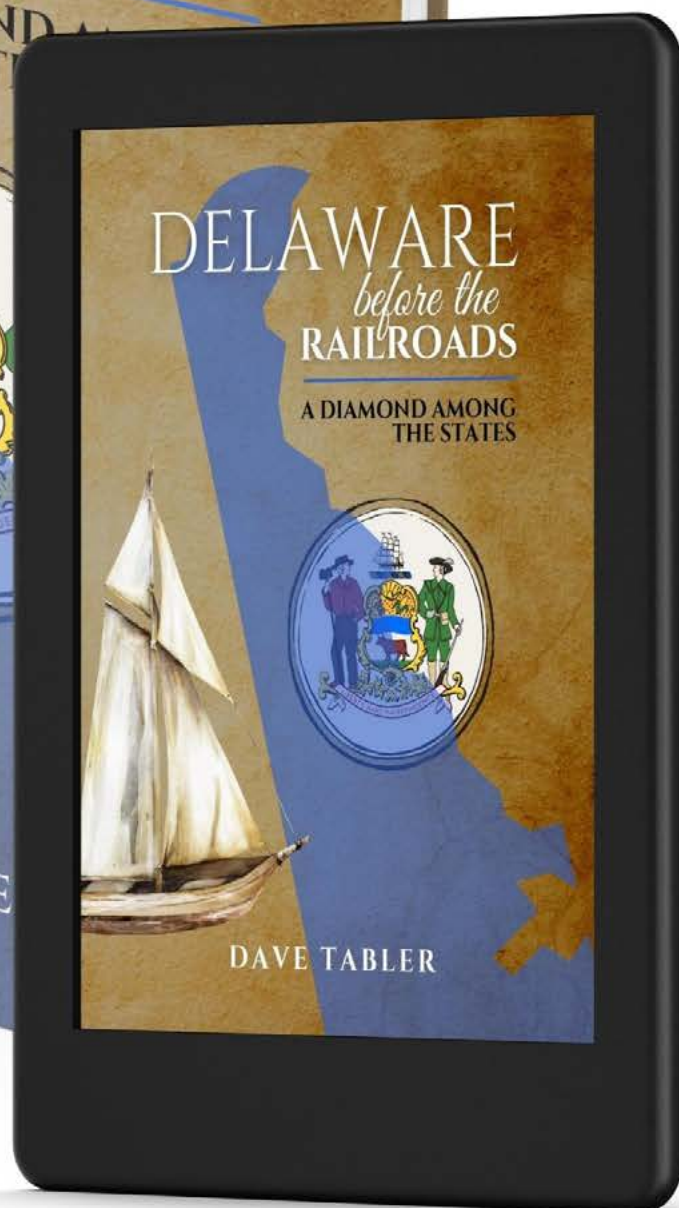
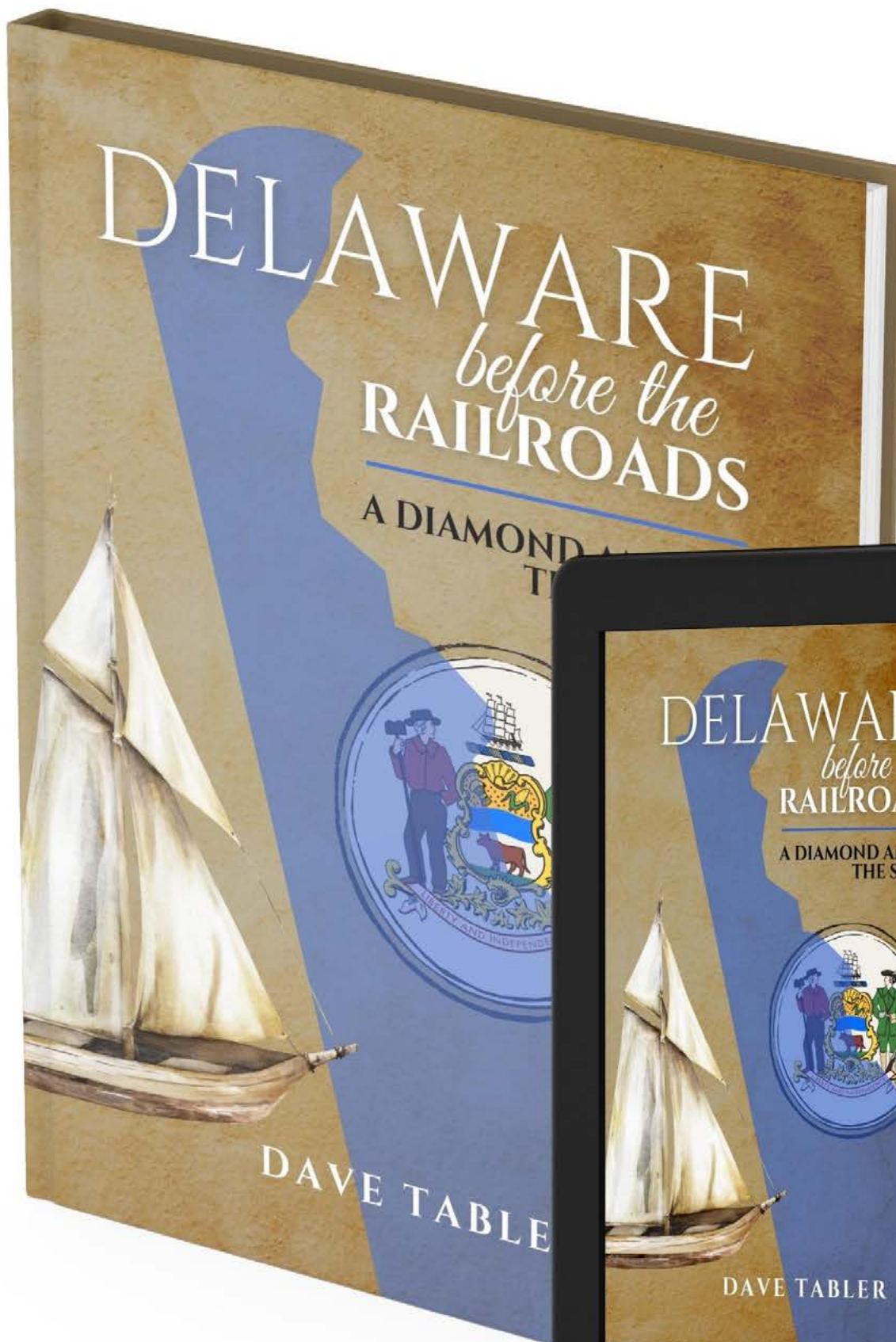




Acknowledgments

Many organizations offered their support to the development of this book. Heartfelt thanks to (in alphabetical order) Ashford Capital Management, Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Bowers Beach Maritime Museum, Camden Friends Meetinghouse, Camden Parks Department, Causey Mansion Refresh, Choptank Mill (Dan Draves), Commission on Archives and History of the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Delaware Academy of Medicine, Delaware Agricultural Museum and Village, Delaware Nature Society, Delaware Public Archives, Delaware Historical & Cultural Affairs, Delaware Historical Society, Delaware Society for the Preservation of Antiquities, Delaware State University (Loockerman Hall), Delaware Tourism Office, DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife, Duck Creek Historical Society, First State National Historical Park, Friends of Old Dover, Inc., Friends of Old Swedes, Friends of Prince George’s Chapel, Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion, Gordon / Fournaris & Mammarella, Greater Harrington Historical Society, Hagley Museum & Library, Historic Odessa Foundation Inc., Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, Lewes Historical Society, Tom Marvel, Milford Historical Society, Milford Museum, National Park Service, Nanticoke Indian Center, New Castle Historical Society, Old Courthouse - Georgetown Historical Society, Old Library Museum (New Castle, DE), Pencader Heritage Museum, Smyrna Museum, St. Jones Center for Estuarine Studies, Ted Harvey Conservation Area, Zwaanendael Museum.

Preface

The arrival of the railroad marks the clear end of one Delaware era and the beginning of another. Prior to 1832, any of its business owners needing to get a sizable quantity of goods to Philadelphia, the closest major market, were forced to ship them via water.

It was impractical to cross the Delmarva north by land to reach Philadelphia or east to access Maryland ports oriented to Baltimore, the next closest market. The overland route was a dense tangle of marshes and undergrowth, roads were narrow and unreliable, and no wagon could compete with a ship for the amount of available cargo space. These realities shaped where towns arose along the Delaware Bay, how well they thrived, and what industries dominated.

The appearance of the New Castle & French Town Railroad in the early 19th century hurled Delaware society towards a complete re-orientation from sea to land travel.

If one looks hard enough, traces of the early Delaware maritime era can be seen all around. Modern development has taken longer to reach the Delmarva peninsula, largely cut off from the mainland until the Chesapeake Bay Bridge was built.

Consequently, Delaware's stock of colonial structures has for the most part remained undisturbed far longer than many other colonial era states. Its key historical sites are more readily accessible today. This book attempts to show the reader as much, with current photographs. They trace Delaware history from 1638-1832. This period encompasses the first Swedish explorers setting foot on this peninsula's shores, to the appearance of the first railroad.

Tucked in around this time line you'll find sidebars explaining various colonial era traditions such as blacksmithing, clock making, and hunting/fishing/trapping, to name a few.

I hope you enjoy taking this journey as much as I enjoyed assembling it for you.

Contents

1610-1730

- Pages 6-13 Delaware land mass named, Lenni Lenape trade with settlers, Swedes land Kalmar Nyckel ship and build Ft. Christina, Swedes introduce log cabins, Dutch counter Swedish encroachment with Ft. Casimir, New Castle- Lewes- Bowers Beach founded
- Pages 16-21 New Castle builds Immanuel Church, Kent County courthouse moves inland, Wilmington erects Old Swedes Church, Unique ‘hundreds map’ of Delaware emerges, Odessa’s Collins-Sharp house constructed, pirates raid Delaware Bay
- Pages 22-29 Pennsylvania’s lower counties secede, William Penn spearheads town planning with Dover’s ‘The Green’, Smyrna- Milford- founded, Loockerman family dynasty formed, New Castle Courthouse defines northern state boundary

1731-1774

- Pages 30-31 Wilmington: 1) charters township, 2) launches first seagoing ship, 3) encourages nascent milling industry, 4) welcomes building of first Presbyterian church in Delaware
- Pages 34-38 Lewes shipping industry emerges, Port Mahon docks illuminate historic style, Cape Henlopen lighthouse opens bay to safe passage, Newark Academy paves way for University of Delaware
- Pages 40-47 First Delaware printer sets up shop, Odessa tanning industry established, John Dickinson letters protest British policies, first Continental Congress convenes

1775-1829

- Pages 48-55 Caesar Rodney makes famous ride, Dover becomes state capital, Cooch’s Bridge Skirmish occurs, Battle of Brandywine ensues, British occupy Wilmington, America’s first Methodist church established, Ashmond Stidham founds earliest gristmill, Choptank Mills becomes longest running mill, Abbott’s Mill mechanics~still functioning

- Pages 56-65 Delaware ratifies US Constitution, Abolition societies form in Wilmington and Dover, Sussex county seat moves to Georgetown, second Constitutional Convention meets in Dover, Bank of Delaware founded, Wilmington Town Hall built, Yellow fever strikes Wilmington, HMS DeBraak sinks, Dupont builds first gunpowder mill, Commodore MacDonough victorious in War of 1812, British bombard Lewes, state cedes Pea Patch Island to Federal control

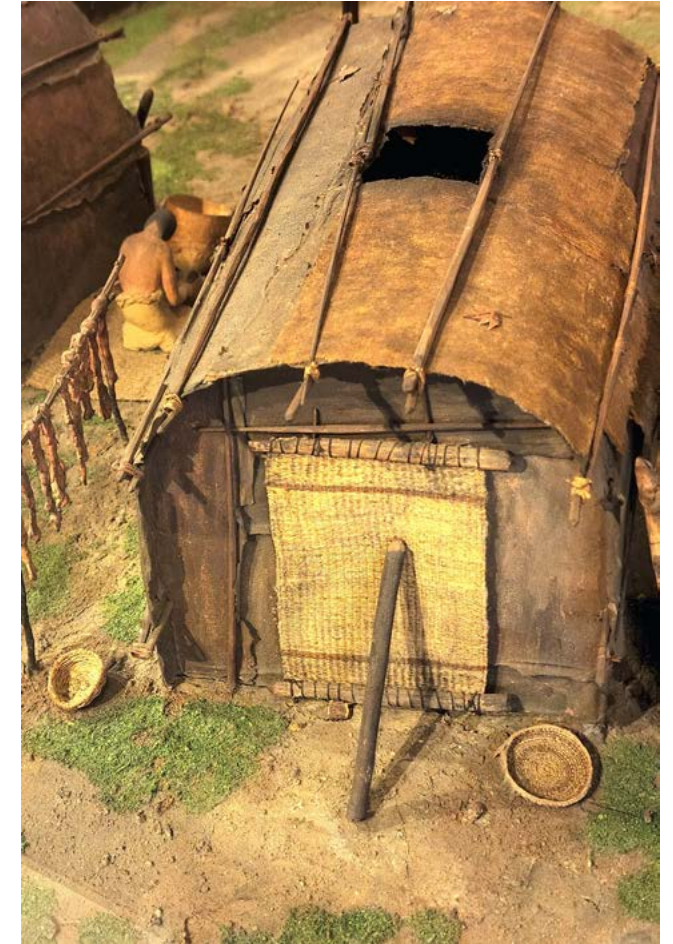
- Pages 67-73 African Union Methodist Protestant church founded, grain merchants become key to Little Creek, steamboat industry launches in Wilmington, Chesapeake & Delaware Canal operations get underway, Lafayette returns to Brandywine, first public schools open

Accompanying Sidebars

- Pages 10-11 Slavery in Colonial Delaware
- Pages 14-15 Colonial Plantations
- Page 26 Colonial Building Details
- Pages 32-33 Colonial Hunting/Trapping/Fishing
- Page 39 Colonial Medicine
- Pages 44-45 Blacksmithing
- Page 53 Homespun Domestic Clothing
- Page 62 Colonial Clockmaking
- Page 66 Chesapeake Bay Orientations
- Page 72 Colonial Hearths



How did Delaware get its name? It begins with a storm at Cape Henlopen and a Virginia navigator who had lost his way. (cont. on pg. 75)



Above Left: More than 10,000 years ago, the earliest settlers of Delaware arrive from Asia emigrating across the Bering Straits. The Lenni Lenape refer to themselves as “the original people,” though they in fact share the peninsula with the Nanticokes, the Choptanks, the Pocomokes, the Accomacs, the Wiccomiss, the Assateagues, and others. But it is the Lenape the Swedish and Dutch traders encounter in 1638. The Europeans want furs, and later maize, and in exchange bring metal goods and fine woven blankets.

Above Right: Detail of a modern model depicting daily life in a Lenni Lenape village shows a rack of animal furs drying in the sun. (cont. on pg. 75)



What drives the Swedes to establish a colony in North America? New markets for copper.
(cont. on pg. 75)



Left: Peter Minuit moors the *Kalmar Nyckel* at a natural outcropping on today's Wilmington riverfront called 'The Rocks,' a point he deems easily defensible, and well sited for beaver pelt trade with the Lenape, and builds a simple fort.
(cont. on pg 76)

Below: The Europeans initially build crude log cabins, the first of their kind in the New World.
(cont. on pg. 76)



Notes on Photographs

Page 6 Cape Henlopen storm Where did the name “Delaware” come from? From Samuel Argall, the second European sea captain known to have visited Delaware Bay. Argall was employed by the Virginia Company, when on August 17, 1610, he was blown from his course on a voyage from Virginia to Bermuda, and took refuge from the weather behind Cape Henlopen.

The headland was then nameless, indeed non-existent, on his charts, and the bay behind it he named for his master, Thomas West, Baron De La Warr, the governor of Virginia. The headland lost this name, but the bay retained it, and from the bay the name traveled to the river that fed it, to the Indians on its banks and, later, to the state formed of the three lower counties on the western shore.

Page 7 Lenape Fur Trading More than 10,000 years ago, the earliest settlers of Delaware arrived from Asia emigrating across the Bering Straits. The Lenni Lenape referred to themselves as “the original people,” though they in fact shared the peninsula with the Nanticokes, the Choptanks, the Pocomokes, the Accomacs, the Wiccomiss, the Assateagues, and others. But it was the Lenape the Swedish and Dutch traders encountered in 1638. The Europeans wanted furs, and later maize, and in exchange brought metal goods and fine woven blankets.

Beaver skins were the main fur initially traded but were soon depleted on the peninsula. After 1640 the Lenape increased the amount of maize planted to sell to the Swedish colonists. The Swedes were concentrating their planting on tobacco for export, and bought maize from these Lenape foragers at lower costs than the value of tobacco. In this way the Lenape gained trade goods while not having to deal with the problem of food storage. (Collection Nanticoke Indian Museum)

Page 7 Lenape Village Model by John and Stanley Swientochowski, 1994, gift of Terry Wrightson, Collection of Delaware Historical Society

Page 8 Kalmar Nyckel What led to the founding of the New Sweden colony in North America? The commercial ambition of Swedish statesmen and their attempts to interest Dutch merchants in the copper trade. Copper mining was one of the most important industries in Sweden during the first half of the seventeenth century. The copper trade was a large source of income to the Swedish government, and so it was always seeking new markets for the red metal.

In 1636 a coalition of Dutch businessmen, backed by capital half from Holland, half from Sweden, formed “The Swedish South Company” for copper trade as well as colonization on the South River (today’s Delaware Bay). They would compete directly with the Dutch West India Company, which had already made inroads into that region.

Peter Minuit had been employed by the Dutch West India Company as General Director of their New Netherland colony from 1625-1632. He’d been recalled to Holland due a change in policy and dumped unceremoniously. He was aggrieved enough to be motivated to join a competing group, and was extremely knowledgeable about the South River terrain, inhabitants, customs, etc. The New Sweden coalition saw in Minuit the perfect candidate to lead its copper trade venture.

On December 31, 1637, Minuit’s expedition set out from the Dutch island Texel aboard the Kalmar Nyckel, accompanied by the Fogel Grip. We know nothing about the journey across the Atlantic—Minuit’s diary and log are lost; but the ships reached the Delaware in good condition, and sailed up the bay about the

middle of March, 1638.

Minuit’s instructions were to sail up to the Minquas Kill (today’s Christina River in Wilmington), where he was to establish communications with the Indians. Having done so he was to explore the river as far as the Sankikan Kill (present day Trenton, NJ), and he was to buy the land on the west side of the Delaware between the two streams. He was to erect the Swedish coat-of-arms at the northern and southern limits of the land, which was then to be called New Sweden. His base of operations was to be the Minquas Kill, where he was to erect a stronghold, giving it, with the firing of cannon, the name of New Stockholm. He was to begin the beaver trade with the Indians, and he should buy cattle, horses, sheep, goats and pigs at New Amsterdam for the establishment of his colony.

Having made a beachhead according to these particulars, Minuit left the Delaware some time in June on board the *Kalmar Nyckel*. (Courtesy Kalmar Nyckel Foundation)

Page 9 Aerial of Ft. Christina In 1638, Swedish and Finnish colonists from the ships Kalmar Nyckel and Fogel Grip established a timber and earth fort along the Christina River on what is today’s Seventh Street Peninsula in Wilmington. Named Fort Christina after the then 12-year-old queen of Sweden, it was the first Swedish settlement in America and the first permanent non-native settlement in Delaware.

Between 1638 and 1655, the profitable fur trade helped increase the settlement’s population to 300. In 1655, however, the Dutch, looking to strengthen their control of the fur trade from the Delaware River to the Susquehanna Valley in Pennsylvania, attacked and quickly captured Fort Christina, renaming it Altenae. Despite the Dutch invasion, the population of the settlement remained predominantly Swedish. When Delaware fell to the English in 1664, the king’s soldiers garrisoned the fort, but it was the Swedish settlement which remained the heart of the village that spread along the banks of the Christina and became, in the next century, Wilmington.

Page 9 Interior of Swedish Log Cabin Today few people realize that the log cabin, the most “American” of building types, was introduced to the New World by European settlers. This one-room log dwelling was originally located on Old State Road Station in New Castle County. The structure was built in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Mentioned in the 1720s will of Jasper Yeates, the house was likely standing prior to that date.

This type of house was introduced to America by Swedish and Finnish colonists who settled in 1639 at Fort Christina, now Wilmington. The round logs, v-notching, wide spaces between logs, clapboard gables and sharply peaked roof establish this as a Swedish-style structure. The house is constructed of white oak logs which are fitted without benefit of nails or tree nails (pegs).

Spaces between the logs are chinked with a mixture of mud, oat hulls, and grass. Resting on a stone foundation, the building originally had a crawl space between the floor and the earth. The shelf was used as sleeping quarters for children or as storage space. The brick chimney and fireplace were influenced by English design. (Collection of Delaware Agricultural Museum)

Page 10 Causey Mansion Slave Quarters One unique aspect of Milford, DE’s Causey Mansion is a well-preserved slave quarters. Daniel Rogers owned the estate from 1797-1806. His probate inventory (d. 1806) listed large numbers of bricks, suggesting that this building was then under construction (he owned about fifteen slaves). The outbuilding served as shelter for the house servants, with one lower room with a brick floor and a large fireplace. One interesting feature of the slave quarters is a large scooped-out dent in the wall at the base of a ladder stairway. This modification was made, so legend has it, to permit one of the servants, who was not a small woman, to get up to her room. (Courtesy Causey Refresh)

Page 10 Hand hewn beam It seems unlikely that slave owners would grant slaves access to offsite sawmills of any sort. (Courtesy Milford Historical Society)

Page 11 Interior of Barratt’s Chapel, Frederica Harry Hosier, known as “Black Harry,” was a traveling companion of Francis Asbury. In 1781, he preached a sermon at Barratt’s Chapel in Kent County on the barren fig tree: “The circumstance was new, and the white people looked on with attention.” Hosier became well-known along the eastern seaboard, preaching for more than 30 years. (Courtesy Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History).

Page 11 Slave mannequin (Collection John Dickinson Mansion/State of Delaware Human and Cultural Affairs)

Page 12 Ft. Casimir, New Castle / Dutch House interior Johan Printz had been governor of New Sweden for 4 years already when Peter Stuyvesant was brought in as the new governor of New Netherlands (New York City) in 1647. Stuyvesant came into a tense situation that was only escalating. Printz had written to his superiors that the Dutch were destroying New Sweden’s trading, arming the natives with guns to win their loyalty and then stirring up the natives against the Swedes, and buying up the very same parcels of land from the natives that the Swedes had previously purchased.

In reality the Swedes were also pursuing the very same policies, but with less success. Stuyvesant came to the South River (Delaware Bay) in person in 1651 “to preserve and protect the company’s rights and jurisdiction.” He’d caught wind that Printz had secretly bought land titles from a sachem named Waspang Zewan. Stuyvesant approached Zewan directly to purchase the same land—both sides of the Delaware from Christiana Creek to Bombay Hook—without mentioning Printz’ dealings.

Sure enough, Zewan was happy to oblige, and denied ever having sold any lands whatsoever to the Swedes. That event led Stuyvesant to conclude that another fort was needed to solidify Dutch presence in the area. He built Fort Casimir one Dutch mile from Fort Christina on the Delaware side of the river, and stationed a garrison with cannon and two ships there. That fort was the beginning of today’s town of New Castle. But not without a fight. The Swedes overran the fort in 1654, and renamed it Fort Trefaldigheets—Trinity.

But Stuyvesant personally circled back on September 11, 1655 to lead the Dutch troops who retook the fort, and kept it out of Swedish hands for good after that. (Courtesy New Castle Court House Museum)

Page 13 Ryves Holt house, Lewes Two boats of Englishmen were shipwrecked in 1657 near the Hoerenkill Creek (today’s Lewes and Rehoboth Canal). They were captured by Lenni Lenape and freed when a ransom was paid by the Dutch. The following year, the Dutch decided to take action to protect their land on this portion of the South River (Delaware River) and, in particular, their town (previously called Swanendael, now Hoerenkill.)

Dutch colony governor Alexander d’Hinoyorsa, William Beekman, and twenty soldiers were sent to purchase additional land from the Lenape. On June 7, 1659, the Lenape deeded to the Dutch all of the land between Cape Henlopen and Bombay Hook, and that extended inland/westward about thirty miles.

The Dutch erected a fort, but in 1664 Englishman Sir Robert Carr swept through to claim the land for the Duke of York, and destroyed or seized all the property of the “41 souls” living there at the time.

The house we today call the Ryves Holt house, shown on pg 15 of this book, was built the following year, but not by him.

About the Author



[Dave Tabler](#) is a late bloomer. He got degrees in art history and photo-journalism, and launched off to a great start right out of college, shooting a book about Civil War history. But then he chickened out and worked crummy day jobs far too long. [“Delaware Before the Railroads”](#) is his hail Mary pass to get a legacy kickstarted. He’s working on a sequel to it which will cover Delaware history from the beginning of the railroads to the advent of the automobile.

Copyright © 2022 by David L. Tabler
All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof
may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever
without the express written permission of the publisher
except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.
Printed in the United States of America
First Printing, 2022
ISBN 979-8-9870006-0-1
Cover Design: Onar Burc