

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 Seven-
teenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

ALSO
Indian Traditions and Sketches

of the region between Absegami and Chicho-
hacki, in the country called Scheyechbi.

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

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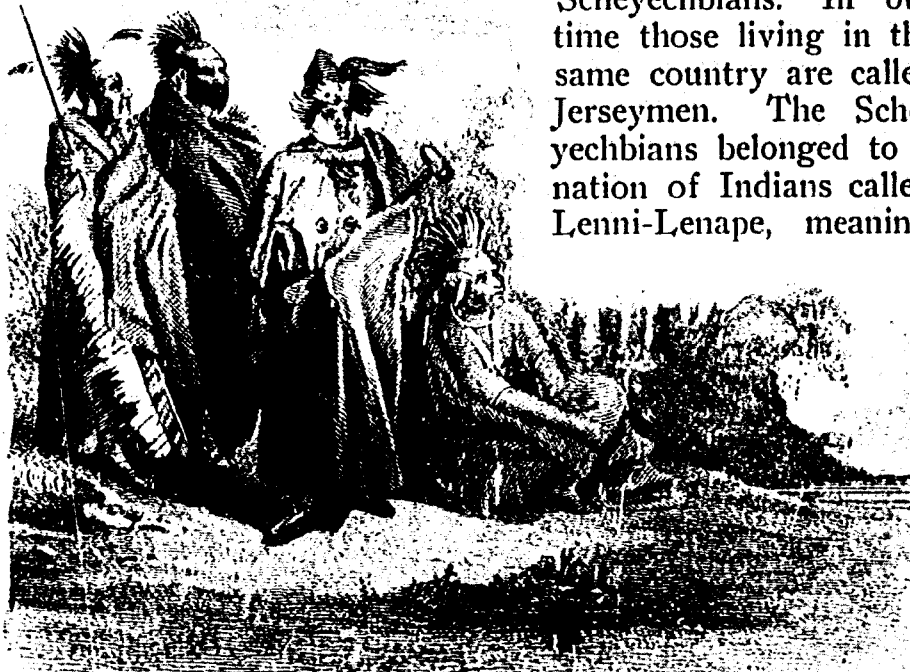
VOLUME I

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Indian Stories and Traditions.

FAR back in the annals of time, ere the foot of white man had trod the soil of Scheyechbi, the region of country east of the Lenape-Wihit-tuck was a paradise for the Indians. Here the untutored child of the forest flourished in his glory; here, unmolested, he wooed his mate beneath the greenwood boughs and traversed the forests at will in quest of game.

Living in the country of Scheyechbi,* the inhabitants were, of course, Scheyechbians. In our time those living in the same country are called Jerseymen. The Scheyechbians belonged to a nation of Indians called Lenni-Lenape, meaning



*Scheyechbi (pronounced Shay-ak-bee) means "long land water," referring, probably, to the waters enclosing the southern peninsular of the State.—"Indians of New Jersey," by William Nelson, p. 19.

**Illusions of
History.**

original people, but the very name suggests a falsehood. There are witnesses in the stones to the probable existence of an entirely different people anterior to the Lenapes. The Scheyebians may have been the descendants of those Chinese navigators who are said to have penetrated the forests of North America in the year 458 A. D.†

The tradition of the Lenni-Lenapes was that the name meant "Original Men." As the central, largest and at one time the strongest division of the Algonquin race of Indians, which comprised all the Eastern tribes, they assumed, and for a long time held, the leadership among the Atlantic coast tribes. Orthographical research in the Indian language, however, indicates that the original meaning of the name was "manly men," the race name for man being "lenape," and "lenni" being another form of "illini," as seen in "Illinois." Other traditions indicate that the tribe was once located west of the Mississippi, whence it migrated eastward to the valleys of the Susquehanna and Delaware.

The "histories" of these so-called original people consisted entirely of stories handed down through the centuries, from generation to generation, until they finally reached the Indians who were in possession of the country when the white man came among them. The red man's history, therefore, was simply his-story.‡

†M. de Guignes, 1753; Smith, p. 13, 1765.

‡One of the greatest men of Europe once said that history is a combination of lies, which men agree to call truth. Few of us will ever know exactly the extent of the legends, the myths and the falsehoods which have been incorporated into history. When we think of the histories of our wars and the biographies of our heroes, we can truly appreciate the cynicism of Frederick the Great, who, desiring his secretary to read history to him, said, "Bring down from the shelves one of my liars." There is a familiar story of Sir Robert Walpole, who, when his daughter attempted to beguile his illness, and asked what she should read to him, made answer: "Anything but history. That I know is lies." In days of old there were historians who avowedly wrote as they were bribed. It was said of Paolo Giovio that he kept a bank of lies. To those who paid him liberally he assigned a noble pedigree and illustrious deeds; those who gave nothing he vilified and blackened. Who is not familiar with the despairing exclamation of Sir Walter Raleigh, on vainly trying to get at the facts of a quarrel which he had witnessed in the courtyard of the Tower, in which he was imprisoned. Two gentlemen had entered the room and given him conflicting, and, as he thought, untrue accounts of the brawl. "Here am I," he cried, "employed in writing a history of the world—trying to give a just account of transactions many of which occurred three thousand years ago—when I cannot ascertain the truth of what happens under my window."

What we call history is often fact fictionized by our prejudiced and distorted views, after it has received similar treatment at the hands of historians in general. But in time the mists and false colorings of wilful or unwritten misrepresentation gradually disappear, and although we may see as through a glass darkly, we do at least see things more as they are, and less as they appeared to those whose interests, material or sentimental, rendered them alike incapable of seeing distinctly and describing honestly.

It is evident that he who records what he sees, if his record is to be of lasting value, must see truly and must write fairly. Unfortunately, the brilliant man is not infrequently among the most erratic, and therefore among the least trustworthy. We have a good example of this in Macaulay, whose history, written as a special pleader in the interest of a certain party, in spite of its early popularity, is now justly relegated to the position of a political work, of no particular historical value, —a Whig pamphlet rather than a history.

Ancestors of the Indians. A missionary and scribe (Rev. John Heckewelder) has given us some account of what the Indians believed concerning their origin. They assured him that their earliest ancestors were animals and that they lived in caves under the earth. One of their number discovered a hole, through which he climbed, and once upon the surface he found the air and country so delightful that he hastened back to tell the other animals. They came forth from their subterranean highways and by-ways, and beheld, indeed, a country that was very fair to look upon; an island beside the sea, it may be, with the wine of life in its pleasant air. The effect was marvelous, for straightway they saw that they were no longer animals, but men and women. Two of the animals, however, the ground-hog and the rabbit, refused to leave their underground homes when bidden, and consequently they remained unchanged; wherefore, some of the tribes of Scheyechbi would not eat of these animals, lest they be accused of eating their own family relations!

MYTHS OF PRIMITIVE AMERICANS.

Described briefly, and by an Indian, the American myth system is as follows: There was a world before this one in which we are living at present; that was the world of the first people, who were different from us altogether. Those people were very numerous, so numerous that if a count could be made of all the stars in the sky, all the feathers on birds, all the hairs and furs on animals, all the hairs of our own heads, they would not be so numerous as the first people.

These people lived very long in peace, in concord, in harmony, in happiness. No man knows, no man can tell, how long they lived in that way. At last the minds of all except a very small number were changed; they fell into conflict—one offended another consciously and unconsciously, one injured another with or without intention, one wanted some special thing, another wanted that very thing also. Conflict set in, and because of this came a time of activity and struggle, to which there was no end or stop, till the great majority of the first people—that is, all except a small number, were turned into the various kinds of living creatures that are on earth now or have ever been on earth, except man—that is, all kinds of beasts, birds, reptiles, fish, worms, and insects, as well as trees, plants, grass and rocks, and some mountains; they were turned into everything that we see on the earth or in the sky.

That small number of the former people who did not quarrel, those great first people of the old time who remained of one mind and harmonious, left the earth, sailed away westward, passed that line where the sky comes down to the earth, and sailed to places beyond.

**Origin of the
Lenapes.**

Jeremiah Curtin, in his work on "Creation Myths of Primitive Americans," published in 1899, gives us the result of close personal communication with the American Indian in the nineteenth century. Mr. Curtin considers that "the treasure saved to science by the primitive race of America is unique in value and significance." Among the more noteworthy of the myths is "Olel-bis," containing an account of the creation of the heavenly house in the Central Blue, the highest point in the sky above us. In this myth is described the great World Fire which was extinguished by a flood; and next a reconstruction of the race in the form now existing.



William Nelson, an authority on Indian history, says the Lenapes had their origin in the neighborhood of Hudson's Bay, and began migrating southward probably three or four thousand years before the Christian era. This statement is based partly upon their traditions and partly upon the kitchen middens or kitchen leavings, traces of which are found in the shell-heaps of New Jersey. These shell-heaps are the production, not only of the Indians living along the coast, but of tribes living along the shores of the Lenape-Wihittuck, who made periodical journeys to the seashore for the triple purpose of fishing, fowling and bathing. These journeys were always made afoot, as the horse was then unknown on this continent.*

One of the largest of these shell-heaps was found on the marsh skirting what is now known as Great Bay, about a mile from the mainland. It has been conjectured that this mound marks the site of an ancient pile-dwelling settlement, similar to the settlement of twenty huts found by Columbus on the north coast of South America, to which he gave the suggestive name of Venezutela, or Little Venice. In place of a shallow layer of shells scattered over a considerable area (a characteristic of all aboriginal village sites on the seacoast) at Great Bay there was found a

*Until quite recently it was believed that the horse originated in Asia, but late discoveries, says a recent writer (E. L. Anderson, London, 1898), show that "at a period long anterior to the earliest records of Asia, horses were known to mankind in various parts of Europe. The remains of the horse of our times are found with those of the extinct mammals of the quarternary period; and, as far as discovered, our horse has an antiquity as great as that of any existing quadruped. The primitive man who dwelt in rock-shelters and caves, and who is supposed to have flourished in that division of the world's history called the "reindeer period," certainly used the horse for food. In the caves of France, Switzerland and other countries great quantities of the bones of horses have been found under circumstances which prove that they were put there long before the times of which we have any historical knowledge, and that their presence was due to a primitive race of man.



An Indian in Full Dress.

A former mayor of Atlantic City, David W. Belisle, published a very readable book of 360 pages in 1854, entitled "American Family Robinson." It is a work on the Indians and Indian adventures. The picture of an Indian in full dress, on the preceding page, was taken from this book. Mr. Belisle was mayor of Atlantic City in 1866, 1867 and 1868. Subsequently he became attached to the *Public Ledger*, of Philadelphia, and was the New Jersey editor of that paper for a number of years, making his home in Camden.

Indian Mounds and Shell-heaps. single mound of extraordinary height and proportions. This significant feature, coupled with the fact that the marsh was once an integral part of the bay, naturally suggested a pile-dwelling settlement. Several Indian graves were uncovered on the slope opposite the mound, from which were taken thirty-two skeletons of adults.

Doubtless the curling smoke from Indian wigwams once ascended above the hill-tops and red cedars which marked the present site of Atlantic City. Traces of these remained until recent years in the shell-mounds in the vicinity of Hill's Creek, above Chelsea, where Indian implements of a very archaic character were also found. Another of these shell-mounds was found at what is now Missouri avenue, between Arctic and Baltic, Atlantic City. Thousands of bushels were taken from this mound and used in the building of the Higbee road.

Dr. Thomas K. Reed, of Atlantic City, has a collection of Indian relics that is unsurpassed by any other private collection in the country. To him, also, the writer is indebted for much information concerning the early history of Atlantic City and Absecon Beach. Dr. Reed has been an active participant in the various movements tending to the advancement of Atlantic City, and during the three decades, 1860 to 1890, he was the leading spirit in every such movement. He is the Nestor of Atlantic City physicians, is universally respected as a model professional gentleman and highly esteemed by a wide circle of friends in Atlantic City and elsewhere. The soul of honor, courageous, educated, studious and refined, he is, literally and exactly, in the best conceivable meaning of that hackneyed phrase, a gentleman and a scholar.

INDIAN RELICS ON THE LEEDS HOMESTEAD.

While working in the rear of a house on Division street, Atlantic City, on April 2, 1900, a plumber discovered a box containing human bones. The house was at one time the home of Andrew Leeds, who died about 1865, and was buried in a vault on the premises, his being the only grave on the island, so far as known. This property remained in the possession of Andrew's widow, familiarly known as "Aunt Ellen" Leeds, until 1896, when it passed into other hands, and Andrew's bones were removed to Pleasantville. The finding of the

Skeletons at Chestnut Neck. bones of a human being in the rear of the old Leeds homestead caused some speculation, but the mystery was explained by Mrs. Abbie Leeds, widow of James Leeds, a son of Andrew and grandson of Jeremiah Leeds, the first settler. Mrs. Leeds said the bones found in the box were no doubt the same bones which Andrew Leeds had unearthed about 1850, near the present entrance to the turnpike bridge, at Baltic and Georgia avenues. At one time there were Indian shell-mounds at this point, the shells being used in the building of the Higbee road in the early history of the city. Near these shell-mounds the skeletons of a number of Indians were dug up out of the sand by Andrew Leeds, who sent them to Dr. Pitney, at Absecon. Many years ago, after the death of Dr. Pitney, the bones were returned to Mr. Leeds, and after the death of the latter, his widow kept them about the premises.

Dr. Thomas K. Reed uncovered a skull in a shell heap back of Ventnor on June 20, 1903. This may have been the skull of an Indian buried on the island in the long ago.

Indian mounds have been found in other parts of Atlantic County. In opening a new street at Pleasantville, in February, 1890, workmen discovered the skeletons of twenty-one Indians. The bones were found about three feet underground, and with them several flints, many arrows, one stone knife, two flakes and a stone mill, used for cracking corn. The latter had been worn nearly in two by use.

These Indian skeletons revived afresh the finding of human skeletons laid bare by the March winds, in the sandy hills of Chestnut Neck, a few years previous. Two skeletons were found beneath the branches of a large cedar, with the head of one encased in a turtle-shell, indicating that it was that of an Indian who had belonged to the Unami, or Turtle Indians, a tribe of the Lenapes, whose totem was a turtle. Many other mementoes of the aborigines have been found at different times in the vicinity of Chestnut Neck and places farther inland.



Very early in their history the Indians living along the Lenape-Wihittuck instituted summer excursions to the seashore. When the warm days of June had come, the squaws having previously planted the maize, the tribe was ready for the march to the chosen spot by the sea. Two or three days sufficed to bring them to their place of summer encampment at Absegami, whose oyster beds were ever a delight.

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Origin of the Word Absecon. Absecon is a corruption of the real Indian name, Absegami. The name originally designated the bay or salt-water lake inside the sand-bar, above what is now Atlantic City, and should be spelled Absegam, or, if the original form be used, Absegami.

Aps or abse is the common Algonkin name for small or little, and is used in relation to inanimate objects. Gami, kami, kam or gom all mean across or on the other side of. In one sense they are particles, but more frequently they are used as nouns or adjectival suffixes, referring to a wide and level expanse of land or water. Thus, Lake Superior, in the Indian tongue, is Kitchi-gami, the great water. In his song of Hiawatha, Longfellow calls it Gitchi-gumi, the big seawater, but the Bureau of Ethnology, at Washington, uses the former spelling.

The true Indian etymology of our local name is therefore Absegami, meaning "little water," and the original spelling has been corrupted to Absecam, Absecum, Absecom and finally Absecon. It must be admitted that the last is the most euphonious. On a map of New Jersey, published by William Faden, in 1777, it is spelled Absecum. In any form, it signifies little water, or water of limited extent, implying that the other shore is in sight.

In a few of the early deeds the name of this beach or island was spelled "Absequan," but there is no authority for this spelling. It is a transmogrification of the real Indian word, "Absegami."

Arriving at the seashore, the Indians prepared for a sojourn of many weeks by erecting temporary lodges of skins or cedar barks and boughs, where they lived and feasted on luxuries so bountifully supplied by the waters, the marshes and forests. They visited friendly tribes farther up the coast, and doubtless enjoyed these sociables as though they themselves and their rude entertainers were people of the highest civilization. The men went fishing and fowling, searched for the eggs of the marsh-hens and gulls, or gathered shell-fish on the flats of the bay. While they were thus engaged, the women attended to the children, cooked the food procured by their lords and masters, gathered the materials and made circular beds of fire on which to roast terrapin, oysters and clams. At this encampment the chief of the tribe strutted about, proudly displaying his white and purple embroidered costume, deeming himself the most gorgeously dressed and greatest monarch on earth.

Ere the melancholy winds of October began to blow, the Indians prepared to leave their temporary abode at the seashore. They loaded themselves with dried shell-

Battle of the fish, some winkle-shells for drinking-
Aborigines. cups, and a few large sea-shells intend-
ed for crockery-ware in the winter
wigwams. The squaws lashed the papooses to their
shoulders and, with a string of dried shell-fish on each
arm, they were equipped for the journey. The men car-
ried their tomahawks, their scalping knives and bows and
arrows, besides bundles of wild fowl or strings of dried
shell-fish, and thus equipped the whole tribe commenced
the journey, Indian file, back to their winter wigwams.

* * *

Indian "history," which, as already stated, is only another term for tradition, makes the vicinity of Absegami the scene of a sanguinary battle. A numerous party of the Unami Indians were hunting on the shores of the Mullica, and while thus engaged they encountered a party of warriors belonging to a hostile Minsi tribe, who had come south in quest of pleasure and scalps. Instantly the spirit of vengeance was aroused, and with drawn weapons the warriors rushed into battle. Stern was the strife, for the forces were about equal in numbers and courage. Gliding panther-like from tree to tree, hurling the tomahawk or drawing the bow and arrow, they waged deadly strife until the shadows of night closed around them. Half the warriors on each side had fallen, but as yet there was no thought of flight. Crouching low in their leafy coverts, and casting eagle glances through the darkness, those unrelenting foes watched and waited for the coming day. At dawn the fight was renewed with unabated fury. Shouts of rage and vengeance were heard on every side, and the wild shrubbery was dyed with blood, as brave after brave fell. Still the conflict went on till but two of the Unamis and one of the northern tribe remained. Observing their advantage, the two Unamis sounded the war cry and advanced to seize their solitary foe, but this doughty savage had no idea of being taken. Flourishing his tomahawk, he uttered a yell of defiance and plunged into the river. His enemies attempted pursuit, but he left them far behind and quickly gained the other shore. Pausing a moment

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Indian Tribes of Scheyechbi. to wave a taunting farewell, he dashed swiftly away and disappeared in the forest. The baffled Unamis then returned to their camp with tidings of the fatal combat, which was destined to be long preserved in the traditional annals of the nation.

Previous to 1645 the Indians were monarchs of all they surveyed in that part of Scheyechbi between the Mullica and Great Egg Harbor. At the time of the coming of the English and Scotch emigrants from Long Island, the red men were not so numerous as they had been.

LOCATION OF INDIAN TRIBES.

A pamphlet published in 1648, by Beauchamp Plantagenet, entitled "A Description of the Province of New Albion," etc., contains a letter written by Robert Evelin, who had passed four years in the province, in which he says: "I find some broken land, isles and inlets, and many small isles at Egbay (Egg Harbor); but going to Delaware Bay, by Cape May, which is 24 miles at most—on that north side about five miles within a Port or rode for any ships called the Nook (Maurice River), and within lieth the king of the Kechemeches, having as I suppose about 50 men, and 12 leagues higher a little above the Bay and Bar is the Manteses. The king of the Manteses hath about 100 bow-men; next above about 6 leagues higher is the king of the Sikonesses, and next is Asomoches, a king with an hundred men, and next is Eriwoneck, a king of forty men (the Amarongs), and five miles above is the king of Ramcock (Rankokas tribe) with a hundred men, and four miles higher the king of Axion (tribe of Atsion or Atsionks) with two hundred men, and next to him tenne leagues over land an inland king of Calcefar, with an hundred and fifty men. And six leagues higher, near a creek called Maselian, the king having two hundred men. And then we come to the Fals. The Indians are in several factions and war against the Susquehannocks."

The author of the pamphlet adds that in addition to those named by Evelin "there are at least 1200 under the two Raritan kings on the north, and those come down to the ocean about little Egbay and Sandy Barnegate and about the South cape (Cape May) two small kings of forty men apiece, called Tinans and Tiascans, and a third reduced to fourteen men at Raymont."—Plantagenet, p. 20; Smith, p. 31.

John DeLaet, another early historian, mentions other tribes, as follows: Naraticongs, Armewamexes, Maeroahkongs, Sewaposes, Minquosces, Mattikongees and the Sanhigans, the latter being the tribe situated at the falls of the Delaware, or what is now Trenton, but which the Indians called Chickohacki. This was the largest Indian village on the east bank of the Lenape-Wihittuck, and here the great chief of Scheyechbi resided.

Gabriel Thomas, in his quaint little history, mentions a tribe called Amacarock, located on the mainland northwest of the island,

Indian Marriage Advertisement.

whereon Atlantic City is now built, which is- and he designates as having "some wood land, some sandy ground." Thomas also locates a tribe called Yacomanshag, about where the town of Hammonton is now situated. Remains of this last-named Indian village were found by a wood-chopper, about five miles north-east of Hammonton, in June, 1896.

Undoubtedly, in the enumeration of the Indians, the writers included the men only, as not until the boys reached the age of fifteen did they become bow-men. We are told that until they reached this age they spent most of their time in fishing. At fifteen they became bow-men, and as soon as they could return to their father's wigwam with a sufficient number of skins, after a day's hunt, they were allowed to marry any girl in the camp who wore a crown of red or blue bays, as an advertisement of her willingness to marry. Usually the male took his first wife at sixteen to eighteen and the female wore her "advertisement" at about fourteen or fifteen.

To approximate the population of a tribe we may safely multiply the number of bow-men by four, and on that basis we find that in the year 1648 there were above 9,000 Indians in the southern and central parts of Scheyechbi, or New Jersey. In the north and north-western sections there were doubtless several thousand more, as we learn from other sources that there were tribes called the Matas, the Chichequaas, the Raritans, the Navesinks, the Nanticokes and the Tutelos. These all belonged to the Lenni-Lenape nation, of which there were two branches in the pine and coast region of Scheyechbi—the Unami or Turtles, and the Unilachtogo or Turkeys.

The upper valley of the Delaware was the home of the Minsi, or "Mountaineers," whose totem was the wolf. They were the real warriors of the Lenni-Lenapes, and were the least susceptible to missionary influence. Further south, as stated, were the Unami, or "People down the River," whose totem was the tortoise. This signified that as the tortoise was the progenitor of mankind and bore the world upon its back, the Unami were entitled to lead in governmental affairs. In the region from the Rancocas southward to Absegami and Cape May were the Unalachtogo, or "People who live near the Ocean." They were skilled in fishing and spoke more subtly than the other tribes the agglutinative language of the Lenni-Lenapes. They were gentler than the Minsi, and being opposed to war, gained for the Lenni-Lenapes the contemptuous phrase of "women" from the Indian tribes of New York.

About the Delaware, almost all the Indian names of streams have been abolished, but several branches of the Mullica and Great Egg Harbor yet retain their primitive titles.

In the pamphlet from which we have quoted we read that in the vicinity of what is now Atlantic City (Eggbay) the country "partaketh of the healthiest aire and most excellent commodities of Europe," and in the forests there were "five sorts of deer, buffes (buffalos) and huge elks to plow and work, all bringing three young at once." The uplands were "covered many moneths with berries, roots, chestnuts, walnuts, beech and oak and mast to feed them, hogges and turkeys, five hundred in a flock."

According to the traditions of the Indians, their number had been greatly reduced by wars among themselves.

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Indian Fights in Egg Harbor. One tribe of the Unamis lived at what is now Leedspoint, another at Wills and Osborn Islands, to the north, and still another at Manahawkin. The first named were a branch of the war-like tribe of Atsionks or Axions, who had their principal settlement near where the present village of Atsion now stands. They claimed the exclusive right to fish in and hunt along all the tributaries of the Mullica. The Tuckahoe Indians, a more peaceful tribe, dwelt along the river of that name, on the southern boundary of Atlantic County. Between the two tribes there was considerable intercourse, and in going from one settlement or camp to another they crossed the Great Egg Harbor river at Inskeep's ford, near the present town of Hammonton. Here they would generally stop for the night, always sleeping in the open air, and never remaining after sunrise.

Between the tribe whose camp was near the present site of Leedspoint and the two tribes on the north there was a bitter hostility. One night when the Wills Island Indians were sleeping in apparent security the Leedspoint warriors crossed the Mullica, and taking their slumbering foes by surprise, massacred all but one, who fled unnoticed to the Manahawkin tribe, and informed the chief thereof of the fate which had befallen his people. The Manahawkin braves armed themselves, and started in pursuit. They arrived the night after the slaughter and found the victorious warriors singing and dancing in exultation of their victory. The Manahawkin braves moved stealthily around to the eastern shore, where they captured the canoes of the Leedspoint tribe, and placing a guard over them, rushed in upon the unsuspecting revelers, slaying them on every hand. Those of the enemy who fled to their canoes found them in the possession of the guard, who killed every warrior that approached, and in a short time there was not a Leedspoint brave left to tell the tale of the battle. Mulberry field, where this battle took place, has always been remarkable for the fertility of its soil. Near the field were several mounds, and some years ago a farmer who owned the land resolved on turning these mounds to good account. Ac-

Battle at Mulberry Field. cordingly, he scattered their contents over the fields for purposes of fertilization. In digging into the mounds many human bones were discovered, there being alternate layers of earth, bones and shells. Mingled with the bones were a number of Indian implements.

HOMES AND HABITS OF THE INDIANS.

Concerning some of the habits of the Lenni-Lenape Indians, we learn from John De Laet, who wrote in 1625, and who was the intimate friend of De Vries, the navigator, that their sumptuary furniture consisted of calabash ladles, mussel-shell spoons, earthen pots, and oak leaf saucers. They aped no good manners, not even on extraordinary occasions. If they ate at the house of a white man, they insisted on mounting the table and there enjoying their host's hospitality in a cross-legged, tailor-like posture. The wigwams of the South Jersey Indians were for the most part roofed with chestnut bark, seamed together with strings slit from maize stalks. These huts were so close and warm that no rain could penetrate. The mats covering the sides were made of corn leaves, and the huts were often large enough for several families. They were sometimes built square, and the tops were generally conical, with a centre pole, around which was an opening for the escape of smoke. To this pole or to the roof they affixed a beam or hook to support an earthen kettle, under which a fire was kept in place by a rude hearth of stones. Around this they spread their corn-leaf mats, which served the triple purpose of bed, table and chairs. Most houses had two doors, which were opened or shut, according to the requirements of wind and weather. In time of war the wigwams of the whole tribe were built together and surrounded with palisades, and these fortifications sometimes ripened into towns. The largest Indian village in Scheyechbi (New Jersey)—especially South Jersey—was about where Trenton now stands. It was called Chickohacki. It was the home of the Sanhigan tribe. The Sanhigans sometimes came to Absegami in summer time.

In sickness, so long as there was any hope, the people were very attentive to each other, but they considered it waste of time to take care of desperate cases. Always impatient to recover or die, if treatment with herbs failed to be beneficial, they shut themselves up in a close cabin, where they were steamed by the sprinkling of water upon red hot stones, after which they were hurried to the nearest creek and therein immersed. This treatment either killed or cured.

The boys fished until fifteen, when they usually became bow-men, and at 16 or 18 they married, the girl being usually a year or so younger. The ceremony of marriage was very simple, and yet significant. In the presence of the relatives, the man gave a bone to his intended wife or squaw, and she handed him an ear of maize, meaning thereby that the husband was to provide meat and the wife bread. From the time of marriage, hunting and fishing was their business, and war their amusement.

Campanius, who wrote in 1702, pronounces the Lenni-Lenapes "the most sensible nation in all America," and William Penn says: "He will deserve the name of wise man that outwits them." They were straightforward and despised bad faith so heartily that Gabriel

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Discovery of Absegami.

Thomas says of them: "If any go from their first offer or bargain with them, it will be very difficult for that party to get any dealings with them any more." The same author, after attributing to the Indian women of Scheyechbi the qualities of neatness, cleanliness, industry and ingenuity, crowns all by saying: "Their young maids are very modest and shame-faced, and their young women, when newly married, are very nice and shy."

The language of the Lenni-Lenape Indians was sweet, lofty and sententious—one word serving for three in the English. William Penn, in a letter dated August 16, 1683, said that no tongue spoken in Europe could surpass it in melody and grandeur of accent and emphasis.



With the advent of the white man the Indians gradually disappeared. That part of Scheyechbi, or New Jersey, whose history we are tracing, was called Eyer Haven, or Egg Harbor. Henry Hudson, in the Dutch ship "Half Moon," a vessel of about eighty tons, discovered Absegami and Eyer Haven on September 1 and 2, 1609, but did not attempt to enter any of the inlets along the coast until he reached what is now Barnegat.

About the last of August Hudson entered Delaware Bay, but finding the navigation dangerous he soon left without going ashore. After getting out to sea again he steered northeastwardly and after a while anchored and made land in the vicinity of the Great Egg Harbor, a few miles south of Absegami.

LOG-BOOK OF THE "HALF MOON."

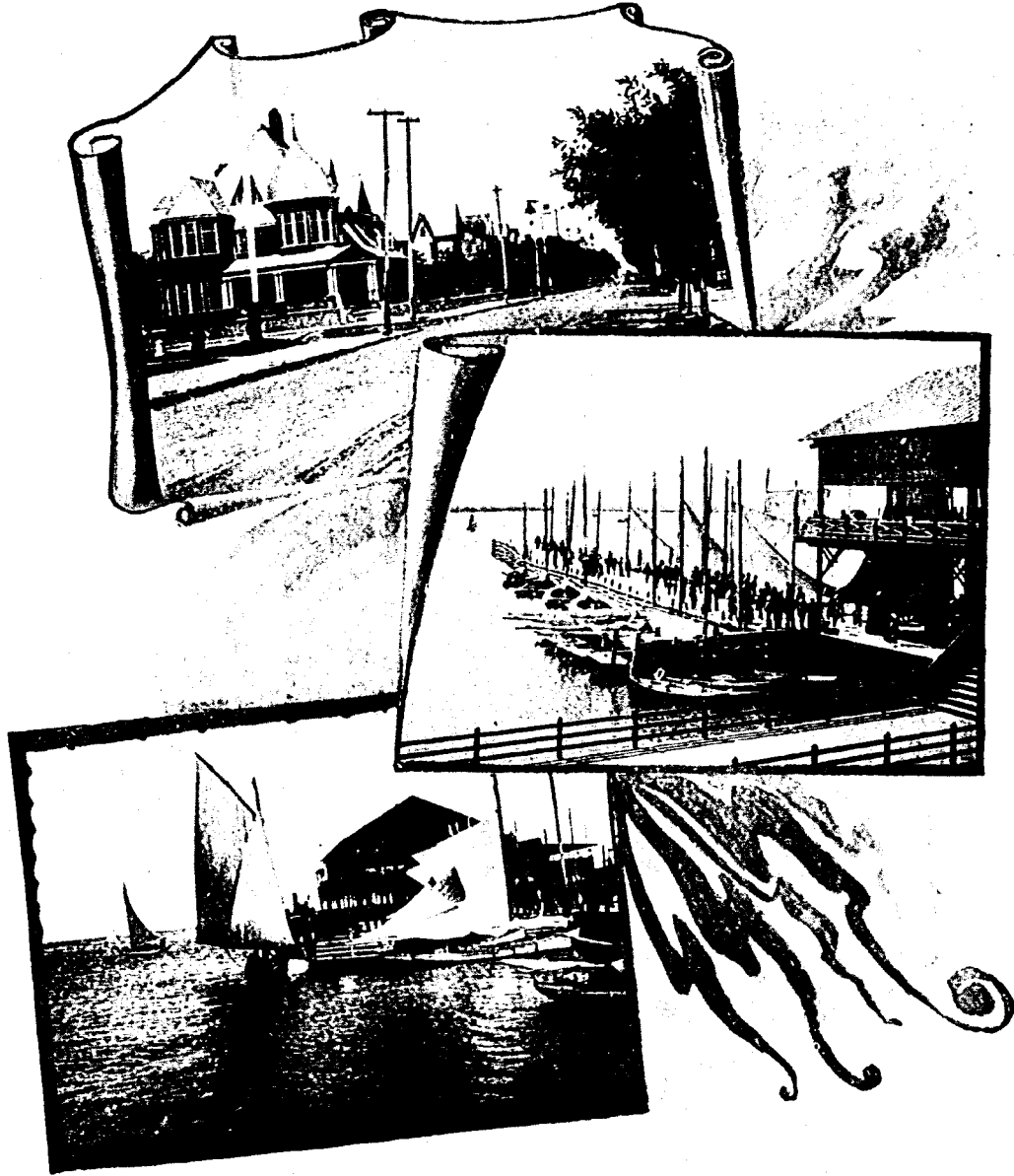
The log-book of the "Half Moon" was kept by the mate, Robert Juet, and contains the first reference to old Eyer Haven of which there is any record. In his log-book, under date of September 2, 1609, he says: "When the sun arose we steered north again and saw land from the west by north to the northwest, all alike, broken islands, and our soundings were eleven fathoms and ten fathoms. Then we luffed in for the shore, and fair by the shore we had seven fathoms. The course along the land (Absecon Beach) we found to be northeast by north. From the land, which we first had sight of, until we came to a great lake of water, as we could judge it to be (Great Bay and Barnegat Bay), being drowned land, which made it rise like islands, which was in length ten leagues. The mouth of the lake has many shoals, and the sea breaks upon them as it is cast out of the mouth of it. And from that lake or bay the land lies north by east, and we had a great stream out of the Bay; and from thence our soundings was ten fathoms two leagues from land. At five o'clock we anchored, being light wind, and rode in eight fathoms water; the night was fair. This night I found the land to haul the compass eight degrees. Far to the northward of us we saw high hills, for the day before we found not above two degrees of varia-

**Staten Island
Seized.**

tion. This is a very good land to fall in with, and a pleasant land to see." The high hills "far to the northward," referred to by Mate Juet, were the highlands of Navesink and Staten Island. Perhaps the reader has wondered why Staten Island, in spite of its location, is a part of New York, instead of New Jersey. On March 20, 1664, James, Duke of York, received from his brother, Charles II., a grant for "all that part of the main land of New England," particularly described; also "all the land from the west side of the Connecticut river to the east side of Delaware bay, and the several other islands and lands," etc., including the provinces of New York and New Jersey. Three months later, on June 23d, the Duke of York, "for the consideration of ten shillings, lawful money of England," conveyed to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret all that portion of the territory between the Hudson river and Delaware bay or river, to be known thereafter as Nova Cæsarea or New Jersey. The duke despatched Sir Robert Carre and Admiral Richard Nicholls, with a land and naval force, to take possession of all lands included in the grant from the king. Much of the territory was then in possession of the Dutch under Peter Stuyvesant. Nicholls was given command of the land forces, consisting of about three hundred men, and his instructions were to place Berkeley and Carteret in possession of New Jersey, and to hold for the Duke the lands eastward of the Hudson, including "the small islands in adjacent waters." Nicholls carried out his instructions, but was perplexed as to the disposition of Staaten Eylandt, as the Dutch called it. Long Island was too big to be doubtful. It was clearly a part of New York by reason of its size and location. The other islands were so small as to be included in the term "small islands in adjacent waters," but Staten Island was neither one thing nor the other—neither large nor small. He finally decided that any island that could be sailed around in twenty-four hours was small enough to come within the instructions, and might be fairly considered a part of New York.

HOW STATEN ISLAND BECAME A PART OF NEW YORK.

Nicholls therefore commissioned Captain James Billup, of the ship "Bentley," to make the effort to circumnavigate the island in twenty-four hours. Billup regarded the beautiful island, with its wooded heights, as a rare prize for the duke, and he determined to win it for him, if possible. But treacherous shoals and shifting winds made it a difficult task. He took the outside course first, but when he started up through what the Dutch called the Arthur Kills he grounded opposite to where Perth Amboy is now located. Finally the crew warped the vessel off, but in a short time she was aground again. Billup was in despair, when three Indians put out from the shore and paddled up to the ship. One of them, Matoachen, or Metuchen, a chief of the Po Ambo tribe, could speak a few words in Dutch, and to him Billup managed to make known his plight. Matoachen agreed to serve as a pilot, and his knowledge of the channel and shoals made it possible for Billup to finish his course within the twenty-four hours. Thus it was that Staten Island became a part of New York. Nicholls granted to Billup, as a reward, a large estate on the southern end of the island, which grant was afterwards confirmed by the Duke of York. Billup named it Bentley Manor, after his ship, and the old stone Bentley manor-house is still one of the landmarks in that part of the island. Billup's memory is preserved in Billup's



Pacific Avenue Eastward from States Avenue - Yachtmen's Pier and Pavillon.

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

State Lines Determined.

Point, at the extreme southern end of the island, where the government erected a fort during the Spanish-American war.

In 1769 the line between New Jersey and New York was officially located by a royal commission, whose report was characterized by largeness of expression and sparseness of detail. To settle the disputes that were constantly arising, another commission was appointed in 1834. This commission decided that the boundary should be the middle line of the Hudson River, beginning at the forty-first degree of north latitude, the middle of New York Bay, the middle of Kill von Kull, the middle of Arthur Kill and the middle of Raritan Bay. This seemed definite enough, but it was not long before new disputes arose. The bed of Raritan Bay became valuable as an oyster planting ground, and the uncertainty as to jurisdiction led to frequent disputes and occasional bloodshed. In 1887 another commission was appointed by the Governors of New York and New Jersey to locate definitely the line between the two States. This commission agreed upon a line in 1889. From the mouth of the Hudson it sweeps east of Robbin's Reef Lighthouse, and includes not only Robbin's Reef and Bedloe's Island, but Ellis Island and Oyster Island, making them a part of New Jersey.

As the Statue of Liberty is on Bedloe's Island, it is on New Jersey soil, although the Century Dictionary and other atlases erroneously placed it within the bounds of Greater New York, until their attention was called to the error by the writer.



The discovery of the inlets above and below Absegami may be properly credited to Captain Cornelius Jacobsen Mey, of the ship "Fortuyn," who left New Amsterdam in June, 1614, and cruised down the coast on a voyage of discovery. He called the inlet now known as Barnegat by the Dutch name of Barendegat, meaning "Breakers Inlet," or, as it is in English, "the inlet with breakers." In the rivers his men in the ship's boat found an abundance of gulls' eggs, and he, therefore, called the streams Great and Little Egg Harbor (the latter now known as the Mullica), and the country Eyren Haven, the Dutch for harbor of eggs. Absecon Inlet he also called Barendegat, these words being used at first not as a name, but merely as a description of the inlet. In the course of time the word was corrupted into Barnegat. On Vanderdonck's Dutch map, made in 1656, it is Barndegat, and in his description of the coast, in one place, he calls Absecon Beargat. He says: "There are several fine bays and inland waters, which form good sea harbors for those who are acquainted with the inlets and entrances to the same, which at present are not much used, particularly Barnde-

**Stories of the
Early Writers.** gat, Great and Little Egg Harbor and Bear-gat, wherein anchorages are safe and secure. But as few Christians are settled at those places, the harbors are seldom used, unless the wind and weather render it necessary for safety."

A certain William Wood, in his description of New Jersey, published in 1634, gives us an idea of some of the habits of our aboriginal friends, the Indians, in the following classic lines :

" The dainty Indian maize
Was eat with clam-shells out of wooden trays,
The lucious lobster with the craw-fish raw,
The brinnish oyster, mussel, periwigge,
And tortoise sought by the Indian squaw,
Which to the flats dance many a winter's jigge,
To dive for cockles and to dig for clams,
Whereby her lazy husband's guls *she crammis.*"

The last line of the foregoing beautiful stanza is most likely literally true. A similar practice is prevalent in some sections of the State even unto this day, being one of the habits of the aborigines which our lazy forefathers were quick to adopt and transmit to succeeding generations. In every community there are men whose wives, like the Indian squaws, are required to do all the drudgery, and often feed and clothe the indolent lords of creation.

Thomas Campanius Fjelm—the last word being an affix to the name proper, denoting the place of his nativity, Stockholm—was one of the most ingenious and picturesque liars that ever traveled—a man of more than Munchausen ability in that particular. He tells some hideous stories of the country, and of many strange things, among which was the fish tree, which "resembles box-wood and smells like raw fish. It cannot be split, but if a fire be lighted around it with some other kind of wood it melts away." Somewhere in the middle of one of the creeks, we are told, there was a place which was never known to freeze, and where swans were seen at all times. The streams were alive with whales, sharks, sea-spiders and tarm-fisks, and the shores "with a large and horrible serpent, which is called a rattlesnake, which has a head like that of a dog and can bite off a man's leg as if it had been hewn down with an axe. There are horny joints in their tails, which make a noise like children's rattles, and

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Quaint Gabriel when they see a man they wind themselves in a circle and shake their heads, which can be heard at a distance of a hundred yards. 'These snakes are three yards long and thick as the thickest part of a man's thigh.' Speaking of the king crab, this prevaricator says: "Their tails are half an ell long and made like a three-edged saw, with which the hardest tree may be sawed down."

Thomas. Gabriel Thomas, in enumerating the streams, mentions Great Egg Harbor River, "up which a ship of two or three hundred tuns may sail." This country, he adds, "is noted for its good store of horses, cows, sheep, hogs, etc., the lands thereabouts being much improved and built upon." On the map which accompanies his book the island whereon Atlantic City is built is described as having "some wood land and some sandy ground."

Some of the "wonderful things" found in this part of the country two centuries ago can best be described in the language of the quaint historian Thomas. "There are, among other various sorts of frogs," he says, "the bull-frog, which makes a roaring noise, hardly to be distinguished from that well known of the beast from which it takes its name. There is another sort of frog that crawls up to the tops of trees, there seeming to imitate the notes of several birds." In writing of the productiveness of the soil he digresses in this wise: "Jealousie among men is here very rare, and barrenness among women hardly to be heard of; nor are old maids to be met with, for all commonly marry before they are twenty years of age, and seldom any young married woman but hath a child." * * * * "Gloucester-Town," says he in another part of his book, "is a very fine and pleasant place, whither young people come from Philadelphia in the wherries to eat strawberries and cream, within sight of which city it is sweetly situated." Burlington was then the "chiefest town" in West Jersey, but Salem was the "ancientest."

Vincent Leonarda, a Portuguese adventurer, was wrecked on Absecon Beach about the middle of the seventeenth century and wandered thence to New York, returning eventually to Portugal.

Romance of
Minnequa.

Leonarda was said to be a descendant of Vasco da Gama, the great Portuguese discoverer. In the shipwreck he and a few of his followers were saved, and, being kindly treated by the Indians, they remained at the camp some days. On leaving, and making their way toward Manhattan Island, they endured hardships and exposure before reaching the mouth of the Hudson, whence they were taken by Dutch settlers across the river to New Amsterdam. Here they soon fell in with a skipper who was about sailing for the Mediterranean, and after a passage of eleven weeks were landed at Barcelona, whence they made their way to Portugal. Some time afterwards the government requested Leonarda to write a narrative of his adventures. This he did, but for some reason, instead of being published, the manuscript was deposited in the archives of the bureau of navigation at Lisbon, where it was destroyed by fire, with many other public documents, about 1848. Previous to its destruction an American traveler gained access to this quaintly written document. He describes it as "a sincere and plaintive, but simple story of adventure, which is probably rendered more sad in tone than it otherwise would have been, by reason of the private troubles that were weighing upon the heart of Leonarda when he wrote it." Doubtless the writer refers to Leonarda's grief over the death of his lady live, a young woman of distinction, which is said to have occurred during his absence in America. Leonarda himself died at Oporto three years after his return to Portugal.

The description of the beach and surrounding country, as given in the parchment, left no doubt in the mind of our American traveler that the shipwreck of Leonarda occurred at no other place than Absegami, or Absecon Beach.

About the time of this shipwreck, according to the story of Leonarda, there was an unusual commotion among the Indians encamped in the vicinity of Absegami. One of their number was Koowauhoke, brother of Wekolis, the chief, who was deeply enamored of an Indian girl named Minnequa. The girl also loved Koowauhoke, and she in turn was loved by Wekolis,* the chief, who cruelly forbade any communication or association between his brother and the girl. To prevent any violation of this order, Wekolis had the girl confined in his wigwam, under guard. The brother whom he had hitherto loved Koowauhoke now hated, and the fire of revenge burned within him.

One night, so the story goes, Koowauhoke and a number of his friends, after a fruitless attempt to rescue Minnequa, broke away from the camp and erected their wigwams about four miles distant, proposing to make an assault upon the camp of Wekolis at a favorable time.

Day and night the young girl was under guard and among the watchers was a young Indian named Waukoonaby, who had loved

* "Wekolis" is the Indian name for the whip-poor-will, a bird whose quaint and unobtrusive note has attracted more attention than that of most other birds. It is heard mostly in the evening, after sunset, when all animate nature is going to rest for the night; also at day break and during the early hours of the day. Heckewelder, in his "Indian Nations," page 307, says: "The Delaware Indians observed that when the white oak put forth its leaves in the spring it was time to plant corn. Then the whip-poor-will arrived and hovered over them, calling out his Indian name 'Wekolis,' in order to remind them of the planting time, as if he said to them, 'hack!heck,'—'go to planting corn!'" An orchid growing in Southern New Jersey, a species of lady's slipper, is called by the Jersey farmers whip-poor-will shoe.

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Wekolis and Waukoonaby.

the captive from his childhood. He well knew that she could never be his squaw, yet he was constrained to risk his own life in an attempt to rescue her from the hands of one whom he knew she did not love. One day, during the absence of the chief, while Waukoonaby was walking with the fair maid of the ocean at some distance from the wigwam, he suggested that she escape with him. At first she hesitated, fearing detection and punishment for both. But at last she consented and a plan of escape was agreed upon.

One stormy night everything seemed auspicious. The chief had left the camp at mid-day and had not yet returned from the chase. Waukoonaby persuaded his fellow-guardsmen to go to sleep, assuring them that he would guard well their captive. As soon as the others were asleep, the watchful pair crept cautiously out of the wigwam and fled, in the face of wind and rain, toward the camp of Koowauhoke. After traveling some distance and being fatigued by the rigors of the night, they sought shelter in a grove of cedars. Here they detected lights at a distance, and believing themselves near the camp of Koowauhoke, they hastened on. On approaching the camp they heard much commotion. The girl and her companion hallooed for assistance, and soon two red men approached. Waukoonaby and the girl supposed they were friends, and before discovering otherwise one of the Indians smote Waukoonaby to the earth with his tomahawk. He quickly seized the girl, and, taking her in his arms, hastened back to his friends. Instead of the camp of her lover, as the girl had supposed, she found herself in the presence of Wekolis, who, returning to his own camp that night, had discovered the treachery of Waukoonaby and was then in pursuit of the girl and her companion.

The next day Koowauhoke, hearing of the girl's capture, determined to attack the camp of his brother the following night. This he did, but was worsted by superior force. He and his men retired to their wigwams sad-hearted and discouraged.

The captive maiden, the object of this fighting, saddened by the fate of Waukoonaby, grieving over her separation from Koowauhoke, and suffering, perhaps, from her exposure of the night before, was taken sick. As she lay upon her bed of leaves and grass in the wigwam, the chief approached, perhaps to caress her. Her face was calm and her brow was cold. He believed her dead. Instantly his heart was filled with compunction, and rushing from the wigwam, he fled to the camp of his brother, crying "Mercy! Mercy! I have killed Minnequa."

Koowauhoke was greatly alarmed. He did not stop to upbraid his brother, but hastened at once to the opposing camp, desiring, if possible, to embrace in death the girl whom he had so dearly loved in life. Reaching the tent, he was overjoyed to find her alive and in deep slumber. The chief had supposed her dead, when, in fact, she had merely fainted.

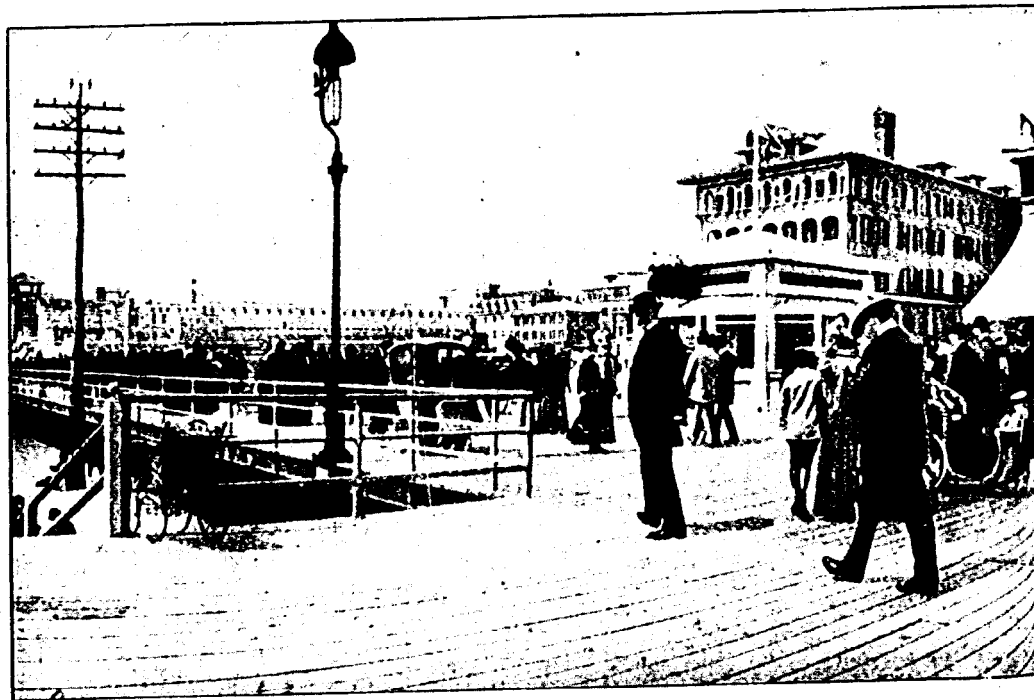
This incident served to melt the chief's heart. Not only did he bid the girl marry the man whom she loved, but if we are to believe our Portuguese chronicler, he actually made Koowauhoke chief of the tribe. Waukoonaby, who had assisted the girl in her flight, although severely wounded, we are informed, did not die, but bravely returned to camp and was requited for his fidelity by receiving in marriage the hand of the chief's sister, another beautiful daughter of the forest.

**Indian Titles
Recognized.**

This story, as given by Leonarda, may be somewhat embellished, although in his manuscript he assured the Portuguese that he gave the facts exactly as they occurred about the time of his shipwreck at Absegami or Absecon Beach.

The government of New Jersey always recognized the title of the Indians to the lands, and always insisted on a fair purchase from them. For this reason the white settlers never had any trouble with the aborigines.

The Legislature purchased of Benjamin Springer and Richard Smith, in 1758, for £1,600, a tract of 3,044



acres, near Atsion, northwest of the Atlantic County line, in Burlington County, as a reservation for the remnant of Indians in New Jersey. This was the first Indian reservation in the country. The place was then known as Edgepelick, but Governor Bernard felicitously called it Brotherton. It is now known as Indian Mills. In 1758 the Indians, about 200 in number, were placed in possession of these lands, holding them (not in severalty) until 1802. During this time they enjoyed the right to fish in all the rivers and bays south of the Raritan, and to hunt in all uninclosed lands.

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Migration of the Lenapes.

In 1796 the Legislature appointed a commission to lease these lands and apply the proceeds to the needs of the Indians. In 1801 another act was passed, with the consent of the Indians, directing the sale of the Brotherton tract and applying a portion of the proceeds to the removal of the tribe to the Stockbridge reservation, near Oneida Lake, New York. The balance of the proceeds of this sale was invested for the benefit of the Indians.

The Mohegans at Stockbridge invited the Brotherton



tribe to "pack up your mat," and "come and eat out of our dish," adding that "our necks are stretched in looking toward the fireside of our grandfathers, till they are as long as cranes." After several years at Stockbridge the remnant of the Lenni-Lenapes purchased lands of the Indians near Green Bay, Wisconsin, and in 1832 formed a settlement there which they called Statesburg. The New Jersey Legislature appropriated the fund (\$3,551.23) then remaining to the credit of the Brotherton colony for the purchase of their new home and their transportation thither.

**Litigation
Over Taxes.**

An interesting account of the Brotherton tract and the litigation over its subsequent taxation is given in the New Jersey Archives (Vol. 9, pp. 357-8). The tract was located a little northwest of the centre of the present Shamong Township, Burlington County, covering what is now the village of Indian Mills, on Bread and Cheese Run. The act of 1758, authorizing the purchase of this Indian reservation, provided: "The lands to be purchased for the Indians as aforesaid shall not hereafter be subject to any tax; any law, usage or custom to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding." The act of 1801, authorizing the sale of the tract, was silent as to the exemption from taxation, and in 1803 the local assessor, deeming that the exemption no longer existed, assessed the lands for state and county purposes. The purchasers certiorated, and the Supreme Court, in September, 1804, quashed the assessment. In December following, the Legislature passed an act repealing the act of 1758, and in 1805 the assessor again assessed the lands in question. The Supreme Court, at the November term, 1807, affirmed the validity of the assessment, holding that the exemption clause was not an irrevocable contract, and that it was merely for the benefit of the Indians during their use and occupancy of the land. This judgment was affirmed by the Court of Errors, but being carried to the Supreme Court of the United States, was, in 1812, reversed, that tribunal deciding that the act of 1804 was unconstitutional, as impairing the validity of a contract. A singular fact is that in 1814, in the face of this decision of the highest court in the land, the property was again assessed, and a still stranger fact is that the taxes were thereafter regularly paid, until 1877, without objection or protest. In 1877 the assessment was again certiorated to the Supreme Court, which, at the November term, 1879, affirmed the validity of the assessment, on the ground that in view of all the facts, as above, "the payment of the taxes from 1814 to 1877, without questioning the right to lay them, raised a conclusive presumption that by some convention with the State the right to exemption was surrendered."

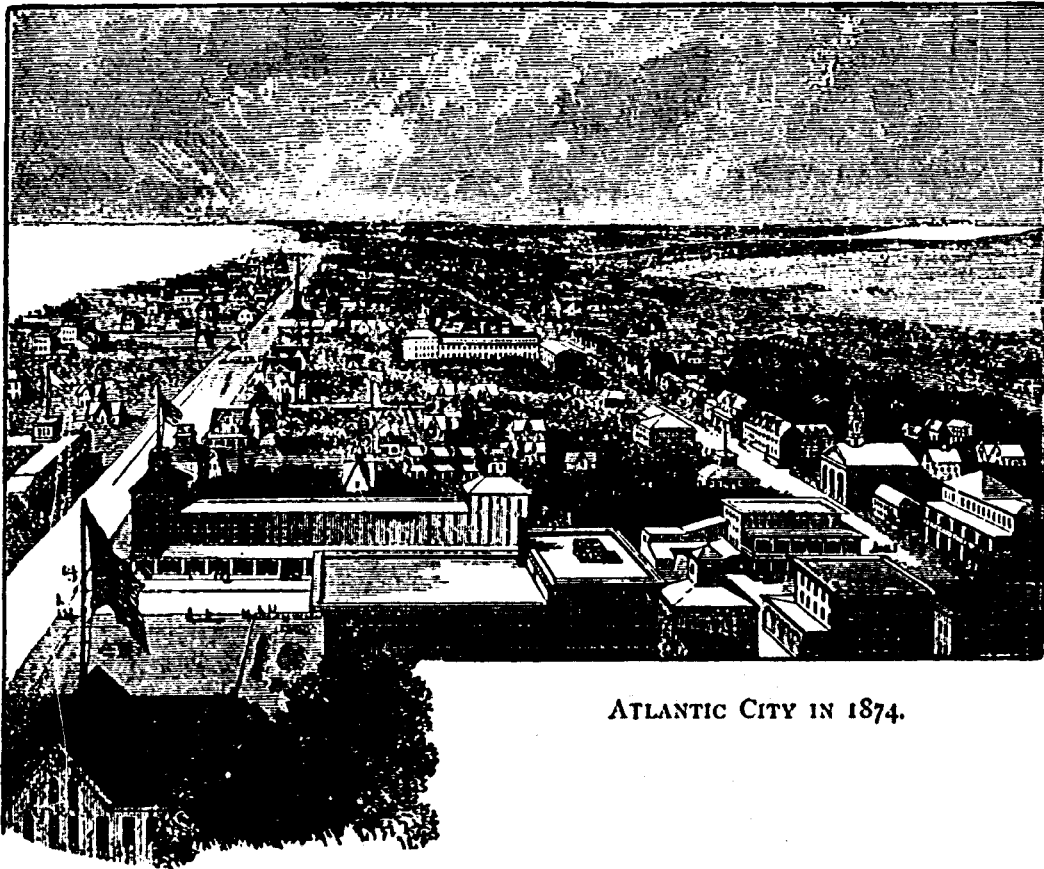
Believing that they had never parted with the right to fish and hunt secured to them in 1758, the Lenapes, forty in number, in 1832, desirous of removing farther west, deputed one of their number, Wilted Grass, known among the whites as Bartholomew S. Calvin, who had served with credit in the Revolution, to lay their claim before the New Jersey Legislature. This he did in a memorial couched in language simple and pathetic, beginning: "I am old and weak and poor, and therefore a fit representative of my people. You are young and strong and rich, and therefore fit representatives of your people." The Legislature voted the sum asked for, two thousand dollars. Wilted Grass addressed a last letter of thanks to the Legislature, in which he said: "Not a drop of our blood have you spilled in battle; not

INDIAN STORIES AND TRADITIONS.

Last Words of an acre of our land have you taken
Wilted Grass. but by our consent. These facts speak
for themselves and need no comment.

They place the character of New Jersey in bold relief,
a bright example to those States within whose territorial
limits our brethren still remain. Nothing save benisons
can fall upon her from the lips of a Lenni-Lenape."

The Lenapes of Pennsylvania were pressed successively
to the Susquehanna and Ohio rivers, and afterward to
Missouri and Arkansas. Most of their descendants are
now located in the Indian Territory and are connected
with the Cherokees. Their number is about 1,700.



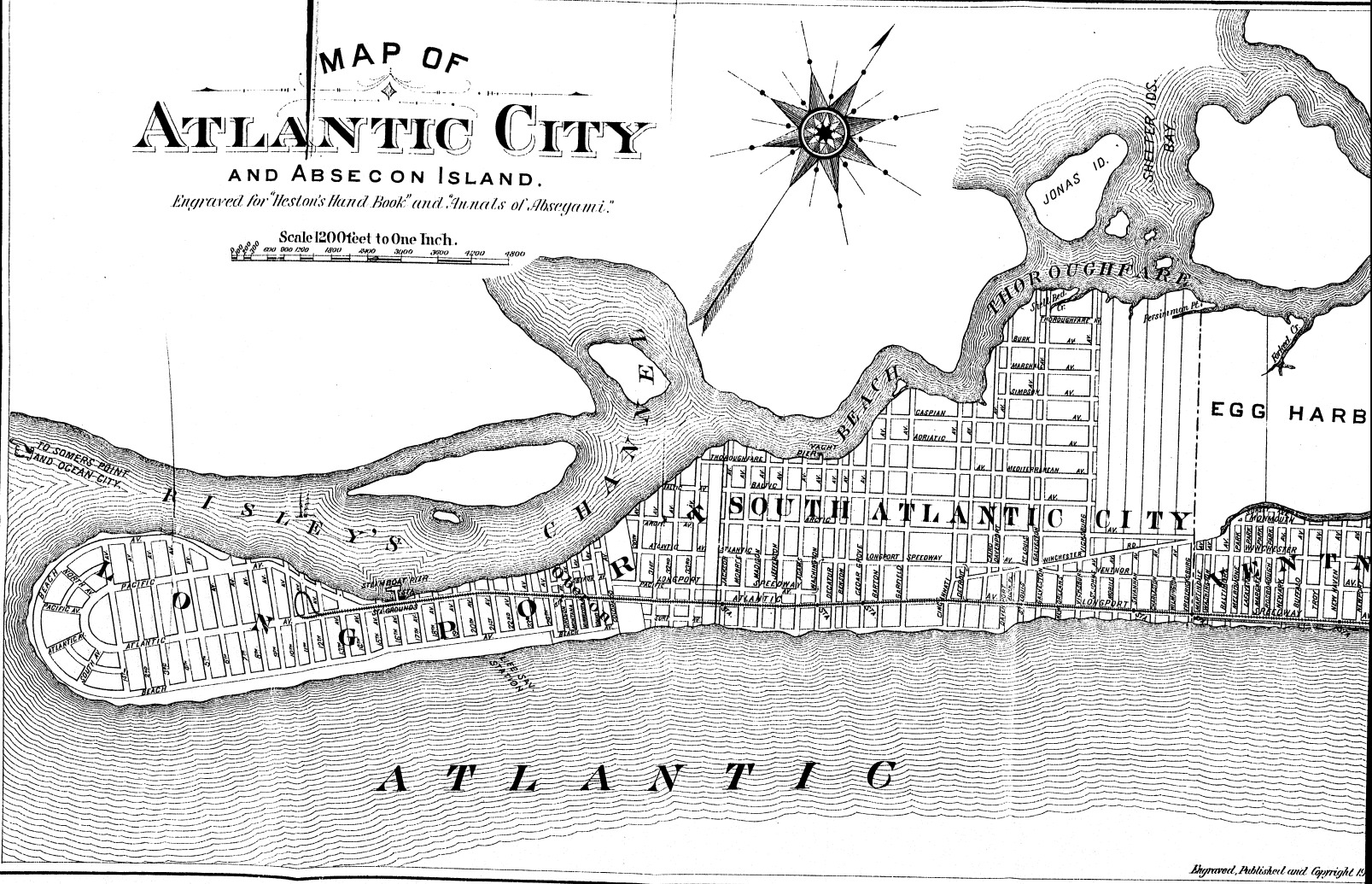
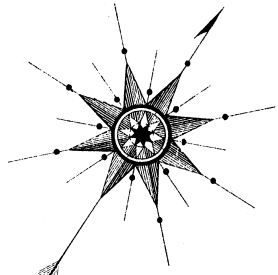
ATLANTIC CITY IN 1874.

MAP OF ATLANTIC CITY

AND ABSECON ISLAND.

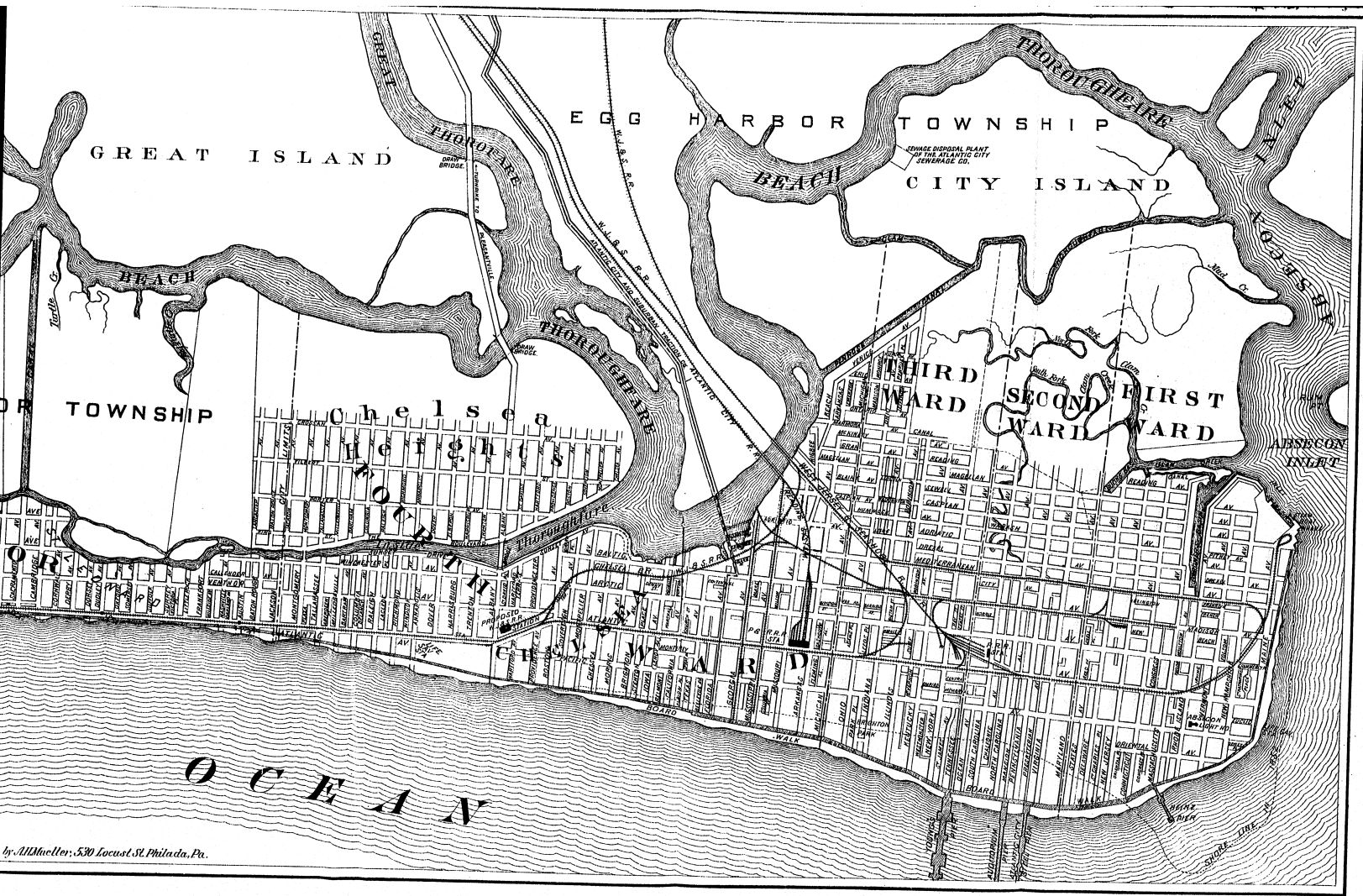
Engraved for "Heston's Hand Book" and "Annals of Absecon."

Scale 1200 feet to One Inch.



A T L A N T I C

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by A.D. Meiller, 530 Locust St. Philada., Pa.