New Castle Tercentenary of Dutch Settlement, 1651 - 1951

For Commemorating New Castle's Heritage from the Dutch Founders

Next summer, on Saturday, June 16, New Castle will celebrate the 300th Anniversary of its founding. The founders were Dutch citizens, led by their director-general in America, Peter Stuyvesant.

The Dutch nation claimed all the territory of the Delaware and the Hudson River valleys by right of discovery in 1609. They named this whole region New Netherland in honor of their homeland—the United Netherlands (Holland). In 1626 they founded as their capital, New Amsterdam (New York) on their North River (the Hudson).

The Delaware was their South River. They had a fort on it opposite the site of Philadelphia in 1624 and enjoyed a fine trade with the Indians, in beaver and other skins, and in tobacco—until the Swedes came in 1638. During the next ten years the Swedes captured the best of the trade on the Delaware.

This was too much for the vigorous Peter Stuyvesant (appointed governor, 1647). In the summer of 1651, he came down from New Amsterdam with ships, men and supplies, secured from the Indians the land from Christina Creek to Bombay Hook, and built Fort Casimir on a then high point at the end of New Castle's present Chestnut Street.

With "Old Fort Casimir," the Dutch controlled the river trade. Close by it they began to build the town, and four years later Peter Stuyvesant took the whole river from the Swedes.

Up to the coming of the Dutch, 300 years ago, the land now occupied by New Castle's streets, Green, gardens, houses and buildings was a forest of great trees extending back from the sandy shore. Grassy meadows and large marshes bordered it north and south.

Here the Dutch felt at home. They knew how to build dykes and make sluices for draining the marshes; how to make brick and to build windmills. Within a few years—in spite of serious misfortunes—the local Dutch director, Jacob Arlichs, could write: "This settlement is now pretty well looking and convenient, with 110 houses built."

The New Castle Tercentenary Commission was created by the 1949 General Assembly to help the people of New Castle and the state pay fitting tribute to the Dutch founders.

To these founders New Castle owes its existence, its beautiful location on the river, its first church, first school, and first court of justice.

To these founders the people of the whole state owe the beginnings of self-government on our soil, and the first examples of that independent spirit among Delaware's people that finally led to our becoming **The First State.**

To Welcome the distinguished invited guests and the thousands of Americans who will come to New Castle for the celebration next June, the commission hopes that this town can be made so clean, fresh, and in such perfect repair that even a Dutch housewife and a Dutch city father would find no fault;

And that all agencies and groups, official and unofficial, and every individual citizen will share in the work—beginning now to plan and to do—toward making the whole Tercentenary program a success.

Tercentenary Commission

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