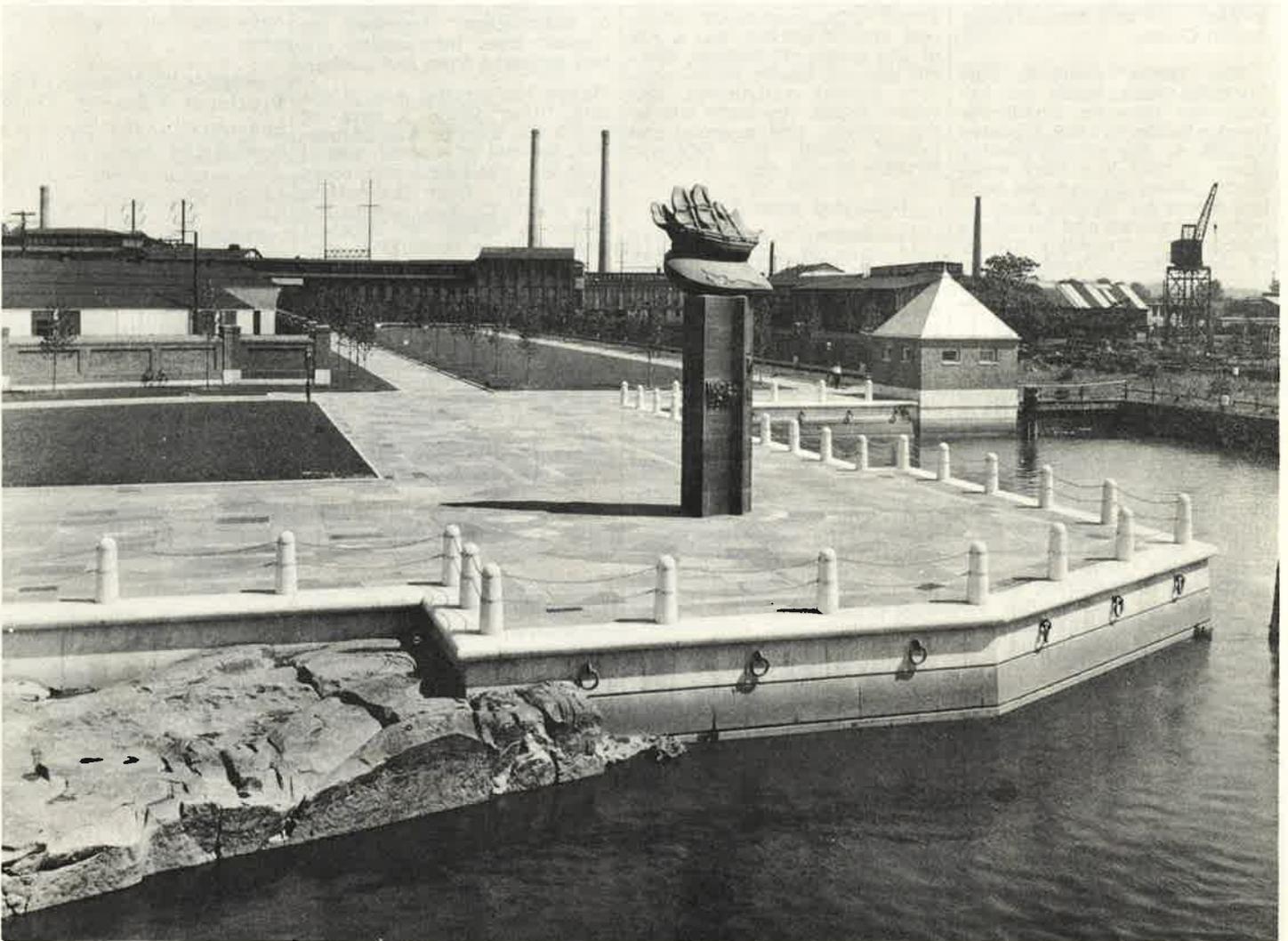


# DELAWARE PORCUPINE

AUGUST, 1961

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HAVE YOU VISITED THIS HISTORIC PARK LATELY?



**FORT CHRISTINA PARK**

*"Landing Place of the Swedes"*

Horner Printing Co.  
Publishers  
Elsmere, Delaware

## Fort Christina Park Is Rich in Historic Lore — Swedes Landed Here

Is the park located in Wilmington? asked the young librarian a few weeks ago when we asked him for the files on Fort Christina Park. "Yes," we replied, "it's quite a park, rich in historic lore." "Sorry," he said, but I never heard of it."

He's not the only one, we suppose. Thousands of people now living in Wilmington and the suburbs are unaware that at East Seventh Street, on the Christina Creek, is a state park constructed at a cost of some \$450,000, and ranking second, historically, one might say, to the spot where the Puritans landed from the "Mayflower" in May 1620 and founded Plymouth Colony.

The "Rocks" alongside Fort Christina Park, while not exactly the ones on which the Swedes landed in 1638, are close enough to the actual landing place, so that it doesn't make much difference, and the park is a mecca for Swedes from all parts of America and for others interested in the early history of the country. Possibly more people from outside the state visit the park than do Wilmington residents.

We were motivated to run a photograph of the Monument in this issue of the Porcupine and describe the events that led to the construction of the Park, when on the Fourth of July, we took the family to visit the destroyers at the Marine Terminal, and afterwards decided to drive down East Seventh Street to see the old Seventh Street Bridge and the north side of the creek where, as a lad we used to fish for crabs on a jetty that at that time extended out into the Delaware.

Returning, we visited the Park, and was surprised to learn that neither our wife, our son, or our grandson had ever been to it. A week or so later, Mrs. John Flannigan of Elsmere called to say that she and her family had visited the park and suggested that we write something about it. It was her first visit also.

### "Landing Place of the Swedes"

It marks the spot known as "The Landing Place of the Swedes" and was constructed to commemorate the three-hundredth anniversary of the event. No park in the United States had ever been dedicated more auspiciously. The Crown Prince of Sweden, who arrived on the S.S. Kungsholm with a retinue of Swedish dignitaries, presented the forty-ton black

marble monument, the work of the Swedish sculptor Carl Milles, to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, who accepted and in turn presented it to the people of Delaware. Present also were the foreign minister of Finland, Rudolph Holsti, with seven Finnish leaders, and of course, the Governor of Delaware, Richard McMullen, and the Mayor of Wilmington, Walter Bacon, with many city and state officials, were on hand.

Most of the early settlers who came to the Delaware during the Swedish regime which lasted from 1638 to 1654, were Finns. The monument which cost around \$60,000, was a gift of the people of Sweden, 200,000 persons, mostly school children, having contributed. Bas reliefs depict the early life of the settlers, and a sculptured sailing vessel, the "Kalmar Nyckel" tops it off.

### Dedicated June 27, 1938

The dedication exercises were held June 27, 1938. To pay for them and the construction of the park, the state appropriated \$60,000; the United States mint struck off 25,000 half dollars which sold at \$1.75. The post office issued a special commemorative postage stamp, one million being sent to Wilmington, and, possibly 50,000,000 being sold elsewhere. Sweden issued a commemorative postal reply card, and a Swedish medal was struck off by Maxfield H. Kirk, one side showing the Nyckel, the other the Delaware State seal. These were sold at \$7.50 each in silver, in bronze and small replicas went for 50 cents.

### Park is Attractive

The park itself is very attractive. The monument is located near the creek and surrounding it and running back about a city block to Seventh Street, are walking paths, with grass plots and lines of trees. On the west side are "The Rocks." It may be reached by driving down East Seventh Street past Old Swedes Church, another historic landmark, probably the oldest church in America still used as a place of worship. One drives under the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks and a few hundred yards farther, opposite the former car-building plant of the American Car and Foundry Company on the south side of the road, lies the city's famous landmark, which marks the place where the Swedes began the "first permanent settlement on the Delaware."

It was interesting to learn

that a duplicate of the monument was erected only last summer at a stone pier in Gothenburg, Sweden, where the "Kalmar Nyckel" left on its first journey to America in December 1637. Old Swedes Church sent a 50-star American flag to be flown at the ceremonies.

### History

The spot on which the Swedes landed in 1638 was nothing like the Park as it appears today. Time and progress have taken their toll. The historian Ferris says it was one on the "Capes of the Christina," a high reef of rocks that jutted out into the river a distance of perhaps a hundred feet and possibly three hundred feet in width. Elizabeth Montgomery, author of "Reminiscences of Wilmington," described the "rocks" from information she had gathered from her mother.

"When the Swedes came," she said, "they found a cave, of which the interior was impressive, the size of a room, and so high that the tallest man could stand erect. Over the bottom was a smooth rock, and in the corner a spring of delicious water with an opening to con-

Continued on Page 7



August 6, 1930—New York State Supreme Court Justice Joseph F. Crater stepped into a taxicab in Manhattan and disappeared into complete oblivion.

August 7, 1928—The American dollar bill began to shrink—appearing in a size one-third smaller than bills issued previously by the Treasury.

August 14, 1945—At 7 p.m., President Harry S. Truman announced that Japan had accepted the terms of unconditional surrender—and that World War II was over.

August 26, 1920—Sex reared its head constitutionally as the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, providing for suffrage for woman, was declared operative by the Secretary of State.

August 28, 1922—The first "commercial" in radio broadcasting was heard over station WEAJ in New York. The sponsor: Queensboro Realty Co. of Jackson Heights, N. Y. Cost: \$100 for 10 minutes of air time.

August 30, B.C.—Cleopatra committed suicide by permitting an asp to bite her.

Success is relative—the more success the more relatives.



Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel.—(Exod. 18:19)

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**FT. CHRISTINA PARK**

(Continued from Page One)

vey it off. . . nearby was an Indian burial place.

Within a few hundred feet of the rocks the waters of the Brandywine, so filled with fish the Swedes called it Fish Kill, provided both food and a means of escape should an enemy succeed in eluding the guns of the fortress. Almost surrounding the precipice were morasses of swamps, over which an army would be unable to advance; only at one point, to the northwest, was a strip of solid land.

"The rocks presented a 'natural wharf,' so steep that it formed a quay where the vessels could lie securely, with the channel of the stream so near that from the shore it was almost possible to touch passing boats that sailed by."

It was to this point that Peter Minuet, erstwhile governor of New Amsterdam, the Dutch possession on the Hudson, the man who purchased Manhattan Island from the Indians for \$24 in trinkets, brought the Swedes, and here again he purchased the land from the Indians, giving similar trinkets, knives, rings, and ornaments.

The ships carried several thousand yards of duffels and other cloths, several hundred axes, hatchets, and adzes, and hundreds of knives, dozens of tobacco pipes, mirrors and looking glasses, gilded chains and finger rings, combs, earrings, and ornaments. Spades, hoes, and other farming implements were also loaded on the ships for use in the country.

Aboard the ships also were heavy cannon, arms, and ammunition, and having purchased the land, Minuit erected the fort. Not a small one by any means, but 100 yards square — the size of a city block, and within the walls a

storehouse and dwelling place were built.

The first expedition brought no settlers. They were not to arrive until April 17, 1640.

Readers desiring to learn more about the Swedes and the Wilmington settlement are advised to consult the books written by Dr. Amandus Johnson, available in most libraries.

**Dear Porcupine**

Dear Porcupine, how nice you are!

You fill my heart with glee!  
If I ever get too complacent  
Stick one of your quills in me.

Evelyn Behney

18 Beech Ave., Oak Grove  
Wilmington 5, Delaware

**Letter to Editor**

Dear Kenneth:

Congratulations on the copy of "Delaware Porcupine" received yesterday, and I am glad to send you a dollar for a year's subscription.

More power to you on your efforts to preserve the Elsmere wooded area. In my young days it was a favorite hiking objective, and I recall many hours of fun my brothers and I had out there. The area should by all means be preserved as a parkland.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Eastman

2017 Veale Road  
Wilmington, Del.

**B. & O. R. R. Bridge  
Planned for Elsmere**

Included in a resolution of the Delaware State Highway Department covering funds needed for various highway jobs in the near future, and



Wot d' ya mean, I have to choose between you an' baseball?  
Quote Magazine

for which the Legislature has approved a \$26 million bond issue, is an \$800,000 bridge to cross the B. & O. R. R. tracks in Elsmere. The federal share of this expenditure is listed at \$780,000 leaving the state to pay only \$20,000.

However, inquiry of the Department brought the answer that the bridge is only in the planning stage, and that no details will be available before the first of next year. Users of the road hope that the bridge will not only cross the tracks but will be extended to cross the Kirkwood Highway. Exceptionally heavy traffic here presents an annoying bottleneck that is aggravating and nerve-wracking.

You are never too old to learn something foolish.

**The Old Timer**



"You're young only once. After that, you need some other excuse."

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