

DELAWARE RELIGION:  
Lutheran Church to  
1700, with Chron—  
ology of Crane Hook  
Church, etc. By J.  
Sweeney, May-July,  
1940

1664-66, October 13/23

Governor of New York and Delaware. The articles of surrender of the Dutch settlements on the Hudson contain provisions directly and indirectly concerning the future course of religion which are similar to the concessions obtained at New Amstel. Therefore, it may be said that the Dutch local administrations retained for a time the power to curb the Lutherans. ✓ Here then is a possible reason for the following letter from Governor Nicolls, October 13/23, 1666, to some Gentlemen (perhaps at New Castle) whose names are not given with the published transcript:

"Gentlemen.

"I have lately received L<sup>res</sup> from y<sup>e</sup> Duke wherein it is perticularly signified unto me that his Royall Highness doth approve of y<sup>e</sup> Tolleration given to y<sup>e</sup> Lutheran Church in theise partes. I doe therefore expect that you live freindly & peaceably with those of that profession giving them no disturoance in y<sup>e</sup> Exercise of their Religion, as they shall receive noe Countenance in but on y<sup>e</sup> Contrary strictly Answer any disturbance they shall presume to give unto any of you in yo<sup>r</sup> divine worship. So I bid you farewell being

Yo<sup>r</sup> very Loving friend.

"Fort James in New Yorke this 13<sup>th</sup> day of October 1666." — Documents, N. Y., XIV, 626.

1667, About

The abovequoted assurance of the then James Duke of York, being obviously as unequivocal as the Lutherans could desire, helps to show that THE PROEABLE YEAR OF ERECTION OF CRANE HOOK CHURCH IS 1667. \*

Reverend Ericus Tobias Björk or Björk arrived on the Delaware, with two companion Swedish clergymen, in the summer of 1697, and

1667, About

officiated as pastor of Crane Hook Church from July 11/21 of 1697 to May 7/17 of 1699, when "Divine service" was conducted in it for the last time.\* Björk then became pastor of the new Trinity Church — now commonly called "Old Swedes" (in Wilmington) — and served as such for more than a decade following its dedication on the old calendar Trinity Sunday, June 4, 1699. The first book of Trinity Church minutes covers the period up to 1714 and actually includes minutes of Crane Hook Church beginning with July 1697: "Mr. Bjork's diary and record was copied into this book under his supervision and with occasional corrections in his own hand and the latter part written by himself."† These statements are set forth with the view of showing that the following record must be in effect the same as the Swedish version written by Björk on or about that May 17, 1699:

"The fourth Sunday after Easter [1699]# we held Divine service for the last time at Cranehook, which as near as I can find had been held there since 1667. I made a short address suitable to such an occasion, exhorting them to renew their hearts before God, as God had graciously blessed us with a new church; and as I had previously given notice that I would on that day let each one know where his seat was to be, for I had taken that upon myself, but little thought what labor and trouble I should have therewith, so I excused myself now and only indicated what part of the church each should occupy, and not shift from one part to another in a disorderly manner as has been here at Cranehook, and especially on the day of consecration they should leave room for the strangers, and I promised that I

\* Authority for these statements will be given in chronological order (later).

† Footnote by translator, Horace Burr, in Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 11.

# The quoted material is listed under the year 1699. — J. S.

1667, About

would before long let them know more definitely where their seats should be." — Translation by Horace Burr, Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 39.\*

This statement by Biörk apparently is the cause of the assumption of various later writers, on down to the present time, that Crane Hook Church was erected in 1667, therefore note well that it simply says, "Divine service ... at Cranehook ... as near as I can find had been held there since 1667." Of course he may have intended to express one or both of two things: that Crane Hook Church was built about 1667, or that public Lutheran worship at Crane Hook dated from about 1667. Biörk's approximation of the year 1667 must be given first place in any honest effort to provide the answer to the question of when was Crane Hook Church built, for the said circa year is only 30 years before the time of his arrival on the Delaware (1697) and it is reasonable to suppose that he had opportunity to peruse some sort of since-lost records, such as church records or a deed of title to the church land, not to mention the probability that some of his parishioners witnessed the consecration of the church.

Biörk had not been pastor of Crane Hook Church for a month before he called representatives of his congregation together to select a site for a new church. At this meeting some expressed their desire to have the projected church built in the vicinity of

\* A "Catalogue and Errata of the Records of Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Church as Translated by Horace Burr" is in Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX-A.

1667, About

the site of Edge Moor (just north of Wilmington), but the majority were roughly divided in favor of either Crane Hook (where the old church still stood) or Christina (the site of Wilmington proper), and the agreement reached was "that the church should be built at Christina and that it should be of brick or stone, though some had been in favor of wood."\*

Biork also alludes to the Crane Hook congregation and the projected non-wooden church in a long letter to a superior in Sweden, dated Christina Creek, October 29, 1697:

"I must confess that they did not entirely comply with what they had promised in their letter: the reason was, that they were most uncomfortably situated, the land which led to their church being then overflowed with water, and yet they would not abandon the place until they should have ministers, to whom they could commit the work, in which, through God's grace, I have succeeded, and agreed with them to fix on a more convenient place to build a stone church, to be called Christina Church."#

From these records by Biörk — as they are set forth in the Swedish manuscripts — Israel Acrelius, a Swedish clergyman who was connected with churches on the Delaware from 1749 to 1756, draws the first part of his account of "Christina Parish" from which the following is translated:

Tranhook Church.<sup>9</sup>

"In the year 1697, when Mr. Eric Bjork came to the country, there was still standing at Tranhook a wooden church, which had

\* Trinity Church minutes, as translated by Horace Burr, in Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 15-7.

/ Acrelius, as translated by William M. Reynolds, 186-90, offers a copy of this, Springer's, letter, dated May 31, 1693.

# Jehu Curtis Clay, Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware, 4th edition, 81-5.

‡ Trane is old Swedish for the "Crane" bird. — J. S.

1667, About

been in use since the year 1667. In the year 1699, the fourth day after Pentecost, Divine Service was held here for the last time." — Translation by William M. Reynolds, 264.

Acrelius is in error, ~~still once~~ again, whether he meant to say, "the fourth day after Pentecost," or the fourth Sunday after Pentecost; because Biörk himself conducted this service and he says that the day was the fourth Sunday after Easter, and, furthermore, the new church was consecrated on Trinity Sunday. Concededly, however, Acrelius is correct in assuming that Crane Hook Church was a wooden building, for this is inferribly from Biörk's records, as quoted above. Contemporary to Crane Hook Church were the common loghouses of the Finns and Swedes, "a little Lutheran church made of logs" at Tinicum,\* and a remodeled loghouse used as a Lutheran church at Wicaco.† Therefore, and even that the architecture of Swanwyck Church (near New Castle) has not been determined, is it not probable that Crane Hook Church was a small log building?

Acrelius repeats on another page:

"... a small wooden church was, in 1667, erected at Tranhook, at the distance of one-fourth of a Swedish mile (one and three-quarters of a mile English)‡ from the fort on the creek; this was more suitable for the Hollanders who dwelt at Sandhook." — Translation by William M. Reynolds, 176.¶

\* The very descriptive quotation is from Jaspar Dankers, Journal, as translated by Henry C. Murphy, Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, I, 178.

‡ Where Gloria Dei Church now stands, in Philadelphia. There is a lot of contemporary materials relative to the churches at Tinicum and Wicaco.

¶ Parenthetic insert seems to be by the translator.

‡ Cf: Rev. Nicholas Collin's notes quoted by Benjamin Ferris, A History of the Original Settlements on the Delaware, &c. (Wilmington, 1846), 145. — J. S.

1667, About

The data already set forth may suffice to show that Crane Hook Church was built about 1667 and it was a small wooden or log edifice. In either case, this worker can not at present throw further dependable light on either its architecture or date of erection. The "rustic cupola" and "the old bell" which Pennock Pusey lately (1895) placed on this house of worship\* <sup>seem to have</sup> ~~are merely~~ <sup>been</sup> moulded from ~~his aging~~ fancy.

Since available 1660-decade records neither show nor indicate the presence on the Delaware of any other Lutheran minister, it may and must be assumed that Lokenius was the first minister of Crane Hook Church.

1669, March 26 (April 5)

By patent dated March 26, 1669, Governor Francis Lovelace<sup>/</sup> confirmed to the occupant "a certain piece of unmanured land at Delaware now in ye tenure and occupation of Jean Paul Jacquett conteynyng by estimation in woodland and valley or meadow about two hundred acres stretching from ye neck of land where ye sd Jean Paul Jacques<sup>#</sup> now lives in length South South West and North North East and in breadth alongst Christeen kill, North North West and South South East, behind along by ye land and fence of Pieter Claesen and Jan Claesen from ye mill to a great swamp having some valley or meadow on both sydes," &c.† — Land Titles in Delaware commonly called The Duke of York Record, 158.

Note: By letter to Director Jacob Alrichs, New Amstel, dated "Amsterdam, the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1659," the Commissioners of the City's

\* Pennock Pusey, "Crane Hook Church," &c., Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, XI, 27.

<sup>/</sup> Lovelace succeeded Nicolls in 1668.

<sup>#</sup> The s in Jacques obviously is a mistaking of the contemporary form of t.

† This Jacquett estate was mostly within the rough M formed by the Christina in present-day Wilmington. — J. S.

1697, July 18/28

"July 18th or 7th /Sunday/\* after Trinity," continues Biörk, "I began in the above order to perform the services by reading the first chapter of the first Book of Moses and the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

"At this time I gave notice that so far as practicable, I had made a distribution of the books sent over in such wise that those who have a large household and many who can read, should have the more books, and those who had less, fewer books; and those who could not use a large book, a manual, Golden Clenodium, &c., should have a catechism or an A B C book and teach themselves first, and those now favored with books should remember to use them faithfully.

"That the Bibles could not yet be given out till I am satisfied who will faithfully adhere to the church. Whereof I exhorted them one and all to consider the matter well, and engage themselves, not only on my account that I may know who my hearers are to be, but also for the sake of the congregation, that each one may know who of his fellow hearers will be ready to stand in his place and do his part of whatever may be necessary with regard to the church and parsonage as to building, repairing, &c., &c.

"I suggested also, that those who have received books should remember God's House with some money as a thank offering, each one in proportion to books received, explaining to them concisely how we, not only with words, but with gifts, can give God thanks for his grace, as when we give to the church, the school, the poor, or to ministers of His Word.

"I moreover added a prudent talk, representing to them that whatever was for the best for the church was also for the best good of the people, and that the King's gift becomes a double gift and I heard nothing but hearty good will thereto.

"He who receives a Bible shall give one Vanakten piece, i.e. six shillings, for a manual three shillings, and they who have a Golden Clenodium, Upsula Psalm book, or any other devotional books shall give two shillings, for Dr. Olaus Swebillius' catechism one shilling, a small catechism six pence and an A B C book three pence."

— Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 14-15.

1697, July 25/August 4

When Biörk became pastor of Crane Hook Church he found that those who attended services there "were most uncomfortably situated, the land which led to their church being then overflowed with water,"/

\* Insert is by this worker.

/ Compare the appended map of Crane Hook Church Site, &c.

1697, July 25/August 4

and the little wooden edifice (as well as that at Wicaco) was "old and in bad condition." — Clay, Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware, 4th edition, 85, 89 (being, respectively, letters of Biörk and Rudman). In consequence, Biörk announced on the old calendar July 25, 1697, that five days later a committee would be chosen from "the whole Congregation" to select a site for a new church. — Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 15.

1697, July 30/August 9

IX,15 Chosen from "this side of the river were Charles Springer, John Nummerson, Hans Pieterason, Hendrick Juarason and Brewer Sinnike. "From the other side,\* Mr. Olle Stoby, Staffan Juransson, Jacob Van de Ver and Olle Fransson.

IX,16 "And now the matter was earnestly discussed among them, for some would have the church at Cranehook, some at Thirdhook and some at Christina, and it did not seem possible to come to any certain conclusion at this time — especially as they on the other side of the river thought it hard for them to help now to build such a church for those on this side, for they feared it would happen that they should get no help, if in course of time they become so numerous that they should need a separate teacher and could support him, and therefore should wish to build a church for themselves, and they who came by the way of Sandhook# thought it would be very burdensome to have to pay ferriage across the Christina every time they came to church.

"Then they on this side immediately satisfied and persuaded them in these particulars, and agreed:

"1st. — That when they on the other side in course of time should become so strong as to be able to set up a separate church and procure and support a minister of this our so called Lutheran Religion, those on this side would help them with money again as much as they now help towards building this church at Christina.

"Now, as at that time I was in a sickly condition and on that account could not be present at the meeting, and heard afterward that not all of the people approved of the agreement, I sat down immedi-

\* The New Jersey side, as is evidenced later in the volume.  
/ Trinity Hook, also called Verdrietige Hoek, at the present Edge Moor.

# Thus Swedes commonly called New Castle. — J. S.

1697, September 19/29

X,16

ately," writes Blörk, "and according to my ability drew up a writing in which I showed that if we on this side had never agreed and consented in this wise, yet we are just as much bound for the Glory of God to help them again on the other side if they now help us, and I further wrote by way of encouragement and exhortation — and Charles Springer ever unwearied in the promotion of God's Glory, in order to bring about a good understanding of the matter, went around with this my writing and read it to them and so won them all to unity.

IX,17

"Then after this agreement — as regards those on the other side who usually cross and come by the way of Sandhook and think it would be very burdensome for them always to pay for ferrying over the Christina Creek, they on this side promised to furnish a canoe for them to use whenever they come to church, but to be used for no other purpose, so that nothing more should be heard of the ferrying, and it should never be a cause of complaint which canoe once delivered to them to take care of — if it be lost they shall provide another themselves.

"Then they consulted among themselves how they should in accordance with their promise support him whom God had been pleased to send them — which promise they must now fulfill. They decided that both sides of the river could at least contribute a hundred pounds, Pennsylvania currency. Whereupon a list was immediately made, and they who were then present (which were many more than those above named who had been especially selected) each one set his hand thereto for a certain sum of money as the subscription shows.

IX,17

"They also agreed that the church should be built at Christina and that it should be of brick or stone, though some had been in favor of wood. We met at Christina September 19 to choose new church wardens but retained two of the old for another year, viz: Carl Christofferson Springer\* and Mr. Wholle Stobey, to whom four others were added, viz: Hans Pielterson, Brewer Sinnika, John Stalcop, and from the other side of the river Jacob Van de Ver, with the understanding that none are to stay in more than two years, part going out each year, and others to come in their place who shall become accustomed by being with those who have a year yet to remain, and therefore Carl Springer and Wholle Stobey remain another year; that these new ones may become used to the duties, and then the coming year they to step out and others be chosen in their stead." — Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 15-17.

1698, May 28/June 7

(See next page)

\* "'Carl Christopherson Springer'" is a copy of his signature, according to Acrelius, as translated by Reynolds, 190. — J. S.

1698, May 28/June 7

On the old calendar May 28, 1698, Crane Hook Church Pastor Biörk laid the cornerstone of Trinity Church (now commonly called "Old Swedes") which was destined to become such a historic landmark in Wilmington, Delaware. Also present at the ceremony were Messrs. Rudman and Auren. — Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 29; and Clay, Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware, 4th edition, 92 (both being translation of writings of Biörk).

1699, May 7/17 (Sunday)

Under the year 1699 Biörk writes (according to translation):

"The fourth Sunday after Easter we held Divine service for the last time at Cranehook, which as near as I can find had been held there since 1667. I made a short address suitable to such an occasion, exhorting them to renew their hearts before God, as God had graciously blessed us with a new church; and as I had previously given notice that I would on that day let each one know where his seat was to be, for I had taken that upon myself, but little thought what labor and trouble I should have therewith, so I excused myself now and only indicated what part of the church each should occupy, and not shift from one part to another in a disorderly manner as has been here at Cranehook, and especially on the day of consecration they should leave room for the strangers, and I promised that I would before long let them know more definitely where their seats should be." — Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, IX, 39.