John Blackwell's ill-fated tenure as governor of Pennsylvania (1688–90) has been well documented, as have many of his activities in England and Ireland.¹ New evidence suggests that Blackwell's kinship links were central to his extensive business activities and may have had a bearing on his appointment by William Penn to the governorship of Pennsylvania. One such link was Maj. Gen. John Lambert whose daughter Frances had married Blackwell.² Another was Dr. Daniel Cox who was deeply involved in land holdings in East New Jersey and West New Jersey.

As a Puritan and a supporter of Cromwell, Blackwell was barred from holding office at the time of the Restoration.³ Nonetheless, he prospered.


His business interests were not geographically limited to England and Ireland but stretched to North America as well. Blackwell appears to be linked to a resettlement scheme in America that mirrored the pre–Civil War Elthuria project with which his father had been involved. The post-Restoration version of the plan arose over what many contemporaries regarded as a drift toward Catholicism, and thereby absolutism, by Charles II and, later and more emphatically, by James II. Involved in this scheme were Daniel Parrott and John Hooke who, like Blackwell, had married daughters of Major General Lambert. In his will of 1695 Parrott named Blackwell as one of his executors. Blackwell's son Lambert Blackwell, had "very considerable dealings in trade" with Parrott between 1683 and 1694. John Hooke also appears to have acted as Lambert Blackwell's legal adviser. At the center of the resettlement scheme, however, was Cox.

Dr. Daniel Cox (1640–1730) was a member of the Royal Society and physician to Charles II and Queen Anne. It was because of his interests in West Jersey and East Jersey that he was at the center of the resettlement scheme, the object of which was to provide a refuge against the threat of popery. Cox had started acquiring property in West New Jersey in 1684, the

From these positions Blackwell was able to extend the land purchases of his father. He was particularly prominent in purchasing bishops' lands; see I. Gentles, "The Sale of Bishops' Lands In The English Revolution, 1646–1660," English Historical Review 95 (1980), 573–96; "The Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Land," Midland History 3 (1975–76), 206–32.


Parrott, Hooke, and Blackwell had married Anne, Elizabeth, and Frances Lambert respectively.

PRO, prob. 11/428, fol. 200, 1695; PRO C8/564/76.


Dr. Daniel Cox was also extensively involved in later attempts to settle French Protestants in America, see, Calendar of State Papers Colonial America and West Indies, (1699), 520; (1700), 656.
year Blackwell went to America. In 1686 he had also acquired interests in East New Jersey. Cox’s American property holdings were substantial. Having purchased the right of government, Cox was, following Edward Byllinge’s death, the nominal governor of West New Jersey from 1687 to 1692.

Cox outlined how in 1685 John Hooke, “his friend and acquaintance,” applied to him for a share of property in West New Jersey. It is clear that both men were close. Cox recalled that he had saved Hooke’s life, while Hooke declared when called to testify at Cox’s chancery proceedings that Cox was “a person for whom this deit had and still have great esteem.” Hooke claimed he paid money to Edward Byllinge for Cox on November 3, 1685. Hooke stated that he wanted land in America in the “prospect of flying thither from the then approaching storm . . . .” He had heard that many of his other friends had purchased land in “West New Jersey” because they shared his worry and were “under Apprehensions of the Prevalency of Popery in England and had thoughts of providing a place of Refuge in the West Indies in Case the Popish Interest should prevail . . . .” Later, however, Hooke wrote that the “Protestant Interest appeared to Exert itself and Especially after the happy Revolution” most of the land was purchased by “men of Trade and Dealing . . . .” Indeed Hooke seems to have modified his views with regard to Catholics following the 1688 revolution.

Hooke is not exact in his references to the actual area being considered, and this means that it is difficult to establish with accuracy the precise details


12 PRO, C9/374/45.

13 Ibid.

14 J. Hooke, Catholicism Without Popery. The Second Part (London, 1704), wing C1497; PRO, prob. 11/526, fol. 361.
of the scheme. It could be related to the "Stancliffe Project" or Cox's involvement in the New Mediterranean Sea Company. Indeed given their nature, especially in the planning stage, there appears to be much overlap between these projects and the people involved.\textsuperscript{15}

Given Blackwell's relation to Hooke and his own interests in America, it seems probable that he would have been involved in this scheme in some capacity. At the very least it is probable, given their relationship, that Hooke would have asked Blackwell's advice with regard to the scheme. It also raises the question as to whether Blackwell's decision to go to America was partly influenced by this scheme and the establishment of Cox's interests in West New Jersey.\textsuperscript{16} It was stated that Blackwell "had come to New England in 1685, and taken up land in north-eastern Connecticut in the interest of certain English and Irish Dissenters . . . preparing to settle down in Windham County, Connecticut . . . ."\textsuperscript{17} A further possible connection of Blackwell to this scheme is his involvement in the New Mediterranean Sea Company of which Cox was the leading figure.\textsuperscript{18} Those who had connections with Blackwell and who are also listed as members of the


\textsuperscript{16} Nuttall, "Blackwell," 139. It is also possible that another factor in the decision to go was the recent death of his father-in-law, Maj. Gen. John Lambert.

\textsuperscript{17} PRO, C7/216/48; C7/592/33.

company were John Hooke, Edmund Harrison, Robert Thompson, and Nathaniel Hooke.¹⁹

There is, however, other evidence which shows a clearer, earlier, and more direct link between Blackwell and Cox. Through his activities alongside Edmund Harrison, Daniel Parrott, and John Hooke, and while looking after the interests of Major General Lambert during Lambert’s twenty-four year imprisonment, Blackwell found himself subject to chancery proceedings brought by the major general’s eldest son, also called John. One of Blackwell’s fellow defendants was Cox.

Blackwell’s activities referred to in the chancery complaint all occurred before the death of Lambert in 1684, and before Blackwell’s arrival in America. In his complaint John Lambert, the major general’s son, stated that he was persuaded by Blackwell and Parrott to “become bound to one Daniel Cox of ye Citty of London Dr in phisick in a Bond of a great penalty.” Lambert further stated that the “confederates,” Blackwell, Parrott, and Cox had taken their “evill designe” further.

Ye sd Confederate Cox yet having in his Custody ye sd Bond wch he promised to deliver up to your Orator not onely Sues yor Orator at Comon Law upon the said Bond soe as aforesaid but also threatens that he will compell your Orator to

pay ye penalty of ye sd Bond And also ye sd Confederates with intent to ruine your Orator have of late taken a Writt upon an Elegit upon ye sd Judgmt directed to ye Sheriffe of Yorkshire . . . .

However it is clear that this was not the first dealing between Blackwell and Cox. In his answer Blackwell related how in November 1658 he had become bound in the sum of £1000 in the major general's behalf to one “Daniel Cox of New Windsor sfather of the said deft Daniel Cox of London Doctor of Phisick . . . .” When he returned from Ireland in 1670 Blackwell said that Dr. Daniel Cox pressed him for the remaining £220 with interest that he still owed from the 1658 bond. Blackwell paid some of this off and then with another fellow brother-in-law, Charles Hatton, entered into another bond with Cox in 1671. In part of his answer Blackwell also stated that he was “well acquainted and haveing great Confidence in the other Defendt Daniel Cox . . . .”

These early links between Cox and Blackwell need to be borne in mind when considering Blackwell’s appointment as deputy governor of Pennsylvania. Penn’s appointment of Blackwell was a surprising one. Blackwell was not a Quaker and appeared to have no links with those who dominated Pennsylvania society. In part this was why Penn favoured him. However, another factor that may have influenced Penn’s appointment of Blackwell was his link with Major General Lambert. Blackwell’s wife, Lambert’s daughter, had returned to England where she visited Penn.

PRO, C7/216/48; C33/282 fol. 263; C33/280, fols. 57, 381, 617. See also Farr, “New Information.” Charles Hatton had married Lambert’s daughter Mary during her father’s imprisonment in Castle Cornet, Guernsey, where Hatton’s father, Lord Hatton, was the governor of the island and the prison. It was partly as a result of this marriage and worries of Lambert’s possible escape that he was transferred to St. Nicholas Island, off Plymouth.

For a summary of the reasons why Penn appointed Blackwell, see, Geiter, “Incorporation of Pennsylvania,” 157–60. Penn stated after Blackwell’s resignation that he had appointed him because of his experience commanding men and that he could be “stiff” with the neighbouring colony; see R. Dunn and M. M. Dunn, eds., The Papers of William Penn (5 vols., Philadelphia, 1981–86), 3:266. However, the nature of Blackwell’s appointment, being immediately undermined by Penn, and the fact that he was not a Quaker left Blackwell in a weak position. This was reflected in the problems he encountered when he arrived to take up his post.

Nuttall, “Blackwell,” 140. It is possible that William Penn’s father, Sir William, had some contact with the Lambert family. On May 27, 1668, Samuel Pepys noted, “and so to see Sir W Penn, who I find still very ill of goute, sitting in his great chair, made on purpose for persons sick of that disease, for their
Penn himself was involved in the authorization of the New Mediterranean Sea Company and generally his “activities in the Jerseys . . . were also a result of connections within the London mercantile community.” Cox consulted and met with Penn. It is also possible that alongside what may have been seen as the reasons for Blackwell’s appointment Penn might have considered Blackwell in the light of his link with Cox and the latter’s extensive interests in America.

That such a factor might have influenced Penn’s decision to appoint Blackwell should be no surprise as kinship and connection were central aspects of seventeenth-century life. Blackwell’s career and fortune had benefited from his ties to Cromwell and Lambert, and his own actions in arranging the marriage of his father’s widow to the regicide Col. John Okey were clearly designed to be as much to his advantage as to that of his father’s last wife. The legal disputes that arose as a result of this connection also show that upon his return from America Blackwell was active once more in a variety of affairs.

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24 Pomfret, The Province of West New Jersey, 151, 154.

25 Blackwell’s involvement in American affairs did not end when he happily bade farewell to his post and returned to England at the start of 1690. In April 1691 Blackwell was summoned to attend the Committee of Lords of Trade and Plantations. Calendar State Papers Colonial America and West Indies (1691), 413, 415, 417–8.