior, late of Deptford, GloucesterCo., yeoman. Int. Admr., Levi Pearce, yeoman. "William Harrison, gentleman, Edward Rudolphas Price, same County, bondsmen. Witnesses — John Wright, Saml. Bustil. Lib. 3, p. 153.

1731, Aug. 17. Inventory (£401.14.0), includes Indian man and child, negro woman and boy, etc., and debts due from Thos. Bryon, William Vaughns, Thos. ilingleston (?). Appraisers — William Harrison, Henry Sparks.<sup>3</sup>

The question that jumps out at me is the dates. The bondsmen were sworn in after the inventory? I grant that I am not completely familiar with the probate process in colonial NJ, so there might be a reasonable explanation. In the meantime, I still have to wonder.....

While researching at the Rutgers Alexander Library, I found an index of Gloucester County wills:



Brown, John, 624H.	B. 8, p. 544.	Grd. 1758.	E
Brown, John, 1143H.	B. 17, p. 219.	W. 1775.	E
Inv. 1775.			
Brown, John, 1619H.	B. 31, p. 37.	Int. 1788.	B
Inv. 1788.			B
Brown, John, 1923H.	B. 35, p. 300.	Int. 1795.	B
Inv. 1795.			E
Brown, John, 2322H.	B. 39, p. 234.	Int. 1801.	B
Inv. 1801.			B
Brown, John, 3758H.	. Inv. 1827.		B
Brown, John, 5082H.	W. 1856.	Inv. 1856.	
Brown, John, Jr., 165H.	Int. 1731.	Inv. (2)	B
1732.			
Brown, John, Sr., 132H.	Int. 1731.	Inv. 1731.	B
Acct. 1733.			B
Brown, John, Sr., 194H.	B. 4, p. 79.	W. 1736.	B
Inv. 1736.	Acct. 1738.		B
Brown, John M., 6184H.	Inv. 1881.		B
Brown, Jonathan, 3514H.	W. 1824.	Inv. 1824.	B

<sup>3</sup>Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State ..., Volume 2; Volume 30, found on google books, mocavo, and archive.org.

Notice the two entries in 1731, one for a John Brown Junior and one for a John Brown Senior. I set out to find those particular records at the NJSA, and find them I did. What I found were two packets (I believe "packet" is the right term for several documents filed together pertaining to one person's probate). The following table gives a brief summary of what each packet contains:<sup>4</sup>

Notes:

- It is my understanding that the numbering of the packets was chronological, meaning the packet numbers increased as each probate packet was recorded? This may or may not be true, and it may or may not mean the packets are in date order. And of course, it's hard not to notice that the packet numbers seem to have been stamped onto the packet papers at a later time, which might also have implications about the meaning of all this. Nevertheless, I am going to present the packets in numerical order which is how they were ordered on the films at NJSA.
- Note that I have attempted to present the table entries in date order, which may not have been the order in which they appeared on the microfilm. I realize this is usually a genealogical no-no, but I don't believe there was any ordering to the documents within a packet, and certainly there is no evidence of order on the film. So the attempt to order by date helps me to look for patterns and discrepancies.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Subsequent observation of the packet images clearly shows a mix-up was going on. One page in the 165H packet has the stamp 132H! It is remotely possible that I got the images from my camera mixed up, but then I found two more pages in the 165H packet that have stamps for BOTH packets: 165H and 132H! I have the feeling that the 132H pages were moved over to 165H later in an effort to keep all Junior papers together in one packet and all Senior papers together in the other.

Even with the understanding that papers between the two packets were mixed up at some point, I have decided to leave the following table and analysis in place for reference.

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<sup>4</sup> I have compiled the images for each packet in separate documents, which are available for reference on request by emailing me at [genealogist@gmail.com](mailto:genealogist@gmail.com).

Packet 132H - SENIOR	Packet 165H - JUNIOR
Levi Pearce was made sole administrator on 5 Sep 1731 (this from my notes; this date not found in current images)	Outside label says “Bond of Admin. On the Estate of John Browne Jun. Gloucester County An. 1731”
	Bond set 25 Sep 1731, for Levi Pearce (yeoman), William Harrison & Edward Redolphus Price, for estate of John Brown JR, a yeoman
Outside label of packet says “John Brown Sen. Inventory and Bond of Administration, Gloucester County, Anno Dom. 1732”	This packet seems to contain two inventories; I brought home images for one. Outside label of one inventory says “Inventory of John Brown Jun. Gloucester Cty” (no date); the other says “Invent. Of the Estate of John Brown Junr und Levi Pearce & bond of administration, Gloucester County, Anno Dom 1732 (last digit is hard to read, either a 2 or 3).
This inventory lists many farm animals, many crops (wheat, rye, corn, oats), books, guns, 2 beds and other furniture, apparel for himself and Susanna Brown (relationship not stated), an Indian man and 3 Negroes, and was presented to Samuel Bustill in 1731 (image of this is incomplete)	One inventory was made on 17 Aug 1731 (coincides with date given in abstract) by William Harrison and Henry Sparks; the inventory in the packet was a copy and examined by Samuel Bustill. This inventory lists most of the same animals, but fewer of them, corn as only crop, plow, furniture, and cloth (not seen in other inventory). Also mention of the <u>time</u> of a “servant lady, a servant maid, and a servant man”
On 31 Mar 1732, the appraisers, first William Harrison, Esq. “coming of the people called Quakers”, and also Henry Sparks (apparently not Quaker) appeared to Samuel Bustill to affirm their work.	<b>NOTE: I have in my notes that this particular piece of paper was found in both packets. Would have to go back to look at film again bcs it probably couldn't be the exact same piece of paper microfilmed for both packets, so the clerk copied the same info twice?</b>
Outside label says “Account of Levi Pearce, Adm of John Brown Sen. Anno Dom 1733, Gloucester County, Bond and Inventory xxxx (can't read last word)”	
Levi Pearce appeared before Samuel Bustill, the Register, on 17 Sep 1733 to give the account, which was then approved on 19 Nov 1733. The account notes John Brown Sr. was a yeoman and among those who were owed a debt were John Brown fuller as well as George Ward Sr. and Jr.	
The account presented by Levi Pearce had an estate value of 401.14, and debts of more than 95.13.11 (images are not complete)	This inventory had a value of 137.13, but did not show debts owed.

### **My Observations:**

- The earliest date I find in either packet is 17 August 1731 for JB-JR.
- The latest date I find in either packet is 19 November 1733 for JB-SR.
- Both packets have references to this John Brown as a yeoman, and so was his administrator, Levi Pierce.
- The appraisers in both cases were William Harrison and Henry Sparks.
- The Register in both cases was Samuel Bustill.
- The inventories of each packet contain many of the same things, but there seem to have been fewer of those things in the estate of JB-JR, and certainly the appraisal for the estate of JB-JR was valued at much less.
- The descriptions of items in each inventory is noticeably different. The inventory of JB-JR, was apparently done by William Harrison, apparently a Quaker, and that inventory lists the value of the time of several servants. The inventory of JB-SR lists an Indian man and Negroes and the value listed for each person is higher than for the servant time listed in the JB-JR inventory.
- The inventory of JB-JR lists the apparel for Susanna Brown. Was this person a wife or daughter who had previously died?

### **My Questions:**

- Who were William Harrison, Edward Redolphus Price, and Henry Sparks? It appears they were probably just business people whose job was working with estates, but if they had any ties to this Brown family, it might help with further differentiation.
- The biggest question is why were there two different probate packets? What are the possible explanations?
  - Here is the reason I favor: It was a mistake by the clerk of the prerogative court because both JB Junior and Senior are referring to the same person, the Junior-Senior designation having changed between 1731 and 1733 based on another JB also living in Deptford Twp. The documents from both packets should have been combined into one packet.
  - There were two different John Brown's, both a Junior and a Senior, who both died intestate within a short time of each other, and Levi Pierce was the administrator of them both. In this case, Levi Pierce was related to at least one, and potentially both deceased Brown's. The two inventories found in each packet are similar but slightly different, and yet both inventories were carried out by the same two men (Harrison and Sparks) – which might not have been that unusual because I have noticed that some people who did appraising work did so for the estates of several people, not just for their friends or neighbors.
  - There were two Levi Pierce's, each an administrator to a different John Brown. I remember at one point I might have seen some evidence that could have suggested another (maybe older) Levi Pierce, but I did not make any written note of it.

Finally, here is a probate abstract for Levi Pierce, which at some point might help us to further locate where 1731-JB had his farm:

**1772, Jan. 22. Perce, Levi, Sr.,** of Deptford Township, Gloucester Co.; will of. Son, Levi Perce, the plantation where he lives, of about 150 acres, being lands that were formerly John Brown's, joining lands of Calep Bickham; also a tract of about 30 acres, joining the land where he lives, and lands of Benjamin Ward, and lands lately Michael Conner. Sons, George and James, plantation where I live, of about 300 acres. Son, Henry, land joining Timber Creek, of  $7\frac{1}{4}$  acres, bounded by lands of Samuel Perce, and the late Edward Leonard; and my lands at Egg Harbor, lying on Little Egg Harbor River, of  $37\frac{1}{4}$  acres, 20 acres whereof is on the west side of said river; and  $17\frac{1}{4}$  on the east side, to be sold, and of the money therefrom, I give my wife, Rosanna,  $\frac{2}{3}$ . Son, John, £10. Daughter, Mary Perce, £10. Son, William, 5 shillings. Son, Ward Perce, £5. Granddaughter, Rosanna Ward, £5. Wife,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the moveable estate, and the rest to my sons, Levi and George. Executors—sons, Levi and George. Witnesses—Benjamin Carpenter, Reuben Jennings, Joseph Jones. Proved July 1, 1772.

1772, June 23. Inventory, made by Bessie Marshall and William Lenard.

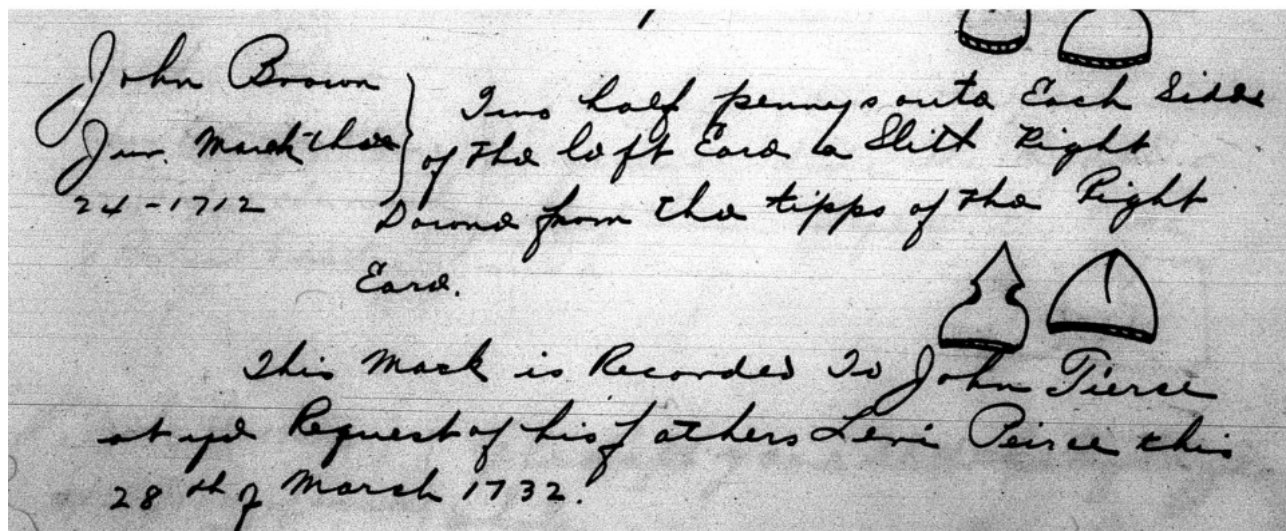
Lib. 15, p. 308.

© 15



## Earmarks

Now we come to the ear marks records.<sup>5</sup>



Based on the link to Levi Pierce, I'm going to assume the JB Jr. in this record was 1731-JB. With an original recorded date of 1712, this record becomes the earliest record we have for 1731-JB.<sup>6</sup>

5 Scanned June 2015 by M.A. Schaefer from FHL film 441463, item 1, *Ear Marks 1686-1776*, Gloucester County Clerk, originals at the Historical Society of PA.

6 Analysis of this record is still in process. The handwriting between 1712 and 1732 appears to be same in this record, which suggests that the source where this record was found could have been a copy, and thus possibly an error was made at the time the copy was recorded.

## ***The Junior-Senior Tangle***

The problem in all of this is that we don't know how old each JB was. We think My-JB was around 53 years old when he died in 1736, but so far we haven't had any indication about the ages of JB-1731 or JB-Clothier when they died. Perhaps the Junior/Senior designation associated with 1731-JB can give us some ideas.

To give myself a frame of reference, I have tried to identify the earliest record that can be associated with each JB – which is no easy task because of the differentiation problem (ie, how do we know which John Brown records pertain to each separate individual?)

Here is my current summary of earliest identifiable JB records:

- For 1731-JB, the earliest record we can identify (yet still unconfirmed), is an ear mark recorded in 1712 when 1731-JB was at that time, apparently, a Junior. When he died in 1731, he was still a Junior, but two years after his death, he became a Senior. It seems obvious there was some mix-up going on in 1731 with multiple inventories, copies of inventories, and changing Junior-Senior designations. Probably nobody at the time was confused, but the recording became a confusing task that resulted in hard-to-explain inconsistencies in the probate packets.
- The earliest record we have for My-JB is a 1721 deed that names him as John Brown of Mantua Creek. Several subsequent records also refer to My-JB using the Mantua Creek differentiator, although his will, written in 1734, identifies him of Deptford Twp.<sup>7</sup>
- The third man, JB-Clothier, was living in Gloucester in 1727 when he wrote his will (proved 1736), but his wife's will (written 1736, proved 1739) indicates that the Brown plantation in Gloucester County was being inhabited by the sister of Charity Chew, Elizabeth Chew Jones. However, even earlier deeds<sup>8</sup> indicate that between 1721-1726, this John Brown owned a fulling mill on the south side of the southerly branch of Timber Creek (near Upton), which was bequeathed to George Ward in the 1727 will.

It seems to me that the Junior-Senior designation applied to:

- the son of John and Ann Brown in a 1688 deed from John Ladd – this was definitely a father-son relationship
- the son of John Brown of Upton in the documents immediately following his father's death – again a father-son relationship, although it's not clear how long after a father's death does the Junior designation remain?
- 1731-JB, which then seems to suggest 1731-JB lived in the same area with one or the other (or both?) JB's at each time (1712, 1731, and 1733).

Certainly in the 1721 deed involving My-JB, My-JB was referred to as “John Brown of Mantua Creek”, not Junior or Senior. So at least in 1721, I don't believe 1731-JB and My-JB were living in the same area. I still need to locate the deeds between JB-Clothier and George Ward to see if there was any further identifier used for JB-Clothier.

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<sup>7</sup> I would like to find a more definitive link from our John Brown to Mantua Creek....

<sup>8</sup> Not yet located by me, but referred to at *West Jersey History*,  
<http://www.westjerseyhistory.org/books/farrwatermills/W.shtml>



## **Conclusion, If Any**

- 1731-JB was a yeoman whose inventory was fairly sizable (in my estimate), which included many animals, crops, and “servants.” Did 1731-JB inherit it or make his own way? I am still looking for more deeds that might give us any indication of location where this 1731-JB lived.
- 1731-JB had a female named Susanna Brown who apparently lived in his household at some point. It's probably a safe bet to associate the 1701 deed from Isaac Wood to John Brown, husbandman, and wife Susanna with this 1731-JB.
- At this point, I don't believe any of the evidence here ties 1731-JB to JB-Upton, but neither can we yet conclude that 1731-JB was *not* the son of JB-Upton. More research is needed!