

ABSEGAMI:
ANNALS
OF
Eyren Haven and Atlantic City
1609 to 1904

Being an account of the settlement of Eyren Haven or Egg Harbor, and Reminiscences of Atlantic City and County during the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

ALSO
Indian Traditions and Sketches

of the region between Absegami and Chichacki, in the country called Scheyechbi.

With Maps of the New Netherlands (1656), West New Jersey (1698), New Jersey (1904), Atlantic County and Atlantic City

BY

ALFRED M. HESTON,
ATLANTIC CITY

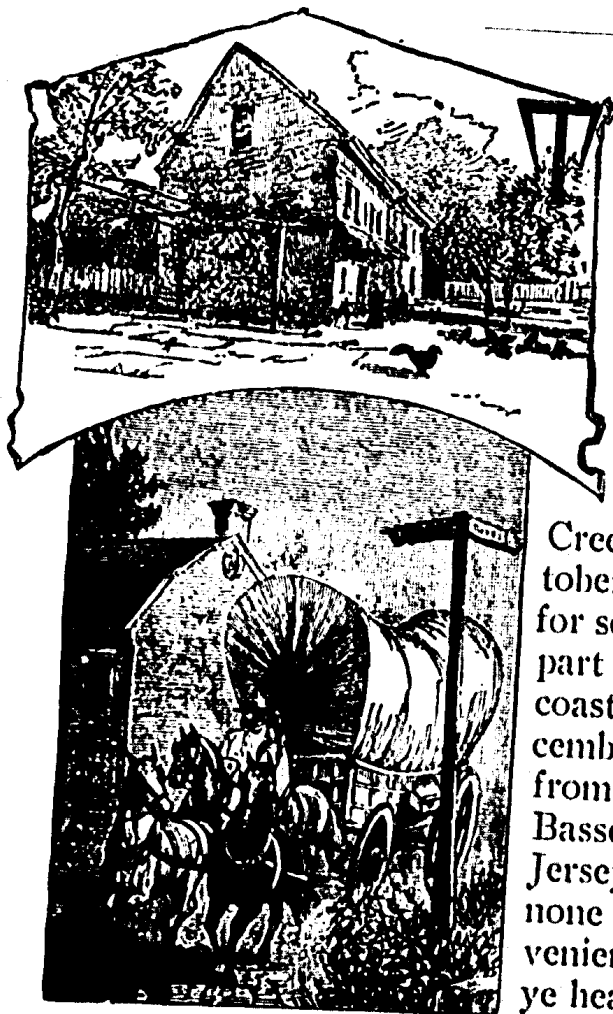
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VOLUME I

Printed for the Author—Nineteen Hundred and Four.

Days of Yore.

1677 to 1854



THE deed from the Indians to the proprietors, for lands between the Rancocas and Timber creeks (including the present bounds of Atlantic County) is dated September 10, 1677, and that from the Rancocas to Assanpink Creek one month later—October 10th. The proprietors for some time seemed loath to part with lands on the seacoast, for under date of December 24, 1692, they wrote from London to Jeremiah Basse, their agent in New Jersey, advising him "to sell none of ye land that lies convenient for whale fishing till ye heare further from us, for that wee will not sell."

Thomas Budd, an early purchaser of lands in New Jersey, had previously sold to Dr. Daniel Coxe, of London, physician to the queen, 15,000 acres on the south side of the Great Egg Harbor—and possibly some on the north side—these being the lands which had been deeded by the proprietors to Budd in settlement of a claim of 1,250 pounds.

**Original Owner
of Island.**

Thomas Budd, original owner of the island whereon Atlantic City is built, arrived at Burlington in 1678. Nine or ten years afterwards he published a pamphlet describing the country, and quoting a speech made by one of the Indians, at a conference of the white and red men, held in Burlington.

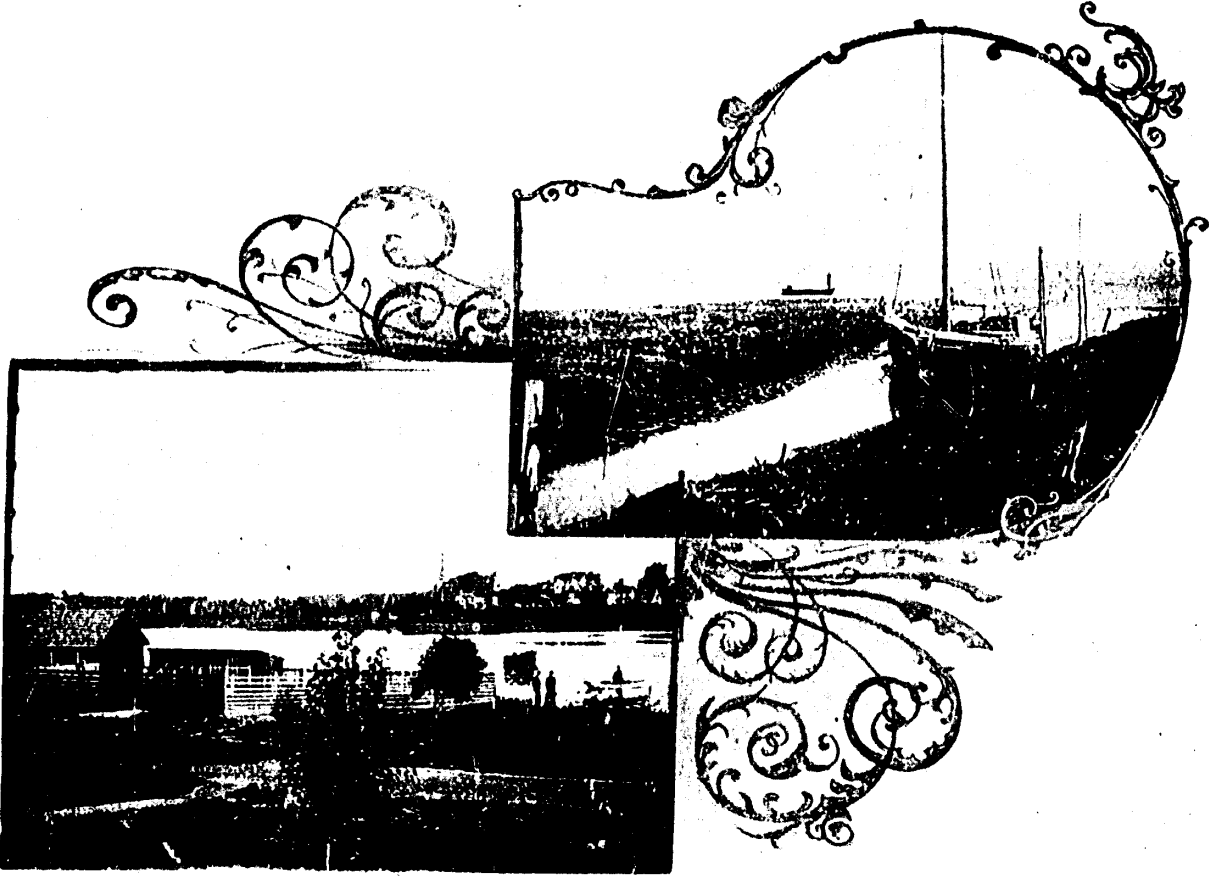
Only three copies of the original edition of Budd's "Pennsylvania and New Jersey" are now in existence, and one of these was sold for a considerable sum (about \$900) some years ago. A reprint was lately issued in Cleveland, Ohio. In this book, by Thomas Budd, the Indian chief is quoted as saying:

"We are your brothers and intend to live like brothers with you. We have no mind to have war, for when we have war we are only skin and bones; the meat that we eat doth not do us good; we always are in fear; we have not the benefit of the sun to shine on us; we hide us in holes and corners; we are minded to live at peace. If we intend at any time to make war upon you, we will let you know of it, and the reasons why we make war with you; and if you make us satisfaction for the injury done us, for which the war was intended, then we will not make war upon you; and if you intend at any time to make war on us, we would have you let us know of it, and the reason; and then if we do not make satisfaction for the injury done unto you, then you may make war on us, otherwise you ought not to do it. You are our brothers, and we are willing to live like brothers with you; we are willing to have a broad path for you and us to walk in, and if an Indian is asleep in this path, the Englishman shall pass by, and do him no harm; and if an Englishman is asleep in this path, the Indian shall pass him by, and say, 'He is an Englishman, he is asleep; let him alone, he loves to sleep.' It shall be a plain path; there must not be in this path a stump to hurt our feet."

THE SPEECH OF AN INDIAN SAGE.

In the same pamphlet the author says: "The Indians have been very serviceable to us by selling us venison, Indian corn, pease and beans, fish and fowl, buck-skins, beaver, otter and other skins and furs. The men hunt, fish and fowl, and the woman plant the corn and carry burthens. There are many of them of a good understanding, considering their education, and in their public meetings of business they have excellent order, one speaking after another; and while one is speaking, all the rest keep silent, and do not so much as whisper one to the other.

"We had several meetings with them. One was to put down the sale of rum, brandy and other strong liquors to them, they being a people that have not government of themselves so as to drink in moderation; at which time there were eight kings and many other Indians. The kings sat on a form, and we on another over against them. They had prepared four belts of wampum to give us as seals of the covenant they made with us. One of the kings, by the consent and appointment of the rest, stood up and made this following speech: 'The strong liquor was first sold to us by the Dutch, and they were blind; they had no eyes; they did not see that it was for our hurt. The next people that came among us were the Swedes, who continued the sale of those strong liquors to us. They were also blind. They had no eyes; they did not see it to be hurtful to us to drink it, although we knew it to be hurtful to us; but if people will sell it to us, we are so in love with it that we cannot forbear it.



Scene at Port Republic,

At Anchor near the Inlet.

**Early Surveys
and Deeds.**

When we drink it, it makes us mad; we do not know what we do; we then abuse one another; we throw each other into the fire. Seven score of our people have been killed by reason of the drinking fit, since the time it was first sold us. Those people that sell it are blind; they have no eyes. But now there is a people come to live amongst us that have eyes; they see it to be for our hurt, and we know it to be for our hurt. They are willing to deny themselves the profit of it for our good. These people have eyes; we are glad such a people have come amongst us. We must put it down by mutual consent; the cork must be sealed up; it must be made fast; it must not leak by day nor by night, in the light nor in the dark; and we give you these four belts of wampum, which we would have you lay up safe, and keep by you, to be witness of this agreement that we make with you; and we would have you tell your children that these four belts of wampum are given you to be witnesses betwixt us and you of this agreement."

* * *

Notwithstanding the fact that the proprietors were averse to selling the lands "convenient for whale fishing," a considerable portion of these lands in what is now Atlantic County came into the possession of Budd previous to 1695, in which year he sold to John Somers, James Steelman and others many hundreds of acres between the Great Egg Harbor and Mullica rivers. In 1695 Budd was the owner of 440 acres on Absecon Beach. His was an "original" survey. Subsequent surveys were as follows: John Scott,* 300 acres (January 25, 1714); An-

*A deed bearing date December 6, 1736, given by Joseph Reeve and Nathan Iorence, of the "south side of Cohausie Creek, in the county of Salem, attorneys for Edward Scott, George Scott and Joseph Scott, sons of John Scott, late of Newport, in the county of Newport and colony of Rhode Island, gentlemen," conveys to Andrew Steelman, of "Great Egg Harbor, in the county of Gloucester," for the sum of forty pounds, a considerable portion of the present bounds of Atlantic City. The original copy of this deed is now owned by S. Bartram Richards, of Ventnor. It conveys "all that piece, parcel or tract of land situate and being on the sea side, in the county of Gloucester, beginning at a corner, black oak standing on the edge of the wood land joining to the Sandy hills and beach, and running from thence nigh on east north-east course, bounding with the sandy hills to a cedar at the mouth of Absenkum, then north-west fifty perches to a cedar, then along the marsh and swamp bounding therewith till it makes nine hundred and sixty perches to a corner tree, then southeast to the first beginning. Within which said boundary is contained three hundred acres, as by a certificate under the hand of Joshua Barkstead, surveyor, bearing date the twenty-fifth day of January, one thousand seven hundred and fourteen-fifteen may appear. Which said three hundred acres of land is part and parcel of a proprietary right, bought and purchased by the said John Scott of and from Gratia Bartlett, of the city of London, in the kingdom of Great Britain, widow, relict and administratrix of Benjamin Bartlet, Gratia Bartlet the younger, Albania Bartlet and Mary Bartlet, daughters and heirs of the said Benjamin Bartlet, as by their deed under their hands and seals duly executed, bearing date the sixth day of August, one thousand seven and seven, and also the power of attorney, recorded in the clerk's office at Salem, for the county of Salem, in Book A. A. A., relation being thereunto respectively had more fully may appear. And all houses, outhouses, buildings, barns, stables, gardens, orchards, woods, underwoods, ways, waters, watercourses, fishings, fowlings, hawkings, huntings, royalties, franchises, privileges, hereditaments and appurtenances whatsoever to the said three hundred acres of land hereby granted, belonging or in anywise appertaining, and the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders thereof."

**Commonidge
for Cattle.** drew Steelman, 256 acres; Amos Ire-
land, 49 acres; Peter Conover, 100
acres; Daniel Ireland, 34 acres; and
John Ladd, 1,035 acres.

THE TEN ORIGINAL SURVEYS.

Absecon Beach was originally located by ten surveys. In 1780 nine of these surveys and one-half the other (which was a survey of 717 acres made to John Ladd) had become vested in Colonel Richard Somers by virtue of sundry conveyances from John Babcock, Frederick Steelman and others. In 1813 the nine surveys and the undivided half of the Ladd survey having become vested in Sarah Keen, the daughter, devisee and executor of the said Col. Richard Somers, were conveyed to George West, who held the same until his death, in 1820. In 1816 a salt works being about to be erected on the beach by John Blake, he obtained leases from George West, and also from Jeremiah Leeds for that purpose.

As stated above, Absecon Beach from the surf to the thoroughfare, and from Absecon Inlet southward to Dry Inlet, was, between the years 1698 and 1742, taken up, surveyed and granted in ten different surveys. Owing to looseness and generality of description, the title to the land is involved in much obscurity down to the time of Jeremiah Leeds. He was undoubtedly in the possession of and claimed, as owner, the whole of the beach from the surf back to the meadows and from the inlet southward to a line near the present city limits at Jackson avenue (excepting a tract known as the Chamberlain tract), at a period as early as the year 1816, and he died in undisputed possession thereof, in 1838, intestate, leaving surviving him a widow, Millicent, and six children, to whom his lands descended as tenants in common, subject to the dower of their mother. Millicent Leeds died in September, 1873.

All of the original surveys referred to were above Jackson avenue, or "Dry Inlet," which at that time was the south end of the island. The term "Dry Inlet" was for many years used to designate a locality now forming the lower boundary of Atlantic City, at Jackson avenue. About the year 1700 the beach was divided midway by a small inlet, through which the tide ebbed and flowed. Years afterwards it was filled with sand, and the locality was then called "Dry Inlet."

In 1695 Thomas Budd sold large tracts of land on the mainland and beaches to actual settlers. Each of his deeds had this clause inserted: "With the privilege of cutting cedar, and commonidge for cattle, etc., on ye swamps and beaches laid out by ye said Thomas Budd for commons." The exaction of these privileges at this date would cause much trouble, as a large portion of the built-up portion of Atlantic City stands upon one of the surveys of Thomas Budd.

DAYS OF YORE.

**Old Time
Patriots.**

From the time of the original surveys, about 1700, to about 1800, there was little attempt at permanent settlement on Absecon Beach, though the lands had passed into other hands by deed or inheritance.

How the First Inhabitant Lived and What He Saw.



The name of the first white inhabitant of the island—temporary, of course—is not positively known, but from accounts that have been handed down to us, the artist has drawn a fairly accurate picture of his habitation. Like Robinson Crusoe, he was monarch of all he surveyed and his right there was none to dispute. Eastward and southward he saw the wide expanse of ocean, with

**Outrage by
Refugees.**

an occasional passing ship; westward were the meadows, with their broad stretch of green grass and the winding

water courses between.

At the time of the Revolution the population of the island consisted of the families of Daniel Ireland, William Boice and George Stibbs. These men, like Ethan Allen, believed in God and the Continental Congress. A company of refugees came to the island one night and took Stibbs from his humble home, blindfolded him and compelled him to accompany them and assist in the robbery of "Uncle" John Winner, a good old patriot, who lived on the mainland. Many years ago three or four caves, showing unmistakable signs of former occupation by man, could be seen in the lower part of the city limits. Below "Dry Inlet" there was a cave where William Day, a deserter from the American army in the second war with England, found a safe retreat from his pursuers. He was employed by Hezekiah Sampson, who lived near by. The furrows of his plough were traced in the little patch of soil which he cultivated near the marsh. After the war this cave was abandoned to the bats and foxes, and Day, it is said, went elsewhere in search of a wife.

Juan Ponce de Leon, the Spanish explorer of the sixteenth century, sought in vain for the spring whose virtues were credulously believed to restore the vigor of youth to the aged. Searching for this fountain of youth, he landed on the coast of Florida in the year 1512,* and in that country there are springs almost innumerable, each of which to-day lays claim to the high antiquity of being the identical spring in which the great Spaniard performed his ablutions. History informs us, however, that nowhere could he find this mythical fountain of youth; but who will deny that had he extended his search north-

*Millions of American school-children have been taught that Ponce de Leon discovered Florida on Raster Sunday, March 27, 1512, and that he gave the country its floral name because Raster lilies were then and there in beautiful bloom. But this sacred date, with its sweet and flowery adornment, must in these latter days be extirpated from our historic annals; for we are now informed by Mr. Fox—with his myth-destroying mathematics—that Raster Sunday in the year 1512 did not fall on the 27th of March. Thus it is that history is written—and rewritten—and then unwritten.

DAYS OF YORE.

The Fountain of Youth. ward his fondest hopes might have been realized, had he landed upon the island where—quoting the lines of the late Col. William E. Potter, of Bridgeton, N. J.—

Where the long surges heave and break
Foaming upon the glittering shore,
And laughing maidens often take
A "header" 'midst the breakers' roar ;
While zephyrs gently woo the toiler,
And nights are mild and skies are clear,
And on the housewife's kitchen broiler
The soft-shell crab doth oft appear ;
Where hops abound and bugles blare,
And Roman nobles, in the busy street,
Incognito, with monkeys fare,
Grinding their daily music sweet ;
Where agile oysters, mild, serene,
On beds of moss recline, and lobsters wise
Live pinchingly ; and pearly sheen
Of hake and flounder wins the flies ;
And the mosquito's monotone,
Beyond the woven window-bar,
Prevents our feeling quite alone—
He is so near and yet so far ;
Where, by the heaving sea, the fisher's booth
Is found ere yet the summer's gone,—
Pours forth the fountain of eternal youth,
The spring of ancient Ponce Leon.
The old Castilian left his home,
The vine-clad hills of distant Spain,
A thousand leagues of sea to roam ;
To brave the heat, the cold, the pain
Of wounds, the fatal poisoned dart,
The march through swamp and tangled wood,
The ambush dark, the fear, the start
Of keen surprise when the wild Indian stood,
Stern, painted, cruel, before him,
But undismayed by wounds or death,
His loved lost youth to restore him,
Aged, weak and worn, with failing breath ;
He searched, without the glorious sight
Of the famed spring, now flowing free,
Pure and wholesome, sparkling and bright,
In our gay City by the Sea.*

The old Castilian died long before the feet of white men trod the soil whereon Atlantic City was founded, but the wonderful life-giving atmosphere of this beach, if not the identical fountain of youth, was discovered by John Peter Brissot de Warville, a Frenchman, who visited this country after the Revolution.

Brissot published an account of his travels in a book entitled "New Travels," in which he spoke of the exceptional dryness of the atmosphere on Absecon Beach, having visited this island in September, 1788, to enjoy the excellent gunning and fishing. He added that in all his

*The concluding lines in the above refer to the artesian wells in Atlantic City which began flowing in 1839, and furnished water that was "pure and wholesome sparkling and bright." On returning to Spain, Ponce de Leon spoke of an island which he had not seen, but of which he had heard, containing a fountain which could make old men young. This story so fascinated Peter Martyr that he wrote of it to the Pope, argued its credibility and afterward drew a map showing where the wonderful fountain might probably be found.

Brissot's Visit in 1788. travels (and he was a great traveler) he had only found one other place in the world, on the seacoast, that could be compared with this island in the matter of climate.

Brissot was the son of a pastry-cook, and was born near Chartres, in 1757. He was a rank republican, and one of the prime movers in the French Revolution. After being two or three times an editor, and once imprisoned in the Bastille for libel, he came to America. Returning to France, in 1789, he plunged again in the stormy sea of politics, and was at last, in 1793, sent to the scaffold by Robespierre, who headed the opposite and then triumphant faction. Brissot was a prominent man in the Legislative Assembly of 1791 and in the Convention; and his intrigues, it is said, succeeded in bringing about the war between France, Austria and Great Britain.

For lack of habitation, Absecon Beach was a dreary place in the early days. One who was familiar with the island, as a visitor, before it was touched by the iron wand of that modern magician, the railroad, describes it as a place "more dismal than the deserts of Arabia." On the beach nothing interrupted the monotonous sough of the sea but the quack of the wild goose, the cry of the curlew, or the shrill scream of the gull. On the meadow side, of a summer evening, when babbling day was touched by the hem of night's garment, there was a perfect realization of peaceful solitude. The sun, resting upon the horizon, flushed with his last rosy rays the surface of the creeks and bays; and the dropping of an oar by a mooring boatman, or the whistling of a boy in the sedge grass, served only to emphasize the stillness and solitude of the scene.

Nevertheless, in those days of long ago the island was occasionally the scene of mirth unrestrained. The country folk—those living on the mainland—had what were known as "beach parties." They came in boats, and, having rounded Rum Point, in the inlet, they hoisted their flag at the masthead as a signal to Aunt Judith Adams. She was the *chef* of the island, and by that sign they conquered her larder. When Aunt Judith saw the flag she busied herself preparing dinner for the party.

Old Time Mirth and Jollity. These beach parties were the "events of the season" in those days. Dr. T. K. Reed, in his reminiscences of the early days, tells us that down on the beach, at low tide, they danced to the soul-stirring strains of "Fischer's Hornpipe," discoursed by a single fiddle. There was none of your mincing and smirking, says Dr. Reed, but genuine fun and frolic—a regular jump-up-and-down, cross-over-Jonathan, and figure-in-Jemima terpsichorean fling! At high tide they all bathed. The hilarity of the occasion culminated when the young men of the party carried the blushing and screaming maidens to the top of the steep sand-hills, and, tying their feet together, rolled them down to the water's edge.

Where shall we find, in the refinement of the present age, a sufficient compensation for the loss of this rude form of jollity? They had no bath-houses in those days, both sexes going among the sand-hills to disrobe. In time this came to be regarded as inconvenient and embarrassing; wherefore, some liberal spirits engaged Uncle Ryan Adams to build them a bath-house. When they came to the beach the next time they started down to take a dip in the surf, and, when nearly there, it occurred to one of the party that they had forgotten the key to the bath-house, and forthwith a messenger was sent back to fetch the key. He returned in a few minutes, saying there was no lock on the door. Reaching the spot indicated by Uncle Ryan, the party found, to their dismay, that the new "building" was a frail structure made entirely of brush, with the blue canopy of heaven for a roof. But it answered their purpose, and that style of bath-house remained in vogue until after the birth of Atlantic City, when Joshua Note converted an old wreck into the first frame bath-house, near the foot of Massachusetts avenue. Abreast of this primitive bath-house was the wreck of the "Vanolinda, and at various points along the beach there were thirteen other wrecks.

Glorious, indeed, to the country folk, at least, were those days of "Auld Lang Syne!" And the city wight, no less than the country swain, was not averse to that form of summer outing. He loved the city and its busy

**The Voiceless
Teachers.**

hum; he loved the excitement of the crowd at home, the absence of those curious eyes and idle tongues characteristic of rustic life; but he loved the seashore, too, and there was no scene over which his eyes roved with greater pleasure than the face of a summer landscape by the sea. Hither he came to fish, to hunt, to bathe. His joy of youthful sport, in summer time, was to be borne on the breast of the ocean; from a boy he wantoned with her breakers, and he became, as it were, a child of the sea! To him the roar of the ocean, no less than the voice of the brook or the language of the winds and woods, was not a poetic fiction. Being a student of Nature, as well as a lover of youthful sports, he read a well-taught lesson in the opening but of spring; an eloquent homily in the fall of the autumnal leaf. The song of a bird, the cry of a passing curlew, represented the glad but transitory days of youth; the hollow tree or the hooting owl, the decay and imbecility of old age.

In the beautiful language of Horace Smith, an English poet—

Your voiceless lips, O flowers, are living preachers,
Each cup a pulpit, each leaf a book,
Supplying to my fancy numerous teachers
From loneliest nook.

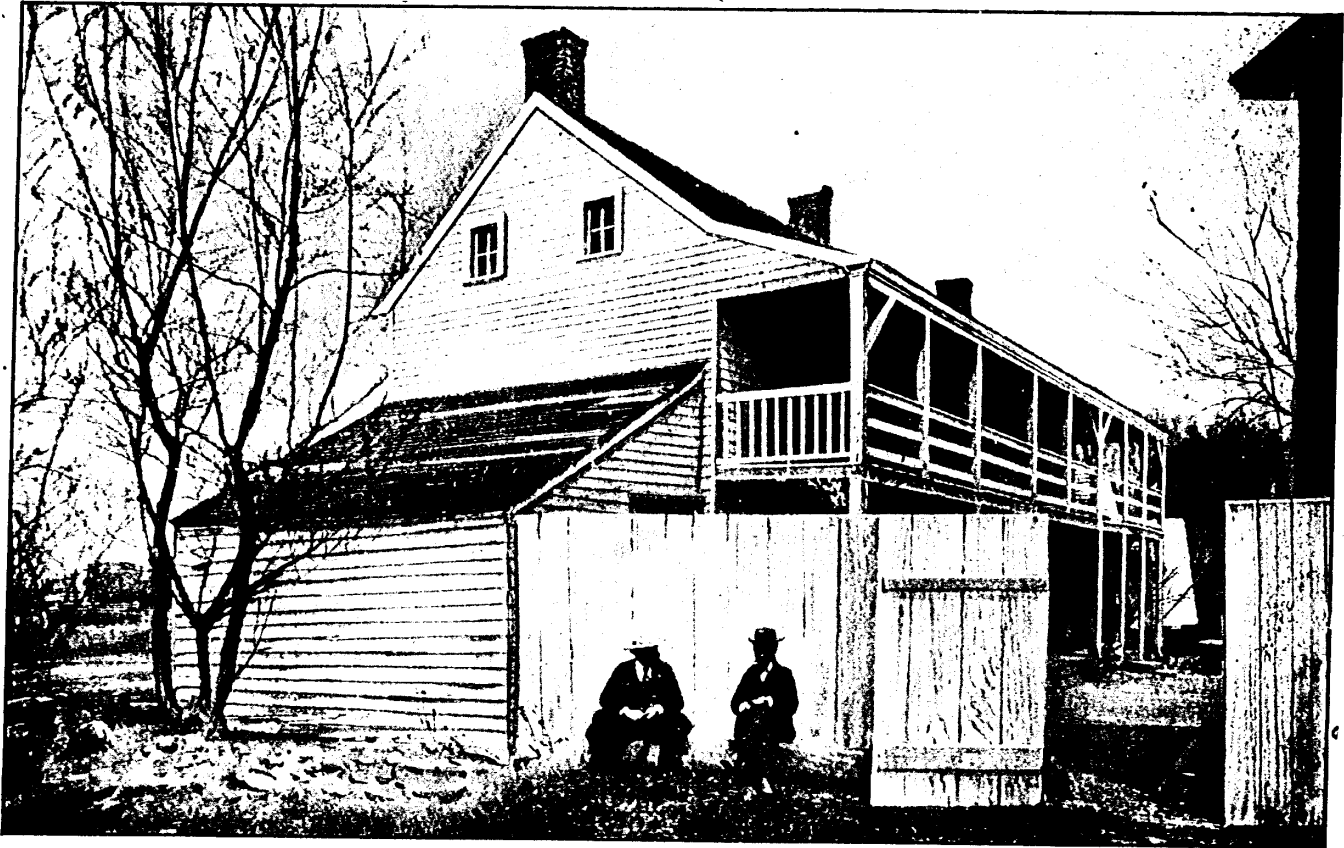
'Neath cloistered boughs each floral bell that swingeth,
And tolls its perfume on the passing air,
Makes Sabbath in the fields, and ever ringeth
A call to prayer.

Not to the domes where crumbling arch and column
Attest the feebleness of mortal hand,
But to that fane, most catholic and solemn,
Which God hath planned.

To that cathedral, boundless as our wonder,
Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply—
Its choir the winds and waves, its organ thunder,
Its dome the sky.

There, amid solitude and shade, I wander
Through the green aisles, and stretched upon the sod,
Awd by the silence, reverently ponder
The ways of God.

On January 7, 1804, Jeremiah Leeds made his first purchase of land on the beach. A second purchase was made on March 6, 1805, and a third on July 5th following. In March, 1807, he purchased one acre of land on the mainland for a "building lot," from which it may be inferred that he had not yet become a permanent resident of the island; but there are other records which indicate a resi-



Oldest Hotel in Atlantic City, near Turnpike Bridge. Built about 1815.

The oldest "hotel" in Atlantic City is now used as a boat house. It was built in 1815. The picture on the preceding page was taken before it was removed from its familiar site in the rear of the old Island House. Since then the Island House has been cut apart and moved westward of the turnpike and the "oldest hotel" has been moved two hundred feet or more, nearer the Thoroughfare.

DAYS OF YORE.

First Permanent Settlement. dence on the island as early as 1795, transient, it may be, at first, but permanent about the year 1800. On April 1, 1816, he leased to John Bryant a lot of land on the north side of the island, "with the privilege of erecting a dwelling house and salt-works, and of pasturing two cows and team for the works." These salt-works were in operation more than twenty-five years, and the average yield of salt, when properly attended, was eight hundred bushels per annum. At this time Leeds doubtless owned all the land eastward of Dry Inlet.

The "Chamberlain tract" of 131 acres was owned by James Ireland, Thomas Latham and Christian Holscom (Holdzkom) in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when they conveyed it to Thomas Chamberlain, and the heirs of the latter sold it to Francis McManus in 1852. With the exception of this tract, Jeremiah Leeds owned the whole island (claiming it and being in possession) as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Leeds' home was originally in the vicinity of Missouri and Arctic avenues, but he afterwards built a house at the eastern end of the island. Here he raised corn and rye, and the harvests were so abundant that it was a common saying among the shallop-men, who came here for grain, that they were going down into Egypt to buy corn. He gave considerable attention to the raising of stock and made willing sales of three-year-old steers at eight dollars each. As late as 1835 he paid only thirty cents a day for labor.

HOW THE "OLD TIMERS" LIVED.

At a bank dinner held in Atlantic City in January, 1889, Peter Boice, aged about eight-four, of Absecon, gave a description of Absecon Beach, as he knew it when a young man of eighteen or twenty. He used to come here to help Jeremiah Leeds reap and harvest his grain. "In those days," said he, "the greater portion of the island was sand-hills, duck-ponds, swamps, brier thickets and nesting places for the wild fowl. Many of these wild fowl could be killed with clubs, and it is said that they were so numerous at times that in lighting upon trees the branches would break. Very few people had guns in those days, consequently they resorted to other means of capturing game. They would creep up under a tree and pull down a few fat squawks or white heron with long poles having hooks on the end. People nowadays have no idea of the great abundance of game in those days. A family by the name of Wilson

**Peter Boice's
Recollections.**

brought a lot of wild rabbits to the island and set them free. In a few years they became so numerous as to be a nuisance. Foxes were plentiful and sometimes killed the little lambs, besides doing much harm in other ways. During the war of 1812 coasting vessels used to stop here for supplies of beef. The captains would help themselves to Leeds' cattle and pay him their own price, which was generally liberal enough. The whole island could have been bought very cheap then—much less than the price of a single cottage lot to-day. Leeds' occupation was the raising of cattle and grain, and though he lived a lonely life, he generally had an abundance. He took his grain to mill on the mainland in boats." Mr. Boice died in 1892. His son, Henry Boice, was also a resident of Absecon and a gentleman of wide influence. He died on March 19, 1899.



Atlantic City Country Club House.

The daughter of the latter, now Mrs. Elizabeth Boice Nourse, of Washington, D. C., presented the Atlantic City Hospital with the building known as the Boice Annex, the ground being broken on her wedding day, June 7, 1898. Mrs. Nourse is the wife of Clarence Doughty Nourse, a native of Virginia, but related to the Doughty family of Atlantic County. He is part owner of the iron works at Alexandria, Va.

Previous to 1854, says another "old timer," immense flocks of snipe and ducks settled in the ponds, especially in the vicinity of Arctic and North Carolina avenues. The district between Maryland and South Carolina avenues, from Atlantic to the meadows, was known as "Squaktown," on account of the large number of squawks which nightly roosted there. The land was low and swampy, and was covered with an undergrowth of bushes, vines and briars. About 1835

**Abundance
of Game.**

Jeremiah Leeds fired into a flock of these birds at this point and killed forty-eight. Besides quail, rabbits and foxes, there were, at that time, minks, muskrats, loggerheads, terrapins and snakes—black snakes, garter snakes and adders. Strange to say, there were no lizards or bull-frogs. The frogs made their appearance after the founding of the city.

Jeremiah Leeds' first home on the island was a log-house, built where the Reading railroad tracks now cross Arctic avenue. Till the narrow-gauge road was built a cedar-tree marked the site of the old fireplace of this log-house. This log-hut was torn down after Leeds had built a new and better one near the Inlet, at the intersection of Baltic and



Old-Time Home of John Leeds.

Massachusetts avenues. It was built of good cedar logs, shingled on the outside and sealed with plowed and grooved boards inside. It had two rooms below and plenty of chamber rooms above. This house was used as a shed and storeroom when a larger frame house was built at a later date. It was finally torn down in 1853, and the cedar logs were converted into shingles.

The third house was built about 1815. It was the home of Andrew Leeds, son of Jeremiah, and is still standing near the draw-bridge across the Thoroughfare, below Georgia avenue.

The fourth house was built at the old salt-works, where the Inlet now flows. It was occupied by John Bryant until John Horner came to this island from Tuckerton and operated the salt-works, Bryant going to Absecon. This house is now a part of the home of the late Irving Lee, on Pennsylvania avenue, adjoining the school house. Ryan Adams was the next to build a house on the Chamberlain tract, at Delaware and Arctic avenues. It is still standing, but not on the old site. The first city election was held at this house. The sixth house was built by John Leeds, son of Andrew, near Arctic and Indiana avenues. The seventh house was built by James, a brother of John Leeds. It was near Michigan and Arctic avenues. The eighth and ninth houses were built by Robert B. Leeds above Baltic, between Rhode Island and Massachusetts avenues, about 1852. These were all the houses on this island when the city was incorporated and the railroad finished, in 1854.

In 1838 Jeremiah Leeds died and his lands descended to his children: Rubanna Conover, Rachel Steelman, Andrew Leeds, Judith Leeds, afterwards Judith Hackett,

HESTON'S ANNALS.

Jeremiah Leeds' Chalkley S. Leeds and Robert B. Progeny. Leeds. The mother of the Leeds progeny at this time kept the old Atlantic House as a tavern for oystermen and traders. It stood near Baltic and Massachusetts avenues.

ANDREW LEEDS AND THE LEEDS HOMESTEAD.

Andrew Leeds, oldest son of Jeremiah Leeds, died about 1865. On November 28, 1896, his body was taken from a vault in this city and removed to Pleasantville for interment beside his first wife. The body had been buried in a metallic casket for thirty years and was sealed in a vault erected on the old Leeds homestead, near Arkansas and Baltic avenues. When the vault was broken open the relatives caused the casket to be removed to a neighboring blacksmith shop, where the lid was removed and the skeleton exposed. It had turned completely black. A number of people who gathered to witness the proceedings were given a peep at the gruesome sight. "Aunt" Ellen Leeds, the surviving widow, then 83 years old, was opposed to the opening of the vault, and became hysterical.

Andrew Leeds was born in 1791, and died at the age of 75 years. He was the only person buried in the city limits. Several drowned sailors were buried on the island at one time, but were later removed to a cemetery on the mainland. The home of "Aunt Ellen" was a modest place for a woman who would have been almost a millionaire had her husband lived and successfully fought the law suits in which he was engaged during his last years. To a newspaper reporter she said, on the day they were forcibly removing the body of her husband:

"I am 81 years old, and it makes my Washington blood boil to think how they are treating me. Yes, I am a relative of George Washington, for my grandmother and Washington's mother were sisters. They have taken all I have from me and now they come and steal my husband. Andrew was 78 years old when he died, and I buried him on September 7th in that vault thirty years ago. They say 'Aunt' Ellen is crazy, but I remember everything. Before Andrew died he planted three stakes in the yard and said that when he died he wanted to be buried there in a vault. When he was buried there were no houses here. It was all wilderness. We used to live in a house on a site now used as the intersection of Baltic and Arkansas avenues. It has all been built up now, but I lived all the time near his grave. Andrew always said that he was born here, and that he would die here and wanted to be buried here, and I kept my promise. Now they have stolen him away; I don't know who, but I think my grandchildren."

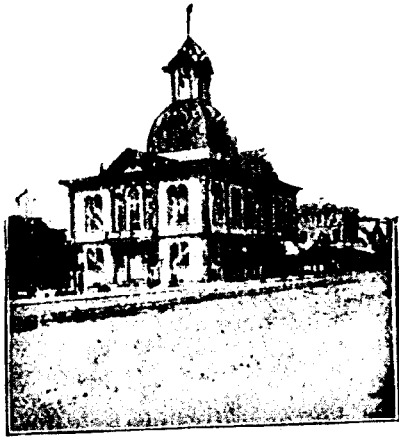
"Aunt Ellen" died at Pleasantville on October 20, 1900, in the eighty-eighth year of her age. Two years later, in September, 1902, what had once been an earlier home of Andrew Leeds was moved nearer to the Thoroughfare. It was the oldest "hotel" in Atlantic City, but had not been occupied for many years. This house at that time was located immediately in the rear of the old Island House property, near the turnpike bridge, at Baltic and Georgia avenues. It was long known as the Leeds homestead, and was built in 1815.

DAYS OF YORE.

Andrew Leeds' Homestead.

Its first owner and occupant was Andrew Leeds. The original building was a little four-room cottage, constructed of ship timber, and built for the purpose of withstanding time and the elements. In 1820, owing to an addition in Mr. Leeds' family, four more rooms were added to the original structure, making the eight-room house as it stood on the day it was to be destroyed, without alteration, addition or repairs.

Mayor Stoy and other citizens inspected this old landmark, and expressed regret that it would soon disappear before the march of progress. A land company, headed by George A. Crawford, was making extensive improvements, necessitating the moving or obliteration of the old Island House and the Leeds homestead. Mr. Crawford hearing of the solicitude of the Mayor to save the old homestead, said he would donate it to the city, provided the municipality would contribute another site. Mayor Stoy at once communicated officially with City Council, but that body was devoid of sentiment. A member moved that the building be given to the Board of Health, to be used as a morgue, which was equivalent to saying to Mr. Crawford, "we decline your offer, with thanks." The old landmark was thereupon retained by Mr. Crawford and by him converted into a boat-house. It still stands near the turnpike bridge.



First City Hall, Atlantic City.

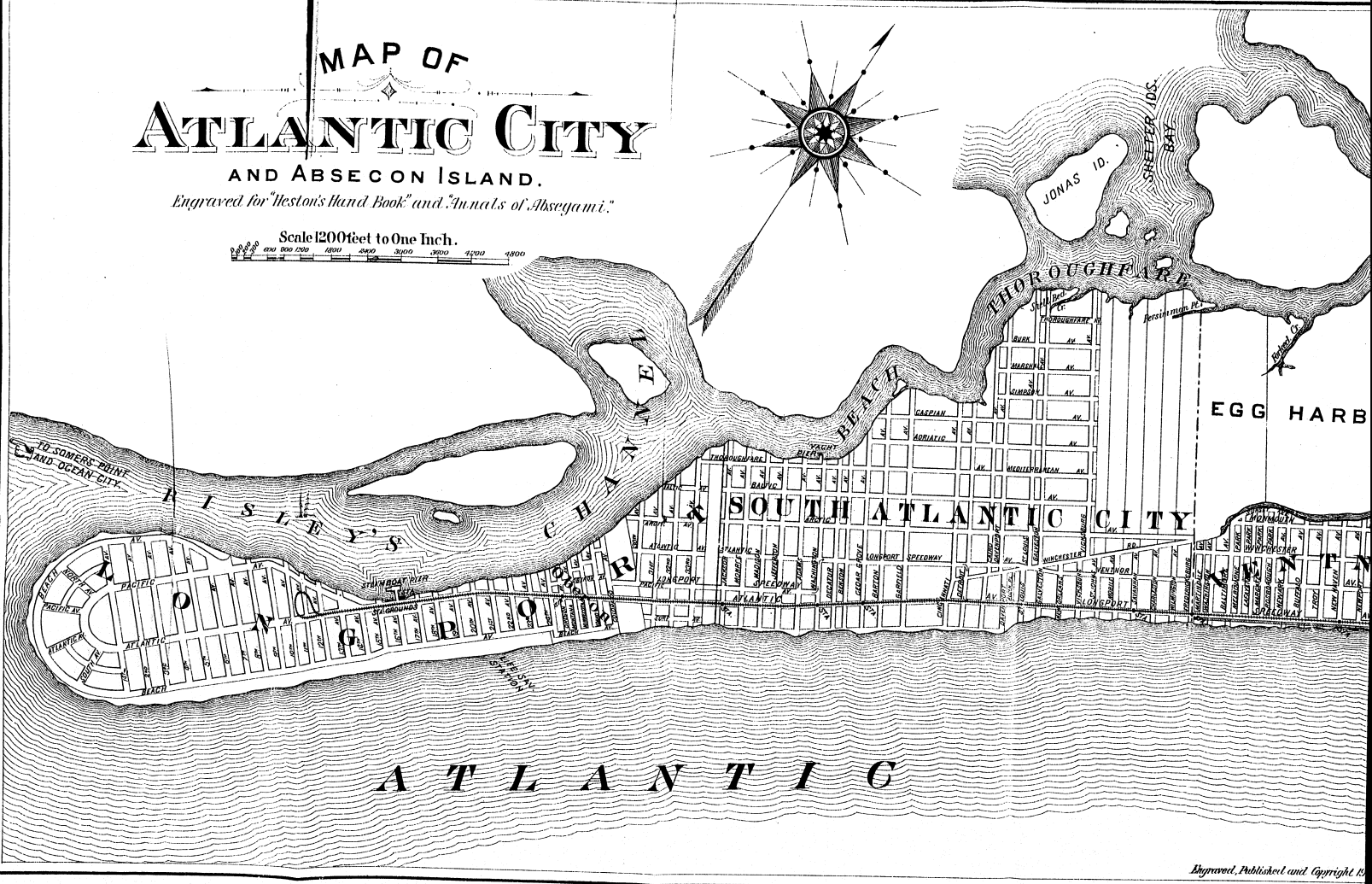
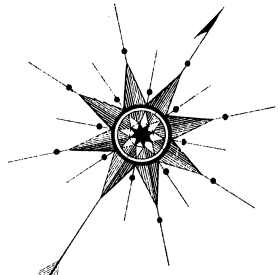
Little more than fifty years ago the island was so uninviting that when the project to make a summer resort was instituted, the idea was ridiculed as being utterly impracticable. Said a conservative old capitalist: "Call it a sand-patch, a desolation, a swamp, a mosquito territory, but do not talk to me about any city in such a place as that. In the first place, you can't build a city there, and, in the second place, if you did, you couldn't get anybody to go there." The conservative capitalist was in due time gathered unto his fathers, and the enterprising men who set to work to plant a city have had the satisfaction of seeing more than their most sanguine expectations realized.

MAP OF ATLANTIC CITY

AND ABSECON ISLAND.

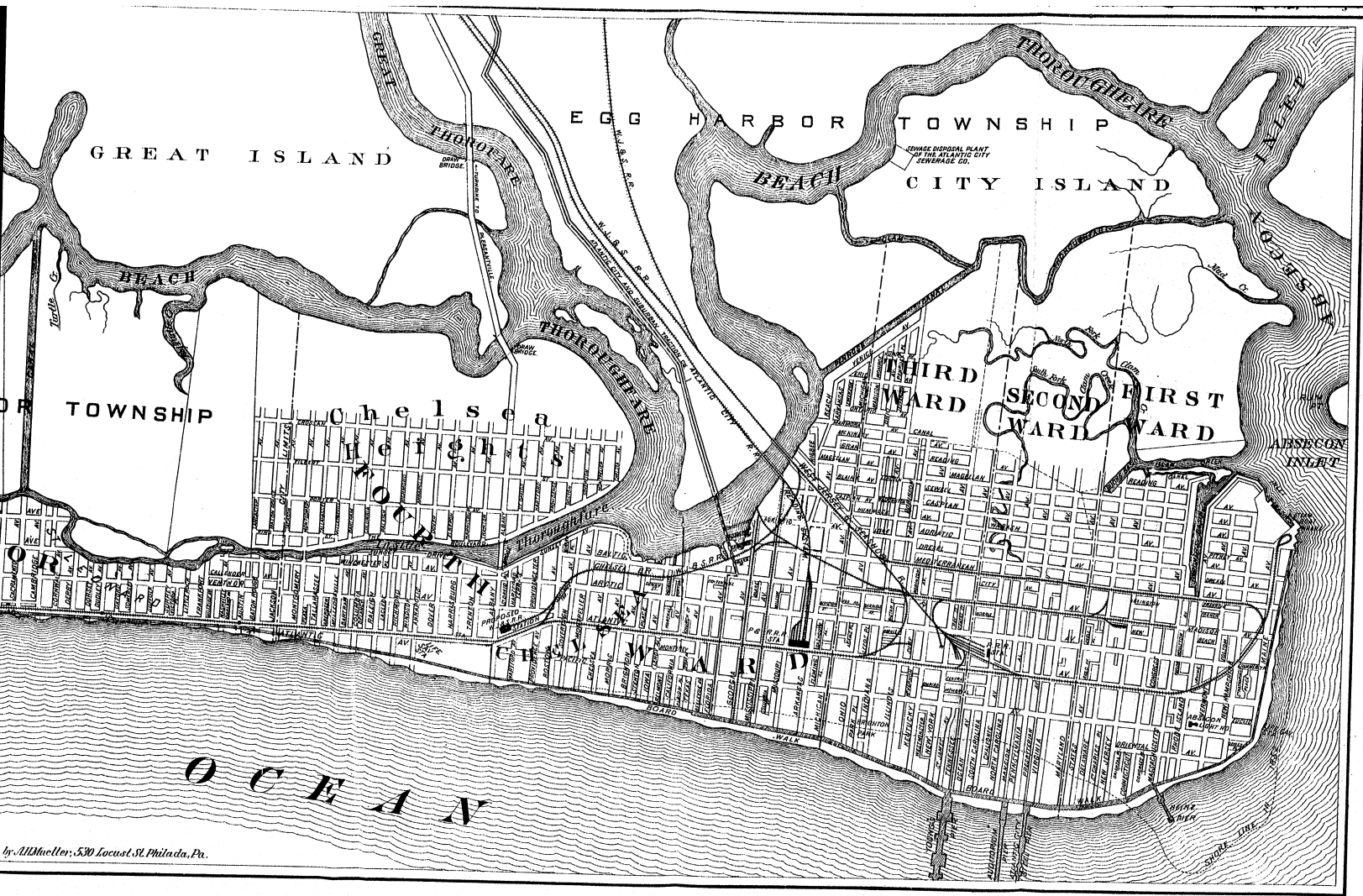
Engraved for "Heston's Hand Book" and "Annals of Absecon."

Scale 1200 feet to One Inch.



A T L A N T I C

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