

**REMINISCENCE OF A TOWN THAT
THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A METROPOLIS**

DELAWARE CITY, DELAWARE



WILLIAM O. WINGATE

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Delaware Heritage Press
Wilmington, Delaware

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FORWARD

This book presents reminiscences of the late William O. Wingate (Will) who lived in Delaware City, Delaware, born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He died in 1975. The story that follows is an exact copy of his typed manuscript found early in 1993 in a brown envelope in the local collection of the Delaware City Library.

The search for permission to print led first to Mr. Frank Derrickson, a non-relative, who remembered that Will had a son Thomas. Thomas Sr. died in 1977 but his son Thomas H. Jr. resides in Waldorf, Maryland. Both he and his uncle William O. Wingate, Jr. (who lives in Bearsville, N.Y.) have given permission to the Commission to publish this autobiographical story.

Any spelling adventures belong to Will. By copying Wingate's paper as written, with typos, a few misspelled words and, on occasion, colorful vocabulary, there is no intention to criticize the style but rather to share the stories just as Wingate might if he could sit down with the reader and spin his tale. The Commission has added a few explanatory footnotes and photographs of landmarks existing in Delaware City while Will was growing up.

We are pleased to be able to share these memories of William O. Wingate and to introduce the man to the generations of his children and grandchildren on the occasion of the celebration of the 190th anniversary of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Between 1803 and 1824 there was a long hiatus in development before serious work on the canal was to continue, but towns such as Delaware City and St. Georges, Delaware, and Chesapeake City, Maryland, sprang up in anticipation of the work and prosperity the canal would bring to their States.



William O. Wingate, author.
1885 to 1975

Photo: Courtesy Grand Lodge,
Free and Accepted Masons of Delaware

Reminiscence Of A Town That Thought It Would Be A Metropolis

Delaware City, Delaware

March 5, 1801, a tract of land about 2000 acres was conveyed to the Newbold brothers, capitalists from New Jersey by the descendants of Henry Ward. This land was between Dragon Creek and St. Georges Creek - Riddens Point (now Reedy point). The Newbolds called it Newbolds Landing and built several wharves along the Delaware River the same year.

There had been some talk of building a canal to link the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. Gov. John Rising¹ and later Augustine Herman² and later still had been considered seriously by Benjamin Franklin and James Madison.

At last it was determined, a canal was to be built and its eastern entrance was to be where the old fishing wharves once stood and its western entrance emptying into Elk River which emptied into Chesapeake Bay. The canal was started in 1824 with hundreds of slaves and Irishmen with picks and shovels and horse and carts.

My grandfather, Wm. M. Wingate, as a small boy watched the digging at the now Chesapeake City end of the canal. He said they drew a line as a starting point and raced to a given point to see who would dig the first shovelful. He said a big slave was first but he said he was second. The canal was finished in 1829.

In 1826 the Newbolds plotted a town and built ten houses and named it Delaware City. It was laid out with broad tree shaded named streets and lots flexible enough to grow into a city the size of Philadelphia which the owners hoped it would rival as a commercial and trade center. The first post office was established in 1826. For various reasons the Newbolds sold their shares in Delaware City to

¹Johan Rising succeeded Johan Printz as Governor of New Sweden early (including what is now Delaware) in the 1650s.

²Augustine Herman lived 1621 to 1684. He was a pioneer, engineer, and surveyor who lived near Bohemia Manor over in Maryland. (Scharf's History)



The C. Van Hekle houses on Clinton Street near Henry Street
Built about 1830

Manuel Eyre in 1828, just prior to the opening of the canal. Mr. Eyre immediately undertook an intensive campaign to promote the town selling several lots during the next few years.

Some of the first land owners were men, some of whose descendants still live in the town.

Major Philip Reybold, a noted and wealthy agriculturalist (who built a mansion on River Road and named it *Lexington*) came to the vicinity in 1810, assisted in the effort to build the canal and through his friendship with Stephen Girard of Philadelphia was able to get substantial loans for the cause. Another executive who became interested in building the canal was Benjamin Latrobe, the architect who planned the dome of the capital at Washington, D.C., one of whose descendants was Gamble Latrobe, at one time superintendent of the Maryland Division of the Pennsylvania Rail Road and the widow of his son Gamble Latrobe, Jr., still lives on Broom Street near Gilpin Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware, a square from where I lived on Rodney Street.

The canal shortened the route between Philadelphia and Baltimore and also New York City and Baltimore. The steamers would leave New York City, go through the Delaware and Raritan Canal, come out at Trenton, New Jersey, come down the Delaware River to Delaware City, go through the canal and by way of the Elk River and Chesapeake Bay to Baltimore.

I remember the two freight boats well, the *Elsinborn* and *Bruen* also the Ericsson Line boats, *Lord Baltimore*, *Penn*, *Ericsson*, *Cadwalader* and *Willing*. There were two day boats and two night boats, when one was leaving Philadelphia for Baltimore, another was leaving in the opposite direction. Crowds of people used to go down to the lock to watch the boats go though. When I was a boy in Delaware City the canal was a busy thoroughfare and I was told it was during the Civil War. Barges, schooners, and boats of every description went through or were tied up along its banks—oyster schooners, peach boats, and boats loaded with produce for the large cities in the north.

My grandfather Wm. M. Wingate, who was born in 1819 on Bohemia Manor, was brought over from Chesapeake City in 1852 to take charge of the Delaware City end of the canal, everything but the



Grandfather William M. Wingate's house on southside of canal
Painting by Ann Lakey of Delaware City

office. They gave him a three story colonial house on the south side of the canal opposite 2nd street in Delaware City to live in, besides his salary. It was located at the end of a lane extending from Battery Point (afterwards called Ft. duPont) for Admiral duPont of Civil War fame, a naval hero, and now called Governor Bacon Health Center.

The house nearly two hundred years old, built before the canal, and bought by the company at the time canal was built and taken over by the government in 1919 and was torn down in 1970 and a little park is now where it was. Connected with the house was a stable, pigpen, chicken house, smokehouse, renderinghouse, a big garden, and a lot of big trees all gone now. When I found it was gone, I inquired about it. I was told they contacted the State Archives Committee and they were not interested. If I had known about it, I could have bought the old house, fixed it up, and made it a summer home.

Battery Point on the Delaware City side of the River was built in connection with Ft. Delaware on Pea Patch Island which was built in 1831³ and Finns Point now Ft. Mott on the New Jersey side to protect Philadelphia, Wilmington, and other cities on the upper Delaware. At Ft. Mott-Finns Point there is a National Cemetery kept up by the government in which nearly 2500 Confederate soldier prisoners and about 1100 Union soldiers are buried. My father as a small boy during the Civil War remembers the Union soldiers stationed at Battery Point going down the lane past his father's house on the way to Delaware City by way of the locks. I remember as a school boy going together with other boys and girls on May parties and other picnics with our lunches to the old Battery with the cannons displaced off their carriages, apple trees growing through the wheels, this was in the 1890's.

My grandfather who was a "dyed in the wool Whig", later a Republican told me we could have had a president from Delaware. When Wm. Henry Harrison was nominated on the Whig ticket for President in 1840, several friends of John M. Clayton like the Higgins, Reybolds, Clarks, Henry Clay, and Webster who used to congregate

³W. Emerson Wilson, *Fort Delaware*, University of Delaware Press, 1957. The fort was built 1818-23, burned in 1831. The present fort begun 1833, completed 1859.

at Major Reybolds home *Lexington* put it up to John M. Clayton to run on the ticket with Harrison as Vice Pres. He turned them down, he wanted first place or nothing so they selected a strong Union Democrat from Virginia, John Tyler for Vice President. Harrison, the day of his inaugural caught cold and one month later was dead from pneumonia. Tyler succeeded him as President and from all accounts was a mighty poor one. Clayton afterwards became Secretary of State under General Zacary Taylor and the author of the famous Clayton Bulwer Treaty,⁴ but such is fate. Clayton is buried in the Presbyterian Church yard at Dover.

Some of the peaches around here were raised by Major Philip Reybold also Isaac Reeves, father of Clement Reeves, born same year as my grandfather in 1819. The Reeves peach was known as "Reeves favorite" a nice big juicy peach. Other men born same year as my grandfather were Richard Cann of Kirkwood and Fredus Van Hekle of near Port Penn. Speaking about Mr. Clement Reeves who lived in next square, he hired me to milk two cows twice a day, morning and evening, take care of lawn in the summer, and heater in the winter before I went to school and after I came home, and after I graduated from high school.

Bill Oakes, a contractor who lived next door to my family at 3rd and Adams Street, hired me as a water boy and to do odds and ends while he was building the barracks for the soldiers during the Spanish American War. I also worked in the tomato factory and mince meat factory to get money to go to college. I wanted to go to Delaware College with Eugene Reybold and Eugene Householder but my father couldn't afford it so I went to Goldey College in Wilmington and graduated in business administration.

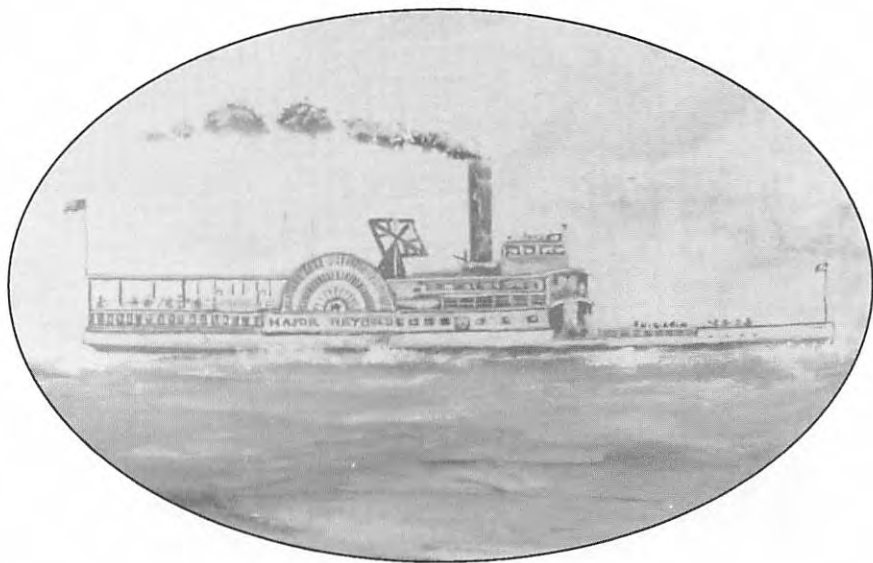
I was born in the little two story frame house between 3rd and 4th Street on Franklin Street (house is still standing) on October 11, 1885.

Some of the first things I remember is hearing them talk about the great fire in 1887 that burnt down all the lower end of Delaware City

⁴The Clayton Bulwer Treaty between United States and England regarding a canal across Central America.



The firehouse bell, Clinton and 2nd Street



Steamship *Reybold*
by Joseph Monigle
a New Castle Artist

on the west side of Clinton Street. That was the beginning of the Delaware City Volunteer Fire Co. That reminds me that as I grew older I always had a desire to ring the fire bell in the tower behind the fire engine house. One day I was playing pitch and catch with Paul Pennington on Washington Street at 3rd Street in front of the Schunders home when the wife of the quarantine tug captain from Reedy Island who lived next to Schunders, came out wringing her hands and crying that her house was on fire. I didn't stop to see how bad it was, this was my chance to ring that bell so I ran down Washington Street and went in the back way. I saw the rope to the bell was fastened high to keep boys from reaching it but I jumped, grabbed the rope which was rather rotten and pulled it. It broke but the bell made a BONG. I was disappointed, I couldn't ring it again but one bong was enough, people came running from every direction. They afterwards found out it was a grease fire in the kitchen which was put out with a bucket of water.

Talking about Major Reybold, he seemed to succeed in everything he attempted. There was a steamboat named for him, the *Major Reybold*, which made a round trip from Salem, New Jersey, in the early morning to Philadelphia every day, stopping at Delaware City, New Castle, Pennsgrove, Chester, and Philadelphia and returning in the early evening hauling passengers and freight. Other boats that stopped at Delaware City were the *Thomas Clyde*, a side-wheeler from Philadelphia to Woodland Beach; the *Columbia*, a two stacker from Philadelphia to Augustine Beach below Port Penn and we could also see the *Old Republic* over on the Jersey side on her daily trip from Philadelphia to Cape May. We boys used to catch minnows and pick water lilies and sell them to the people on the *Clyde* and *Columbia* when the boats stopped at the wharf.⁵

.....
...in the 1750s were two brothers, Peter and Carr. It seems they had a falling out with their father about the boat building business which was a joint venture so they decided to come to America. For a while they

⁵Page missing from original manuscript.



First Presbyterian Church (2nd and Jefferson Streets)
Original Frame structure at right was built in 1846
Great Grandfather Richard Wingate was buried in this graveyard.
The Methodist Church mentioned in this narrative
has been torn down.

lived in Northern New Jersey and when the Revolutionary War broke out they joined the Continental army under Washington. When the war was over the Congress hadn't any money so decided to give the veterans land. Peter Wingate went to the Southwest and it is he or his descendants for whom Ft. Wingate, New Mexico, is named. The other brother Carr took land on Maryland's Eastern shore and it is he or his descendants for whom Wingate, Maryland, is named.

My great grandmother was a Foard. Her first husband was George Benson, her second husband was Richard Wingate. My grandfather, Wm. M. Wingate, was the oldest child of that marriage. My great grandfather Richard Wingate is buried in the old Methodist Churchyard in Delaware City between 2nd street and Williams Street on Jefferson Street. His wife is buried I think in the cemetery near Cayots Corner near Chesapeake City, Maryland.

My grandfather Wm. M. Wingate married Mary Ann Pennington whose father was caretaker of the railroad bridge over the canal. My father's oldest sister, Sarah Elizabeth, my aunt, told me as a small girl she remembers her grandfather Pennington's War of 1812 uniform hanging in a closet all covered with gold braid.

My Grandfather Wingate and his wife were the parents of twelve children, eight boys and four girls of which my father was the 9th child. Five boys and three girls lived to maturity.

My mother was born in Keyport, New Jersey. Her father was Wm. Stout who married a Huff and she was the mother of two daughters of which my mother was the younger. Her mother died a short time after she was born and she and her sister were raised by a grandmother. My grandfather married a second time to Sarah Elizabeth Spence, who lived near Dover, Delaware, by whom he had six children, a daughter and five sons. The second son, Haldeman C. Stout was the founder and president of Industrial Trust company and afterwards Discount and Credit Corp. of Wilmington, Delaware. The fourth son Leslie W. Stout, born in Delaware City was one time manager of Laird and Co., afterwards Laird, Bissell, and Meeds. He later became president of Rehoboth Trust Company and when taken over by Farmers Bank, became vice president of that bank.

My grandfather Stout lived in Wilmington, Delaware, when he was asked to take charge of the Alexander Carriage and Wagon Works in 1883 at Front and Washington Streets in Delaware City. The company built about fifty carriages and forty heavy wagons annually. He lived at one time on Washington Street opposite the residence of Dr. Belleville.

My mother and father got acquainted at the Methodist Church, were married in 1884 and I was born in 1885 as stated earlier. My grandfather Stout moved from Delaware City to Mt. Cuba, then to Wilmington on Shallcross Avenue near Scott Street next door to my wife's people, then to the farm house which was torn down to make way for Wanamaker's store. One of his fields is now occupied by the Warner School and one by Salesianum School. I remembered when I visited that farm house in 1889 and 1890. We used to go stand on the 18th Street bridge which at that time was over the railroad and dropped stones on the trains going under us. Now the street goes under the railroad. My grandfather Stout afterwards had a dairy farm near Cheswold and when the day's chores were done my Uncle Leslie, just a little older than I, used to go into Cheswold with me, and one of our town chums was Edgar Boggs father of the now Senator J. Caleb Boggs.

My parents had four children. Myself the eldest, my brother Lester now dead, was at one time chief ticket seller for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company at Wilmington and was with the Company for 50 years. My only living sister Mrs. Willard H. Saulsbury is at the Masonic Home and my younger sister now dead, became the mother of Herbert B. Warburton, one time congressman from Delaware.

My grandfather Wingate was for everything that would be for the benefit of the town. When they tore down the old Methodist Church at Williams and Jefferson Streets to build a new Methodist Church between 3rd and 4th Streets on Clinton Street he was on the building committee. They built the new chapel from the material from the old church. He also was President of the New Delaware City Cemetery Co. and deacon in the Methodist Church. I remember he had a nice looking horse and carriage. The tires on the carriage wheels were solid rubber



Delaware City Bank,
built about 1850, corner of Washington and William Streets.
Still a working bank, now Wilmington Trust Company.



Homes built on the site of the Tomato Cannery
where Will worked at 5th and Clinton.

and fit in a groove on the rim. He and my grandmother used to go to church in style. He also invented a haul seine to fit the locks in which thousands of herring and other fish were caught. In my younger days the Blue Laws were prevalent. The trains didn't run on Sunday, the locks were closed from 12 midnight Saturday to the same time Sunday, no boats were locked in or out, no fishing in locks, river or canal during that time, stores were closed also.

In 1849 the Delaware City Bank was founded. Later in 1865, changed to Delaware City National Bank. My grandfather was a stockholder in the bank. The Superintendent of the canal John R. Price used to travel by horse and carriage along the towpath from Chesapeake City to Delaware City a distance of 15 miles to deposit the money. My grandfather was always afraid he would be waylaid. They afterwards provided the superintendents with a launch, the *Linda*. They then came by water and my grandfather said that was safer. When I was a boy, the bank officers were George Cleaver, President, Francis McIntyre, Cashier, S. D. (Burl) Townsend, Teller and afterwards was President of Laird and Co. and still later President of Wilmington Trust.

In 1887 an act was passed exempting any manufacturing company from taxes for 10 years from the date of location in Delaware City. When I was a boy there were two tomato factories, a mince meat factory, and a creamery. One tomato factory at 5th and Clinton Street was run by a man named Starr from Salem, New Jersey, I believe, and later by Joseph Anderson. Another tomato factory around by the railroad station was run by Chas. T. Pancost who also ran the mince meat factory. The creamery across from the railroad station was run by John Wertz. Later it was bought by Dragon Run Dairy of Wilmington, Delaware, owned by Casper T. Toppin. The incubator factory was run by Clayton VonCulin. Two slaughterhouses, one run by William A. Davidson and the other by Frank Householder. The caviar processing plants were run by Anderson and the other by Sadlers. Sadlers also put up herring.

Blacksmiths were Hines across from the bank, Moodys at Front and Washington Streets, Amos Collins at 5th Street Bridge, later at Front and Canal Streets.



Beyond this Fifth Street Bridge, Will learned to swim.

I lived with my grandfather just before I graduated at the high school. One day when I was taking the mail up to him I was crossing the locks and Dan O'Neill, head of the towing mules at the locks and father of Bessie O'Neill who afterwards worked with me at Laird and Co. in Wilmington, asked me if I would take one of the mules over to Amos Collins blacksmith shop to get it shod. I said I would. I rode bareback past my grandfather's over 5th Street bridge, down Canal Street to the shop at Front and Canal Streets and then back to the stable. I remember I was so sore that I couldn't sit down for a week. Mr. Dan O'Neill, remembering the occasion, always gave me the laugh about that experience.

One of my earlier remembrances was the blizzard of 1888. It was some snow. Where I was born we had a grape arbor extending the whole length of the lot. It was arch shaped and the snow was up to the top. My father had bought two small pigs. Everybody had pigs those days that they slaughtered about the 2nd week in December for meat. My father had been unable to feed them I believe and they were squealing from hunger. At last he got a shovel and began to dig a tunnel down the walk. I watched from the kitchen window. Several years later I told him about it. He said, How could you remember that you were so young?" I said "I can see you now in my mind digging away under the grape arbor until you got to the pigs."

The next year 1889 was the Johnstown Flood. The papers were full of it and I became interested in looking at the pictures.

As small boys, a lot of us as well as girls used to go up above 5th Street bridge at an old sunken mud machine where several of us learned to swim. When we found we could swim we then went to the river, (mostly the boys). The tide was too swift for the girls. We would swim mostly off the Major Reybold Wharf or the Canal Co. wharf. Sometimes we would swim off the "I" which extended from the locks into the canal or off a "V" shaped wharf extending from the locks out in the river.

It is different now but when I was a boy we had a right angled enclosed pond called the "Basin" closed at the canal end and at the river end where as many as two or three hundred people used to skate. At



Charles Ash house built by Isaac Ubil at 2nd and Washington
Streets, built in the 1870s

the eastern end of this pond was a building called the Club House in which a family named Lindsay used to come every summer. Extending out from the bank into the river in front of this house was a wharf called the "Iron Wharf". I understand my grandfather rented this wharf during the Civil War and sold lumber, feed, and other accessories used during the war and made quite a bit of money. We also used to skate on the canal. I have skated to St. George's and up to the tide waters where we cut holes in the ice and caught fish and in the spring and summer we used to go up there in boats and fasten layout lines with baited hooks about a foot apart and also catch fish.

Mr. John Roberts, the livery stable man who used to live at the Southeast corner of Henry and Clinton Streets, after Cleavers sold it and later occupied by Dr. Ellis, had two ice houses on the bank at the tide waters. He cut ice in the winter time using men and horses and stored the ice in the houses and sold it from door to door in the summer using a big ice wagon driven by William Ennis, a very nice colored man who was the principal of the colored school in the winter.

Part of Delaware City is laid out especially out the St. Georges Road and west to Dragon Run from the Ashurst property. The farm house for this property is on the corner of 2nd and Washington Streets and now owned by the Catholic Church. When I was young William A. Price farmed this farm. Harbor Estates is built on part of it and some of it runs out on the west side of St. George's Road nearly to Higgins Estate. I lived on Adams Street near 3rd Street and the Isaac Ubil family lived on the south side of 5th Street at the end of Adams Street Mr. Ubil was a building contractor. One of the houses he built was the Colbourn mansion which was beyond Polk Town on the Port Penn Road near the present ship canal. The mansion, I believe was bought by Nathan Miller and now torn down. Colbourns were the famous Colbourns Mustard people who owned the schooner yacht *Venitza* which was tied up during the winter at 5th Street bridge. One spring the *Venitza* was sailing in Long Island Sound when it was hit by a sudden squall and capsized and Mr. and Mrs. Colbourn and one daughter were drowned. The younger daughter, Madaline, swam ashore and was saved.

The Ubil family had several boys and good looking girls. One girl married Ed Cole who lived at 3rd and Jefferson Street Another girl named Agnes married and lived in Philadelphia. Edna, now dead, married Wm. Saxton and afterwards moved to Wilmington. She was in school when I was but she was in the same class with Helen Cheers, Henry Reybold, Emmett Tosney, and others I don't remember who were older than I. Two of the Ubil boys, Howard (Ide) and George were around my age. We used to fish, catch musk rats, shoot ducks, etc. They had quite a collection of Indian arrowheads and other artifacts which they had picked up in the fields behind their house. I had a few myself which proved that Indians at one time roamed the fields around the site of the town.

Wm. A. Price, at one time Post master, who lived in the Ashurst farmhouse whose cow pound extended from Washington Street along Henry Street to Clinton Street. The northwest corner of that yard at Henry and Clinton Streets is now occupied by the Frank Warner property. Mr. Warner, Supt. of Engineering of Delaware River from Phila. to Cape May married Mary Reybold, the second oldest sister of Gen. Eugene Reybold who was in my class at school.

In the summer we used to take a skiff and with some of the older girls and boys like ourselves used to go to Reybolds cove and go swimming. It had a good sand beach.

Some of us boys used to go out St. George's Road to Higgins woods and gather chestnuts. We also used to go on the Railroad tracks to Reybolds station and get apples from the Winchester orchard as well as Club Foot Jim Clark's orchard.

Mr. H. P. Scott when he bought the old Major Reybold mansion called *Lexington* built a golf course. Several of us boys used to go out there when there were tournaments and caddie for the different friends who came to play. It was possible to earn 75 cents or \$1.00 in an afternoon.

On 5th Street across from the T. Bayard Heisel home was an Irish lady named Biddy Malone whom the boys teased which wasn't right. Sometimes the boys would take apples from her small orchard. Anyone that got under the upstairs window got the contents of her chamber pot.



The current Reybold house on Adams Street between Williams and Second Street, built about 1900. The original home named *Lexington* on River road was torn down many years ago.

One day Bill Keane got too close and got the full contents of that receptacle. Bill smelled so bad that we made him walk ahead of us to town. Biddy's pet phrase was "You little sons of bitches have got more brass in your ass than a copper kettle."

I remember a baseball game one 4th of July in the late '90s. Friends of Mr. H. P. Scott challenged the Delaware City Baseball Club to a game which was accepted and played on the diamond next to the Methodist Church where the water works now stand. The Scott team was made up of L. Scott Townsend, catcher; William H. Hilles, pitcher; Thomas F. Bayard, Jr., first base; Burl Townsend, Henry Higgins; and others made up the rest of the team who I have forgotten. The town team had Phil Oliver, catcher; John Roberts, pitcher; Mr. Griffin, first base; Bumpy Bowen, short stop; Norman Cleaver; Billy O'Neill, and others whom I have forgotten. I remember Tom Bayard hit a home run over the corn field next to the Steelman home and Scott Townsend had his finger broken by a pitch from Billy Hilles.

Mr. Townsend at one time was Vice Pres. of Security Trust Co. at 6th and Market Streets in Wilmington. Afterwards he became Pres. of Laird and Co. when I was cashier. I asked him one day if he remembered that game, he said he did and remembered the broken finger.

Mr. Hilles married Tom Bayard's sister Florence and lived in a mansion along the river near Hamburg Cove below New Castle.

Burl Townsend was at one time teller in Delaware City Natl. Bank. He was with Laird and Co. and later became Pres. of the Wilmington Trust Co. He was married to Helen Cheers. Lived on Broom Street in Wilmington, Delaware.

Mr. H. P. Scott went into the investment business at 9th and Market Streets, Wilmington, Delaware, in the same building in which the grandfather of Alfred E. Bissell, Alfred Elliott, one time had an investment house.

Writing about the boys of Delaware City, Eugene Reybold, Eugene Householder and myself graduated in the same class in high school. Reybold and Householder took a train to Delaware College and myself to Goldey College in Wilmington. At Reybold station Harry Scott, Jr. got on and Orie Sutton got on from St. Georges at Corbitts, both on

their way to Wilmington Military Academy in Wilmington. Dick Rodney used to come down from New Castle to catch the train for Newark.

I remember the station agent at Porters was Mr. Crumpton and his assistant was named Hancock. One day Hancock asked me if Orie Sutton knew he could throw his voice. He was a ventriloquist. I said I didn't think he knew. In a few minutes I could hear a voice coming from the direction of Kirkwood saying "Hello Sutton!" It hollered two or three times. At last on account some of the boys started laughing, Sutton got wise and said some son of a bitch in this crowd is throwing their voice. Hancock later became the assistant station master at B&O Station at Delaware Ave. and duPont Streets in Wilmington, Delaware, and was up to his old tricks again. Later at the Wilmington Club of which he was a member, I asked Judge Rodney if he remembered that fellow at Porters Station, he said he did.

At the Bear Station we would pick up Doug Buck and his older brother Francis. They being descendants of John M. Clayton through their mother, lived at Buena Vista built by John M. Clayton and also went to Wilmington Military Academy. One morning on the train going to Wilmington, I heard a racket in the rear of the coach. I looked back and saw Doug Buck and young Dick Cann slugging away at each other. The bigger boys had gotten them to fighting. Doug and Dick at that time were in short pants both about ten years of age. That was the fall of 1900. Eugene Reybold is now dead. He graduated from Delaware College, went into the Army became Lt. Gen., head of the Engineering Dept. of the U.S. Army, and later consultant to Frank duPont when they were building the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

Householder, after two years at Delaware, was appointed to West Point. He graduated and during the first World War was in command of troops in Atlantic City.

H. P. Scott, Jr., lived at one time on Gilpin Ave. and Franklin Street, Wilmington, Delaware.

C. Douglas Buck married Alice, the second daughter of T. C. duPont. He became chief engineer of the duPont Highway (#13), Later Governor of the State and U. S. Senator. Buck is now dead.

Orie Sutton, I understand, fell off a truck he was driving and was run over and killed.

I graduated from Goldey College, worked for Bancrofts, duPonts, Laird & Co., and the County in several capacities, and lastly as comptroller of Wilmington Club. Richard S. Rodney (Dick) became a judge, now dead.

Wm. A. Price lived in the Ashurst farmhouse property at 2nd and Washington Streets and farmed some of the Ashurst farm. I remember he had quite a large strawberry field. Several of we boys, during strawberry season, used to pick strawberries for him. One day I was not on my knees picking, I was stooping going down the patch looking for the big ones to fill the boxes quicker, when I felt a kick on my rear. I looked up. It was Mr. Price. I said, "Mr. Price, what was that for?" He said, "Billy, you can't pick strawberries with your ass up to the sun!" I never forgot it.

I remember there was a general store at 5th Street Bridge run by a Mr. Griffenberg, a brother of State Senator Griffenberg who owned the Reynolds Candy Store in Wilmington, whose son married Elizabeth Johnson, daughter of Edward Johnson and Eva Berry Johnson. The children at one time lived in Wawasett. The Johnsons parents lived on Clayton Street, Wilmington, Del.

Some of the other families in Delaware City were the Tugends, Henry, Fred, Kate, John, Emma, Charlie who recently died, and George.

The Neffs. Bill Neff, saddle and harness maker, his brother Ed who had children - Bill, Edward, and Lena.

The Clark's. Harry C. Clark, Rhinehart Clark whom I remembered drowned up at the bridge at 5th Street. He struck the underneath part of the bridge going under it with his head and fell overboard and drowned. I saw them bring him home on a shutter after they recovered the body. There was also Fannie Clark and Georgia Clark. John D. Clark married a daughter of Major Reybold and had a house at Clark's Corner, afterwards the protectory for Catholic boys (whose sons were Theo. F. Clark, one time state treasurer, and James Clark). Grandson Courtland Clark married Nan Saddler. Other Clarks were Big Jim



Central Hotel
Currently owned by Sterlings (Canal and Clinton Street)



The F. O'Neil and W. J. Robinson homes—built 1840 and 1830 respectively (corner of William and Washington Streets)

Clark who lived at 2nd and Hamilton who was a cattle dealer. Another grandson of J.D. Clark was Wm. D. Clark who married Irene Davidson who is still living and is about 92 years of age. A Clark family, Jeff Clark lived on Clinton Street and had a daughter, Alice. Emma and Julia Clark lived on 5th Street opposite the Cheers home.

The Cheers family. John T. Cheers had children - Woodward, Annie, Helen who married S. D. (Burl) Townsend, Lucy and Donald. John Cheers had a ship chandlery store, foot of Clinton Street and was part owner with Henry Brady of Middletown of tug boats and mules which did the towing through the canal.

A grandson of Major Reybold, Edwin W. Reybold had sons, Wm. U. Reybold who married Bernice Keane and had a son Bill Reybold, Jr. Edwin often called Ted, moved West. Henry Reybold married Mary Schaeffer, daughter of the canal carpenter, Charles Schaeffer, and Isabel Reybold married an army officer.

The Mulligan's, father Michael, sons Peter and Jim. Peter's children's name I have forgotten. The father and son Peter had stores at Front and Clinton.

The Hines. M. F. Hines and Samuel Hines were blacksmiths with their father. Wm. Hines was a shoe maker and married Annie Van Kirk. M. F. Hines, married Cornelia Schunder, a very great friend of my mothers. They had a daughter, Lillian, who married and lived in Philadelphia. She died during the flu epidemic in 1918.

The Pennington family who lived between Henry and 3rd Street on Clinton had children, Anna, Russell, Lizzie, Fred, Paul, Ryland, and George.

The Davidson family. John lived next to us on Adams Street. He had three sons. Frank, Howard, and Robert and a daughter Nellie. Frank was in business with Clark, Davidson, and Reybold Grocers. Joseph R. Pennington owned the lumberyard and married Anna Reeves, daughter of Clement Reeves. They had a son named Bill who worked in the Delaware City Natl. Bank and a daughter who married George Clark.

The Vails. Dr. Thomas Vail, veterinary doctor, had a daughter Katie who married my Uncle Charles and who had a daughter Maud.

Hattie Vail married Wm. A. Beck and had a daughter Lucy who married Benj. Vinton. Bertha married my Uncle O. B. Wingate and had one son, Thomas V. Wingate, Episcopal Minister.

Charles G. Ash, connected with the Canal Co. lived at 2nd and Washington Streets as already stated whom his daughters married Dr. Bellville married Naomi Price and Frank McIntyre.

Givison family, George B. Ford family, Tosney family, Bigger family and the Derrickson family.

The Jim LaBoube family. Children Frank, Kate, and Emma. The Jim Lang family. Jim was a tug boat captain, who had a niece Sadie, nephew, Billy.

Benj. Dougherty married Louse Householder and had a daughter who married Stewart Beck, lived next to us on Hamilton Street near 3rd Street.

The Bright family. Old Wm. Bright, the tin smith, had two sons Bill and George, who was at one time mayor. Bill Bright's children were Annie, Bill, Mamie, and Samuel. George married Abby Sutton and had a son Lionel. Old Wm. Bright had a daughter who married a Moody who was a blacksmith.

The Schunder family lived at 3rd & Washington Streets. The children were John who married Laura Frempt, Cornelia who married M. F. Hines, Annie who married a Philadelphia gentleman, Frank who married Celeste Higgins, and a son William.

Jacob Frempt worked under my grandfather at the locks. He had three children whose names were Laura, who married John Schunder. She was a very good soprano singer. Dora, who took me to school for the first time, and a son whose name I have forgotten.

The John Nickel family. Mrs. Anne Nickel, the wife, was a great friend of my mothers. The children were Harry, Alida, Myra, and Lydia. Harry Nickel bought the Davidson house and my grandfather's house in which we used to live which were side by side between 3rd and 4th Street and put them together in one larger house.

The Gassner family. Mr. Gassner was the rector of the Episcopal Church. The rectory was at 3rd and Washington Streets. Gassner's children were Sallie, who married Wm. B. Jester son of the druggist,



Diving Bell now located in Battery Park on Clinton Street.
Purchased in 1848 to allow for canal underwater workers.

sons Henry and William and a daughter Christine.

I remembered a fight I had with Henry at the school. His sister Sallie went in and told the principal, Willard Smith, who kept both Henry and I after school and rattaned us for fighting. William, the second son was a tough fighter and hard to lick. I remember we were fighting along a fence at Henry Street and, as I was the better wrestler, William held onto the fence to keep me from throwing him and fought with one hand and of course I with both hands free was licking him pretty bad. When the fight was stopped by two men, we afterwards became good friends.

Some other families in Delaware City when I was a boy were the John Beck family whose children were Adelbert, Anna and Eva, who at one time sat ahead of me in school.

The Steele family, the father of whom Bill Steele worked on the locks under my grandfather. Bill's children were William, Tottie, and Minni. Tottie became the mother of James Truss who was with the Internal Revenue later with P. S. duPont and Minnie was in my class in grammar school and a very good looking girl.

Down the street from them on Adams Street was the Fountain family. There were three Fountain children. Irvin, Soloman, and Ada who was also in my grammar school class.

The O'Neill family had children, a son Charles, a daughter Bessie who worked with me at Laird and Company later Laird, Bissell, and Meeds, and another son Emmett. They lived at the corner of 2nd and Jefferson Streets.

Another O'Neill family lived at Henry and Clinton Streets. The children's names were Annie, Maggie, and a brother June, a nickname, I believe. Annie O'Neill and my mother were very good friends.

Tosney family. Boys Joseph, who worked in Joseph Warren's grocery store across from the locks, and Emmett, who I think in my younger days went to Delaware College and since then I have lost track of him. There were several Bowen's whom I can't remember now.

There were also some prominent colored families like the Roberts, Boyer, Watson, Shorter, Manlove, Taylor, and Fields families.

Where the Harbor Estates now is located there used to be a woods which we called Texas. That is where we used to go and cut Shinny

sticks. Shinny is a sort of golf game. The boys used to play hit shins instead of the ball.

In the woods called Texas we used to pick fox grapes, also in the woods along the Battery Lane leading towards Polktown as well as cherries from the Reeves property along the same lane. The Reeves property was along the Battery property.

Before the water works were built we had town pumps located as follows: one in front of George B. Ford; one at 3rd and Franklin Street across from the Frank R. Householder property; one at the corner at Henry and Hamilton Streets in front of William A. Davidson property; one at 2nd and Washington Street in front of Armstrong property; and two in the schoolyard. And of course nearly every house in town had a pump of its own.

Wm. Householder, mortician, whose oldest daughter Laura was I thought one of the prettiest girls in school. He had a younger daughter Bertha and a son Jay.

Anna Hemphil who was the daughter of Evans Hemphil who was with the Railroad Company, Alida Dunlap, Elsie Price who married Harry Steelman. Frank Dunlap, father of Alida was the 5th Street Bridge tender and besides Alida, he had a son Frank, a daughter Cora, and another son Howard. Also Francis Dunlap, no relation, a doctor, married Ida Bigger.

J. Thomas Price who married one of the Charles G. Ash daughters was in the office of the Canal Co. His children were Fred Price living in Wilmington, Harry C. who married Natalie Reybold, Mattie, Marion, and J. Morton Price.

Doctor Frank Belleville married one of the Ash girls and had a son Charles and a daughter. Frank McIntyre married an Ash daughter and had two sons, Ash and George, who married one of Preacher Stahl's daughters, whose father was a preacher at the Presbyterian Church.

The Cleaver family was another prominent family who built the Cleaver property at Canal and Clinton Streets known now as Central Hotel. There were sons Henry, who went to school with my father and afterwards lived on 12th Street and Market in Wilmington, and had sons Paul and Charles and brother George who was captain of a



Delaware City Elementary School on Clinton Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Currently City Hall downstairs and Library upstairs. Built in 1884.

government launch. He was badly hurt in an explosion.

Miss Ella Cleaver was my teacher in grammar school and a very good one. I remember when I was with Laird and Company she used to come to see me several times. She had two brothers, Edward and Norman. Frank Cleaver lived on Washington Street between 3rd and Henry Street. He had a son Robert and daughters Lizzie and Beatrice. Peter B. Cleaver lived at the corner of Henry and Washington Streets. He was very active in the Methodist Church.

The Frank Armstrong family who lived on Canal Street near 3rd Street built boats. I have forgotten the names of his children. His brother lived on Washington Street near 2nd street and had sons Harry, Thomas, Philip, and a daughter Annie.

John C. Higgins family had sons Henry R. and John. Henry R. was the father of Anthony Higgins and a daughter. Part of the Higgins farm is where the Gunning Bedford School now stands.

The Swan family. Albert Swan was a barber and had a son Ward who learned telegraphy under my uncle; daughters Ella and Ethel. There was another son Albert, Jr. The two younger children who died during the diphtheria epidemic that struck Delaware City in the late 90s. (Our family was lucky, we children never caught the disease.) Tom Swan farmed one of the Higgins properties on the canal. He had two daughters, Bessie who was in my class at school and Clara who was in the same class as my brother.

Another Reybold grandson was J. Frank Reybold, one time Post Master of Delaware City and one time lived in the Cleaver property at Canal and Clinton Streets. He married Dr. Tybout's daughter. Dr. Tybout owned the property at Tybouts Corner. They had children Max, Ethel who lived to be 97 years old, Fred who lived to be 94 years old, Mary Natalie who married Harry C. Price, Eugene already mentioned and Alice whom I thought my brother Lester had a crush on as many times I saw him carrying her books on the way home from school.

Besides Miss Ella Cleaver, the primary teacher was Louise Price, daughter of Nicholas Price, who lived on the corner (S.E.) of Front and Clinton Streets and had a tobacco store on Clinton Street between



Dr. Belville's residence built in 1848
(on Washington between Williams and Front Street)
The office is on the right and pharmacy in the rear.

Front and Harbor Streets opposite the canal.

I remember very well a murder in the town. It seems that a negro, Noah Benson was killed in a fight over a colored woman. It occurred in the square opposite the Dr. Belleville house. A man named Henry Hutt was accused but it couldn't be proven very well although Hutt served quite a time in New Castle jail. My uncle Bill saw the body floating in the canal near the locks, got it out of the water, tied a rope around the left arm and tied it to the "T", waiting for the coroner. It was headless and nude and the head disappeared and has never been found 'til this day, over 75 years ago. Several people went down to the "T" to see the body. Among the boys from school was myself.

When I was a boy living with my grandfather he taught me several tricks in wrestling and, if I do say it myself, I became about the best wrestler in school.

One day during the Spanish American War when Fort duPont was garrisoned by batteries "L" and "M", we were loafing at Auntie Caldwell's Candy Store opposite the lumber yard and next to the fire company when some soldiers came in talking about wrestling. One of my friends said I bet not one of you soldiers can throw Bill Wingate. I was about 15 years old at the time and one soldier who was about 21 took up the challenge. I didn't want to wrestle for I knew he was older and probably stronger but nevertheless I accepted the match and we went out on the road on Clinton Street, which was a dirt street, and went to it. I realized in a few minutes that the soldier was stronger but I was quicker and I thought of some of the tricks of my grandfather taught me. We wrestled for about a half hour when, by a quick maneuver, I got him over my hip and threw him on his back and held him. The boys with me cheered. The soldier looked crest fallen so I went to him, shook hands and told him I did not mean to embarrass him. He wanted to wrestle again but once was enough. I was afraid he being stronger and older, I might not be successful the next time so rested on my laurels. I always remembered the soldiers name, it was Pickles and he was a farm boy from Illinois I believe.

It seems some of the soldiers, when they enlisted and were told they were going to Fort duPont at Delaware City, Delaware, believed they



The Derricksons (Frank, Catherine, and Elaine)
live in the center house (Adams and Second Street), built in 1846.

were going to a big city and some were very much disappointed when they arrived here.

Another school teacher was Jennie Marley, teacher of the Intermediate Dept. I remember one "Hollow Eve" (Miss Marley lived on Clinton Street where the Spicer Funeral Home now is located) we tied a rope to her bell, went across the street which was an open lot before the Bradway house was built, laid on our stomachs and pulled the rope. Miss Marley, Beulah her niece, or her aunt, Miss Janvier, would come out, look around, and then go back in the house. We pulled the bell several times until we got tired of bringing them to the door.

The first principal I remember at the school was named Gardiner. It was during his term when we had the bell for the school made. At the dedication about 1891, they unfurled the large flag on the building and hundreds of flags fluttered to the ground. The next principal was a younger brother of L. Irving Handy, a Past Grand Master of Masons at the time of the 100th anniversary of the Grand Lodge in 1906 and the Congressman from Delaware. Some of the boys used to go barefoot in the summer and I remember Bill Bright one morning came scuffling in the assembly hall for morning exercises before school and got a large splinter in his foot. He was certainly yelling. Mr. Handy, the principal, sat him on a chair, got out his penknife, stropped it on his shoe, got hold of Bill's foot and cut out the splinter. Blood was running quite a lot. Some of the girls were squealing and some looked like they were going to faint. But the operation was a success, Bill got better.

The next principal was Willard Smith. He afterwards married one of his pupils, Julia Saddler, and they became the parents of a son who afterwards became mayor of the town.

The last principal I remember was Norris Wilkinson. He was principal when I graduated in 1899. We held the commencement exercises in the Methodist Church as it had the largest hall in the town. I remember what his sister, Mary, who was the class prophet said. I was always good in history and as she came to my name she said Bill Wingate, the class historian, the only one in the class who will probably be President of the U. S. Her prophesy so far is way off and probably will always be as I do not aspire to having that job and never did.

I remember very well the run for the presidency by Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison in 1892, which Cleveland won. We had a parade in Delaware City on succeeding weeks. The same boys about 8 or 10 of us carried a large flag two at each end and about three on each side, it was a large flag. One week we would say throw Cleveland out and put Harrison in for the Republican parade and the next week we would say the opposite.

Billy Davidson, the butcher, barbecued a steer at the lower end of Clinton Street on the Park property opposite the locks and fed everyone who wanted a sandwich during the parade.

In those days Delaware City usually went Republican. I remember Capt. Eugene Reybold, uncle of Gen. Reybold was at one time mayor of the town. On July 4th he used to furnish fire works and set them off across the canal opposite Williams Street.

We also used to have two baseball teams called "Up town" and "Down town" teams. The "Up town" team used the diamond along side the Methodist Church. The "Down town" team used the diamond at the park at the locks. The "Up town" team was composed of Johnny Cain, catcher; Mitch Givison, pitcher; players Bill Kean, Harry Steelman, Fred Pennington, and others whom I can't remember. The "Down town" team had Dicky Carrow, catcher; Harry Bristow, pitcher; Tom Carrow, Eugene Reybold, Harry Armstrong, Ward Swan, sometimes myself and others I cannot remember used to have some great games against each other.

I am going to see if I can remember the names of my classmates who graduated in June 1899. Mary Wilkinson, May Taylor, Alida Dunlap, Elsie Price, Beulah Marley, Bessie Swan, Anna Hemphill, Eugene Reybold, Eugene Householder, Bill Keane, Donald Cheers, and myself. Twelve in all. In my bedroom I have a picture of the grammar grade of which some of the above are in it. And also as the years have passed, some are dead.

Some of the best years of my life were spent in this small town of which the originators had high hopes it would grow into a large city. Maybe it will yet. We will see. I understand some of the new citizens are thinking that way.



Distance shot of the Battery Park and the shops on Clinton Street.

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Free and Accepted Masons of Delaware

...and all others who told us anecdotes

The Delaware Heritage Commission

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