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THE CRADLE
OF
PENNSYLVANIA

THOMAS WILLING BALCH



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The
Cradle of Pennsylvania

THE
CRADLE OF PENNSYLVANIA

BY

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A VICE-PRESIDENT

OF THE

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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AN APPEAL TO THE
PATRIOTIC COLONIAL SOCIETIES
OF PENNSYLVANIA

TO SAVE

THE CRADLE OF OUR STATE
BY URGING THE FOUNDING OF
THE GOVERNOR PRINTZ PARK

The Cradle of Pennsylvania

I.

IN 1907, Virginia celebrated the tri-centenary of the settlement on Jamestown Island, the first birth-place of the United States of America. In 1920 and 1921, Massachusetts commemorated the third centennial of the landing of her Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth Rock, another birth-place of our country. The peoples of those two Commonwealths did well to recall to the attention of the whole Nation the early settlements of Virginia and Massachusetts by men and

women of English stock. For with the settlements at Jamestown Island and Plymouth Rock began respectively the settlement by the English-speaking race of the five colonies south of Mason and Dixon's line—Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia—and the four colonies in New England—Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

Two other European Nations besides England joined in the work of colonizing the Atlantic seaboard of our country embraced within the area of the original Thirteen Colonies. Those two powers were the United Netherlands and Sweden. Three other European Nations began settlements in other parts of

the territory comprised within the present bounds of the United States. In the order of their occupancy and colonization of American lands, those three Nations were Spain, France and Russia. But none of these last three had a hand in the founding of our Nation. Their contributions were subsequently absorbed either by purchase or conquest.

The Hollanders made a settlement in 1612 far up the North or Hudson River and built two years later in 1614 at the same place a fort to which a few years afterwards was given the name of Fort Orange. The merchants of the United Netherlands began trading annually as early as possibly 1613, certainly 1614, with the Indians on Manhattan

Island. And since that time trade has been kept up every year between Holland and the valley of the Hudson. From that trade resulted the settlement of Amsterdam or New Amsterdam in New Netherland. Fort Orange and New Amsterdam are now respectively Albany and New York. From the Dutch settlement on Manhattan Island, the Hollanders began to cross over and settle in what is now northern New Jersey. Meanwhile under Captain Cornelius Mey, whose name is perpetuated in Cape May, the Hollanders also began effectually to occupy what is now southern New Jersey. Those lands that the Hollanders had occupied and settled, passed by right of conquest in 1664 under the sover-

eignty of the English Crown. So both the present States of New York and New Jersey, which were born out of New Netherland, look for the beginning of their sovereignty to the United Netherlands.

Likewise, a third one of the original Thirteen Colonies or States derives her sovereignty from the States General of the United Netherlands: Delaware. And like New York and New Jersey, Delaware eventually passed by conquest in war under the sovereignty of the English Crown. But unlike those two colonies, Delaware belonged for seventeen years after the Dutch period to the Swedish Crown and then again came as the result of war under the sovereignty of the States General of the

Netherlands before she passed by right of conquest under the English Crown.

The Hollanders were the first white people to occupy and settle upon the land which now constitutes the State of Delaware. They established a colony on a stream near the mouth of the Delaware River in 1631. The Hollanders named the creek on which they settled, Hoornkill, most probably in memory of the city of Hoorn on the Zuyder Zee. They built a fort and called it Oplandt. The surrounding country they named Zwaandael, very likely on account of the number of swans that then abounded in the region. But owing to the inability of the Hollanders to live on amicable terms with the red men, the latter

rose in their wrath six months after the founding of the Dutch settlement and wiped it out of existence by killing all its members except, according to tradition, one sole Hollander. That effectually ended that early Dutch effort to actually occupy and possess the land of present-day Delaware. While the Hollanders had with the destruction of the settlement on the Hoornkill by the Indians thereby lost the actual possession of the land of Delaware, they still had by the rules of the Law of Nations an inchoate title to that country which they could change into possession once more by occupying the land within a reasonable time again. But the Dutch did not reoccupy the country along the Delaware in the next

few years. And in 1638 a Swedish colonial expedition, sent out in the reign of Queen Christina by her Chancellor, Axel Oxenstierna, began a Swedish settlement at a point within the bounds of the present City of Wilmington. The creek on which they located they named in honor of their Queen, Christina Creek, and the fort they built they likewise called after their sovereign lady, Fort Christina.

In 1642 Oxenstierna sent Colonel Johan Printz, who had served in the Thirty Years's War in the Germanic Empire, to New Sweden to be the Governor of the colony. Printz sailed to cross the Atlantic from the port of Göteborg on the west coast of Sweden with two vessels, the Fama

(Fame), and the Svanen (Swan). He took with him new colonists and additional supplies to reinforce the infant Swedish colony. The expedition touched on its transatlantic voyage at the English West Indies, then ascended Delaware Bay and River, and reached Fort Christina early in 1643. Governor Printz had received from his sovereign queen and her chancellor full powers to establish the capital of the colony wherever he thought best. Printz was not satisfied with the site of Fort Christina a few miles up a narrow creek, a tributary of the broad Delaware River. While it was a convenient place to trade with the surrounding Indians and afforded secure anchorage for the Swedish vessels, it did not enable

the Swedish governor to control the passage up and down the Delaware River with his cannon. So Printz started out very shortly after his arrival at Fort Christina on a voyage of exploration. He sailed up the Delaware River as far as San Kikan, the modern Trenton.

As a result of the information which he gained on that trip, Governor Printz decided that the lower end of Great Tenekongh or Tinicum Island was the place to establish the site of the capital and government of New Sweden. Great Tinicum Island was protected either by water or marshes on all sides from a direct attack from the mainland. Opposite in the middle of the Delaware River, Little Tinicum Island

lay, as it were, on the waters. Between Great and Little Tinicum Islands there was an excellent natural harbor, the best for the small vessels of the seventeenth century on the whole course of the Delaware River from San Kikan to the Atlantic Ocean. So Governor Printz, using the plenary powers reposed in his good sense and judgment, decided to remove in 1643 the capital of New Sweden from Fort Christina to Great Tinicum Island. On that island, looking out over the Delaware, he built a fort which he named in honor of the Swedish port from which he had sailed with his expedition, Fort Nya Göteborg. He built houses for the settlers, and a house for himself, which

was known as Printzhof. He had Swedish religious services. In November, 1643, in a patent in which Queen Christina granted the whole island to Printz and his descendants, the island was called like the fort, Nya Göteborg. Subsequently, in 1646, Printz built a chapel near the fort. In September of that year Magister Campanius consecrated this small wooden church on Tenekongh. It was the first church of the historic church of Sweden and also the first church of any branch of the universal church built within the bounds of Pennsylvania.

When Governor Johan Printz, acting by official authority for and on behalf of his sovereign liege, Queen

Christina of Sweden, established in 1643 on Great Tinicum Island the seat of the sovereignty of which he was the personal and actual representative in America, the lower end of Great Tinicum Island became the cradle of what is today the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It was the first permanent white colony settled within the area of our State. And then for the first time the Governor of a European colony, the personal representative of a European sovereign, established the capital of his colony within the bounds of our present Commonwealth.

Before that day no white people had effectually occupied the lands that now form Pennsylvania. A French voyageur, Etienne Brulé, a

companion of Champlain, very probably had traversed about 1614 from north to south our present State in coursing down in a bark canoe the Susquehanna River. Later the Hollanders had established one or two temporary trading posts to collect furs from the Indians but had never attempted to occupy the country permanently, as they had done in the settlement of Fort Oplandt in Swaandael at the southern end of what is now Delaware.

Thus it was that Johan Printz in his official capacity of Governor of New Sweden, became the first executive in that line of Governors which today actually and actively is represented by the Governor of Pennsylvania. The sovereignty that Printz

established over the land—that subsequently was named Pennsylvania—by actual occupation and possession in 1643, was absorbed by conquest in 1655 by the States General of the United Netherlands, from whom in turn it was taken in 1664, likewise in war, by the King of England, by whom, subject to his royal authority, it was delegated to William Penn as Proprietor. And therefore it is, that the permanent Swedish settlement of Governor Printz at Tinicum in 1643 makes Tinicum Island one of the birthplaces of the American Nation. And Pennsylvania should not lag behind her sisters of Virginia, New York and Massachusetts in pointing out to the whole Union, nay to the whole world, where her early history begins.

The memory of William Penn has been preserved in the name of our Commonwealth and in other ways. But too many of Pennsylvania's heroic dead have not as yet received their proper due on the scrolls of history. And that is true of the original founders of our Province. With the passage of years, Governor Printz and his Swedish settlement on Great Tinicum have been all but forgotten in the great and immense commercial development that has come to our beautiful and splendidly endowed land of Pennsylvania. While the people of Pennsylvania have heard much of how Virginia had a code of laws in 1611 and began representative government in America in 1619, how Fort Orange was

built in 1614 and trade started in 1613 or 1614 between the United Netherlands and Manhattan Island and kept up every year since, and how Massachusetts in the Mayflower compact of 1620 made a valuable contribution to the development of our Nation, the people of Pennsylvania have heard little of many of the great contributions that this Province and State have made to the formation and upbuilding of the United States of America.

For instance, it is all but forgotten that the policy of fair dealings with the Indians inaugurated at Tinicum by Governor Printz and the Swedes prevented the breaking out of war between the pale faces and the red men in the area of our State through

the Dutch period and the English period until the coming of William Penn in 1682. That was a precious beginning upon which the great Quaker statesman knew well how to build and under his leadership peace with the Indians continued for many years more. That was a notable and practical contribution to the cause of peace on the part of Printz and Penn of which our Commonwealth may well be proud, and it was in sharp contrast with the policy of war that marked the beginning of some of the other colonies. And Pennsylvania has made other important contributions to the progress of mankind.

II.

MORE than a dozen years ago, when the Society of Colonial Wars decided to commemorate the settlements of the Hollanders and the Swedes in the valley of the Delaware the present writer's interest in Governor Printz and the Swedes was awakened. On Saturday, the 6th of February, 1909, at the banquet which the Society of Colonial Wars gave to the Swedish and the Netherlands Ministers in the Assembly Hall of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, on the occasion when the two bronze tablets on the south side of the City Hall to the memory of the Dutch and the Swed-

ish settlements in the Delaware Valley were unveiled, I spoke to Mr. de Lagercrantz, the Swedish Minister, about the Swedish settlement on Tinicum Island and Governor Printz. He knew practically nothing of either. Then I explained to him that that was the first permanent settlement of Europeans within the area of present day Pennsylvania, and further, that Johan Printz was the first Governor in the line of executives that had developed into the Governors of Pennsylvania. I told Mr. de Lagercrantz that while we had in the Historical Society portraits of Gustavus Adolphus, Queen Christina and Axel Oxenstierna who favored and sent out the Swedish colonial ventures to America, we had not a picture of

Governor Printz, not even a small print or wood cut. And then I said to Mr. de Lagercrantz that if a portrait of Printz existed in Sweden, and that if either an original or a copy, no matter how small, could be presented to the Historical Society, it would be a notable contribution to American history.

In addition, I urged upon Mr. de Lagercrantz, that if such a picture or portrait could come to the Historical Society as a gift from the King of Sweden, it would be better still. Mr. de Lagercrantz was greatly interested. He asked me to write him in a letter all that I had just told him so that he could send it on to Sweden to see if a portrait of Governor Printz could be found. Accordingly, I did write

him the next day, as he requested, and in a few days received the following reply:

“Légation de Suède

“Washington the 11 of
February, '09.

“My dear Mr. Balch:

“Many thanks for your kind letter and for all kindness shown me at the splendid entertainment by the ‘Society of Colonial Wars.’

“I have already copied your letter and sent it home to start a search for Printz’s portrait.

“It is sure to be somewhere, but there may be some difficulty to find it. Probably there is one in Chemnitz. The case is in the best of hands now and I will let you know as soon

as I hear something of interest in the matter.

“I am, my dear Mr. Balch, your cousin from the 17th Century.

“Truly and respectfully

“LAGERCRANTZ.”

The investigation thus begun resulted in the finding of a portrait of Johan Printz in the church of Jönköping. It had been discovered a few years before by Dr. Amandus Johnson. A copy of this picture was made and sent over as a gift from King Gustavus the Fifth, not to the Historical Society, as I had suggested, but to our Swedish Colonial Society, then recently organized by the vision and energy of Messrs. Gregory B. Keen and Amandus Johnson. And to that society it still

belongs. That was the first practical step to recognize here Printz's historical importance.

As time went on, I looked further into the subject of that early beginning of our Province. I presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Massachusetts, on Wednesday the 21st of October, 1914, on "The Swedish Beginnings of Pennsylvania." ¹I told the gentlemen from Massachusetts and other New Englanders there assembled how the sovereignty of our Province and State began with Johan Printz, Governor of New Sweden in 1643, how he had established the capital of his govern-

¹ "Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society for October 21st, 1914," Worcester, Massachusetts, New Series, Volume 24, page 305.

ment on Great Tinicum Island, which was the first capital representing a European sovereign planted within the bounds of what is now Pennsylvania, and how Pennsylvania alone of the Thirteen Colonies looked for the beginning of her sovereignty and Christianity to Sweden.

The next year, in a paper which I read before the American Philosophical Society on the 5th of March, 1915,² I again spoke of Governor Printz and his pioneers on Tinicum Island as having been the founders of what eventually became our present State of Pennsylvania, and urged that, "first a bronze tablet should be

² "Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, January—April, 1915," Philadelphia, Volume LIII., No. 216, page 12.

erected in memory of Governor Printz and his capital called Nya Göteborg on Great Tinicum Island, and second, a bronze statue of Governor Printz, either of life or heroic size, should be placed at some conspicuous place in the city of Philadelphia." I presented the same idea a month later in another paper before the Society of Colonial Governors of Pennsylvania.³

Owing to the war I let the subject remain quiet for a time. But the 20th of March, 1920, I wrote to Governor Sproul and called his attention to Johan Printz and urged upon him that the Commonwealth should erect a monument in memory

³ Pennsylvania Society of Colonial Governors," Philadelphia, 1916, Volume I, page 300.

of Governor Printz at Harrisburg. As a result, Governor Sproul became interested in the idea of commemorating Printz and had the copy of Printz's portrait, belonging to the Swedish Colonial Society, copied by Madame Van Helden in the spring of 1921, and this last copy now hangs in the Governor's mansion at Harrisburg with this interesting inscription upon it for all future Governors to read: "Johan Printz, Governor of New Sweden, 1643-1653, who established at Tinicum Island, on the Delaware River, the first permanent seat of government in Pennsylvania." That was a second practical step in recognition of Governor Printz and his government at Tinicum, this time carried into effect by the executive of the Commonwealth.

Since then I have called attention many times to Governor Printz and urged that Pennsylvania properly recall his memory and his times to the knowledge of the people of Pennsylvania and consequently to the world at large. For if Pennsylvanians do not do it, it is not likely that strangers will.⁴

⁴ Concerning the Colony of New Sweden, the reader is referred to the monumental work of Dr. Amandus Johnson, "The Swedish Settlement on the Delaware, 1638-1664," Philadelphia, 1911, published by the Swedish Colonial Society.

III.

NOW what can be done to bring to the notice of the American people the Swedish settlement planted on Great Tinicum Island by Governor Printz as one of the birthplaces of the American Nation and the cradle of our Pennsylvania? Here are a few suggestions. The quickest and least costly way to place Johan Printz prominently before the American public would be to name the highway between Wilmington and Philadelphia the GOVERNOR PRINTZ HIGHWAY. It was at Fort Christina, whose site is now within the bounds of the city of Wilmington, that Printz landed

upon^{at} his arrival in New Sweden. And it was at Tinicum, only a few miles below Philadelphia, now the chief city in the lands over which Printz ruled, that he established the seat of his government. If the highway connecting those two towns were called after him, it would help greatly to make him known in the localities in which he ruled and it would not cost anything beyond the price of a few signs.

Trees could be planted to Printz's memory in Fairmount Park, at Essington, at Harrisburg and other places by patriotic societies, or other associations, or the school children.

In addition, Johan Printz should be visualized in bronze for the people of Philadelphia, the largest city in

the territory that once was New Sweden, and also for the inhabitants of Harrisburg, the present capital of the Commonwealth.

Over and above these various ways of recalling to the present and future generations the beginning of the sovereignty of our State, there is something else that Pennsylvania could and should do. Pennsylvania should preserve for all time its cradle. This could be accomplished by the State acquiring for an historic State Park, the plot of ground, about four and a half acres or so in size, upon which Printz's castle formerly stood and on which now is the Tinicum Inn. It faces on the Delaware River and directly opposite, Little Tinicum Island, rising out of the Delaware

River, seems to float upon the waters. Little Tinicum should also be acquired by the State, for it was because of the natural harbor existing between Great and Little Tinicum Islands, that Printz decided to establish the seat of his government on the lower end of the greater island. In that way he secured not only an advantageous position to command the passage up the river, but also at the same time a good harbor for his sailing vessels. Upon the Tinicum Inn plot of ground on the main island, Printzhof could be restored exactly as it stood originally if any plan or drawing of it remains. Or in case there is no picture of it extant, then a Swedish house of the middle of the seventeenth century and of the prob-

able size of Printz's castle, could be reproduced at the spot where Printzhof was located and so visualize as far as possible for the people of this Commonwealth, the American home of Governor Printz.

Immediately adjoining the Printzhof or Tinicum Inn plot of ground, the Corinthian Yacht Club owns the land lower down the river. Upon the grounds of the yacht club stood formerly Fort Nya Göteborg and also the Swedish chapel. So long as the Corinthian Yacht Club wishes to retain their beautifully kept grounds, they should not be disturbed. They have preserved the memory of the early Swedish settlement under Printz with care. The large flat stone at the entrance of the club house was

originally a part of the Swedish chapel. And the club possesses some other more modest relics of the Swedes. Indeed, if it had not been for the Corinthian Yacht Club, their land even before now might have become merely a factory site, and what a comment that would be for Pennsylvania. So long as the Yacht Club wishes to retain that land, it is safe from desecration and the club should be thanked by every one that takes an interest and pride in the history of our State.

The Tincum Inn plot, however, is not safe for the future. It might be bought for a factory site. The State should acquire it as soon as possible, as well as Little Tincum Island. To the two should be given the name

of GOVERNOR PRINTZ PARK. Such a historic park, like the park at Valley Forge, would then take its place naturally in the metropolitan park system of a greater Philadelphia.

All such efforts here in Pennsylvania to commemorate the governorship of Johan Printz over New Sweden and the establishment of the capital of the colony at Tinicum, would naturally attract interest in Sweden to him and his expedition. And it might well be that by 1942 the tricentenary of the sailing of the expedition under his command from the port of Göteborg would be celebrated in that seaport town. For instance, a bronze memorial tablet could be unveiled in that year at an appropriate place in that city.

Then looking into the future a score of years from now, in 1943 the city of Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania could join together to appropriately celebrate the tri-centenary of the landing of Governor Printz and the Swedes at Tinicum and the establishment of the capital of New Sweden there. A pageant could be staged on the Delaware River and Tinicum Island showing Governor Printz and the Swedes sailing up the Delaware River, disembarking at Essington, the hoisting of the Swedish flag, and the re-enactment of other appropriate events connected with the beginning of the settlement at Tinicum. A series of special stamps could be issued by the Federal Government showing the

Swedish pioneers landing at Tinicum,
the portrait of Governor Printz, Old
Swedes's Church, and so on.

IV.

THIS great and powerful country of ours was built out of Thirteen separate and distinct Colonies. Fused by the stress of war into a common league for defense, they all called alike on the past experience of humanity in general and on their own experience as individual colonies, in forming and establishing our government. Each and every one of those Thirteen Colonies or States did its share in the construction of the Nation. To no one of them alone, nor any two or three of them, but to all Thirteen together belongs that glory. As one of the Thirteen, Pennsylvania did her full share in building the Union.

Pennsylvania, however, unfortunately, has not made a large part of her history adequately known. She has done well by William Penn in writing his name in large letters upon the tablets of history. The fame of the great proprietor is assured as long as history shall be written and taught. Many others connected with the founding and development of Pennsylvania, however, she has allowed to be forgotten, while she has forged forward successfully in her wonderful commercial career. Among those who have been permitted to fall into oblivion is Johan Printz and the early Swedish settlement which he founded at Tinicum. But Pennsylvania can ill afford to let Printz and that early settlement

be all but forgotten. In that settlement at Tinicum, Pennsylvania possesses one of the birthplaces of the American Nation. It is one of the birthplaces of the country as truly as Jamestown Island, Fort Orange, Plymouth Rock and other revered and sacred historic points in the original Thirteen States are the birthplaces of America. Pennsylvania should make as widely known that first little settlement within the bounds of our State as Virginia and Massachusetts have brought into public view respectively the early settlements at Jamestown and Plymouth Rock. If we do not make it known, nobody else will. The easiest and least costly way to take the first step to that end is to begin

by naming the main highway between Philadelphia and Wilmington the Governor Printz Highway. Then as soon as possible the State should secure the four-and-a-half acre lot on which Printzhof was located and also Little Tinicum Island, and make them into a State Park bearing the name of the first white ruler in the land comprised within the bounds of what is today the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania—

GOVERNOR PRINTZ PARK.

Philadelphia, 1st October, 1921.

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