

THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT LEWES.

BUILT 1728.

REBUILT 1760.

DEMOLISHED 1871.

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HISTORY OF LEWES, DELAWARE.

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HISTORY OF LEWES.

Of the several European projects which in the seventeenth century caused the great deportation of people from the Old World to the shores of the New, none was more remarkable than that which was actively promoted by the Lords States General of Holland. The United Provinces were then the greatest maritime power of the world, and the zeal for fresh discoveries with a growing thirst for extension of trade, sent the ships of the little Dutch republic into all known ports, while unknown marts were keenly sought in the then persistent efforts to find a new passage to India across the American continent.

While religious motives in some form more or less inspired emigration from most other countries, trade was the dominant purpose of the Dutch, religious propagation and other objects being the resulting and secondary incidents of the primary inspiration. But the latter, however originating, were the achievements which have had most immediate concern with the progress and history of mankind; and it is here that the early Dutch navigators won imperishable and deserved renown.

While it is generally conceded that the Spaniards as early as 1526 had explored the whole Atlantic coast as far North as the thirty-fifth degree of latitude it is certain that the practical discoverer of Delaware Bay and River was Henry Hudson, an English navigator in the service of the Dutch

East India Company. The journals both of Hudson and of Robert Juet, his first officer, show that the discovery was made on the 28th of August, 1609, and they detail the courses and distances sailed along the coast, and the soundings off the bars and within the capes which have since been found remarkably accurate. Upon incontestable evidence, thus definite and circumstantial, the Dutch laid claim to the adjacent territory as against the vague and sweeping assumptions of the English under the general discovery of the Cabots in the prior century. Unfortunately for the Dutch they were slow in asserting their prior right, which gave ground for the English contest, until organized colonization and actual occupancy of new territory became requisite for rightful ownership. But not less by this juster test than by their prior discovery had the Dutch the first valid claim to what is now Delaware territory. It was a claim moreover founded upon recognition of the prior right of the natives, of whom the land had been purchased, and it was sealed with the blood of the purchasers; for it was the Dutch expedition of De Vries, provided with all requisites for actual cultivation of the soil that in April, 1631, landed near Lewes and began the settlement which suffered a sad massacre from the Indians—an event to be more fully noticed hereafter.

Hudson in 1610 again came to the New World with a trading cargo, which he exchanged with the Indians for furs, and the following year a voyage was made by Hendrick Christiaensen and Adrien Block with the Schipper Rysar, who returned with a valuable cargo of furs, together with two red men, sons of Indian chiefs. This so quickened the curiosity and public interest in the new land that a memorial

upon the subject was sent to the Provincial States of Holland and copies distributed formally to their principal cities. Then followed a succession of voyages, among which was that of the ship *Fortune*, commanded by Captain Cornelius Jacobson Mey, from whom Cape May derived its name. In the same fleet was Block's vessel, the *Tiger*, which was destroyed by fire when about to sail for home. But her undaunted navigator, while the other vessels pursued their return voyage, built a hut on the shore of a little island, where he spent the winter of 1613-14 in constructing a boat to take the place of the burnt *Tiger*.

This new craft, the first built in America, was 38 feet keel, 44½ feet long, 11 feet wide and 16 tonnage. She was christened *Onrust* or *Restless*, and although scarcely larger than a modern fishing smack or oyster shallop, was destined to great historic fame; for it was with this diminutive vessel that Captain Cornelius Hendrickson in 1615-16 made a thorough exploration of Delaware Bay and River, at least as far north as the mouth of the Schuylkill. In the course of his adventures the enterprising explorer ascended our Christiana, where he met a band of Minqua Indians with whom he traded; and it should prove a matter of some interest to our immediate community that perhaps on the very spot where Wilmington now stands the captain held a friendly conference with the red men, from whom moreover he rescued three white captives who had wandered from the Dutch fort on the Hudson. That immediately hereabouts was the scene of these events there can be little doubt, since here was the first upland reached after ascending through the marshes, a locality which was long a favorite abiding place of the Indians and from whom our

first Swedish settlers subsequently purchased their landing place and town site.

While authorities differ as to the extent of Hendricksen's cruise through the Delaware, there is no good reason for doubting the truth of the explorer's own report which distinctly states that he "discovered and explored certain lands, a bay and three rivers situate between 38 and 40 degrees;" nor can we fairly doubt that Hendricksen, as the first explorer in detail of the Delaware Bay and River, was the first white man to tread the soil of what is now Delaware territory, while the experience of nearly three centuries has confirmed the accuracy of his report respecting the character of the country, its trees, streams, native fruits, wild animals, abundant game and temperate climate. Indeed, while, for some reason Hendricksen failed to receive proper reward or recognition at home, his services were of incalculable value in first acquainting the Old World with the resources of the New; and while he was thus persistently laboring with little hope of reward, others, less deserving, were soon to be unduly rewarded. Fleet after fleet, carrying multiplied adventurers, hastened across to America in an eager race for gain. For on the 27th of March, 1614, the High and Mighty States General of Holland had issued their famous ordinance or edict granting and conceding to whomsoever should from that time forward discover any "new passages, havens, lands and places," the exclusive right of navigating to the same for four voyages, provided such discoverers made "pertinent" reports thereof within fourteen days of their return.

The effect of this prodigious stimulus was to enlist fresh capital and to vastly increase the number of exploring ves-

sels coasting the new continent. A single summer sufficed to so augment the number and greed of adventurers that the demand for new countries and their fabulous treasures exceeded the supply; and upon the return of the vessels in the fall the navigators and their merchant associates drew up their reports with charts of their several discoveries, and hastened to The Hague to claim the concessions offered by the official edict. Unfolding their maps and warming with eloquent tales in the wondering presence of the twelve High Mightinesses the navigators enlarged upon their various adventures, told of losses and gains, travails and triumphs, and, depicting a future of Dutch glory as the harvest of their sacrifices, they demanded the promised reward. It was promptly granted; and by a special charter under the date of the 11th of October, 1614, the adventurers acquired control of the entire Atlantic coast from Canada, then New France, to Virginia, embracing the whole region from the 40th to the 45th parallel of latitude, to which was given the name of New Netherlands. To this vast territory the grantees had the exclusive right to trade for five years—a monopoly which would seem to dwarf the soaring proportions of modern plutocracy and belittle its most expanded Trusts.

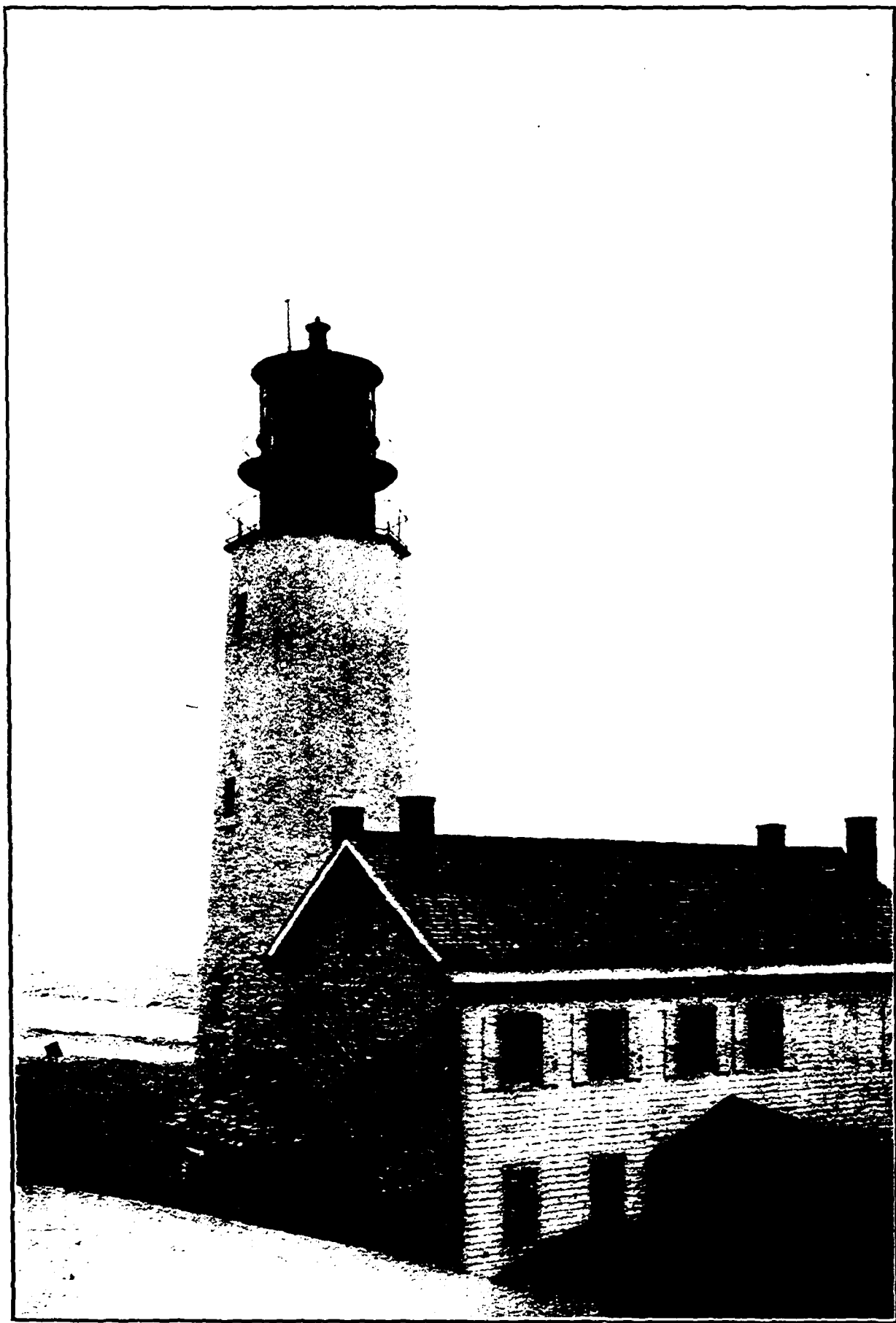
The so-called “discoveries” thus so summarily rewarded could have comprised, in such brief voyages, little more than passing observations largely conjectural, and there is no evidence extant that any of these privileged vessels entered the Delaware; but there was one little craft, we have seen, that not only entered but thoroughly explored the rivers, creeks and harbors of our fronting waters and traded with the natives along their shores. Long after the returned

adventurers had received their huge reward abroad the little home-built *Restless*, without reward, continued her busy career of exploration. To her bold commander, Captain Cornelius Hendrickson, honor was due alike for his humane release of the Indian captives on the *Christiana* and for the invaluable information he contributed respecting the character and resources of the country. While little of such information has been preserved it is known to have materially facilitated the organization of that great Dutch West India Company, which was so large a factor in the early colonial history of America.

Deserving to rank with Usselinx, Minuit and other earnest leaders of American colonization, Hendrickson was thus an effective co-adjutor in their cherished scheme; and at last their patient and persevering labors were rewarded by the formal incorporation on the 3d of June, 1621, of the great Dutch organization whose autocratic and comprehensive powers perhaps the world never saw paralleled in the history of granted franchises.

But with the usual abuse of irresponsible power members of this Dutch West India Company soon launched upon a career wholly foreign to the peaceful purposes for which it was constituted. The war with Spain affording a fair pretext they pursued a course of privateering that became little short of colossal piracy against the commerce of Spain and Portugal. This yielded such enormous spoils that they unblushingly protested against a proposed peace or truce upon the naive and quaint plea candidly expressed in their memorial that their company, formed wholly for a peaceful object could not exist without war !

Nevertheless there were some shrewd and conservative,



CAPE HENLOPEN LIGHTHOUSE.

yet energetic, members who did not forget the original purpose of the company, but honestly believed in the profit and prosperity to result from its legitimate pursuit of colonization and commercial projects. Among these men of substance were John De Laet, the historian; Killiaen Van Rensselaer, Samuel Godyn and Samuel Blommaert. These men, with others of prudent and prophetic views, secured from the so-called assembly or "College of Nineteen" a charter of Exemptions and Privileges," which was confirmed by the States General on the 7th of June, 1629, under which enormous tracts of land and extraordinary powers, privileges and franchises were accorded to all such as should plant colonies or settlements in New Netherlands.

This was the original basis of that patroon system of vast land tenure that specially characterized the early settlement of New York State. It was provided that on certain conditions members could send, on the company's ships, three or four persons as agents to select lands, and that after first satisfying the Indian's right to the same and defining the desired boundaries such members should become the feudal lords or patroons over tracts of fixed size, on condition that on each of them a colony of not less than 50 adults should be planted within four years. These tracts for colonial settlement might be 64 miles in length or half that extent if on two sides of a navigable river, and they were acquired in absolute fee simple by the patroons who were sole magistrates, and, within their own bounds "had chief command and dower jurisdiction," with the exclusive privilege of fishing, fowling and milling, and of founding cities and appointing officers. They prohibited all manufacturing, retained complete monopoly of the fur trade, and in all other

respects the patroons were to be sovereign in their lordship.

Thus in the virgin soil of the New World where equality in human conditions it was fondly hoped might take root, were sown the seeds of privilege—in the heart of that primal domain where the free air bred jealous individuality and the chance of a fair and equal start for all, there was planted a complete feudal system; and a landed aristocracy of pretentious and alien purpose strutted its brief hour on the broad theatre destined for freest democracy.

Among the earliest tracts secured under this bountiful charter were two on either shore of lower Delaware Bay, the one on the East taken by Samuel Godyn and the other on the West by Samuel Blommaert. The tract taken by Godyn, after whom the bay was then named, included Cape May and a large surrounding area, while the land selected by Blommaert comprised a tract in the southeast corner of what is now Delaware, 32 miles long north and south, and two miles wide east and west. Two persons had been sent from Holland in 1629 to examine the land and make the requisite preliminary purchase from the Indians, and the patent for the tract was registered and confirmed on the 1st of June, 1630. While it is impossible at this day to identify the exact inland boundaries of this domain it is certain to have embraced the entire water frontage of what is now Sussex county upon ocean and bay and to have included the present sites of Rehoboth and Lewes. And thus our little State had a colonial connection with New York in its scheme of settlement and at least a corner of its territory was involved in the operations of the huge patroon landed interests of that State. For, the early example of Godyn and Blommaert on the South or Delaware Bay was speedily followed by others

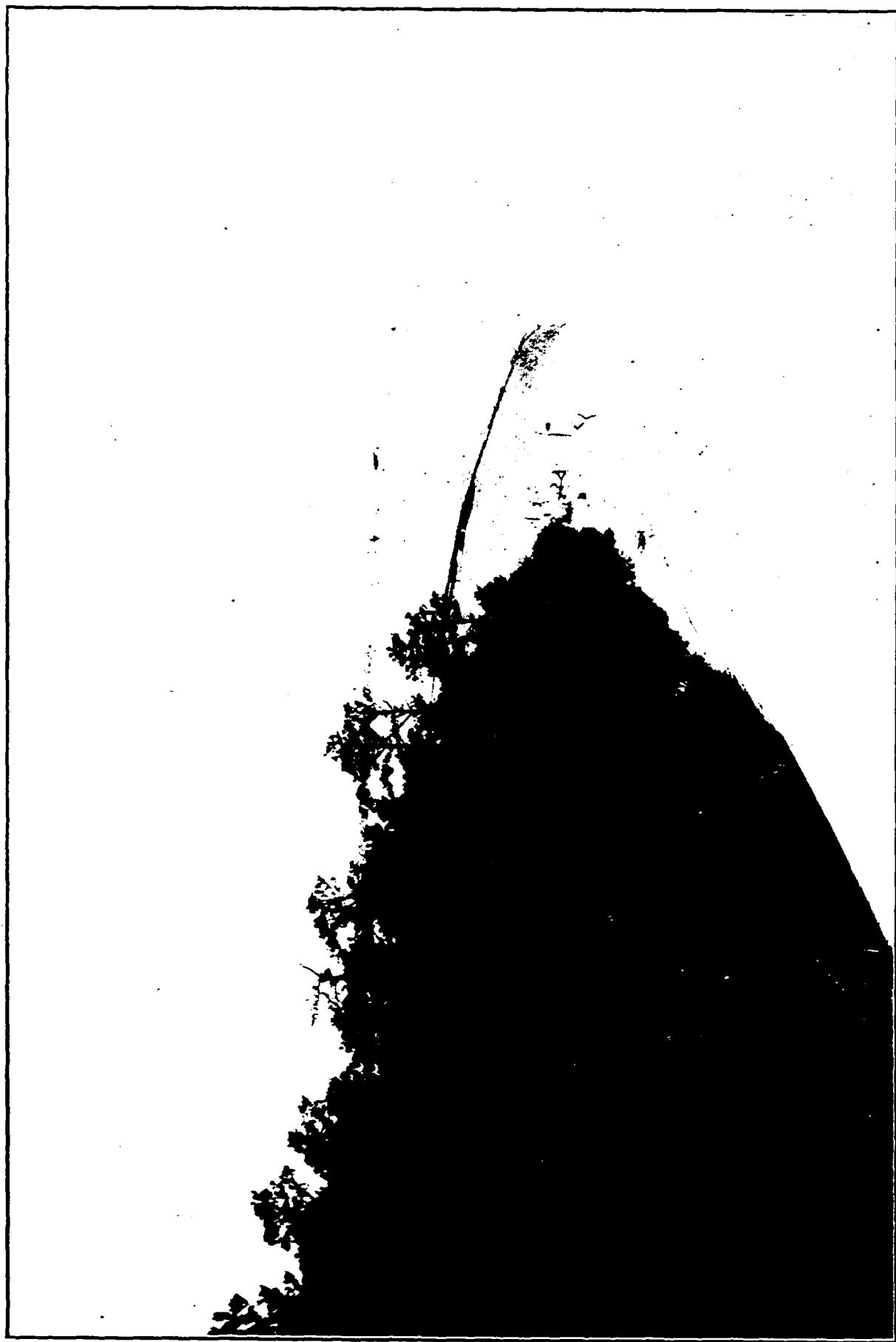
on the North or Hudson River among the most conspicuous of the latter being Van Rensselaer, whose tract embraced nearly all of the present counties of Albany and Rensselaer.

But these lords of the soil, grasping as they gained, and, fired with visions of coming wealth and power, soon began to quarrel among themselves, and as soon, felt impelled, in order to avoid exposure of questionable transactions, to make an equal division of their vast acquisitions to quiet the disaffected partners concerned. Then as the colonization and actual occupancy and cultivation of the land were necessary to complete good titles to the great estates Blommaert prepared an expedition provided with cattle, farming implements and other requisites to that end, to be sent to the Delaware for due settlement, over which he appointed as commander David Pietersen De Vries of Hoorn, a bold and skilful navigator and master of artillery of the United Provinces. This great seaman and explorer who had just returned from a three years cruise in the East Indies was at first offered but a secondary position among the titled operators, but declining any part under the highest assignment, his equality was recognized, and he was made full patroon on the 16th of October, 1630. The expedition sailed from the Texel in the ensuing December; it comprised the ship *Walvis* or *Whale* of 18 guns, and a yacht which, in addition to immigrants and farming supplies, carried implements for capturing whales, which were thought to be plentiful about the region of Delaware Bay.

Such was the origin and character of a voyage of historic fame known as the "De Vries" expedition. Yet the best sources of information favor the belief that De Vries himself did not sail with this first expedition, but that it was

commanded by Peter Heyes, and reached South or Goodyn or Delaware Bay in April, 1631. Sailing up the western shore the two vessels passed the sandy point, now known as Cape Henlopen, and entered what was recorded as "a fine navigable stream filled with islands, abounding in good oysters" and flowing through a fertile region. They were met by the land odors and saw the bursting vegetation of a smiling April; and, wearied with the ship odors and the confinement and monotony of a four months' sea voyage, the immigrants gladly yielded to the allurements of the fragrant new home in its fresh spring apparel. There they landed with their supplies and their appliances for farming, for whale-fishing and for a permanent fixed settlement in a virginal and new land of promise. The settlers were about thirty in number, all males, and nearby, in good faith and high hopes they began that first Delaware colony which was destined to so brief an existence and so sad a fate.

The stream they had ascended, now known as Lewes creek, was then named Hoornkill in honor of De Vries, whose Holland residence was in Hoorn, while the landing place of this first Delaware colony to which the name was also applied, was nearly identical with the site of the existing Lewes; and here thus began the eventful history of the little Delaware town. Moreover the whole settlement was also called Zwaanendael or "Valley of Swans," from the number of those beautiful birds there found, and the land it comprised was, as a precautionary or confirmative measure again purchased for the patroons on the 5th of May, 1631, by the captain and commissary of the expedition from ten Indian chiefs belonging probably to the Nanticoke or Tide Water Indians, a tribe of the great Leni-Lenape or



THE SAND MOUNTAIN NEAR LEWIS.

self-called "Grandfathers" or "Original People," comprising forty or more tribes which originally inhabited the great central belt of what is now the United States.

A small building with surrounding palisades was erected near the landing place, it is supposed, and then the commander, Peter Heyes, crossing over to Cape May there made a similar Indian purchase of a large tract of land in what is now southern New Jersey in behalf of the patroons. Being then not long in ascertaining that little was to be expected from catching whales in that locality, Captain Heyes in September sailed for Holland, leaving the commissary, Gillis Hossett, in command of Fort Oplandt and the colony of Zwaanendael.

The tragic event that followed furnishes a vivid page of early colonial history. The colony was suddenly cut off without a survivor by the Indians. It was the first and probably the only blood of white men that ever stained Delaware soil by red men, at least in their tribal or concerted action. Why and how the massacre occurred was never known with certainty, but it became a general belief that it resulted from the unwise and hasty conduct of Hossett and his men. The Dutch had erected, according to their custom, a pillar, probably as one of their boundary marks, which bore upon it a piece of tin traced with the coat of arms of the United Provinces. One of the chiefs, attracted by the shining article, with an innocent but mistaken impulse, thoughtlessly possessed himself of the piece of tin of which he wanted to make pipes. For this act he was violently rebuked and threatened with punishment. The offender tried to explain that he meant no offence and offered ample compensation for what he had ignorantly

taken, but he continued to be harshly abused by his accusers, who would listen to no plea for neighborly peace and good will. The Indians were all extremely anxious to appease the whites, of whom they stood in great awe, and, that nothing might be lacking in their zeal to atone for the offence, they slew the offending chief and brought his scalp in token of their act to Fort Oplandt. Instead of receiving the thanks and friendly return for which they had persistently labored the Indians were assailed with renewed violence for the very act by which they had meant propitiation, and they went away in great displeasure and despair. Then some friends of the murdered chief who had taken no part in the matter, feeling outraged at the harsh and unjust behaviour of the whites, sought revenge, and, stealing upon them when all but one sick man were at work in the fields, slew them at their labor, and then hastened to the fort, killed its one sick occupant as well as a huge chained dog on guard.

Such was the story told afterward by the Indians, for they left no white survivor to report differently of the butchery. While open to doubt in some particulars De Vries appears to have believed the account as afterward related to him, and there seems no reason to question its substantial truth.

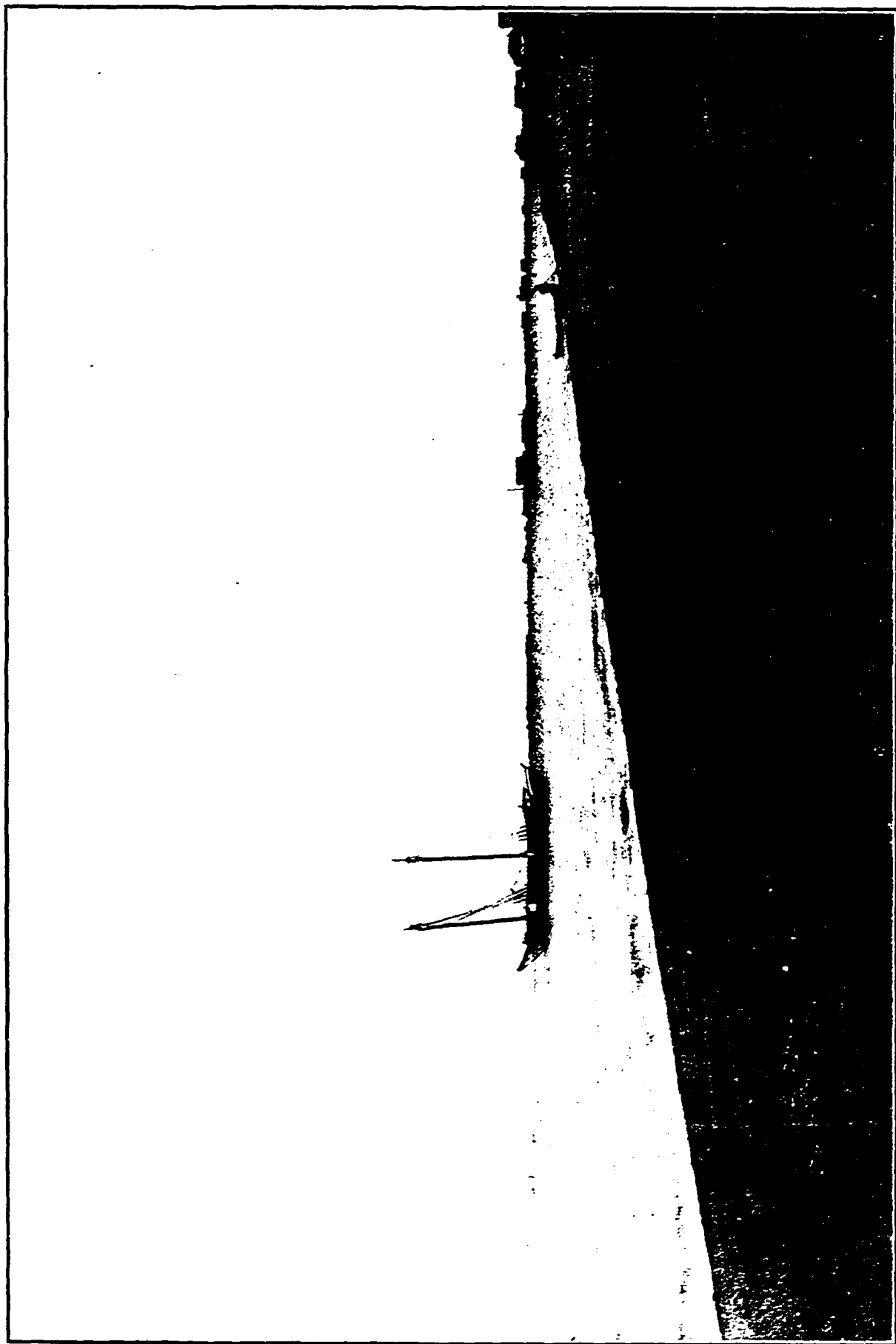
But however sad its fate and brief its existence this early settlement and actual occupancy of Delaware soil was a vital factor in the attainment of our civic autonomy and separate existence as a sovereign State ; for it precluded our being absorbed into the territory of Maryland. The royal patent to Lord Baltimore of the next year, issued in 1632, having expressly restricted the grant to lands “uncultivated

and inhabited by savages," it necessarily exempted lands which the "Savages" had already disposed of and "Christians" had "cultivated." Such was substantially the decision of the Lord's Commissioners after a patient hearing, and a decree of the King's Council issued in 1685 in order "to avoid further differences," divided the disputed peninsula equally between the opposing claimants by drawing a line from a point equally distant from each bay on the latitude of Cape Henlopen running northward to the Pennsylvania boundary. The "latitude of Cape Henlopen" here quoted was that of the original Cape Henlopen at the southeast corner of our State, and the decision was a distinct recognition of both the southern and western boundaries of Delaware as now existing; and although the representatives of Maryland's claim rejected the settlement and long contended for the whole peninsula, the decision was the basis of the ultimate adjustment of the long pending controversy between the heirs of William Penn and those of Lord Baltimore.

Thus again was historic Lewes, in the first tragic experience of the place, deeply involved with the momentous problems pertaining to the very existence of the State. And the fact of the bloody baptism and early disappearance of the little colony instead of affording ground for ignoring Delaware's prior claim to territorial existence, would seem to lend pathos and add a quickened sense of historic sympathy to considerations of justice regarding the tragedy. Yet Lord Baltimore's claim to the whole area of Delaware was wholly baseless except by taking advantage of the colonist's misfortunes, disregarding their prior cultivation of the soil and assuming the rightful repossession by the Indians of the land they

had fairly sold to actual settlers. The latter had acted in good faith, and their vacation of the premises was not their choice but their cruel fate—an end deserving the kindly consideration rather than the envious cupidity of rival claimants.

Early in the year following the massacre De Vries had made preparations for sailing from Holland with more settlers for Zwaanendael when the startling news of its destruction reached him. Deferring his departure some months, he sailed in the fall and, after a weary voyage, reached Delaware Bay in early December, and after taking precautions against an apprehended surprise from hostile Indians, De Vries sailed up the Hoornkill and even before landing saw growing evidence that his worst fears were to be realized. The stockade and various buildings forming the strong hold of Fort Oplandt were in ruins, and destruction was seen on every side. But they failed to see the worst until they reached the spot where the settlers had met their cruel fate. There they found the ground bestrewn with the skeletons of their slaughtered countrymen and near at hand the remains of their cattle. It was a scene of oppressive awe; silence, ruin and desolation reigned in the once lovely valley, and the searchers returned sorrowfully to the ship. Seeing no Indians, De Vries ordered a gun to be fired, hoping to bring some of them to the ship; but none came until the following day when several appeared cautiously near the ruins of the fort, but declined approaching the ship, apparently signaling the whites to come to them. De Vries, anxious to gain particulars of the massacre went ashore the next day and held a parley with them, and after much delay and skillful persuasion so far gained their



THE BEACH AT LEWIS.

confidence as to attract some of the Indians on board where he heard from them the account of the tragedy substantially as here given.

De Vries, who was a wise and just man, did not care to investigate too closely a deed which was beyond recall or amendment to any good end ; but he felt assured it resulted from some provocative or brutal conduct of his own men, whom he well knew to be capable of cruel debauchery and he attributed the killing of Hossett and his men to "mere jangling with the Indians," to use his own words, and instead of seeking revenge or continuing a bloody quarrel with them, he made a treaty of peace with the red men and sealed it by making them the customary presents of duffels, kettles, &c.

Lingering through December in and near the Hoornkill or Lewes Creek, De Vries, on New Year's Day, 1633, sailed northward and reached Fort Nassau, near Gloucester, on the 5th of January. After a river cruise and some conferences with Indian chiefs he dropped down stream and lay for a time near the mouth of Minqua's kill, now our Christiana, where he encountered cold weather and obstructing ice, and thence returned to Zwaanendael. Arriving there on the 20th of February De Vries within a fortnight again weighed anchor and sailing for Virginia, there procured supplies for his colony. Upon his return he found his men had in his absence taken a number of whales yielding considerable oil, but he thought these returns not sufficient to justify the expenses involved, and, as the colony was now too small for self-support and defence against the natives De Vries took the few remaining adventurers and sailing homeward by way of Manhattan reached Holland sometime in the summer of 1633.

Thus was the South or Delaware Bay abandoned to the red natives. The hush and solemnity of primeval nature once more reigned supreme, and for five years until the coming of the Swedes in 1638 its solitudes were unvexed with the presence of Europeans. But as before stated, such abandonment was not the voluntary act of the colonists. Their desertion of the country was not their choice, but their misfortune. The De Vries settlement of 1631 was made for the valid purposes of actual occupancy and cultivation of the soil, both of which were achieved before the savage slaughter of the occupants and cultivators. This exempted the land from the grant to Lord Baltimore, made on the 20th of June, 1632, and thus neither by the accepted English rule established under Queen Elizabeth's reign requiring occupancy of wild land to secure its possession, nor upon any basis of precedent, principle or justice could the proprietary of Maryland fairly ground a claim for the possession of Delaware.

The first white occupants of the site of Lewes had probably been Dutch traders who established a post there for Indian traffic as early as 1622. Following the Indian massacre of the De Vries settlement in 1631, the Dutch two years later, as before stated, totally abandoned the region of the Delaware Bay, but they continued their possession of New York, then New Amsterdam, and having regained control of northern Delaware by the conquest of the Swedish forts at New Castle and Christiana in 1655, they held at least nominal rule over lower Delaware, and in 1658 re-established a post at Lewes for trading with the Indians. But they were in constant dread of English claims to the country, and with a view of strengthening their

title Beekman and D'Hinoyossa, representing the interests, respectively of the West India Company and of the City of Amsterdam, its creditor, came down from northern Delaware to the Hoornkill and sent word to Indian chiefs to meet them for a new treaty of peace and land trade. In this they were successful as shown by a report to Governor Stuyvesant, under date of June 14th, 1659, and the same year a fort was built at the Hoornkill for defence against apprehended assault from the English. And thus for the second time the Dutch secured the Indians' title and prior right to the country embracing the site of Lewes.

It is not certainly known when the first actual settlers came to the Hoornkill after the Indian massacre in 1631, but following the re-establishment of the Dutch trading post in 1658 and the Dutch surrender to the English in 1664, all customs were abolished in October, 1670, when new settlers began to come in and by a census taken May 8th, 1671, there was a total population of 47 in the Hoornkill, while transfers of landed property, which had already commenced, became more numerous. On the 7th of July, 1665, 80 acres were granted to Alexander Molestedy (Molestine) "lying upon Whorekill neare unto the mouth of the kill," and 130 acres to Hermanus Wiltbank on the Whorekill and Pagan's Creek. On the 12th of January, 1670, a grant was made to James Mills of a "neck of land lying to the southward of the town called Whorekill," while following the English conquest in 1664 among the earliest deeds for land in lower Delaware was one for a tract from the British governor, Sir Francis Lovelace on the 2d of July, 1672, to Hermanus Frederick Wiltbank, designated as "all that piece of land at the Horekill signed and called Lewes, in Delaware Bay,

which piece of land is called ye West India fort.” It would be well to say here, however, as a matter of curious history, if nothing more, that prior to any land transfers by or to English parties, on the 7th of February, 1635, two years after the departure of De Vries and his colonists the whole of the patroon lands stretching 32 miles along the Delaware shore, including the site of Lewes, and embracing 12 square miles, including Cape May on the New Jersey side, were sold by Godyn, Blommaert and associates to the Dutch West India Co. for 15,600 guilders or \$6,240, constituting the first land sale between white parties upon the Delaware Bay or River, and probably ending in this region all individual landed interests held under patroon tenure.

During their brief re-possession of power the Dutch in 1673 established a court at Lewes, which was continued by the English when they resumed control the following year. When the new justices were appointed May 28th, 1680, they took steps looking to a permanent seat of government, and upon petition for a change of name Gov. Andross promptly rechristened the Horekill or Whorekill, both being a corruption of the original Hoorukill, with the name of “Deale,” which appellation it bore until the coming of William Penn, who named the county Sussex, while Lewes took its name from an English town in the English shire of Sussex.

Under the new auspices linked with William Penn’s acquisition of the country, a new interest was inspired in Lewes with special hopes of making it a merchant port. The court was instructed to grant titles upon conditions implying the building of good sized houses on pain of fine and forfeiture, upon which basis various improvements were encouraged, and quaint petitions urged with odd specifica-

tions, are to be found in the curious transactions of its ancient records. John Brown, shipbuilder, petitioned the court for "a lotte at Lewes on which he might build a sloop or shallop, as the one he now occupies is not fit;" and the same year William Beverly was sued by Hermanus Wiltbank for neglect of his work in building the vessel. Shipbuilding was then a growing industry in Lewes, while the records show that tobacco was then largely grown and used in nearly all business transactions.

From various causes largely connected with the Quaker immigration and influence led by William Penn, Lewes now had a fairly prosperous growth, and by a census taken in 1725 the town contained 58 families, while 15 families were settled at Quatertown two miles inland. Among the settlers at Lewes after Penn's arrival in 1682 were a number of immigrants from Scotland and northern Ireland, who belonged to the religious sect called "Independents," to whom came, about the year 1691, the Rev. Samuel Davis as preacher, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. This appears to have been the beginning of organized religious movements, and during the ensuing 30 years various denominations established themselves, while the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts sent over as missionary the Rev. William Beckett, who, selecting Lewis as a centre of operation, settled himself here in September, 1721; but the first church structure in Lewes was not finished until 1728. On October 3d, 1739, the eminent George Whitefield preached in Lewes and afterward reported that he thought its chief inhabitants "not troubled by the tender and melting story of a Saviour's sacrifice." In June, 1773, Gov. John Penn presented St. Peter's Church

with an elegant communion service, which is still in use. The town has not been without seasons of special advancement, including improvement among its colored population, in religious and other matters.

Corresponding progress was attained in educational matters which elicited the early interest of William Penn and his associates, with whom Lewes always seemed a favorite locality. Pertaining to this subject an interesting relic has recently been unearthed. In digging a cellar at Quakertown two miles distant workmen found beneath the surface a metallic seal about an inch and a half in diameter inscribed with the clearly cut words "Trustees of Penn's School Charter of Lewes." It bears no date and little has yet been ascertained regarding it, but it would seem to indicate a project early proposed in behalf of education and an early recognition of the importance of Lewes as the seat of such a movement, much as the historic interest and early importance of the place receive additional emphasis from its still standing ancient school house where four of Delaware's governors began their early education, coupled with the fact that in a single one of its burial places rest the remains of four of the same rank of chief magistrates formerly ruling its affairs. And here it would seem not amiss to refer to the early reputation borne by Lewes as a town of intelligence, when with other provisions for proper reading matter it was quaintly observed that they could not be fairly deemed supplied without a certain newspaper printed in Philadelphia by one Benjamin Franklin; leaving the fair inference that the "certain newspaper" was accordingly duly subscribed for and faithfully perused by the good people of the intelligent town.

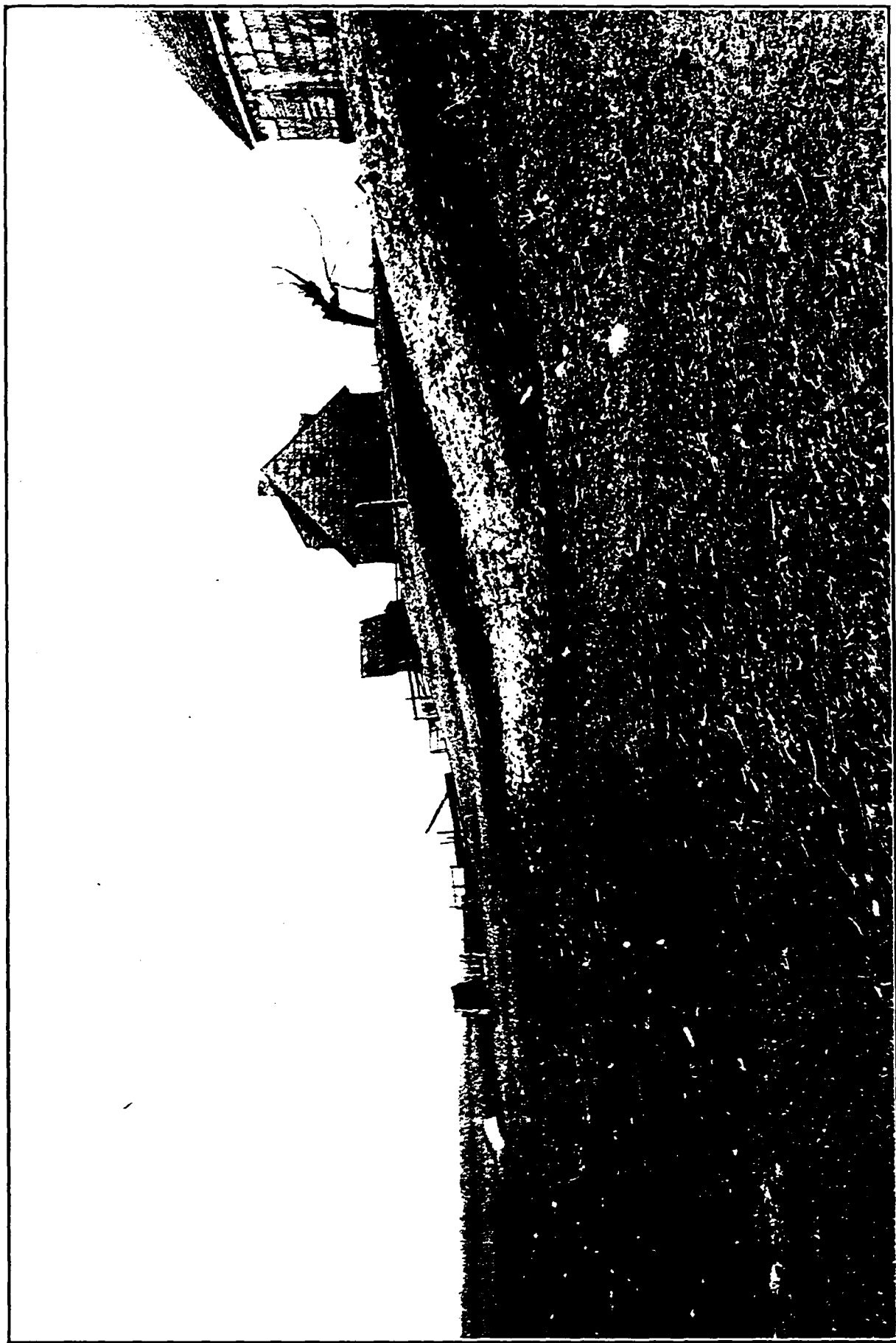
By virtue of the king's authority and long usage confirmed

by express grant by the heirs of William Penn the tract of sandy level and marsh lying between Lewes and the bay was early consecrated as a public commons for the people's benefit; and by subsequent acts of the Legislature and Court of Quarter Sessions it was placed in charge of trustees. Since 1871 the control of the commons has been vested in the commissioners of the town, who authorized improvements to be made and buildings erected on leased lots. A highway across the marsh to the beach skirting the immediate bay front has also been constructed and wharves built out into deep water by which additional facilities it has been made possible to encourage shipping in lieu of that ruined by the filling up of the olden Hoornkill or modern Lewes Creek.

Lewes occupies both a protected and exposed situation—the one afforded by nature, the other incident to man. While sheltered from the ocean behind its sandhill cape, its very security conspires with its fine site, its watery accessibility and the supporting fertility of its back country, to offer a tempting bait to sea marauders regular and irregular. In the colonial period in the latter part of the Seventeenth Century the coast was much harassed by pirates as well as in both the Revolutionary struggle and War of 1812. During the period first named French privateers threatened to lay waste such towns as refused to pay them tribute, and the court, fearing Lewes might prove a salient point for attack, took action on the 15th of July, 1695, to provide for a watch on the cape. Their fears were not immediately realized, but on the 27th of August, 1698, French pirates landed and pillaged nearly every house in Lewes. At the beginning of the war for independence early in 1775, a permanent look-out scout was stationed at Lewes, fifty to one hundred men

were kept on guard at the lighthouse and pilots were warned against bringing any British armed vessels up the bay.

Lewes indeed contributed her full share to the success of our Revolutionary struggle and the trials and anxieties it involved. Originally of royal English stock the people of lower Delaware and adjoining Maryland counties were kept by their Peninsular isolation out of touch with the general growth of resistance to British oppression, and were very loath to cease their long devotion to the throne of their fathers. This greatly encouraged Tory hopes and emboldened the supporters of England in her course. Yet it was in Lewes that the largest assemblage ever seen in the State convened on the 28th of July, 1774, in earnest and devoted sympathy with the people of Boston when the British Parliament closed their port following the memorable wreckage of tea in Boston harbor. The principal speaker was Thomas McKean, the future "signer" of the Declaration of Independence, and in response to his stirring and exhaustive appeal to make common cause with the Bostonians the meeting took prompt action for home rights, fairly leading off in certain lines in radical proposals for redress of grievances. And it was doubtless this resolute and defiant tone from a comparatively Tory quarter that at once aided in ripening colonial resistance into unity of feeling and gave early prominence to Delawareans in the Continental Congress. Moreover it is worthy of note that at this early meeting in behalf of liberty the eloquent McKean with consistent faith and prescient wisdom deprecated the prevalence of African slavery and hoped that an honorable expedient might soon "be found to put an end to an institution so dishonorable to us and so provoking to the most benevolent Parent of the Universe."



LANDING-PLACE OF FIRST SETTLERS AT LEWIS IN 1631, AFTERWARDS SITE OF FORT
IN REVOLUTION AND WAR OF 1812.

Perhaps no place of equal size exceeded Lewes in the number and prominence of its actors in the Revolutionary struggle. The natives of the town included Shepherd Kollock, the distinguished officer, journalist and efficient patriot who fought at Trenton and other battles and afterward published newspapers in various places—and Colonel David Hall, who raised a company in the town which participated in the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth and in the South—and who later recruited the celebrated Delaware Line Regiment, of which he became colonel, and fought through the war. These and other natives and residents of the town plunged with great zeal into the struggle. On the 27th of March, 1776, Henry Fisher of Lewes, notified the Pennsylvania Committee that the enemy had appeared in the Lewes roads, when preparations for resistance were promptly begun. On the 11th of June, 1776, the Lewes Committee notified Congress of the reported assemblage of one thousand Tories at a spot eighteen miles distant, who intended to co-operate with the British vessels in front of Lewes. The British frigate *Roebuck* had manœuvered before Lewes with many threats and a few shots at the town with little effect, when in the first week of May she was joined by the sloop of war *Liverpool*, twenty-eight guns, and the two vessels sailed northward and cruised between Chester and the mouth of the *Christiana* where, in front of Wilmington, they were attacked by American row-galleys under Captain Houston of Philadelphia, and forced to retreat.

This was the first naval encounter with the enemy in the struggle for national existence while the last sea fight to that glorious end was the battle of April 8th, 1782, when

the American sloop of war Hyder Alley, Captain Barney, defeated the British sloop General Monk at the entrance of Delaware Bay. Thus the opening and close of the naval part of the Revolutionary War occurred on Delaware waters, the first in front of Wilmington at one end of the State, and the last in front of Lewes, at the other end. It is but fair, however, to the town of Lewes to refer to the prior capture of four of Roebuck's crew near Cape Henlopen, and especially to the gallant prior fight of a Lewes schooner and Lewes people with a tender of the Roebuck which, before sailing for northern Delaware, vainly attempted to prevent the landing of powder sent to the American forces ; so that, strictly speaking, the naval part of the Revolutionary struggle may be said to have opened and closed in sight of the town of Lewes.

In the course of our war for Independence the exposure and accessibility of Lewes subjected its people and neighboring farmers to many abuses and depredations, one of the most remarkable of which involved a member of the eminent Quaker family of Fisher, whose ancestors came to America with William Penn and whose branches have afforded worthy and influential actors in various high positions. During the severe winter of 1779-80, when the British war vessel Roebuck lay near Cape Henlopen, a press-gang from her crew, impelled by the urgent need of food supplies, seized upon Thomas Fisher, then a lad of 17, on his father's farm near Lewes, and, carrying him and a negro slave on board the vessel, sent peremptory notice to the parents of the boy that the only possible condition upon which the captives would be surrendered was their ransom by the speedy delivery of 100 bullocks on board the Roebuck.

The condition was promptly accepted and the required cattle, chiefly afforded by the home herd, with a few neighboring contributions, were driven several miles on the ice to the war vessel and the captives liberated pursuant to the terms demanded.

It is unnecessary here to speak of Lewes' part in the War of 1812. It has not been long since we were favored with the reading of a valuable paper by William M. Marine, Esq., on the "Bombardment of Lewes," which not only covered the subject in ample detail, but told the story with such fervor of rhetorical delivery as summoned before a delighted audience ensanguined visions of a memorable conflict wherein, according to the rhyming participant quoted

The commander and all his men
Shot a dog and killed a hen.

It will suffice to repeat here the well-known fact that such substantial service was rendered by the defenders of Lewes in protecting the whole coast of lower Delaware from British depredations for army supplies as earned grateful thanks to the commander, Colonel Samuel B. Davis, a native of Lewes, and his soldiers, who were largely its citizens.

Local writers calmly assume as a fact what historical authorities deem at least problematical with respect to an interesting geographical point connected with Delaware's early settlement. It has long been a cherished and fixed belief among the people of Lewes that the suburbs of their town or the immediate vicinity embrace the olden "Paradise Point," where Peter Minuit and the first Swedish colonists landed in 1638, while enroute to their final destination on the Christiana. It is claimed that such resting place was

really the high ridge of land on the then named Hoornkill, now the lower part of what is known as the Pilot Town part of Lewes; and they believe that a few of the Swedish immigrants who then and there landed did not resume the voyage with Minuit, but remained in that locality where they were afterwards joined by Dutch traders through whose influence the Holland authorities caused a fort to be built on or near what was the landing spot both of the first Dutch settlers of the De Vries expedition and of the resting place of the Swedes, which they called "Paradise Point."

This is all pure conjecture, wholly unsupported by even the probabilities of the situation. While the exact identity of Paradise Point has never been certainly determined it is generally conceded to have been north of the Mispillion, between that creek and Murderkill, where the shore somewhat projects into the bay. This would place it in Kent county at least fifteen miles north of the spot claimed in lower Pilot Town. All authorities speak of the Swedish stopping place as a "point," none of them as a cove or bay, or allude to a stream ascended to a high ridge on its banks upon which to land, by some one or more of which particulars the locality could have hardly failed to be characterized had the Swedes landed near the mouth of the Hoornkill or sailed up the stream for a landing place as claimed, however much the locality may have since changed; nor is there a hint from any source of any Swedes having stopped any where and discontinued their journey with Minuit to his destination on the *Christiana*.

But a locality so rich in historic interest as Lewes can well afford to dispense with additional distinction of this kind. Standing on or near the site of the original De Vries

settlement, Lewes may be deemed the most ancient town in Delaware. Its origin and brief early existence assured the first requisite of a physical basis upon which to erect a political community. Except for that early Dutch settlement where now stands the town of Lewes Delaware would have been a part of Maryland. As a theatre of events affecting the latter welfare of the State, Lewes must ever stand forth in proud historic perspective. As involved in matters going alike to the making and defending of Delaware, Lewes is scarcely second, historically, to New Castle, its early seat of government, or Wilmington, the starting point of its first permanent settlement, while it has certainly been the greatest sufferer in its service and especially in its defence of our little commonwealth. Lewes is probably the only considerable town in the State whose area was included in the territory affected by the operations of the old Dutch patroon system of landed aristocracy. It was thus subjected to a first crushing blow from the savages, and it has borne the brunt of constant border piracy and naval attacks, regular and irregular, during two wars, while its early pilotage and protection to extensive maritime interests are not unworthy of mention.

With the Indians Lewes and its immediate vicinity were ever a favorite resort; and there have been incontestible evidences that an aboriginal village once occupied the present town site. A railroad excavation through a small hill has uncovered a burial place and many skeletons were exposed. The succeeding white settlers seem to have endorsed the red men's choice alike as to the living and dead. The original court records as early as 1687 refer to an Ancient Burial Place, where the citizens of Horekill made interments, and

near the supposed scene of the first Dutch massacre by the Indians one acre of ground was set apart for such use. This and other burial grounds contain the remains of persons interred prior to the year 1750, who lived in the preceding century. Among the many graves are notably those of four of Delaware's Governors, namely, Daniel Rodney, Caleb Rodney, Samuel Paynter and Dr. Joseph Maull.

Thus much for what may perhaps be fairly deemed a historical presentation of Lewes. As much more could be written of greater general interest touching personal incidents and matters of traditional and legendary nature, while in matters combining both the authentic and half-licensed fictions reminiscent of early frontier life and daring tales of the sea, the ancient town affords abundant material. Some legitimate matter of historical bearing has doubtless been overlooked; nor has any attempts been made to describe the industrial or other modern interests of Lewes; while refraining from this and endeavoring to give emphasis to its historic character the writer hopes that the just and general characteristics of a place so deeply concerned with nature and history have not been neglected. And this is deemed a not unsuitable place to acknowledge the large extent to which material for this paper has been derived from Scharf's excellent history of Delaware and the aid received from the archives of the Pennsylvania Historical Society and the collections of the late Dr. Mustard of Lewes.

It is a matter of tradition that the British government built a good light house at Cape Henlopen as early as 1725, with a tower octagonal in shape, whose walls were seven feet thick and seven stories high, built with stones brought from England. For its benefit 200 acres were

ordered to be surveyed by Governor John Penn in November, 1763, and the same month provision was made for raising a fund by subscription and by means of a lottery to maintain a light and buoys at the mouth of Delaware Bay. The interior of the light-house was finished in wood which the British burned during the Revolutionary War and a piece of the charred remains resulting is among the relics preserved by the late Dr. Mustard of Lewes.

An incident which may be deemed at once legendary and historic in character is connected with a once stately mansion which is still standing in Lewes. The edifice has always been associated with the well known Fisher family and is called the Fisher House.

It was once the residence of Colonel Samuel B. Davis, commander of the defending forces at the bombardment of Lewes in 1813. With the colonel, during his residence in this house, there lived a young lady as his ward, for whom he cherished great affection as one of his own children, while she had never suspected that she was not his daughter until she was playfully bantered by some friends upon a certain occasion in a way implying serious doubt of her real relationship with one she thought her father. Startled with suspicion and awed with harassing doubts she impatiently awaited a reliable test of the truth, and when the colonel left the house to attend church on the ensuing Sunday she quickly searched through his well stored papers among which found unquestionable evidence that she was not the daughter but the ward of her supposed father and the heiress of large estates in New Orleans. Her close and trusted connection with Colonel Davis is said to have remained undisturbed by her discovery and, marry-

ing in due time she became known to the whole country as Mrs. Myra Clark Gaines, probably the greatest litigant of her age. She was something of a poet when young, and a spot is pointed out in the fence surrounding the Fisher house where swung the familiar garden gate which inspired her pretty lines "Swinging on the Old Red Gate."

Another matter of mingled romance and reality seems entitled to a place here from its connection with a critical epoch in our national history in the War of the Revolution. The continental Congress had been deliberating upon the momentous question of total separation from the mother country, and the resolution for final action was to be voted upon with little further delay. Of the three Delaware delegates Thomas McKean and Cæsar Rodney earnestly favored the declaration for independence while George Read opposed it as at least premature. Pending the decision, Rodney went to Dover with the double object of arousing public sentiment for independence and of aiding to enlist troops for the army to support it, in both of which he was threatened with defeat by a third matter of more engrossing urgency; for at Dover Rodney met an enchantress in the person of Sarah Rowland from Lewes, a sprightly young Quaker widow, witty and fascinating, who was ardently devoted to the Royal side of the conflict. Cæsar Rodney, angular in person and honest in purpose had a facial affliction of a cancerous nature which added a scarred and drawn expression to naturally plain features, but like most men of iron nerve and stalwart mould, his rough exterior was coupled with a warm heart and special susceptibility to female charms. With the quickness of woman's intuition the lady realized the situation and saw her opportunity. To much beauty of

person she added winsome manners and rare powers of persuasion, and, under her blandishments Cæsar's first prepossession fast ripened to captivity of the heart. Beguiled by her wishes he innocently confided to his charmer the situation of affairs in Congress and revealed the closeness of the expected vote favoring and opposing the Declaration of Independence. Meanwhile Rodney's colleague, McKean, was sending daily letters urging his speedy return; for in Rodney's absence the two other delegates would be tied and Delaware's voice silenced in the patriotic crises. Through the contrivance of the fair deceiver these letters had been intercepted; and Cæsar, suspecting no ill of one he loved, dreamed on in sweet beguilement.

Thus matters continued until near the evening of the third of July when suddenly a patriotic maid servant of the false woman rushed into Rodney's presence and drawing forth a package of the intercepted letters exclaimed "see how she's fooled you!" Cæsar Rodney hastily perusing the letters raised his hand to his forehead and uttering a cry of disgust and despair, hurried away and mounting his horse, dashed off upon that well known night journey to Philadelphia, which, if less renowned than Paul Revere's ride, ranks with the most momentous flights in lofty purpose and historic importance. By terrific speed and repeated relays of horses the rider reached Philadelphia in time to cast his vote for that glorious cause which has given license to the hideous fourth of July uproar with which we have ever since been annually afflicted. "Cæsar's Ride" was so exhaustive a night's trip that he looked pale and sick upon his appearance in Congress when John Adams said of him "Cæsar Rodney is the oddest looking man in the world; he is tall, thin,

slender and pale; his face is not bigger than a large apple, yet there is sense and fire, spirit, wit and humor in his countenance." The beautiful Tory lady by whom he was so nearly betrayed afterward married a captain in the British navy, but Cæsar Rodney lived and died a bachelor; their story has been a fruitful theme for gay recital and graceful verse in the literature of our Revolutionary struggle.

Lewes has long been the home and headquarters of pilots. Their calling as a profession was recognized as early at least as 1765, when Friend Griffith, an immigrating Quaker in that year, wrote "on the ninth day of sixth month we made Cape Henlopen and a pilot came on board and he proved to be a native Indian." A large number of these men live in Lewes and own their homes and their craft and they form a thrifty and reliable class of good citizens. Their avocation and influence, the numerous houses with tightly shingled walls for protection from sea winds, the odor and feel of sea air, the talk of the people, and the visible signs on all hands of seafaring pursuits combine to give a character of its own to Lewes and distinguish it from the average of Delaware towns. Its citizens tell of a long line of distressing shipwrecks among the most notable of which was that of the British sloop of war *De Braak*, Capt. Drew, carrying letters of mark and reprisal from the English government against Bonaparte and his allies, and laden with the fruits of many victories, when, on the tenth of June, 1798, while near the mouth of the bay, and steered by a Lewes pilot, the vessel in a sudden gust went down with all on board; including fifteen prisoners and a fabulous store of gold, trophies and treasure.

Another memorable calamity was the wreck of the large

French vessel upon which Jerome Bonaparte embarked for France upon his recall from America by his brother Napoleon. While being blockaded by the British, his ship was utterly wrecked on the point of the cape during a fearful storm. Fortunately Jerome was among those saved alike from the storm and the enemy, and, reaching Lewes he became a guest in what was then the Peter Maull House. Many similar disasters could be named. Indeed all about the neighboring coasts of bay and ocean is an unbroken line of wrecks representing every description of craft. Lewes is toned with the very sentiment and atmosphere of the sea. Tidings of hardship and heroic sacrifice have brought storied interest and world-wide sympathies to the firesides of her humble homes. But if a weird pathos is exhaled from her troubled past a hopeful future will come of the already quickening life of an industrial and more varied development, while brightening her seafront in ever inspiring presence, are the proud and protected shipping and noble life-saving appliance of an enlightened and generous nation.

On the very site of this ancient town first took root the corporate germ, the vital seed of a new political community. Here its soil was first cultivated and first stained with the whites man's blood; here the assaults of angry nature and hostile man have most left their scars; and, considering the unique origin of the town as the child of an alien oligarchy, in view of its varied characteristics, with all the lights and shades of its eventful career, it may well be doubted if any place in the State or elsewhere can furnish a more significant and picturesque history than Delaware's ancient town of Lewes.

