

# MARKER OF TIME



Staff photos/Jason Minto

Members of the Kitts Hummock Improvement Association stand with the town's historical marker, which will be dedicated today. From left, kneeling, Andy Mariani, vice president; Dick Rodgers, head waterman; Ed Alexander, board member; Liz Garcia, board member; Hiram Godwin, president; standing, Dave Egan, waterman; and board members Kurt Bertino, Joe McDonough and Jim Keating. Not pictured, board member Bob Doberstein and Treasurer Sue Mariani.

## 'Forgotten resort' honored

By Jenny Kanla  
Staff writer

DOVER — A local landmark will be honored today when a state historical marker is unveiled at Kitts Hummock — one of Delaware's most overlooked vacation communities.

This "forgotten resort" rests between local wetlands and the Delaware Bay, just south of Dover Air Force Base.

Members of the Kitts Hummock Improvement Association and the Delaware Public Archives will host a brief ceremony at 11 a.m. as they uncover the resort's new marker.

Kitts Hummock first attracted European settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

They would flock to this quiet coastal area during summer months to benefit from the cool bay breeze and escape the sweltering heat farther inland.

Russ McCabe of Delaware Public Archives said there is even evidence that Native Americans enjoyed the land before



The text on the marker describes the history of the bayside community of Kitts Hummock.

these European settlers.

In the early 1800s, a tavern was constructed to accommodate the many vacationers who would go fishing and crabbing at the hummock.

Several small resort cottages were built on the hummock during the late 1800s.

Despite the community's intriguing background,

many Downstate residents prefer to vacation at Delaware's popular Sussex County beaches.

Some local residents are unaware that the hummock exists.

Dover resident Joe McDonough, member of the Kitts Hummock Improvement Association,

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# Marker

Continued From Page 1

said he loves the cozy resort's convenient location.

"It's only 20 minutes away and it's like I'm in a whole new world," he said.

The association works to maintain the historic hummock and the many old cottages that are nestled by the bay.

The placement of a historic marker will help the proud resort residents educate others about the community's intriguing history.

"We hope to instill an additional pride in people

who are not aware of what a historic district we live in," Mr. McDonough said.

He and the dozens of other families who vacation in Kitts Hummock hope their community will always remain a serene vacation spot.

"We're content the way it is," he said. "It's peaceful and quiet. We don't want any big housing developments to change the character of the neighborhood."

Mr. McCabe said the informative marker will help preserve the hummock's history, despite any changes that occur.

"As Delaware changes

rapidly in some areas, people want to commemorate history," he said. "(The marker) will help promote civic pride and the pride of community archives."

The district's representative, Sen. John C. Still III, R-Dover North, sponsored the \$2,500 project.

"I believe we need to have a ready and accessible historic marker denoting the key facts of certain historic sites," he said. "This way our heritage and history are remembered and honored for all to see in the future."

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Staff photo/Jason

**Like the Native Americans before them, European settlers escaped to Kitts Hummock for fishing relaxation.**

# DELAWARE

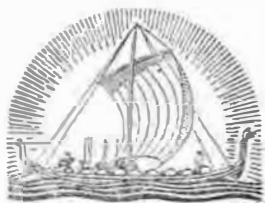
A GUIDE TO THE FIRST STATE



*Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project  
of the Works Progress Administration  
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ILLUSTRATED



*Sponsored by Edward W. Cooch, Lieutenant Governor*

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A younger brother, Philemon Dickinson (1739-1809), also spent his youth at Kingston-Upon-Hull, living the same life, taught by the same tutor. After being graduated in 1759 from the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) he managed for a while his family's enormous plantations in Delaware and in two counties of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Later he returned to Philadelphia to read law in John's office. A resident of New Jersey at the time of the Revolution, he rose to be a major general and commander in chief of the New Jersey militia, and in 1777 his command drove the British forces from Staten Island. In 1782 he was elected to Congress from Delaware, where he owned land, and from 1790 to 1793 he filled the unexpired term of a Senator from New Jersey.

At 0.9 m. on the Kitts Hummock Rd. is the junction with a side road.

Left on this road to BYFIELD, 1.7 m. (L), believed to be the birthplace of Caesar Rodney (1728-84) whose 80-mile horseback ride from here to Philadelphia, July 1-2, 1776 to cast his vote for Richard Henry Lee's resolution for independence has become the most noted episode of Delaware history. His vote and Thomas McKean's overrode the negative vote of George Read, a conservative like Dickinson (see above), and enabled Delaware on July 2 to be one of the 12 Colonies whose delegates voted for the Declaration of Independence. This document was signed by Rodney, McKean, and later on by Read along with delegates from the other Colonies, including those from New York, which as a Colony did not vote for it originally.

In 1923 an equestrian statue of Rodney on his famous ride was erected in Rodney Square, Wilmington (see WILMINGTON). In 1934 a statue of him and one of John M. Clayton (see BUENA VISTA: Tour 1) were placed in Statuary Hall in the Capitol at Washington, D. C., as Delaware's two most important native sons.

The rutted lane, hubdeep in winter, leads to a slight elevation on which stands the sagging ruin of a frame house that replaced the original house of Byfield. The 800-acre plantation belonged originally to the Jones family (see above), later becoming the property of William Rodney (1652-1708) who came to America about 1681 and was six times a member of the Delaware Assembly under Penn. His son Daniel sold it to a brother, Caesar Rodney, the Signer's father, in 1731, some 3 years after Caesar, Jr.'s birth. It is not definitely known that the parents were living at Byfield before buying it, hence the doubt as to its being the birthplace of the noted patriot. However, Caesar Rodney grew up here, inherited the farm, and was buried here. In 1887 what were thought to be his bones were dug up and reinterred in Christ churchyard, Dover. The family graveyard at Byfield was almost effaced by years of neglect and some doubt was expressed at the time that the bones removed were the right ones.

At 1.9 m. on the main road is the junction with an avenue of maples.

Right on this private dirt lane, often impassable, to TOWN POINT, 3.4 m., on Jones Creek, an ancient, small, plain house in lonely crumbling decay, the first story brick, the second story frame. It is probably the "Towne Point" mentioned in an early deed as "the first seat on said creek," standing in 1680 as the house of Edward Pack, an early magistrate, who held here the first courts of St. Jones County.

A few years later Pack sold for 1,200 pounds of tobacco "all the land, dwelling-house and tobacco-house" to William Darvall, also a magistrate or justice, under Penn. Darvall was granted a salary of "40 pounds in current money" to run a ferry here—on condition that he employ a man to keep a tavern, sell "all liquors at retail," and "dispose of all manner of trade whatsoever." In this way the authorities sought to establish the nucleus of a town—hence the name "Towne Point"—

in this wilderness region which was lagging far behind the sections around New Castle to the north and Lewes to the south. The courts of St. Jones County (later Kent) met here only until 1690, however, when they were transferred to the tavern of William Maxwell. Not far from the latter a courthouse was erected about 1697 where the present courthouse stands in Dover (see DOVER).

At 3.2 m. on the main road is KITTS HUMMOCK on Delaware Bay where it is widest—nearly 30 miles broad. For years simply a small grove of trees on the shore, this ancient fishing and "pleasuring" ground now consists of a string of small cottages and boarding houses. In recent years hook-and-line fishing in the bay has been popular here. Bathing is possible only at high stages of the tide when the mud flats are covered to a shallow depth. This was one of the worst mosquito-ridden spots in Delaware before the advent of mosquito control; even "smothers" of damp seaweed could not make enough acrid smoke to protect picnickers.

For 250 years the shallow bay flats here have been noted fishing and oyster grounds. Colonial planters detailed the best fishermen among their Negroes to go to the beach with seines and tongs to catch the quantities of fish and oysters that were a regular diet for all slaves as well as their masters. Oxcart loads of bay trout and bluefish went back home to be barreled in brine for winter use.

Nowadays, though city anglers may blister in the sun, farmers of the region still find sport in hauling seines at night when the fish run best and cannot see the nets. Whiskey helps to counteract mosquito bites, and whether or not many fish are caught everyone has a good time. (Other favorite nocturnal sports of Kent Countians are 'coon hunting and fox hunting.)

It is said that Kitts Hummock was originally "Kidd's Hammock" for Capt. William Kidd, the 17th century pirate (see LEWES, also Tour 12). A hummock is a wooded knoll in a marsh or near a beach.



## Tour 2B

Junction with US 113—Murderkill Neck—Bowers Beach; 3 m.

Main road paved throughout.

This short route traverses Murderkill Neck, which extends between St. Jones Creek and the Murderkill to Delaware Bay.

At 0 m. the Bowers Beach Rd. branches east from US 113, about 11 miles south of Dover (see Tour 2).

At 0.4 m. is the junction with a side road.

(Scharf) - 1888

on September 29, 1679. Pack resided on Towne Point, and Briggs on "Kingston upon Hull," adjoining Edward Pack, who was one of the signers of the petition for a new county in 1679-80, and was chosen the following May as one of the justices of the peace for St. Jones' County.

The first court for St. Jones' County (now Kent County) was held in Edward Pack's house on "Towne Point." On March 10, 1681, Pack and Briggs sold this property to William Darvall. The conveyance locates the property as follows: "Whereas there is a certain house and land commonly called by the name of Towne Point, lying and being on the mouth of Jones' Creek to the southwest, and to Delaware Bay to the east, and to the land of John Briggs to the north and northwest, now in possession of Edward Pack, containing one hundred and fifty acres." It is further mentioned that in consideration of one thousand two hundred pounds of tobacco, "all the land, dwelling-house and tobacco-house" were conveyed to William Darvall, also a magistrate, who sold it September 23, 1686, to William Hill, from whom it passed to his son Samuel, and daughter Elizabeth, wife of Robert Jadwin. They remained in possession of the property until November 12, 1724, when it was sold to Charles Thomson, by whom it was conveyed, August 26, 1727, to Benjamin Shurmer, who, on May 5, 1730, sold it to Caleb Hunn as "Towne Point," containing one hundred and forty acres. Later, Nathaniel Hunn came into possession of the property, which he left by will to his daughter Mary, the wife of Waitman Sipple, Jr., who, August 11, 1749, conveyed it to John Hunn. Later still, Samuel Dickinson came into possession of this tract, and it is now owned by his great-grandson, Algernon Sidney Logan. It appears from the following that Wm. Darvall still continued in occupation at the Point in 1688, and kept at the place a tavern and also ran a ferry:

"ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT, Dec. 14, 1688.

"DOVER RIVER, in Prov. of Pa.

"William Darvall and John Barnes:

"John Barnes obliges himself to live, and keepe ordinarye, on the now dwellings plantation, or the Court house where the said William Darvall shall appointe, and also to sell and dispose of all manner of trike whatsoever, and sells all liquors by retails, &c.

"For his care, trouble and service, the sum of forty pounds, in current monney of Pennsylvania.

"The said William Darvall is to have two men or boys servants, and if any men or women's servants shall be wanting, to look after horses and ferry, &c., the said Darvall is to furnish them."

A tract called "Poplar Neck," containing four hundred acres, was granted to Thomas Young, June 16, 1671, by Gov. Francis Lovelace. This was before courts were held at Whorekill (now Lewes), and is the earliest date of warrant in the county. The property is described as being about two miles above St. Jones' Creek, bounded south by a swamp running westerly from the bay side. It passed from Thomas Young to his son Benjamin, and was sold by him to Ralph Hutchinson, of New Castle.

"Mulberry Swamp," containing four hundred acres adjoining the foregoing tract on the north, was granted to Thomas Merritt July 16, 1671, and in 1680

passed to Walter Dickinson. July 5, 1679, this land was granted to Barnard Hodges, who had then occupied it for eighteen months, and it became known as "Hodges' Desert," and "Jones his Valley." Walter Dickinson began suit against Hodges for Mulberry Swamp, formerly surveyed to Thomas Merritt, and the jury found for Dickinson. This tract came into possession of Samuel Dickinson before 1725, who, September 28, 1743, sold it to Griffiths Gordon. Samuel Dickinson also came into possession of sixty acres of Young's land, a part of Poplar Neck, which he sold to John Pleasonton in 1725.

Jehu Curtis, January 5, 1738, took up a small tract of fast land and some marsh containing twenty acres, named "Kitt's Hammock," and which he very soon after assigned to John Pleasonton, who owned part of Poplar Neck adjoining. The survey gives "Kitt's Hammock" as containing thirty-one acres. "Brinkloe Range," a tract of marsh land, lay adjoining Kitt's Hammock to the southwest; one hundred acres of it also passed to John Pleasonton. These Pleasonton lands passed to David Pleasonton, and by a survey in Book B, it is shown that in 1818 Nathaniel Pleasonton's tavern was on the site or near the present Kitt's Hammock Hotel, and the Pleasonton farmhouse was located west of it. The old tavern entirely disappeared long years ago.

After the tavern went down the place was used very much as a tenting-ground and for basket picnics, until about 1846, when William Hutchinson and Henry W. McIlvaine built a hotel at Kitt's Hammock, and about the same time planted oysters in Delaware Bay at an expense of one hundred and five dollars each, thinking that it would be a benefit to the hotel which is located on the beach. McIlvaine failed, the property changed hands, and no further attention was given to the oysters planted by Hutchinson and McIlvaine until about twenty years afterwards, when New York boats began to find an abundance of oysters on this ground. Mr. Hutchinson consulted counsel and found there was no law to protect his oyster-beds. Subsequently a bill was drawn up by Joseph P. Comegys, now chief justice, and a law was enacted protecting Delaware fisheries, which has resulted in great benefit to the State. While McIlvaine and Hutchinson gained nothing for themselves in their oyster-planting, they claim to have first demonstrated the feasibility of that culture in Delaware Bay. Kitt's Hammock is on the bay where it is about thirty miles wide, and consists of one hotel and about twenty summer cottages, principally owned by people in Dover, nine miles distant. The hotel and grocery are now (1887) kept by John G. Melvin.

St. Jones' Landing is at the mouth of St. Jones' Creek, three miles south from Kitt's Hammock. Vessels bound for Cape May occasionally stop here to take on passengers.

John Burton, November 24, 1679, received a warrant for six hundred acres of land, adjoining that of Walter Dickinson, which was known as "Burton's

Margaret and Honey  
Cox, with unusual  
dolls at Kitts, 1920s.



@ 1918  
beside tidal pool.)

Credits: Tintype from Sallie E. Wallace.  
Girls, Carolyn Cox Rose.  
Tidal pool, Alice Short.



# Does a Kidd lurk in Kitt's Hummock?

From the Dover Bureau

M.N. 9-18-74

DOVER — Old records show that Kitt's Hummock is indeed Kitt's Hammock and a governor's widow romanticizes that it may even be Kidd's Hammock.

Mrs. Alice G. Denney wrote to Levy Court President Joshua M. Twilley that Kent County should restore the recorded name of Kitt's Hammock by the nation's 1976 bicentennial.

Mrs. Denney is the widow of the late Gov. William D. Denney, who was in office from 1921 to 1925. She said records in the state archives prove her to be correct.

Twilley said he believes the name was inadvertently changed to Kitt's Hummock quite some time ago by state highway employees, but the commissioners took no action on her request.

Mrs. Denney wrote, "tradition has it that Captain Kidd of pirate fame chose the hammock long years ago as a fine burying place for treasures captured off Delaware's shore."

A hammock — hummock is also correct — is a tract of land rising above the general level of a marshy region. Kitts Hummock is located north of Bowers in Kent County.

Mrs. Denney suggested that some even earlier records may be found that would indicate the original name was Kidd's Hammock.

# Kidds Hammock Correct Name, Research Shows

From the Dover Bureau

late Gov. William D. Denney, who was in office from 1921 to 1925.

DOVER — Kitts Hummock should really be Kitts Hammock and Kent County should correct the name by the 1976 bicentennial, says the widow of a former governor.

Old records show hammock is correct.

Levy Court President Joshua M. Twilley said he believes the name was inadvertently changed some time ago by state highway employees.

But Levy Court commissioners took no action on the request for a correction by Alice G. Denney, widow of the

Mrs. Denney, who said the state archives prove her correct, suggests earlier records may be found that would indicate the original name was Kidds Hammock.

She suggested said tradition has it that the hammock (hummock is also correct) north of Bowers was a burying place for Captain Kidd's private treasures.

A definition of hammock: "In the South, a piece of rich land with hardwood trees growing on it."

# Kitts Hummock a spelling matter

Kitts Hummock was started when Jehu Curtis on January 5, 1738, found 31 acres of high land and took up a title.

He called it "Kitt's Hammock." The spelling is wrong today, but the pronunciation is correct. Some say the name comes from Captain William Kidd, who is supposed to have frequented the place, but there's nothing but legend to back that up.

It was on the outskirts of Kitts Hummock, at Towne Point, that the first courts of Kent County were held after the petition for the creation of a new county in

1679-80 was granted. Before the advent of Dover, this point was the most prominent settlement in the area.

Around 1846 William Hutchinson and Henry McIlvaine planted the first oyster beds in Delaware waters. The venture cost them only \$105. However, the bed was neglected for about 20 years.

Renewed interest was sparked when fleets of New York oystermen found vast quantities of the bivalves offshore. Hutchinson went to law but found there was none to protect him. As a result, the first fisheries law in Delaware was passed.

8161-17-1918  
agent Sept 21-1918  
ply to the undersigned—J. P. Comerys  
railroad or water. For terms, etc., ap  
and is most convenient of access by  
one of the kind on the Delaware shore  
most desirable. It is the best situated  
ing place property, the above would be  
to any one desirous of owning water  
a new ten-pin alley on the premises  
and large and new stabling. There is  
story hotel, new, and in complete order  
and the improvements are a large three  
acres of upland beach and salt marsh.  
This property consists of about 100  
Bay near Dover, is offered for sale.  
Kitts Hammock for Sale—This val  
nable watering place on the Delaware

CHAPTER 14  
KITTS HUMMOCK



or generations, local residents have found "the Hammock", as it is locally called, a place of refreshment in spite of mud, odorous horseshoe crabs and mosquitoes. Its following is loyal, with succeeding generations of the same family inhabiting the same battered and often-patched dwelling. There



*Cox-Rose*

The Cox Cottage  
1920s  
It was originally a  
trapper's cabin.

(Credit: Carolyn Cox Rose)



are those who have built comfortable dwellings and stay the year around.

Storms have lashed cottages from their foundations and floated privies into the marsh behind, but the Hammockers are not abashed, though the Bay waters have made them move many feet inland down through the years.

This hummock of land has always been the abode of free-spirited citizens seeking peace and privacy.

I get a hushed feeling when I mount its narrow shingle of sand and first see the Bay waters, either near or far, depending upon the tide. Perhaps I love it because it is the first strip of seashore I can remember playing upon, skipping flat stones upon the water, or hunting tiny seashells, delicate as a new-born baby's nail. There are no real brats on the beach, only curiosity seekers.

There was always something new or interesting to see or do, such as walk to Sand Ditch to watch the seiners haul in their nets, and seeing the sting rays with lashing tails angrily fighting confinement. To the south were the king crab pens and the lure of the mouth of St. Jones Creek which we never quite reached, because the beach became so narrow and uninteresting.

There were old army hammocks to swing in under the canopy of a cottage while the tide was out or pools to explore offshore. There were evening bonfires to ward off the huge mosquitoes and marshmallows to toast. Bare feet were acceptable in spite of sand burrs and sand fleas.

There was a bathhouse at the back of a cottage where one changed from a "surf" filled bathing suit into comfortable cotton clothing. The cottages contained "old fashioned" furniture, such as wrought iron beds and outmoded washstands and chamber pots which would bring a small fortune at an antique auction today.

One could eat continuously, it seemed. The best applesauce in the whole world was made by Dora Cox, which she obtained from apples grown in the Neck.

To the uninitiated, Kitts Hummock may seem the ideal hangout of pirates of former days. That "gentleman" pirate, Captain Kidd, saw it from a ship, at least, whether he actually buried treasure there or not.

Former historians have taken it for granted that the name Kitts is a corruption of "Kidd" -- there is evidence to the contrary. As early as 1660, it was noted that the native Indian name of the Delaware River was *Kit-hanne*, meaning "great river". The Mohawks of New York State even's edited history.

called the Delaware River the *Maquas-Kittan*. Whatever the origin of its name, all the old records before 1933 spelled the name *Kitts Hammock*, with an *a*.

A. Sydney Logan, in his book *Amy Warren*, capitalized on the buried treasure legend. He did write a remarkably factual story about the area. Also, reports of "found" treasure are on record, and no less a personage than the Reverend Thomas Smith, a Methodist minister, related in his diary that, "I was called upon to preach the funeral of Mr. William Bell, whose residence was on the seaboard, and where, it is said, he had found a vast amount of money in a hogshead, which had rolled ashore from some ship wrecked on the coast." This was in 1802, over 100 years after the death of Captain William Kidd. The thought of treasure still holds romance.

Kitts Hammock, Pickerings Beach and even Sand Ditch among them, were food baskets and playgrounds of the tenants of St. Jones Neck. Pleasanton's tavern occupied the place in the early 1800's. It was the scene of a great deal of political action of a radical nature, if past historians reported truthfully.

A. Sydney Logan mentions a round dome-shaped building at Kitts in *Amy Warren*, but if one existed, it was before the memory of any of the present generation. Many remember a hotel with silver maples in front.

It is true that about 1846 Henry W. McIlvaine and William Hutchison built a hotel at Kitts Hammock, and about the same time planted oysters in the Delaware Bay at the expense of \$105.00 each, thinking it would supply a delicacy for the hotel table. McIlvaine failed, the property changed hands, and no further attention was paid to the seeded oysters until twenty years later when New York boats began to dredge oysters from the spot. Mr. Hutchison consulted a lawyer and found there was no law on the books to protect his interest. Joseph P. Comegys is credited with drawing up a bill which became law, and so watermen in the whole state benefitted as a result of one McIlvaine's financial failure.

\*\*In a newspaper article, Mr. Ned Heite gave a brief history of Kitts Hummock, which adds to that already related:

It all started when Jehu Curtis\*, on January 5, 1738, found some thirty-one acres of high land here (?) and took up a title. He called it "Kitt's Hammock."

\*Grandson of John Curtis. See Priscilla Kitchen section  
\*\* DELAWARE STATE NEWS

A tavern was kept there by Nathaniel Pleasanton in 1818 but it failed and disappeared. After that the white, sandy beach was a favorite tenting ground for the area.--

On May 18, 1881, the hotel (built by Hutchinson around 1846) reopened (was) remodeled under the management of J. Jeanes and E. J. Hiss, who called the place "Bay View." The proprietors offered to meet guests at the train in Dover. Board was \$8 per week (Children half-price). Bathing and fishing were prime offerings.

Still are.

Later that decade, John G. Melvin took over the operation of the hotel, conceding to the name, "Kitts Hummock".

About twenty cottages were built there during that same period, the first to rise in what has been a steadily-expanding community of sweltering Doverites.

Most of the land on the beach is rented to the cottage owners--.

Florence Kenton ran the hotel in the 1920's.



The illustrious Annie Jump Cannon, noted astronomer, relaxed with childhood friends at Kitts Hammock in her youth -- in spite of mosquitoes. Dressed in weighty blue serge swim suits and black stockings, she and her friends were reprimanded by a straight-laced old lady for lounging on the beach in such revealing costumes.

Annie called her cottage a "cabin". On the first floor, it had long bunks along one wall for the boys to sleep. Upstairs the girls slept on feather beds.

Rachel, the cook, started them singing spirituals around a bonfire at night.

No doubt Dr. Cannon got some "bright" ideas on the beach at Kitts, because she was mindful of the "myriads of stars above us" and went on to Harvard where she cataloged her "scientific castle" including over 400,000 stars -- "a structure that probably will never be

duplicated in kind or extent by a single individual" ever. She found five new stars and several hundred variable ones. If Captain Kidd was the most notorious personage to set foot at the spot, Annie Jump Cannon was certainly the most famous.



The first road parallel to the Bay stopped at Keith's cottage on the south end. Some early owners there were Tom Keith, Andrew Cox, the Goodens, Collisons and Tousers, Oggletrees, Hopes, Chadwicks, Boyers, Godwins and Judge Willey.

On the north end were Enterlines, Ennises, Heites, Clements, and Maloneys, among others. The children of Bob Mitchum, the movie star, spent summers there, later.

Captain Muncey was a long-time resident of Kitts. Once, when the weather got exceedingly rough and his boat did not come in, others "risked their lives" to go out for him and found him so unperturbed that he refused to leave his good fishing spot. The weather was rougher on shore than in the Bay.

The Hopes flew their own plane from Baltimore and landed it on the beach, a real eye-popping event for the small fry.

The last time the cottages were moved back was 1933.

There was a communal pump until several families tapped an underground river 250 feet below the surface and installed an electric pump. Ned Heite recorded his own memories of the pump and hours spent on the beach:

Used to be that one of the chores of the kids at Kitts first thing in the morning was to take the jugs down to the pumphouse at the crossroads and fill up with drinking water for the day.

Washwater came from the rain barrel.

If it didn't rain, you didn't wash.

The day of the "peek-in" shower and the WPA John (which washed back on the marsh every high tide) is fading fast.

If you wanted a drink of water, you just went to the trough-type pump spout and held your hand over the mouth until there was a good flow.

(Now) all the splash is (taken) out of getting water.

The horse trough's still there, but you couldn't get a horse up to it for love nor money.

One of the greatest pleasures of Kitts Hummock for the kids was going out in the mud (waist deep for a five-year-old) and catching crabs with a hand net.

Sometimes the crabs caught them.

Invariably, though, somebody'd get clumsy with a net handle about a hundred yards offshore in the mudflat.

There would be a mud fight.

Now they're doing their best to get rid of the great settler of arguments, the muddy beach.

State's covering it with sand.

That's progress?

Personal note from me to Ned: "Want to bet that the mud's still there when this gets published?"



And now they are talking about oil rigs in the Delaware Bay. I remember the scepticism that prevailed when drilling for oil took place in Delaware in the 1930's. So convinced were the oldtimers that it was all a hoax, that I am certain they would have refused to buy any oil stock on principle alone. At least, that's the impression I got from my father at the time. He was a farmer and not a waterman, and like oil and water, the two did not really mix.

As long as the oil didn't start rolling up the Bay Road, I don't believe he would have cared two pins about the ecology angle. He enjoyed going to the beach on Sunday afternoons to see how many fish the blistered city slickers brought in, or he would go down on a full moon to scoop up a truckload of "king" crabs for his chickens. He ate with relish fresh fish mother bought from the peddlers and requested an oyster pie now and then, but he would not eat crabs. (That was about it.)



Scenes from Kitts Hummock

His dislike of the water almost approached a phobia. I loved it; however, I didn't almost sink in the middle of the Bay on a steamboat bound for Philadelphia in a storm, so I am in no position to condemn his attitude.

Anyway, he left the waterman's part entirely to his brother, Irving, who piloted a fishing party boat out of Bowers Beach for more than twenty years and also an oyster dredge out of Mahan's for a while. The interesting part is that my father could swim and many of the watermen could not.

#### TRAPPING AND HUNTING

It seemed to me that my father risked his life much more on the marsh than he would have in the water. He loved to trap and hunt. On winter mornings, he could hardly wait to get the milking done so he could take off for the marsh to check his snooges and traps for muskrats.

Knowing how to step from tussock to tussock and when not to traverse a certain portion of marsh took acumen and long experience.

Once, Harry Steenberg, from Pennsylvania Dutch country, decided to follow my father and Sonny (Dawson) Minner as they checked their traps. He learned the hard way that one does not step in the tracks of another, but must make his own path. The one part of *Amy Warren* hard to believe is that she walked the marsh alone. No woman that I know of ever set foot on the marsh during my childhood.

It was no picnic, either, to bare an arm to the shoulder in sub-freezing temperatures and plunge it down to retrieve a water-soaked "rat" from a trap. Perhaps that is why snooges were more popular. They were cheap to make and sprung the animal into the air where it was easily reached.

The job was not over, however, until the animal was skinned and stretched on a board. I never saw my father more cheerful than when he came home with a black muskrat, which brought more money as Hudson Seal on the fur market. Beaver were long gone, but once he caught an otter which he considered the biggest prize of all.

Very little of the muskrat went to waste, however. The dark, red meat was an excellent substitute for beef, and often my father and Sonny carried quarters given them by the best citizens of Magnolia society for a pair of "rats" they hadn't even caught yet. Bones were fed to the dogs. "Marsh Rabbit" is a tasty dish, properly

prepared; so is Snipe and other marsh birds which were usually prepared for me.

Almost every farmer had a rabbit beagle. Ours was named "Sport". Just seeing a gun would make him turn a most inside out. There was no subsistence diet on the farms during the Depression if the man of the family was energetic. We had almost no money, but what with wild game in abundance and chicken, duck and guinea running loose on the farmland, we had provender fit for a king. We did not eat raccoon and opossum because we did not have to.

My father and his brother Irving teamed up on "coon hunting". One night a raccoon in Jones Neck would not turn and kept the dogs running around and around in a "cripple". It was two o'clock in the morning when they got home, coon-less. The worst times, though, were when the dogs met up with a skunk and didn't back off fast enough. They had to load the sick, smelly dogs into the truck and live with the odor a couple of weeks.\*

#### THAD WINDSOR

My Uncle Irving used to go north with Thad Windsor of Milford, the hotel owner, for exotic game which was served in the hotel dining room. Once they returned with a bear.

Mr. Windsor was a florid and heavy-set man, but I remember best the monkey which he brought with him to the Collins farm. Once it got loose and it led a merry chase up and down the rainspouts and lightning rods, keeping out of reach of the dogs.

Mr. Windsor gave the family a Mexican Chihuahua named "Peggy". She was my grandmother's constant companion for many years.

The Wright family also obtained one of the first purebred German Shepherds in the area, named "Donna". They trained her to round up the cows and bring them to the barn alone.

My father loved hunting dogs for their usefulness. He enjoyed hearing the tongueing of the chase, but fox hunting was not one of his vanities. He was rather intolerant of those who allowed dogs to run pell mell after a fox across a well-groomed field when he figured they should have been toiling at "honest" labor. Besides, the foxes ate his poultry and they were not edible themselves.

\*Doris Frazier suggested tomatoe juice as an antidote(?)

**humic** (hyōō'mik) *adj.* of or derived from humus  
**humic acid** a brown powder consisting of organic acids, derived from humus

**hu-mid** (hyōō'mid, yōō'-) *adj.* [Fr. *humide* < L. *humidus* < *humere*, altered (after *humus*) < *umere*, to be moist: see HUMOR] full of water vapor; damp; moist —*SYN.* see WET  
**hu-mid-i-fy** (hyōō mid'ə fi', yōō-) *vt.* -fied', -fy'ing to make humid; moisten; dampen —*hu-mid'i-fi-ca'tion* *n.* —*hu-mid'i-fi'er* *n.*

✱**hu-mid-i-stat** (-stat') *n.* [HUMIDI(TY) + -STAT] an automatic device for controlling the extent to which a humidifier or dehumidifier modifies the relative humidity

**hu-mid-i-ty** (-tē) *n.*, *pl.* -ties [ME. *humydite* < OFr. *humidite* < LL. *humiditas* < L. *humidus*: see HUMID] 1. moistness; dampness 2. the amount or degree of moisture in the air —*relative humidity* the amount of moisture in the air as compared with the maximum amount that the air could contain at the same temperature, expressed as a percentage

✱**hu-mi-dor** (hyōō'mə dōr', yōō'-) *n.* [HUMID + -OR] 1. a device, as a tube containing a moistened sponge, for keeping the air moist in a tobacco jar, cigar case, etc. 2. a case, jar, etc. equipped with such a device

**hu-mil-i-ate** (hyōō mil'ē āt', hyoo-, yōō-) *vt.* -at'ed, -at'ing [*<* LL. *humiliatus*, pp. of *humiliare*, to humiliate < L. *humilis*, HUMBLE] to hurt the pride or dignity of by causing to be or seem foolish or contemptible; mortify —*SYN.* see DEGRADE —*hu-mil'i-a'tion* *n.*

**hu-mil-i-ty** (hyōō mil'ē tē) *n.* [ME. *humilite* < OFr. < L. *humilitas*] the state or quality of being humble; absence of pride or self-assertion

**hum-mer** (hum'ər) *n.* 1. a person or thing that hums ✱2. same as HUMMINGBIRD

**hum-ming** (-in) *adj.* 1. that buzzes, drones, or hums 2. [Colloq.] full of activity; lively; brisk

✱**hum-ming-bird** (-bārd') *n.* any of a large family (Trochilidae) of very small, brightly colored, New World birds with a long, slender bill for feeding on nectar, and narrow wings that vibrate rapidly, often with a humming sound

✱**hum-mock** (hum'ək) *n.* [orig. naut. < ?] 1. a low, rounded hill; knoll; hill-ock 2. a ridge or rise in an ice field ✱3. a tract of fertile, heavily wooded land, higher than a surrounding marshy area —*hum-mock-y* *adj.*

✱**hu-mon-gous** (hyōō mān'gəs, -mun'-) *adj.* [prob. a blend of HUGE, MONSTROUS, & TREMENDOUS] [Slang] of enormous size or extent; very large or great

**hu-mor** (hyōō'mər, yōō'-) *n.* [ME. < OFr. < L. *humor*, *umor*, moisture, fluid, akin to *umere*, to be moist < IE. base \**uegw-*, \**ugw-*, moist, moisten, whence Gr. *hygros*, moist, fluid, Du. *wak*, wet, WAKE<sup>2</sup>] 1. orig., any fluid or juice of an animal or plant; esp., any of the four fluids (cardinal humors) formerly considered responsible for one's health and disposition; blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile), or melancholy (black bile) 2. a) a person's disposition or temperament b) a mood; state of mind 3. whim; fancy; caprice 4. the quality that makes something seem funny, amusing, or ludicrous; comicality 5. a) the ability to perceive, appreciate, or express what is funny, amusing, or ludicrous b) the expression of this in speech, writing, or action 6. any fluid or fluidlike substance of the body; blood, lymph, bile, etc. [the aqueous humor] —*ut.* 1. to comply with the mood or whim of (another); indulge 2. to act in agreement with the nature of; adapt oneself to —*SYN.* see INDULGE, MOOD<sup>1</sup>, WIT<sup>1</sup> —*out of humor* not in a good mood; cross; disagreeable —*hu-mor-less* *adj.*

**hu-mor-al** (-əl) *adj.* [ModL. (Paracelsus) *humoralis* < L. *humor*] of or relating to the humors of the body

**hu-mor-esque** (hyōō'mə resk') *n.* [G. *humoreske* < *humor* (see HUMOR, *n.* 3) + -eske, -ESQUE] a light, fanciful or playful musical composition; capriccio

**hu-mor-ist** (hyōō'mər ist, yōō'-) *n.* [HUMOR + -IST] 1. a person with a good sense of humor 2. a person skilled in the expression of humor; esp., a professional writer or teller of amusing stories, jokes, etc. —*hu-mor-ist'ic* *adj.*

**hu-mor-ous** (-əs) *adj.* [HUMOR + -OUS; sense 2 < Fr. *humoreux* (< L.), sense 3 < L. *humorosus*] 1. having or expressing humor; funny; amusing; comical 2. [Archaic] whimsical; capricious 3. [Obs.] a) moist b) humoral —*SYN.* see WITTY —*hu-mor-ous-ly* *adv.*

**hu-mour** (hyōō'mər, yōō'-) *n.*, *vt.* *Bril. sp.* of HUMOR



HUMMINGBIRD  
(4 1/4–4 3/4 in. long)

—*over the hump* [Colloq.] over the wo difficult part

**hump-back** (-bak') *n.* 1. a humped, deformed person having a humped back; hunchback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) with long fl dorsal fin resembling a humpback ✱4. a male (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) at the time it trav to spawn —*hump'backed* *adj.*

**humped** (hunpt) *adj.* having a hump; hum

**Hum-per-dinck** (hoom'pər dɪŋk'; E. hu Eng-el-berht (en'gəl bert') 1854–1921; Ger. **humph** (humf: conventionalized pronoun: us as a voiced snort with the mouth closed) *interj.*, or grunting sound expressing doubt, surpri disgust, etc.

**Hum-phrey** (hum'frē) [OE. *Hunfrith* < strength + OE. *frith*, peace] 1. a masculine Ger. *Hunfried*, It. *Onfredo*: also sp. *Hum'ph* H(oratio), (Jr.), 1911–78; vice president (1965–69)

**Hump-ty Dump-ty** (hump'tē dump'tē) a character in an old nursery rhyme, a personi egg, who fell from a wall and broke into piec

**hump-y** (hum'pē) *adj.* hump'l-er, hump'l-er humps 2. like a hump

**hu-mus** (hyōō'məs, yōō'-) *n.* [L., earth, gr IE. \**ǵhom-*: see HOMAGE] a brown or bla resulting from the partial decay of plant matter; organic part of the soil

**Hun** (hun) *n.* [OE. *Hune* < LL. *Hunni* (pl.) < whence Chin. *Hiong-nu*, *Han*] 1. a member Asiatic people who, led by Attila, invaded central Europe in the 4th and 5th centur [often h-] any savage or destructive person; of contempt applied to German soldiers esp. in Hu-nan (hōō'nān') province of SE China: 81 pop. 36,220,000; cap. Changsha

**hunch** (hunch) *vt.* [*<* ?] to draw (one's body as to form a hump; arch into a hump —*vi.* forward jerkily; push; shove 2. to sit or st back arched —*n.* 1. a hump 2. a chunk; ✱3. [Colloq.] a feeling about something not bas facts; premonition or suspicion: from the that it brings good luck to touch a hunchbac

**hunch-back** (-bak') *n.* same as HUMPBACK (s —*hunch'backed* *adj.*

**hun-dred** (hun'drid, -dard) *n.* [ME. < OE., *hunderod*, ON. *hundrath* < PGmc. base \**h* IE. base \**kmto-*, whence L. *centum*: see CENT] count (whence Goth. -*rathjan*) < IE. base \**re-* 1. the cardinal number next above ninety-ni ten; 100; C 2. a division of an English c probably, 100 hides of land 3. a similar divisio U.S., now only in Delaware —*adj.* ten times t

**Hundred Days** the days from March 20 to Ju the period from Napoleon's recapture of pov escape from Elba, to his final defeat

**hun-dred-fold** (-fōld') *adj.* having a hund much or as many —*adv.* a hundred times as many; with a (or, British, *an*) —*n.* a number t a hundred times as great

**hun-dredth** (hun'driθ) *adj.* [HUNDRED + -ceded by ninety-nine others in a series; 100th ing any of the hundred equal parts of somet the one following the ninety-ninth 2. any of equal parts of something; 1/100

**hun-dred-weight** (hun'drid wāt', -dard-) weight equal to 100 pounds in the U.S. and in England; abbrev. cwt.

**Hundred Years' War** a series of English- (1337 to 1453), in which England lost all he in France except Calais (lost to France in 15. **hung** (hun) *pl.* & *pp.* of HANG —*hung* suffering from a hangover —*hung up* (on emotionally disturbed (by); neurotic, repres baffled, frustrated, stymied, etc. (by) 3. committed (to), or obsessed (by)

**Hung.** 1. Hungarian 2. Hungary  
**Hun-gar-i-an** (hun ger'ē ən) *adj.* of Hungar their language, or culture —*n.* 1. a native of Hungary 2. the Finno-Ugric language of ians; Magyar

**Hun-gar-y** (hun'gar ē) country in SC Europ mi.; pop. 10,198,000; cap. Budapest: H MAGYARORSZÁG

**hun-ger** (hun'gar) *n.* [ME. < OE. *hungor*, *hunger* < IE. base \**kenk-*, to burn, dry up, *kankā*, pain] 1. a) the discomfort, pain, caused by a need for food b) famine; star



# Colorful history of Kitts Hummock spans three centuries

By Joanna Wilson  
Assistant editor

At Kitts Hummock, a dozen miles and a world away from Delaware's bustling capital, a row of weathered beach cottages nestle into a narrow rise of shoreline, overlooking the Delaware Bay's muddy waves.

It's a scene that has changed little over the last century or so. Summer life hasn't changed much at Kitts either: fishing, boating, sunbathing...and more fishing. Sure, some of the cottages have new roofs, fresh paint or modern siding, but an air of rustic charm still prevails.

Anyone stumbling upon the quiet community today — a place where dogs bark at unfamiliar cars and no trespassing signs are common — would hardly guess at its long and colorful his-

tory, now told by a new state historic marker.

An early version of the name "Kitt's Hammock" first appeared in 1738, when Jehu Curtis took up a small tract of 31 acres of "fast land" and marsh. Some sources say the name was originally "Kidd's Hammock" for Capt. William Kidd, the 17th century pirate.

Ned Heite of Camden, who spent many summers at his parents' Kitts cottage, has one word for the Kidd theory: "Nonsense!"

Heite believes the name is a corruption of Christopher. Another theory: local Native Americans called the Delaware River *Kit-hanne*, meaning "great river."

As for hummock, however, Heite is quick to correct any who would call it such.

"It's spelled 'hummock' but it's pronounced 'hammock,'" Heite stressed.



A ROW OF COTTAGES nestle into the narrow shoreline at Kitts Hummock, a scene that has changed little in the last century. Photo by Joanna Wilson.

## 20th century summer place

Pirates or not, Kitts had plenty of 20th century characters.

Margaret Paul's family kept a cottage at Kitts from

1957 to 1978. She remembers the Smith family — Peggy, who ran the hotel restaurant and brothers Harvey and Reese, who was known as "the mayor of Kitts Hummock."

Margaret Collison of Smyrna, whose grandfather James Behen Sr. is said to have floated his cottage down from neighboring Pickering Beach, recalls the warmth of neighbors like contractor Ward Hurley, who took in boaters stranded by the weather.

"It was when people took care of people," said Collison.

The Heite cottage was "basically one room with a room up and a wrap-around screen porch" — typical of Kitts cottages at that time.

"Most everybody had a

behind the cottages, so we carried everything down there — water, food, ice. There was no electricity. We used oil lamps. It was like the 17th century," he continued.

Thomas remembers a 1933 hurricane.

"Every cottage on one end of the beach lost its front porch but one," he said, noting everyone had to move their cottages back to where the horse barns had been.

For many years, the only fresh water source was a central community pump. Doris Jackson of Dover said the morning trip to the pump for drinking water in buckets "wasn't any big deal."

The "odorless" Works Progress Administration toilet was a "great advance," Heite said, over

However, rainwater had its advantages. "Rain, what it does to your hair is unbelievable. It makes your hair lovely," said Mrs. Jackson.

Summer garb was simple, especially for the children of Kitts.

"You had two bathing suits and you changed from one to the other," said Thomas.

For boaters, Thomas said, the bay's tides, wind and weather had to be watched closely.

"You always had a plan. That was the golden rule. You didn't go in the water without everything you needed...oars, life jackets, compass, an extra can of gas," said Thomas, who also collected clams by the gunny-sack-full and scooped up blue crabs with dip nets at low tide.





# Kitts: a quiet summer place

Continued from page 12

but plenty of other Dover families still summered at Kitts.

"It's hard to realize how much a part of Dover Kitts Hammock was," said Dover historian James Jackson, whose parents had a place four cottages from that of his future wife, Doris.

"It was a very notable place because that's where you taught me how to dance," Jackson said,

recalling the little dance floor at the old hotel.

"We taught all the boys down there to dance," Mrs. Jackson replied, laughing.

"How simple life was down at Kitts Hammock," he said with a sigh.

One simple pleasure to the children of Kitts was the thick brown mud, ankle to hip deep at low tide.

"Now, people talk about the mud at Kitts like it

was poison," said Jackson, shaking his head.

"And we used to paint ourselves with it!" said Mrs. Jackson.

With the marsh so close by, another challenge was the mosquitoes.

"If you were blessed with a nice east wind, you were all right," said Thomas. "Those mosquitoes could eat you alive, literally. It was a battle to keep the screens in good repair."

"I don't think anybody had a neutral feeling about Kitts Hammock. You either loved it or you didn't," Jackson said, noting a fashionable new ocean resort beckoned: Rehoboth Beach, with its dance bands and faster pace of life.

"As we got older we couldn't wait to go to Rehoboth," said Mrs. Jackson.

## 21st century Kitts Hammock

Andy Mariani was part of a younger generation of Kitts kids. He remembers the beach when the oyster catch was still pretty good, when crabbing brought in bushels and when the old baseball field was still just off the main road.

"It used to be a paradise. Now it's a half paradise," Mariani said with a laugh, sitting in year-

round resident Tom Robinson's living room as wind, rain and ocean-like surf pounded outside in a late spring storm.

Robinson, who laughingly describes his high-on-pilings home as "a \$50 trailer with a \$50 million view," is a Pennsylvanian who settled in Kitts about 15 years ago.

The "peaceful and quiet" character of Kitts also is what drew Mariani to buy his own year-round home there in 1976.

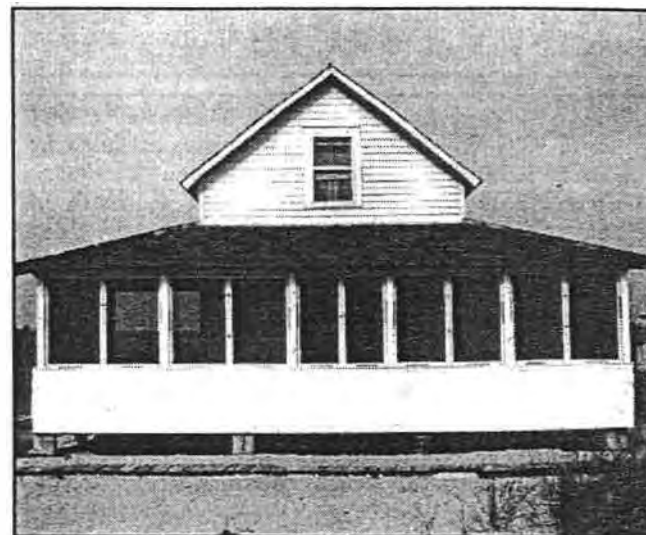
And the quiet is what draws former Dover mayor Joe McDonough, too.

"I do all my reading down here," said McDonough, who bought his summer cottage at Kitts in 1991 and has since been involved in its first civic association, which deals with such concerns as beach replenishment and mosquito control.

None of the three expects change to come quickly to quiet Kitts.

"Because of the wetlands and the bay, that's the way it's going to stay," said McDonough. "I don't see us changing much."

*For more photos of Kitts Hammock, including some 19th century view, visit the Dover Post online at [www.doverpost.com](http://www.doverpost.com).*



THE HEITE FAMILY COTTAGE at Kitts Hummock, just after World War II. Photo courtesy of Ned Heite.



A STRIKINGLY SIMILAR COTTAGE some 50 years later. Photo by Joanna Wilson.



AT THE BEACH: Baby Ned Heite sits on the lap of Kitts Hummock neighbor Audrey Clark Jackson. Photo courtesy of Ned Heite.

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