



Estell Empire:
Ships, Settlements,
Suffrage, and
Society -
Estell and Burbridge
Colony Land Deals

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Noyes Museum Intern
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The Estell Colony

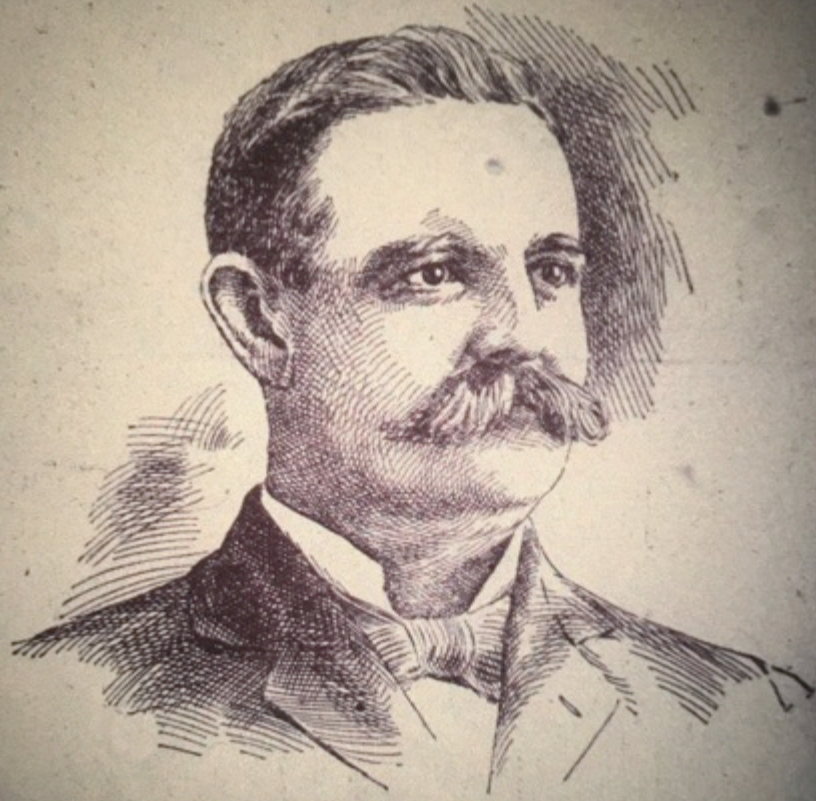


Portrait of Daniel L. Risley
“Atlantic County’s New
Settlement,”
Pleasantville Weekly Press
(Pleasantville, NJ),
January 23, 1895.



In 1894, real estate agent and developer Daniel L. Risley bought two large tracts of land in Estell Manor (about 9,863 acres) from Rebecca Smith Estell and her daughter Annie Estell Bourgeois with a mortgage of \$47,000 collectively.

Risley developed the land, sectioned it into lots, and enticed hundreds of families, mostly immigrants, to buy it. Risley marketed what became known as the Estell Colony as ideal for farming, calling it “the greatest agricultural colony on earth.”



DANIEL L. RISLEY.

Not being able to buy any more adjoining land he went further inland and when the South Jersey railroad ran its first train through to Cape May, Dan. Risley was aboard. He saw en route just what he was looking for—a large tract of high, fertile land. Only a few days had passed before negotiations had been closed for the purchase of ten thousand acres which he soon had plotted out into 5-acre farms. He called the place Estelle. When these were sold he assumed the sole agency for the South Jersey Land and Transportation Co., which owned 20,000 acres immediately

children will very likely attend the Richland school for the present.

About 15 loads of hay pass up South Jersey avenue every day on the way to Vineland and vicinity, where it is sold for \$4 to \$7 a load.

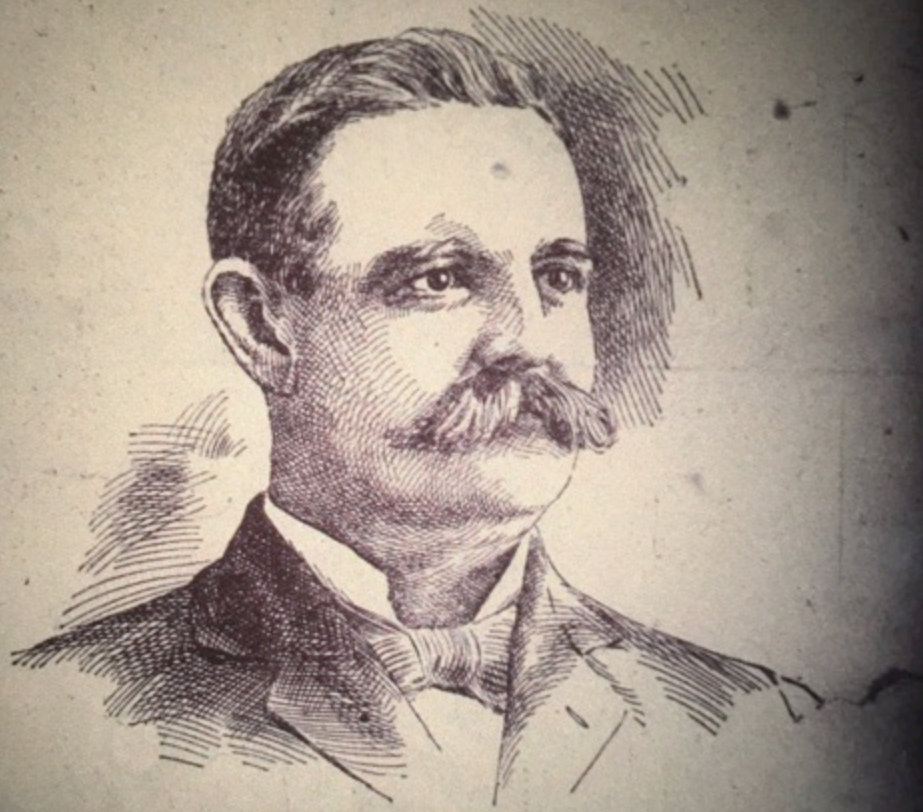
The other day your correspondent came across a small grave yard just beyond First avenue outside of Estelle. There were four tombstones in a row and this is the tale they told of the period of the Revolution:

Judith Coneley, Died 1780, Aged 48.

Ephraim Sayre, Jr., Died 1772, Aged 24.

Bertha Sayre, Died 1780, Aged 37.

Daniel Risley in an article advertising the Estell Colony land. “Largest Agricultural Colony in the United States,” Pleasantville Weekly Press, November 11, 1896



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Not being able to buy any more adjoining land he went further inland and when the South Jersey railroad ran its first train through to Cape May, Dan. Risley was aboard. He saw en route just what he was looking for—a large tract of high, fertile land. Only a few days had passed before negotiations had been closed for the purchase of ten thousand acres which he soon had plotted out into 5-acre farms. He called the place Estelle. When these were sold he assumed the sole agency for the South Jersey Land and Transportation Co., which owned 30,000 acres immediately

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The other day your correspondent came across a small grave yard just beyond First avenue outside of Estelle. There were four tombstones in a row and this is the tale they told of the period of the Revolution:

Judith Conoley, Died 1780, Aged 40.

Ephraim Sayre, Jr., Died 1772, Aged 34.

Bertha Sayre, Died 1780, Aged 37.

In 1903, the American Hotel of Mays Landing held one of the largest sales of foreclosed property ever in Atlantic County, New Jersey.

The Estell-Bourgeois family bought back almost all of the land Risley had lost.

Some of the settlers of the Estell Colony were able to repurchase their land. However, hundreds lost their property, purchase money, and their homes.



Burbridge Colony

General S. G. Burbridge, c. 1860

Photograph

U.S. National Archives,

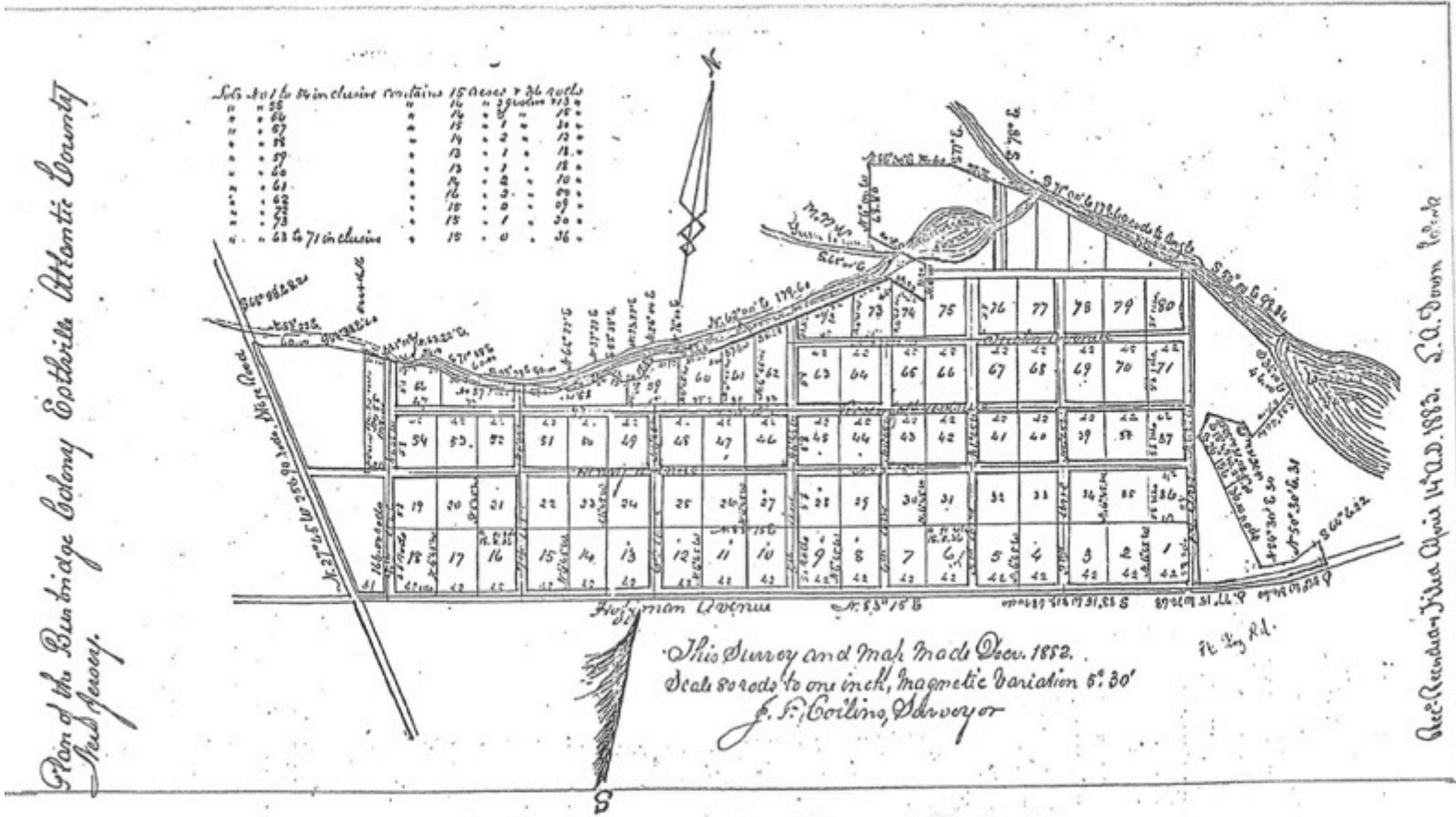
Photographer Mathew Brady



Spanning the years 1882-1883, the Burbridge Colony of Estellville remains a relatively forgotten and short-lived piece of local history.

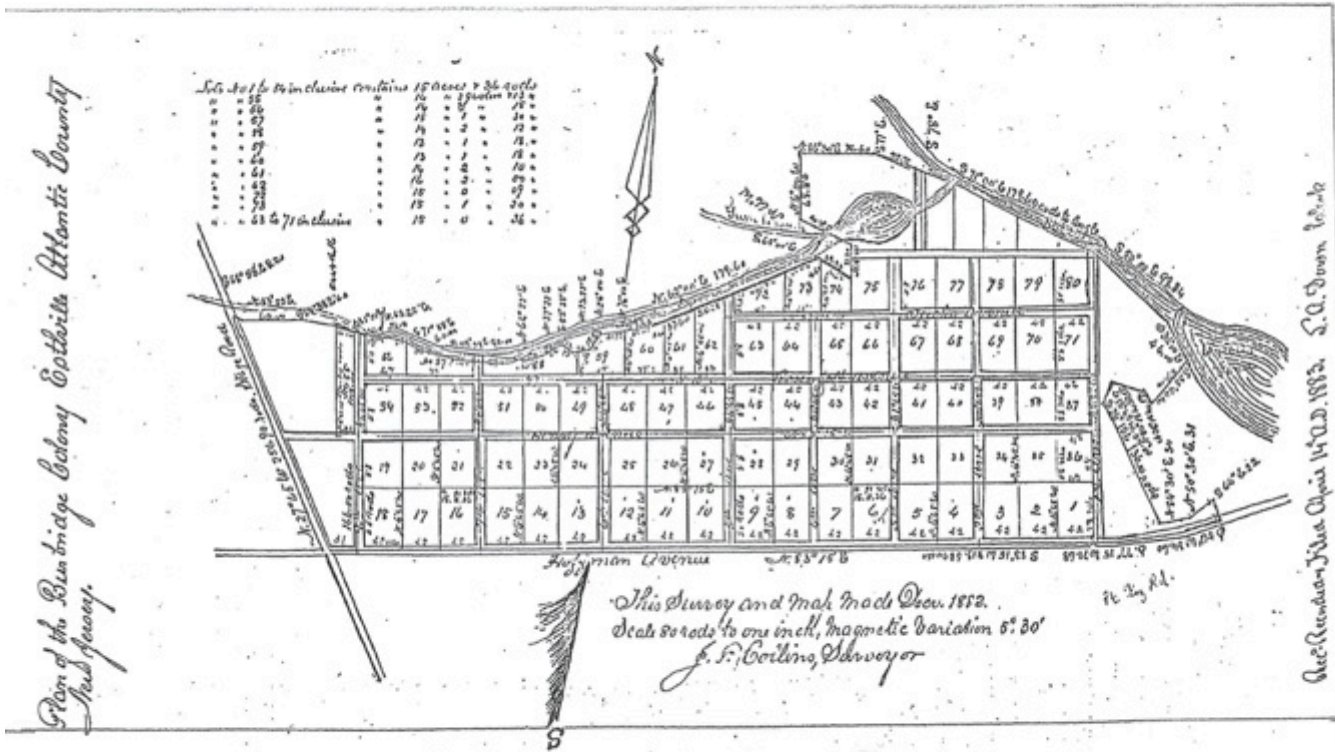
The colony, established by former Civil War General S. G. Burbridge, was formed as a community for Jewish refugees to live in after immigrating to the United States from Russia.

BURBRIDGE COLONY



Burbridge Colony
 Survey,
 c. 1882
 Office of the Clerk,
 Atlantic County,
 filed April 14, 1883

BURBRIDGE COLONY



The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) in New York helped place Jewish refugees in Estellville with the guarantee that they would thrive independently in the area. The refugees were given a fifteen-acre plot of land and the tools necessary for their survival.

General Burbridge, with his agricultural experience, was entrusted with living at the colony and overseeing the lives of the colonists. They were expected to pay back the sum of \$600 to HIAS over several years.



Ruins of Burbridge Cemetery
Estell Manor Historical
Society, Inc., 2013



Life in Burbridge Colony did not go smoothly for those living there. The land turned out to be poor for farming, and a drought in the summer of 1883 made it nearly impossible to grow any crops. Additionally, General Burbridge was not present, as he had promised, and was caught embezzling money meant for the colonists. Due to this, many of the refugees could not afford to pay HIAS back and moved to large cities for work. By December of 1883, Burbridge Colony was nearly deserted by all of its inhabitants.