

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

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VOLUME I

Printed for the Author—Nineteen Hundred and Four.

Revolutionary Reminiscences.

1776 to 1782.



ONE of the most important affairs which occurred on the Jersey coast during the Revolution was the attack upon and burning of Chestnut Neck, Atlantic County, in October, 1778. During the war this place was of considerable importance, being a resort for American privateers with their prizes. A thriving business was also carried on by the wagonmen, who carried goods from Chestnut Neck to points along the Delaware.

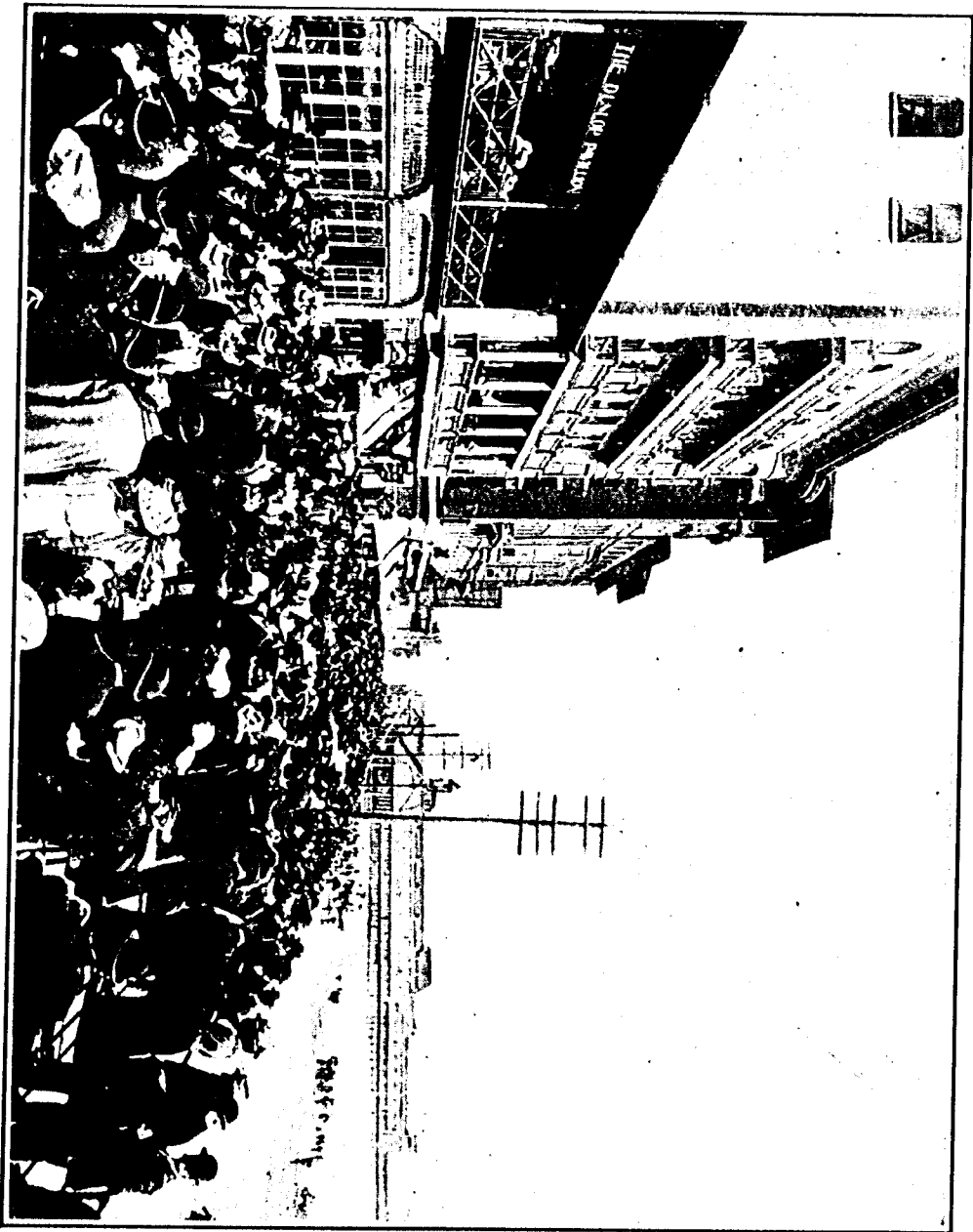
With New York harbor in a state of blockade, and Philadelphia in the possession of the enemy, a new port of entry had to be found for southern vessels bearing provisions for Washington and his army. Great Bay, on our coast, was selected for this landing place, and the supplies were forwarded in wagons to the Delaware at Burlington, and thence across the river to Valley Forge.

The British, at New York, finding their commerce much injured by the privateers, fitted out an expedition to destroy Chestnut Neck. A year or two before this two Americans, Richard Wescoat and Elijah Clark, had built a small fort at Fox Burrows, on Chestnut Neck, and bought for its defence a number of cannon, for which, in September, 1777, the colonial legislature had passed a resolution to pay them 430£ 1s 3d.*

*The following advertisement appeared in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, of Philadelphia, under date of March 11, 1777:

NEW JERSEY, March 1, 1777.

Pursuant to the directions of an act of this Council and General Assembly of New Jersey lately made and passed, entitled "An act to empower the Marshal of the Court of Admiralty to secure and sell the prize vessel or brigantine called the 'Defiance' and her cargo, lately taken by the militia of this State." Notice is hereby given that the said brigantine called the 'Defiance' with all her tackle, apparel and furniture, now lying at the mouth of Tuckahoe River, in Great Egg Harbour Inlet, and the cargo of the said brigantine, consisting of



An April Sunday on the Boardwalk.

REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES.

Attack on Chestnut Neck. A letter from Chestnut Neck, dated October 5, 1778, published in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, of Philadelphia, is also of interest. The letter says:

The enemy have made their appearance and are coming in. They are to the number of twenty sails, two frigates, several brigs, sloops and schooners, and three-row galleys with lattine sails. Several sail of vessels are here *and nothing to protect them*. All possible assistance is expected from you.

The same paper, under date of October 10th, says that Governor Livingston, of New Jersey, had received information of the intended attack, and convened Council to take measures to defeat them. Governor Livingston received the information on the evening of September 29, and at three o'clock called a meeting of the Council of Safety. He sent express riders to arouse the inhabitants on the shore. The *Packet* also announced "the arrival of Count Pulaski with his legion of horse and foot from Pennsylvania, who, hearing of the descent of the enemy on the coast at Egg Harbor, immediately marched to the assistance of that place with his troops in high spirits, and with great alacrity."

Late in the afternoon of October 5, 1778, the British fleet of nine vessels—the sloops Zebra, Vigilant and Nautilus, two galleys and four other armed boats commanded by Captain Henry Collins, of the Zebra, appeared off the bar at an inlet about a mile above Brigantine inlet. The former was closed by the shifting sands in the year 1874. This fleet had left New York on September 30th, with 300 men of the British line and 100 New Jersey "volunteers" or loyalists, and its destination was immediately made known to General Washington, who sent Count Pulaski and his legion to Egg Harbor.

molasses, sugar, coffee, cocoa, salt, cotton, etc., and sundry whaling tackle, will be sold at public vendue, at the house of John Somers, jun., at Great Egg Harbour, in the county of Gloucester, on Wednesday, the twelfth instant, the sale to begin at ten o'clock in the forenoon. The cash to be paid on the delivery of the goods.
ISAAC KAY, Marshal.

Possibly the most conspicuous fact disclosed is that New Jersey at one time had a Court of Admiralty. Such, indeed, was the case, the court being established at the opening of the Revolution and continuing to exercise jurisdiction until the powers became vested in the Federal Courts. It is also to be noticed that a "brigantine called the *Defiance*" was for sale. This vessel had been captured by the hardy Whigs of Cape May and Atlantic counties. In their yawls, shallops, yachts and schooners these patriots defended the exposed coast of South Jersey and annoyed Tory ships passing along shore from New York.

**Nest of Rebel
Pirates.**

It is asserted by Steadman, the British military historian—and he was in a position to be correctly advised—that the predatory advance of Lord Cornwallis' division into New Jersey, on the west side of the Hudson River, in September, 1778 (an incident of which advance was the massacre at Old Tappan and the change of position made by General Knyphausen and his Hessian troops on the east side of the river), was part of the general plan to divert the attention of General Washington from the expedition which had been fitted out to make an incursion on the Jersey coast at Little Egg Harbor. This movement of the British forces was certainly a correct military proceeding to successfully create a diversion of the patriot army.

During the early years of the war Little Egg Harbor Bay was, as the British officers called it, a "nest of rebel pirates." The sea-faring patriots of that section were accustomed to slip out of the bay and capture many of the rich-laden cruisers which sailed between New York harbor and Delaware Bay. The prizes taken were brought into Little Egg Harbor Bay, and a vast amount of stores and other property were thus distributed among the daring sailors in that vicinity. It is said that at one time as many as thirty armed sloops were lying in wait for possible prizes. Late in the summer of 1778 two very valuable and important prize ships, the "Venus" and the "Major Pearson," both under manifest from London, were towed into the harbor by these bold seamen.

On the morning of October 6th, owing to ill winds, the British were unable to get their fleet inside the harbor, but Captain Patrick Ferguson, who commanded the troops, resolved that he would not wait for the passage of the sloops through the inlet. He filled the galleys and armed boats with his soldiers and started up the Mullica River in the direction of Chestnut Neck, having been informed that at this point there was a wharf and storehouse for prize vessels and their goods.

THE FATE OF PAT FERGUSON.

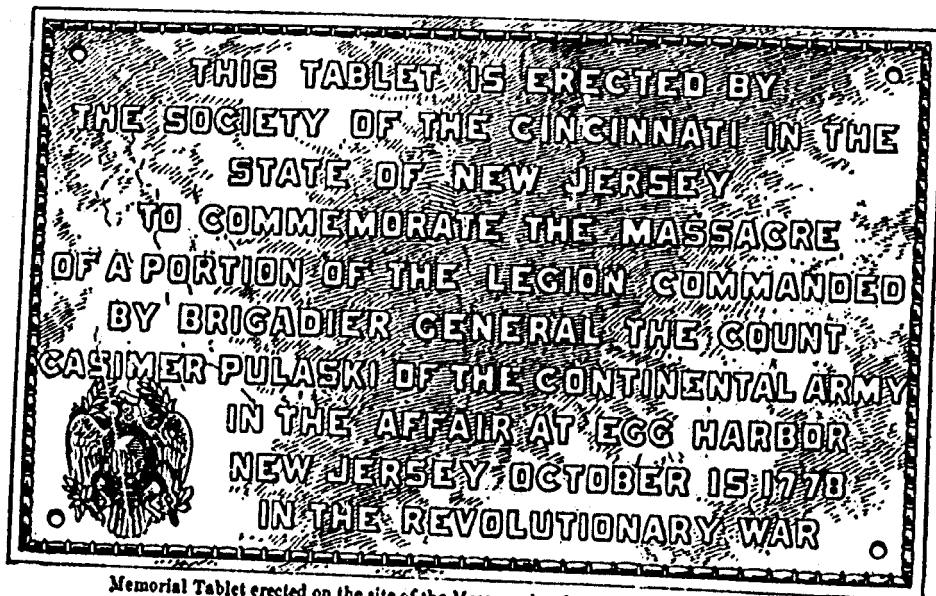
Captain Ferguson was regarded as the best marksman in the British army. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and in October, 1780, while participating in the Carolina campaign, entered on the fight at King's Mountain with a profane boast that he would not be dislodged from that natural defence; but at the close of the terrific fighting, when first retreat and then flight was the desperate order of the British commander, several of Colonel Sevier's men took deliberate aim at Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson, and he fell from his horse pierced by six or eight bullets. He died soon afterwards, and was buried in a hastily-made grave on the side of the mountain. The spoils of victory were 800 prisoners and 1500 stand of arms. The American loss was twenty.

REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES.

**Pillage and
Plunder.**

On nearing the village of Chestnut Neck, which was obscured by a thick fog, Ferguson discovered the shipping and immediately prepared to make a landing and an attack. As the men reached the shore they were met with a show of resistance by a small body of militia behind a breastwork and from another battery near by. Neither of these works, however, were provided with artillery.

The landing of the British troops was effected under the fire of the galleys and the only casualty was the wounding of one man. A charge was then made on the militia. They were driven from their breastworks and compelled to take refuge in an adjoining woods, whither



Memorial Tablet erected on the site of the Massacre by the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Jersey.

the women and children had preceded them. Returning to the shore, the British found the large prize ships scuttled and dismantled, and these they destroyed.

They also burned eight other sloops and schooners, with some periaguas and large whale boats, numbering thirty in all. The twelve houses which constituted the village were plundered and destroyed, as well as several barns. The storehouse near the wharf was stripped of all the goods it contained and burned. The breastworks were also destroyed.

**Pulaski's Legion
Massacred.**

Before leaving Chestnut Neck, Captain Ferguson was notified of the contiguity of salt works, and the barges were accordingly steered to the landing place of Eli Mathis, at the mouth of Bass River. Here the troops again disembarked and destroyed Mathis' dwelling house, farm buildings and their contents, salt works, a saw mill, and twelve houses in the neighborhood.

On the following day, Wednesday, October 7, the troops returned to the harbor, where they found the "Zebra" and "Vigilant" aground on the bar. Both vessels were floated the following morning.

On the evening of October 8th, Pulaski and his Legion entered the village of Tuckerton, and proceeding down the Island Road, encamped on the farm of James Willets.



COUNT CASIMIR PULASKI.

The command consisted of three companies of light infantry, a detachment of light artillery, equipped with a single brass field piece, and three troops of light horse.

From the Willets farm house Pulaski had a good view of the harbor and the English fleet at anchor. Farther down the road and nearer the lowlands was a picket post of about fifty infantrymen, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel the Baron de Bosen.

Lieutenant Gustav Juliet, of the Legion,

organized a fishing party on the 13th, and while in the bay, having reduced three of the number to a state of helpless intoxication, and compelled two others to submit to the disgraceful proceedings, the signal was given and they were taken on board the British fleet as deserters from the Americans. Juliet gave Ferguson a complete account of the strength and position of Pulaski's force. He also falsely told the British captain that Pulaski had directed that no quarter be given any of the British if taken in battle. It should be stated that a year before this, Juliet, then a member of the hired Hessian army, had deserted to the Americans. Lieutenant-Colonel the Baron de Bosen, second in command of Pulaski's Legion, did not admire a man who would desert his colors, and plainly showed it in his treatment of Juliet. The latter, therefore, sought the first opportunity for revenge. On board the "Zebra" and "Vigilant" a diabolical scheme was planned. Before midnight of October 14th, Captain Ferguson, accompanied by the renegade Juliet, left the fleet with 250 British regulars and Jersey loyalists, besides a number of marines. They purposed surprising Pulaski's picket guard of fifty men commanded by Baron de Bosen. The British rowed over ten miles in

**Betrayed by
a Hessian.**

galleys to Osborn's Island, and landed between three and four o'clock on the morning of Thursday, October 15th. Captain Ferguson sent a party to guard the inmates of the home of Richard Osborn, Jr., and to compel some male member of that family to guide them to the picket post of the Americans on the mainland. Osborn's son Thomas was threatened with a drawn sword and thus compelled to serve as guide.

Marching across the island, they came to a bridge over Big Creek. Ferguson left fifty men to guard this point and secure his retreat. Then silently proceeding about a mile over a rough corduroy road, they came to the upland, where they found a single sentinel, whom they captured before he could discharge his firelock. This soldier being secured, and some accounts say he was killed, the entire command of Ferguson made a rush for the three houses containing the picket guard. Thomas Osborn, the unwilling guide, had meanwhile concealed himself in the meadow grass, and from his hiding place he heard the cries of the Legion as they were being massacred. Awakened by the shouts of the British, they seized their weapons and prepared to make a defence. Lieutenant-Colonel de Bosen led his men in their desperate effort to break the British cordon, and with sword and pistol he fought valiantly. Juliet spied him in the darkness, and called out: "This is the Colonel; kill him." Instantly his body was pierced by many bayonets. The men cried for quarter, but as at Old Tappan and Paoli, their appeals were unheeded. About forty men, including de Bosen and Lieutenant de la Borderie, were overpowered and butchered. Five men only were taken prisoners, and very few escaped. Ferguson afterwards reported that they were "almost entirely cut to pieces." He also destroyed the houses which belonged to peaceful Quaker settlers.

The first discharge of fire-arms was heard at Pulaski's headquarters, more than a mile distant, and he was instantly in the saddle. While his command was "mounting in hot haste," he dashed down the road to aid de Bosen and drive off the enemy. But he was too late. The British, after their cruel deed, made a hasty retreat to the bridge and thence to the landing place. In their retreat, they removed the planking on the bridge, and thus halted Pulaski in his pursuit.

The guide, Thomas Osborn, came out of his hiding place when he saw the American troops, and told Pulaski of his compulsory service. The excited soldiers would not believe him and tied him to a tree, where they flogged him so unmercifully that his life was only spared by the interference of the officers. That day they sent over to the island for the father. Both prisoners were taken to Trenton and lodged in jail for two weeks, being released when it was found that no treason could be proven against them.

The British loss in this affair was two regulars killed and two wounded; Ensign John Camp, a Tory volunteer, stabbed in the thigh, and another Tory wounded. As they were crossing the island, a Tory told them that Colonel Thomas Proctor, with a detachment of artillery, armed with two brass twelve-pounders and one three-pounder, had come from The Forks of the Mullica, and was then only about two miles in the rear. Having no artillery to oppose this pursuing force, Captain Ferguson concluded that it would not be safe to risk another encounter with men made desperate by the thought of the butchery of their comrades. In the middle of the

**Fourteen
Tories killed.**

afternoon of October 16th, the British soldiers were safely aboard the fleet, which immediately weighed anchor. As the flagship "Zebra" was passing over the bar, she again grounded. After trying in vain to get her off, the captain transferred the troops to the "Vigilant" and "Nautilus," and with great reluctance ordered the "Zebra" to be fired. For many years after the Revolution fragments of this wreck could be seen in the vicinity of Chestnut Neck.

Of this affair near Tuckerton, Judge Jones, the Tory historian, says: "They (the British) plundered the inhabitants, burnt their houses, their churches and their barns; ruined their farms; stole their cattle, hogs, horses and sheep, and then triumphantly returned to New York." Washington Irving says of it that it was "a marauding expedition worthy of the times of the buccaneers."

* * *

During the Revolution the Tories of South Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, commonly known as "refugees," were continually passing to and from New York and North Jersey by way of Egg Harbor, the colonial name of Atlantic County. From Sandy Hook to Delaware Bay, from Acquackanonck and beyond to Absecon and Tuckahoe, they carried on a merciless career of rapine and bloodshed. These troublesome fellows did infinite mischief to the shore people, who were generally good Whigs, but on some occasions the latter were able to "turn the tables" on the Tories and punish them as they deserved. On September 11, 1782, Captain Douglass, with some of the Gloucester militia, attacked a boat containing eighteen Tories, of whom fourteen were killed or drowned. The others escaped.

WRECK OF THE MERMAID.

On March 31, 1779, during a heavy snow storm, the transport ship "Mermaid," of Whitehaven, England, was driven on shore at Little Egg Harbor, and 145 out of 187 lives were lost. On April 25 of the same year the schooner "Mars," Captain Taylor, fell in with a vessel mounting fourteen guns, which he boarded and took. She was a British packet from Falmouth, England, bound to New York. Captain Taylor took the mail and forty-five prisoners, but fell in with a fleet of twenty-three sail convoyed by a large ship and frigate, which gave chase to the frigate and recaptured her. The American captain, perceiving that odds were against him, made all sail and succeeded in getting safely into Egg Harbor.

Near the close of the Revolution some of the troops captured at the surrender of Cornwallis, who were cantoned in Virginia, escaped in small parties, and by concealing themselves in the woods by day and traveling by night, with the assistance of guides and friends whom they

REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES.

Giberson and Lane. found on their way, finally reached Egg Harbor, whence they sailed for New York. To prevent this Captain John

Davis was sent with a company of men to Egg Harbor. On one occasion his lieutenant, Benjamin Bates, with Richard Powell, a private, called at a house where it was understood two refugees were lodging over night. Bates and Powell reached the house shortly after daybreak and found two girls building a fire in the kitchen. They inquired if there were any persons in the house besides the family, and were told that "two men from up in the country" were asleep in one of the rooms. Bates directed the girls to show them where they were, and in doing so they passed through a room separating the kitchen from the bed-room. Two pistols were seen lying on a table in this room.

Knocking on the door, Bates was at first refused admission, but finding him determined to enter, the two refugees opened the door and surrendered. They refused to tell their names, but were afterwards identified as William Giberson and Henry Lane, refugee lieutenants, the former a notorious rascal, who had committed many outrages and killed one or two patriots in cold blood. On their way to Davis's headquarters, Giberson called Bates' attention to something he pretended to see at a distance, and while Bates was looking in that direction, Giberson started to run in another, and being a very fast runner made his escape, Bates, however, firing several shots after him.

Captain Davis directed Bates to recapture Giberson the next night, if possible. Accordingly, he went to the same house. While in the act of opening the door, Bates heard the click of a gun, and turning around he saw Giberson aiming at him from behind a tree. He quickly dropped on his knees and the ball passed through the crown of his hat. Giberson started to run, but was pursued by Bates, whose first shot took effect. Although badly wounded in the leg, Giberson succeeded in reaching a swamp, but was soon captured and taken to Burlington jail, whither Lane had been previously taken by Private Powell.

**Depredations
by Tories.**

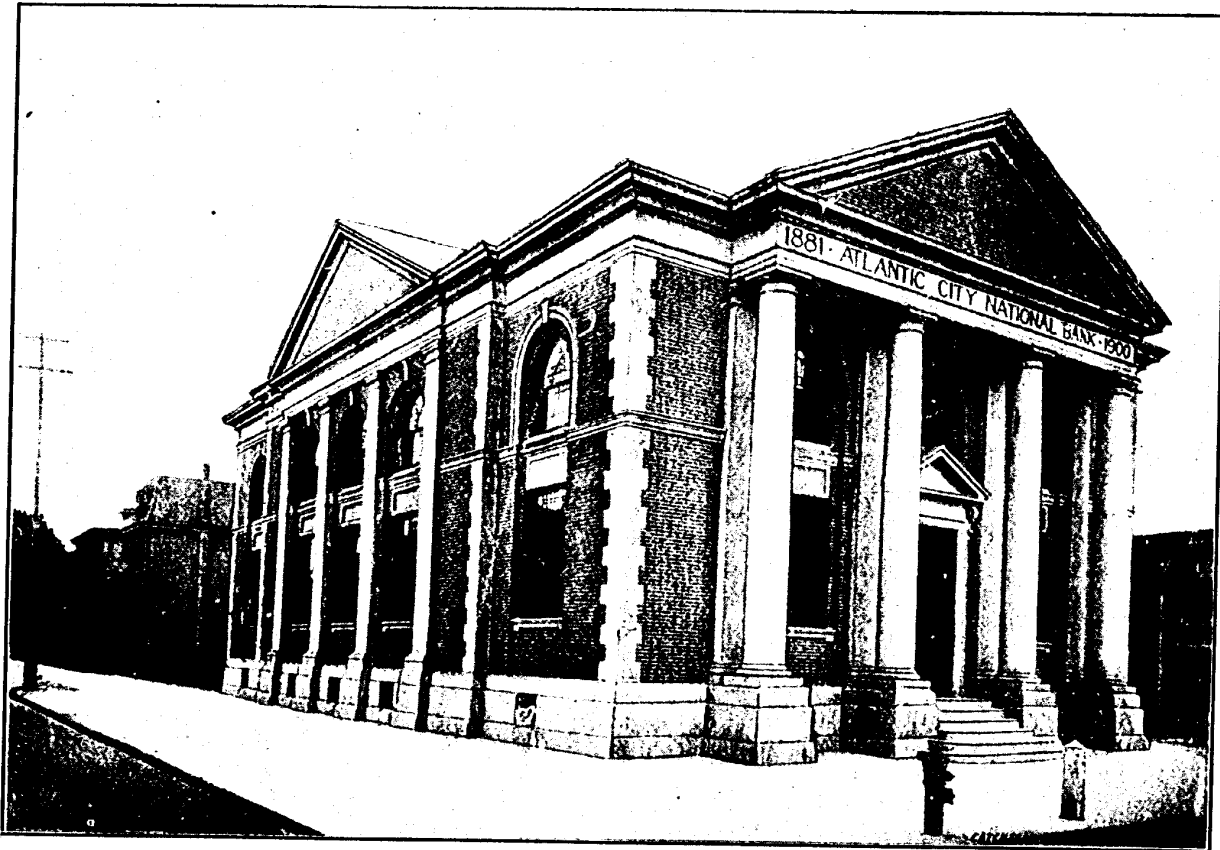
Giberson had a sister who bore a striking resemblance to him, both in face and form. This sister obtained permission to visit him in prison, and while there they exchanged clothes. The brother left the jail in woman's attire, and the jailer, completely deceived, helped him into the wagon. He went to New York, joined the British army, and with them went to Nova Scotia.

Previous to his capture, as recorded above, Giberson had an exciting experience at Tuckerton. It is related that one day a lad was gunning in Tuckerton Bay, when he was surprised by the appearance of Giberson and his gang in a boat. They made the boy a prisoner and took from him his fowling piece. They then ordered him to pilot them to Tuckerton landing. Reaching what was called "scow landing," they moored the boat and went to the tavern recently built by Daniel Falkenburg, the first inn keeper in Little Egg Harbor. As soon as the refugees reached the tavern they indulged in a drunken revel. Some of the residents sent a messenger to Mannahawkin, where there was a company of militia, and informed them of the presence of the refugees in Tuckerton.

A squad of soldiers marched toward the place to capture or disperse the revelers, but a Tory informed the outlaws of their coming, and about the time the militia reached Tuckerton the refugees fled to the landing. Seizing their guns they took an advantageous position in the boat. The militia marched down Green street toward the landing, and as they came near the creek, the refugees poured the contents of their heavily charged guns into the ranks of the militia with such fury and precision that the latter were forced to retreat, followed by the outlaws, who pursued them to West Creek. Seeing the retreating militia on the opposite side of the creek, Giberson and his victorious band returned to Tuckerton to go aboard their boat.

When they reached the landing the boat was some distance off. In their absence two of their comrades, who were too drunk to join in the pursuit, had become sober enough to unmoor the boat and were paddling the craft down the creek, shouting as their companions came in sight, "we are the boys to hold the boat." The returning outlaws, mistaking them for their enemies, ran along the creek in pursuit. They fired at and killed both of the men before discovering that they were of their own gang. After this the refugees returned to the tavern and finished their debauch. Before leaving Tuckerton, Giberson hunted up the boy from whom he had taken the gun, returned it to him and also presented him with a Spanish dollar. After the close of the Revolution, Giberson returned to Egg Harbor and settled down to a more peaceful and honorable occupation.

About the time of Giberson's capture and imprisonment in Burlington, Captain John Davis was informed that a party of twenty-one British soldiers, who had escaped from Virginia after Cornwallis' surrender, had arrived upon the Egg Harbor shore, and were concealed in the woods waiting for a vessel to take them to New York. Knowing where they would embark, he secreted himself, with a number of his men, near where the boat lay. When they came there was a lively hand-to-hand



Atlantic City National Bank.

The Atlantic City National Bank occupies an imposing building at the corner of Pennsylvania and Atlantic avenues. It is one of the "solid" banks of the country, ranking first in the state and seventh in the entire country. The president is Charles Evans and the cashier Francis P. Quigley.

REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES.

Steelman, the Patriot. fight, but Davis and his men were victorious, killing or taking prisoners nineteen of the twenty-one Englishmen.

One of the patriots of Atlantic County, during the Revolution, was Richard Steelman, a descendant of James Steelman, who bought large tracts of land in Egg Harbor of Thomas Budd, in 1695. Richard Steelman commanded privateers, engaged in a coast guard, and his chief business was to prevent lawless persons from supplying the British with contraband goods. The enemy paid high prices for fresh provisions, and a number of people, mainly of the class called "Hickory Quakers," engaged in it as a money-making business. Some of these made a business of securing supplies of meats, vegetables, etc., and when a load was secured they tried to "run the blockade." Steelman frequently heard of the movements of these men and made midnight raids on the storage places, generally dwellings, and confiscated the supplies.

On October 25, 1782, a British cutter from St. Thomas, West Indies, loaded with supplies for the British in New York, grounded on the southern end of Barnegat shoals. Captain Steelman, in the armed galley "Alligator," with about twenty-five men, went to the wreck to watch the crew and to secure the cargo. At night the patriots were wet and tired, and building a fire on the beach they went to sleep. Towards morning a refugee band, under Captain John Bacon, surrounded the sleepers and fired upon them, killing Steelman and about twenty of his men. The site of this barbarous slaughter is the southern end of what is now Barnegat City. No monument marks the spot, though their patriotism ought to be thus recognized and their memory perpetuated.

Near the headwaters of the Mullica River, about five miles from the village of Elwood, in Atlantic County, is a long, narrow island, midway of the stream and parallel with its course. The division thus formed is called "The Forks," and marks the head of navigation. Here, in the time of the Revolution, stood a small hamlet, in whose houses and barns were stored many of the cargoes captured by privateers. The inaccessibility of the place to British vessels of war precluded all danger of a hostile

Col. Richard Wescoat. incursion from the seaboard, and so profitable did the business of handling prize cargoes become that The Forks rapidly increased in population and importance. About the year 1778 the predatory bands of refugees, or pine robbers, as they were sometimes called, became troublesome, and to guard against their attacks a small military force was kept at The Forks for several months. This force, with a number of volunteers from The Forks, participated in the defence of Chestnut Neck, when that post was attacked by the British on October 6, 1778.

WESCOAT, THE WIDE-AWAKE WHIG.

Colonel Richard Wescoat, who built the fort at Chestnut Neck, lived at The Forks for a time. He wrote to Hon. William C. Houston,* member of Congress from New Jersey, as follows:

FORKS EGG HARBOR, December 15, 1779.

THE HONORABLE WILLIAM C. HOUSTON, Member of Congress, Philadelphia.

SIR: I have the satisfaction to inform you that I have been down to Absecon Beech and have gott all the wine Belonging to the United States landed on the said Beech Excepting four or five Casks which were Bilged and almost out. The Severity of the Weather and exceedingly High winds which prevailed have rendered it out of my power to Bring it to the main land which is seven or eight miles from the Beech. The Scollops which I expected to take it in have not yet arrived. I shall therefore have it properly stored and taken care of till opportunity presents of conveying it to the City of Philadelphia.

I am sir, Your Obed't Serv't,
RICHARD WESCOAT.

Colonel Wescoat served several years in the war and was badly wounded at the battle of Trenton. At the date of the above letter he was in charge of the government commissary stores at The Forks. The British about that time made several attempts to burn and once finally succeeded in burning a number of storehouses, containing valuable merchandise, keeping the little village in a constant state of excitement.

Colonel Wescoat, on more than one occasion, put his children in the family carry-all or carriage, together with the silver plate, and placing all in care of "Jude," a trusty

* Mr. Houston was the grandfather of the late William C. Houston, a Philadelphia merchant, who for many years was a summer resident of Atlantic City, having a commodious cottage on North Carolina avenue below Pacific, adjoining the Episcopal rectory.

Joe Mulliner, slave, sent him far into the swamp with them, until all danger from the enemy was passed. Colonel Wescoat, after the war was over, moved to Mayslanding, and died there at the ripe old age of 102.

The return of peace was followed by the speedy decline and eventual decay of the settlement at The Forks. Within twenty-five years of the present date a few of its old habitations were still standing, but they too have disappeared, leaving no vestige to link the present with the vanished past.

A refugee band, led by Joseph Mulliner, was long a terror to the patriots living in the vicinity of The Forks. Their favorite rendezvous was an almost inaccessible jungle known as Cold Spring Swamp. Mulliner was an Englishman, and is described as a young man of good address and attractive personal appearance. He was over six feet in height. His band of outlaws sometimes numbered nearly a hundred, and they had little regard for human life, if it stood in the way of their infamous plans. Mulliner's wife was an active and cunning assistant, giving information in person or by note, which often led to the capture or injury of the patriots. She lived in a cabin in the swamps on the southern side of the river, nearly opposite to where her husband had his principal rendezvous. Mulliner had a dog to whose neck he attached an ingeniously constructed collar, and having trained the dog as a courier, when he wished to communicate with his wife—and through her with some of the absent band—he would write his message, fasten it to the collar and then start the dog across the river.

In order to facilitate his plans, Mulliner procured a large log, to which he fastened the tops of a number of cedar trees, giving it the appearance of a growth of small cedars. These cedars formed a sort of arbor, in which one or more men could sit and paddle the improvised canoe across the river. This was usually done where the river was studded with small islands, and if in danger of detection, the oarsman would paddle his log-boat to the edge of an island and wait there, seemingly a part of the island, until the danger had passed. Mulliner wore an officer's uniform, with a ponderous sword at his side and

Execution of Mulliner. a brace of pistols in his belt. When on a march he also carried a gun, so that he was amply equipped for an attack at any time.

At last his outrages became too audacious for even the tardy justice of those troublesome times, and he was hunted down by an armed force, arrested and imprisoned at Burlington. His imprisonment lasted but six weeks, when he was tried and sentenced to be hung at Burlington on August 16, 1781. It is recorded that on the day of his execution thousands of persons assembled to witness the hanging.

The condemned desperado was placed in a wagon, which contained his coffin, and was followed by a procession of people. They passed out of Burlington, over Ewing's bridge, to a place called "Gallows Hill," where the condemned man was suspended from the branch of a large tree. Under the gallows he confessed many of his crimes, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence.

In a letter from Burlington to the *Pennsylvania Packet*, of Philadelphia, under date of August 16, 1781, the following brief account of his conviction and execution is given :

"At a special court lately held in Burlington, a certain Joseph Mulliner, of Egg Harbor, was convicted of high treason and sentenced to be hanged this day. This fellow had become a terror to that part of the country. He made a practice of burning houses and robbing and plundering all who fell in his way, so that when he came to trial it appeared that the whole country, both Whigs and Tories, were against him."

After his execution Mulliner's body was delivered to his wife, who still resided at the Forks of the Mullica. It was taken to Pleasant Mills, then known as Sweetwater, and interred in a plot of land he had once owned, near where the paper mills are now located. About 1860 his bones were exhumed by a party of drunken woodsmen, and taken to Batsto, Burlington County, but by the order of Jesse Richards, owner of the Batsto Iron Works, they were returned to their original resting place, where they have since lain undisturbed.

It has been stated by a recent writer on Atlantic

REVOLUTIONARY REMINISCENCES.

The Buttonwoods Lookout. County that Mulliner was hung on one of the buttonwoods at The Forks. The same writer says in another place that he was hung as a spy, with two other men, at Woodbury. Neither statement, as shown above, is true.

"The Buttonwoods" is the collective term applied to a group of buttonwood trees, three in number, which are still standing upon the Atlantic County side of the Mullica, about a mile above Pleasant Mills. These sylvan patriarchs have figured prominently in local history and tradition for the past hundred and fifty years. During the Revolution the largest of them served as a lookout and signal station for the American patriots. A rude watch tower was constructed among the upper branches, from which the sentinel on duty could obtain a view of the country for several miles around. For some months in the year 1778 a small force of New Jersey militia was stationed near the buttonwoods as a protection against the numerous bands of Tories or refugees that infested the neighborhood.

A certain Colonel Morgan kept a tavern and store at "The Forks," and though he professed loyalty to the cause of liberty, yet secretly he gave aid and comfort to the refugees, concealing their stolen goods and assisting them in every possible way. He also managed to fill his own coffers with a portion of their spoils. A large tree stood in front of his tavern, and a few feet above the ground it branched off into a number of forks, within which a cage was built. In this cage ten or a dozen persons could be seated at one time, and be fairly hidden from view. The refugees were in the habit of climbing up into this cage, called by them the Punch Bowl, to drink punch and concoct their schemes of robbery and rapine. Doubtless the fate of many a man and the capture of many a boat load of goods was agreed upon at these festive gatherings in the Punch Bowl.

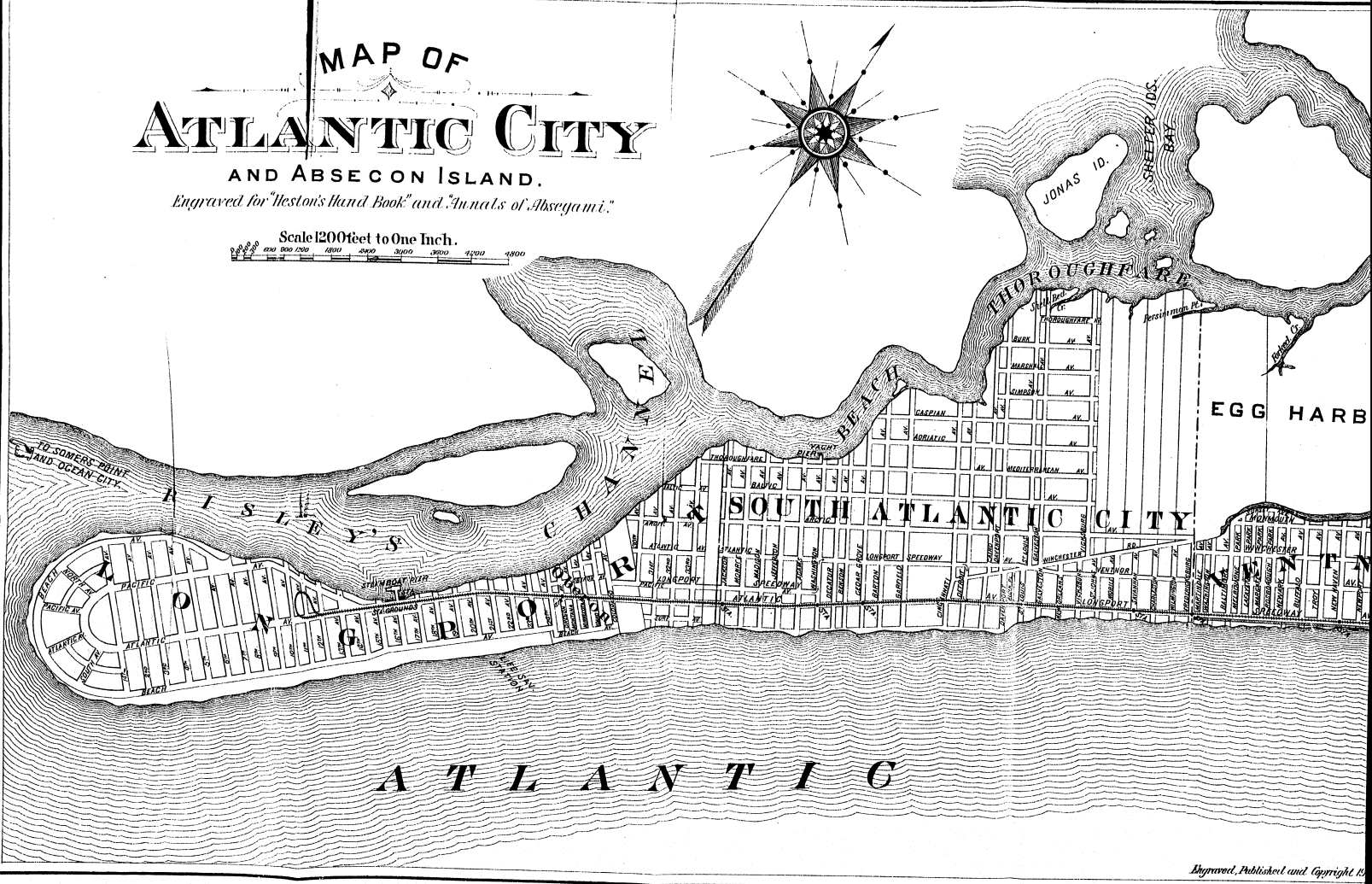
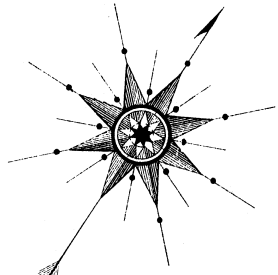
MAP OF ATLANTIC CITY

AND ABSECON ISLAND.

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

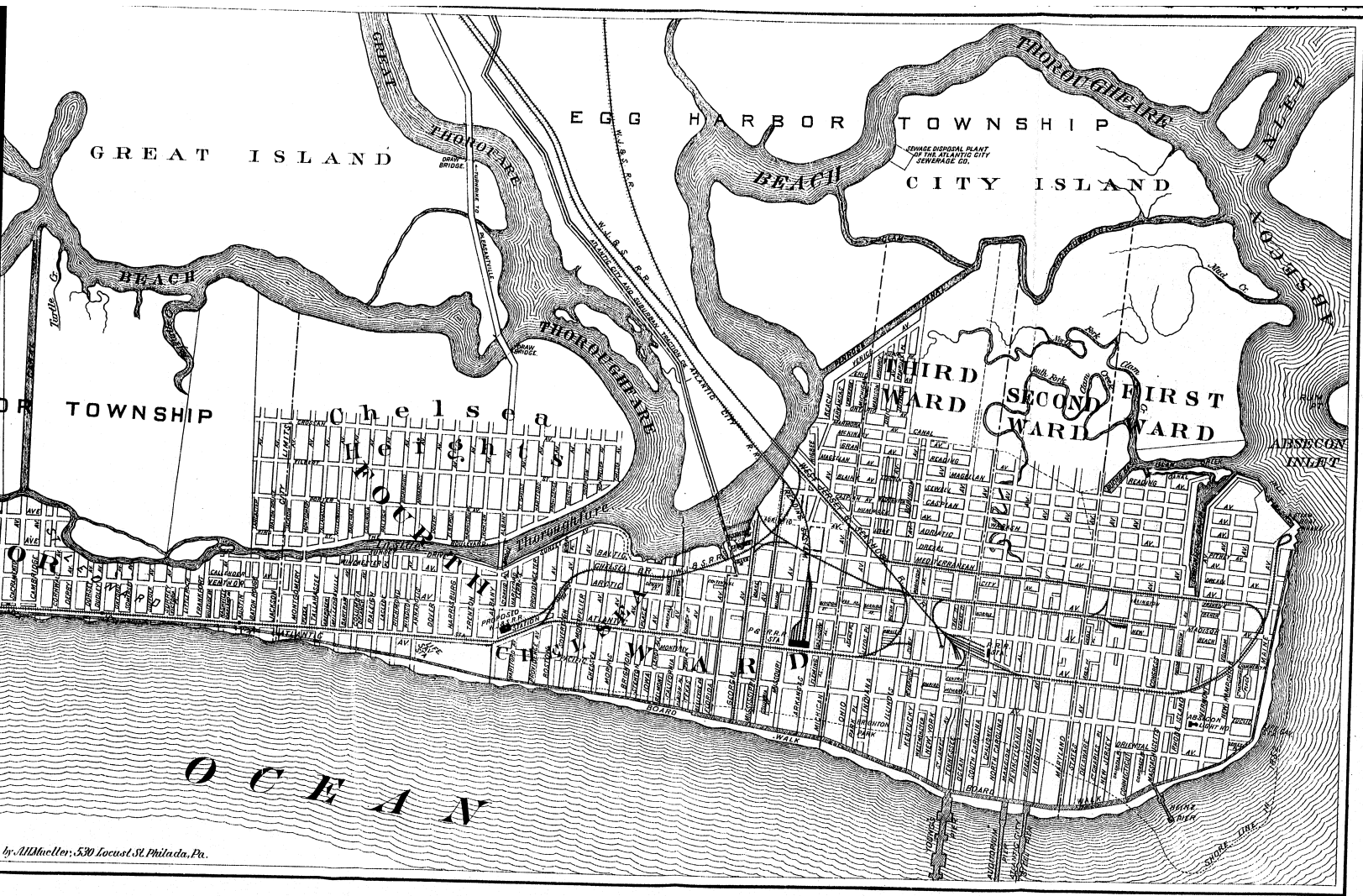
Scale 1200 feet to One Inch.

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A T L A N T I C

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