

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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ATLANTIC CITY

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VOLUME I

Printed for the Author—Nineteen Hundred and Four.

Shipwrecks and Drownings.

1714 to 1904.



ABSECON, Brigantine and Island beaches, forming the coast line of Atlantic County, have witnessed many terrible marine tragedies, and each of these beaches has at times been strewn with the bodies of those who have found sad landing thereon. So far as known, the dates of these wrecks are as follows:

1714, November.—The first wreck of which there is any authentic record was that of the sloop "Dyre," of Boston, which "was run aground near Egg Harbour, but there was hopes of getting her off," as we read in the Boston News-Letter of December 6, 1714.

1739, June.—The ship "Tryal," Captain Crump, from Dublin for Philadelphia, with passengers and servants, "ran ashore at Egg Harbour" and it was "thought she cannot get off again."

1747, July.—An unknown sloop, Robert Gibbs, master, from Philadelphia for Rhode Island, was "cast away" near Egg Harbour. The vessel and greater portion of the cargo were lost.

1747, July 21.—In the Boston Gazette of July 21, 1747, is a lengthy account of the depredations of pirates on the Jersey coast, and we are told how "they chased a Schooner ashore near Egg Harbour, which they set fire to, the Men escaping on Absecon Beach." Soon after the pirates "fell in with a poor Cape May man laden with Shingles, which they took, and gave to 25 of the Prisoners scarce any Provisions."

1750, January 4.—The "York," Captain Gibson, from Barbados to New York, with a cargo of rum, &c., came ashore at Egg Harbor. The vessel was lost, but the crew and some of the cargo were saved.

1753, March 10.—A French sloop, the "Mary Magdalen," Captain Dugea, from Cape Francis to Cape Breton, was lost on Absecon bar during a violent northeast storm. The cargo of indigo, sugar and rum was lost. The captain, a merchant passenger, and crew of four white men and a negro were drowned. Two persons got upon the round house and were taken off by a whale boat.

About 1760.—The ship "Henry," Captain William Banks, was wrecked on Absecon Beach. Her cargo was partially saved by John Steelman, of Leedsport, for which he charged 100 pounds.*

*The following is an exact copy of a bill (unreceipted) found among the papers of John Steelman, who died in 1762. Presumably the work of saving the cargo from the Henry was done by Steelman, and we may assume that it had not been paid for at the time of his death. The original bill is now in the possession of the author.

Capt. Wm. Banks,

Dr.

To Labour Boat hire and house hire to secure the effects of
the ship Henry and cargo stranded on Absecon Beach

£100:0:0

Rec'd payment

Wreck of the Faithful Steward About 1765 the ship "Faithful Steward" came ashore on Absecon Beach. One boat load of passengers, in trying to get ashore, was swamped. They had with them a quantity of stamp act paper, and being eager to get ashore with this, over-loaded the boat. A considerable quantity of this paper was picked up by Zephaniah Steelman, of Leedspoint, who had come over on the beach to look after his cattle, and remained with his family for many years. Steelman also obtained from this wreck two complete sets of English china-ware, one of which is still an heirloom in the family. The other was destroyed by fire. The owners of the stamp act paper no doubt hoped to find a profitable sale for it, the ports of Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Charleston being closed against it; but the sturdy patriots of old Egg Harbor would not profit by this reminder of British tyranny. They stowed it in their garrets, where it became food for the mice or scribbling paper for the children of that day.*

About 1770.—Just prior to the Revolution the ship "Ellis," from Liverpool, came ashore upon the shoals, which at that time extended more than three miles from the shore. She was loaded with tea, and had on board a British official who had been commissioned to enforce the stamp act. It should suffice every patriotic inquirer to know that the representative of Great Britain's tyranny was smothered beneath the billows of Absecon Beach, and thrown upon the shore, as with indignation and disgust, a limp and lifeless form.

1779, March.—In a snow storm the British transport "Mermaid," of Whitehaven, England, with troops from Halifax for New York, was driven ashore and bilged at Little Egg Harbor. After being in this situation from five o'clock Monday morning until noon on Tuesday, a boat came off to their relief, and saved 42 of 187 on board. Among the lost was Captain Snowball, Lieutenant Snodgrass, 112 sergeants, drummers and privates, 13 women, 11 sailors and 7 children—in all 145.

1781, February 22.—The brig "Fame," Captain William Treen, while at anchor off Great Egg Harbor, in a heavy northwest gale, with snowy squalls, capsized. Her crew consisted of thirty-two, of whom twenty were lost. The same brig, about the first of the month, had taken the privateer "Cook," Captain Brooks, from New York to Chesapeake Bay, and sent her into the Great Egg Harbor as a prize.

A ROMANCE OF THE WAVES.

A storm of nearly a month's uninterrupted fury; that piled the coast of New Jersey with wrecks and washed hundreds of bodies of seamen ashore; that made Cape May an island; that raged along the whole coast, from Labrador to Mexico—such was the great storm of December, 1826, and January, 1827. On the morning of December 12th the wind began to blow from the northeast, and by night had increased to a hurricane. On New Year's day, with-

*The Assembly of Virginia was the first to make public opposition to this odious law. Patrick Henry, a brilliant young lawyer, introduced a resolution denying the right of Parliament to tax America. He boldly asserted that the king had played the tyrant; and, alluding to the fate of other tyrants, exclaimed: "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles I. his Cromwell, and George III."—here pausing till the cry of "Treason! Treason!" from several parts of the house had ended, he deliberately added—"may profit by their examples. If this be treason, make the most of it."

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

Shipwrecked Babe Floats Ashore.

in three miles of Lewes, on Delaware Bay, there were two hundred vessels ashore; two hundred and twelve bodies were collected and buried, and two million dollars' worth of property was destroyed. On Sunday, January 7th, a fisherman named Hughes, gathering wreckage on the coast below this beach, saw, some distance from the shore, what seemed to be a box fastened between two barrels. After much trouble he secured the prize, which proved to be a cradle covered with canvas and lashed between two casks. He removed the covering and there lay a child, apparently dead. He carried both cradle and babe home, where his wife revived the hapless little derelict, and by night it was apparently none the worse for its terrible struggle for life. In the cradle was a writing telling the story. Captain Fane and wife, on board a Boston brig, having no hope of escape, sought to save their only child, a girl, by committing it to Providence and the mercy of the sea. In the course of a few months the child was taken by relatives in Boston. Emeline Fane, as the child was named, grew to be a beautiful and accomplished woman and went to England on a visit to relatives, where she was wooed and won by a nephew of Warren Hastings, the famous Governor-General of India. Her husband died three years after the marriage, and she married an Australian millionaire named Shelbin. They embarked on the "Wanderer," a British clipper ship, bound for Sydney, Australia, and no tidings were ever had of the vessel thereafter. The sea again claimed the child of the wreck.

This great storm of 1826 had a humorous as well as a pathetic side. The saving of wreckage turned out to be a "turkey and buzzard" deal, in which the ship owner got the buzzard. When one captain got his salvage statement, giving him credit for only one hundred and twenty-four dollars, he murmured, "Why, that is flat piracy," and so the evil repute of the enterprising wrecker originated. One man near Egg Harbor Inlet secured and sold one hundred and eighty casks of French brandy, but he fell into the hands of the custom-house officers and was sent to jail for smuggling.

1830.—A nameless craft, supposed to be piratical, was wrecked on this beach in 1830. The crew was taken off just before she went to pieces. Soon after they were landed, the captain, whose mind had been shattered by the disaster, handed his gold watch to the mate, and then deliberately walked into the surf and was drowned. The crew and wreckers joined hands and tried to rescue him, but in vain. His comrades said he had a large sum of specie on his person, and expressed much regret at its loss, but no sorrow for the loss of their whilom leader. They were villainous-looking men and confirmed the suspicions of their nefarious calling by mysteriously decamping in the night.

1830.—In the winter of the same year (1830) the ship "George Cannon," from Liverpool, with a cargo of dry-goods and hardware, came ashore. The boxes of dry-goods were thrown overboard and soon lined the strand. The off-shore people scented the prey and came in crowds, eager for the spoils. Then began the most exciting game of hide-and-seek ever known on the seaboard. Cupidity and rapacity crushed out all sense of honor. Neighbor robbed neighbor. Holes were made in the hills and the boxes buried, but while the party who had hidden was gone to seek another, some-

**Loss of the
Gheyis Kohn**

body would dig it out and convey it to another place of concealment. The night was bitter cold, and two men, who started for a house at Cedar Grove, perished on the hills near by.*

1830.—The "Gheyis Kohn" was totally destroyed off this beach in 1830. The majority of the passengers were saved, including a little girl nine years of age, who was restored to her parents, far out in the wilds of the West. Captain Busk, the commander of the vessel, committed suicide by plunging into the water, although a life-boat was within his grasp.

About 1835.—The ship "John Willetts" became a total wreck on Absecon Beach about 1835. A man named Robinson, who subsequently became a school teacher at Absecon, was one of the few survivors. One man froze to death in the rigging and his body was washed ashore.

1840.—The schooner "General Scott" was wrecked in 1840. The captain was the only person saved. He floated in on a feather bed.

1846.—A small schooner, commanded by Captain Lowe, ran ashore in 1846. As the wreck boat approached the scene of disaster, the cries for help became more and more distressing. In the midst of the excitement the captain's wife fell into the waves and was drowned. Her body was recovered.

1846.—The ship "Edgar" was wrecked in 1846. The "Pork Road" was cut through this year, in order that the wreckers might cart the cargo—pork and hams—to the meadow side of the island.

1852, December 8.—The "Rainbow," Captain Fairclouke, was wrecked. Seven persons were on board and all were saved.

From September, 1847, to January, 1856, sixty-five vessels came ashore—five in one night. Many lives were lost. The record of this period has been lost.

WRECK OF THE AYRESHIRE.

A communication to the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, in 1899, contains some reference to an important wreck on the New Jersey coast, that of the Ayreshire, and to other matters interesting to Jerseymen. The Bulletin article was as follows:

We have received from Controller Heston, of Atlantic City, a communication in which he shows that to "Honest John Hill" the chief credit is due for the championship of the two-cent postage reform of 1883. He says:

In your reply to "G. M. B.," last Saturday, you say, concerning the bill which reduced the postage on sealed letters from three cents to two cents, that Congressman Bingham, of Philadelphia, was principally responsible for this reduction. You are in error in ascribing to General Bingham the credit of this reduction. As a Jerseyman by adoption, I must claim this credit for a deceased Jerseyman. It is not fair to enrich the living at the expense of the dead. "Honest"

*Mrs. Robert B. Leeds, of this city, has in her possession, a calico lining for a bedquilt which possesses special interest. It is a part of the wreckage from the George Cannon, which struck on the beach near where one of the piers now stands. The Cannon had an assorted cargo, part of which was thrown overboard. The vessel got off and was being taken into the Inlet when it struck again on the north side of the channel and went to pieces, a total wreck. It was a packet ship from England. The wreckage was a bonanza to people along the shore, who secured parts of it. The relic which Mrs. Leeds has is well preserved, and is a fine sample of old-fashioned print and design. The first double-barrel guns ever seen in this locality are said to have appeared along the shore soon after the wreck of this vessel.



1 Hon. John J. Gardner, Member of Congress
2 Hon. Wu Ting-Fang, Former Chinese Minister

3 Hon. Joseph E. P. Abbott
4 Hon. E. A. Higbee, County Judge

No envoy from a foreign country to the United States ever attained the degree of popularity reached by Wu Ting-Fang, who held the post of Chinese Minister at Washington, and when he was recalled in 1902 there was widespread regret. Since his return to China Mr. Wu has been made a vice-president of the council which directs Chinese relations with other countries. Madame Wu followed her husband to the Orient, but their son, Wu Chao-chu, a youth of sixteen, was left in America, to be educated in Atlantic City. He graduated from the high school with the highest honors in June, 1904. In reply to a letter from the Annalist, Mr. Wu said:

PEKING, CHINA, 3d January, 1904.

A. M. Heston, Esqre., Atlantic City, N. J., U. S. America:

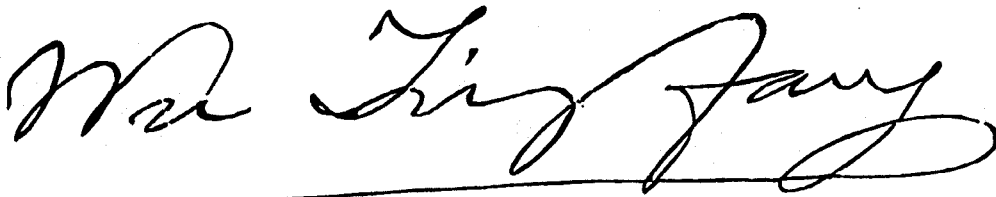
DEAR SIR: In eply to your letter of 11th of Novr. last, I have to state that the reasons for placing my son in school at Atlantic City are:

1st—Madame Wu and I happened to know a very respectable married couple residing in Atlantic City, who were very fond of our son and who kindly undertook to take charge of him after our departure from the U. S.

2d—We were told that the High School at Atlantic City was just as good as any of the High Schools in Washington, where our son was being educated.

3d—The excellent climate of Atlantic City was an additional inducement for leaving our son there.

I remain, yours truly,

A large, elegant handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wu Ting-fang". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that spans the width of the text block.

John J. Gardner has been identified with the history of Atlantic City since 1856, when he came here as a boy from the mainland. Excepting his service in the army during the Civil War and the time spent in college at Ann Arbor, Michigan, his home for forty years was on Absecon Island. About 1896 he removed to a farm, which he had previously purchased, near Egg Harbor City. He enlisted for three years in 1861, when only sixteen years old, and again in 1865 for one year. He served five terms as Mayor of Atlantic City, five as State Senator from Atlantic County and is now finishing his sixth term as a member of Congress from New Jersey.

Joseph E. P. Abbott is the oldest member of the Atlantic County bar and is, therefore, its "father." He has lived at Mayslanding all his life and after a successful career as an attorney and counsellor was appointed Prosecutor of the Pleas by Governor Griggs in 1898. He still holds that position.

Enoch A. Higbee is another native of Atlantic County who has won success at the bar. He has also enjoyed political preferment, being at one time Collector of the Port of Somerspoint and afterwards Mayor of that city, which latter office he still holds. In the early part of 1904 he was appointed by Governor Murphy the Common Pleas Judge of Atlantic County, to succeed Judge Endicott, who was made a Circuit Court Judge. Judge Higbee presides over the county courts with dignity and grace.

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

John Hill and 2-Cent Postage John Hill was elected to the Fortieth, Forty-first and Forty-second Congresses from the Fourth District of New Jersey, and during that time he served on the Committee on Post-offices and Post-roads. It was during this service that he secured not only the passage of the One-cent Postal Card law, but introduced the Two-cent Letter Postage act, making several speeches in its favor. He was succeeded in the next Congress by William Walter Phelps, Republican, who, in turn, was succeeded by Augustus W. Cutler, Democrat. During this interval no progress had been made in securing two-cent letter postage, though Mr. Hill, by his pen in the public prints, and by personal appeals to members of Congress, had been unremitting in his efforts. Subsequently Mr. Hill was elected to the Forty-seventh Congress from the Fifth District, the State having been redistricted in the meantime. His principal desire for re-election was to secure the passage of his two-cent letter postage bill. Mr. Hill told me in 1883 that before making up the committee Speaker Keifer sent for him, and requested that he name the committee of which he would like to be chairman. He said frankly that he would prefer to have the chairmanship of his old committee—Post-offices and Post-roads—and without a moment's hesitation Mr. Keifer agreed that he should have this, further requesting that he place his wish in writing, so that it would not be forgotten. Mr. Hill did so. When the list was announced there was general surprise and indignation among Mr. Hill's friends. Speaker Keifer had grossly violated his promise and given the chairmanship to General Bingham, at the demand of Don Cameron, in return for the votes of Pennsylvania in the caucus for Speaker. General Bingham was a member without experience in the committee. Notwithstanding this unfair treatment, Mr. Hill did not relax his efforts in behalf of two-cent postage. On December 4, 1882, he introduced a joint resolution for the reduction of letter postage to two cents, to take effect on July 1, 1883. The date was subsequently changed to October 1. He finally secured its report from the committee, of which General Bingham was chairman, and, of course, spokesman, and the measure was duly passed. Mr. Hill watched and nursed it through the Senate and into the hands of the President.

In this connection, permit me to claim for another Jerseyman the credit of introducing a measure which has been of incalculable benefit to mankind, namely, the life-saving service. Dr. William A. Newell, a Republican, who was Governor of New Jersey from 1857 to 1860, was previously elected to the Thirtieth and Thirty-first Congresses, extending from 1847 to 1851. The life-saving service was wholly devised and originated as a system by him during the first session of the Thirtieth Congress, and the first stations were established by the Government on the coast of New Jersey and Long Island. Notwithstanding the many improvements which have since been made, the first triumph was the greatest, when 301 passengers and the crew, comprising all on board, were landed on Squan beach from the Scottish bark *Ayreshire* during a blinding snow storm on Christmas night, 1849. No government, no board of underwriters, nor maritime exchange has ever recognized Dr. Newell's agency in originating and establishing the life saving service. Dr. Newell was appointed Governor of Washington Territory about 1880, and is now passing his quiet old age in Olympia. "Honest" John Hill was a resident of Morris County, N. J., where he died a number of years ago. He was one of nature's noblemen.

**Wreck of the
Powhatan.**

On April 16, 1854, the bark "Powhatan" was wrecked. Many of the bodies were washed ashore in this vicinity, and were buried on Brigantine, Rum Point and in the graveyards of the county. Captain Amasa Bowen, afterward of the Atlantic City Life Saving Station, helped to inter fifty-four bodies in the cemetery at Smithville. For weeks after the occurrence bodies were seen floating around the waters of the inlets, bays and thoroughfares, in such decomposed condition that it became necessary to bury them almost on the spot where they were found. The story, as told by one conversant with the facts, is herewith given: The fierce northeaster that began on April 14, 1854, raged for several days with unparalleled fury, strewing the entire coast with fragments of shipping. The "Powhatan" was a packet ship, heavily ballasted with iron. She had left Havre on the first of March, with 311 German emigrants. Efforts were made to sail before the wind, but, becoming ungovernable, her sails were removed, and the vessel for hours struggled amid the waves with bare poles. What may have been experienced by those on board during this time will never be known, as no one lived to tell the story. On Saturday evening, at five o'clock, April 15th, she was driven with great force on the shoals at Long Beach, twenty-five miles above Atlantic City. The passengers were seen clinging to the leeward bulwark, with the sea constantly washing over them. Assistance was impossible, as any boat sent to their rescue would have been swamped, while the cries of the sufferers were heartrending. Tossing on the surf, the vessel lay throughout Saturday night and all day Sunday—twenty-four hours. On Sunday afternoon the vessel broke in two, the masts fell, and at five o'clock a huge wave covered the entire wreck. Wrecking Master Jennings had received a message through the trumpet from Captain Meyers, asking him "to save those washed ashore." On Tuesday, forty bodies came ashore at Abscon and Brigantine Beach, and on Wednesday, April 19th, twenty-eight persons were buried in the Baptist Church burying-ground in the little village of Manahawkin. About forty-five bodies of the "Powhatan" came

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

Manhattan and Colgate Wrecks. ashore along our Atlantic City beach, most of them at the foot of North Carolina avenue. These bodies were conveyed by boat to Absecon and buried there. A child was clinging to the neck of a man when the body came ashore.

On the same Sunday evening (April 16, 1854) the schooner "Manhattan," Captain Fields, of Bangor, Maine, came ashore in the gale, a half-mile below the wreck of the "Powhatan." She came within fifty yards of the shore. Paralyzed by fear, the crew shut themselves up in the cabin, but the gale made quick work of the schooner. In an hour she went to pieces, and all on board—nine persons, including the captain—were lost, except one. Thrown into the sea, five clung to a spar, and of these one, George Griffiths, succeeded in reaching the shore in an insensible condition.

The "Charles Colgate," of New York, ran ashore on January 13, 1856, and became a total wreck. The crew was saved by the life boat. Two years later, on February 25, 1858, the "Flying Dutchman" went to pieces near the scene of the "Colgate" wreck. No lives were lost. In 1860 the "Polly Whimble" was wrecked. A wealthy lady was saved by a brave sailor, who lost his life in an attempt to save another woman's life.

The ship "Maria," a blockade runner from New York, was chased by a Government gunboat in April, 1863. The "Maria" was run ashore above Ventnor, in the early morning, and the crew escaped, taking the first train from Atlantic City. The vessel went to pieces on the beach.

In the fall of 1867 the "Santiago de Cuba" came ashore opposite South Atlantic City during a heavy fog. She was a side-wheel steamer, bound for New York from the Pacific coast, her cargo consisting of allspice, wool and crude rubber. She was heavily freighted with passengers, some 317, of all nationalities and colors, with many women and children among them. Assistance was rendered as soon as possible. The Government life boat of Atlantic City, in charge of Amasa Bowen, and the one stationed near the present site of Ventnor, in charge of Japhet Townsend, were hurried to the scene of the wreck, but before their arrival seven persons were drowned by

Santiago de Cuba the upsetting of a life boat in the surf. The seven drowned persons included four women, two sailors and a ten-year-old girl, one of the women being the child's mother. The child's body was washed ashore some days afterwards. The corpse was kept until a zinc coffin could be procured and communication made with her relatives, who lived at Delphi, Illinois. When the grandfather of the child, an old man about seventy-five years of age, heard of the fate of his daughter and granddaughter, he became hopelessly insane and died six weeks after the news reached him. A Welshman, rescued from the same ship, returned to his own country, and an Irish girl, who had accumulated a small fortune in California, was among the unfortunate seven. One other female, who was consigned to a watery grave, was a Southern lady, who had been married only a few weeks. About three months later a woman from Michigan, whose husband had been missing for some time, appeared at Atlantic City and made inquiry concerning the sailors that had been lost. The body of one had been washed ashore, and the description was given her. She concluded that the description answered completely to her long-lost husband, and collected from the vessel-owners his back pay. The "Santiago de Cuba" was pulled off about four weeks after she came ashore.

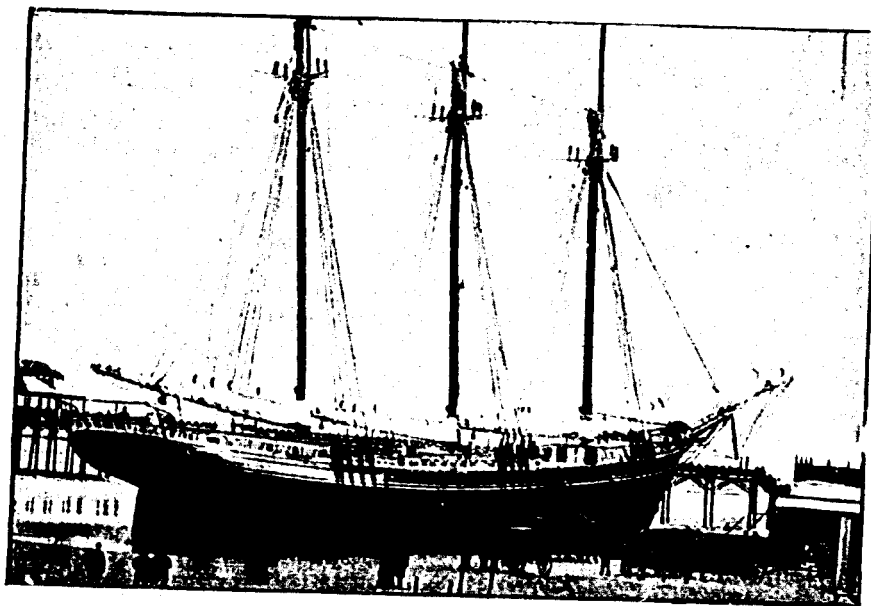
The yacht "A. B. Thompson," Captain Francis Steelman, left the Inlet wharf on the afternoon of July 18, 1874, with a party of eight, including the captain, for a pleasure trip to sea, intending to return the same afternoon. The party consisted of Daniel Offly Sharpless and his wife, Esther; Miss Caroline Sharpless, a young lady about nineteen years of age; Alfred Sharpless, a lad of fourteen, all of Philadelphia; Mrs. Bettle, wife of Hon. Edward Bettle, of Camden; Miss Anna W. Roberts, daughter of the proprietor of the Chalfonte Hotel, and a Mr. Clark, of Atlantitc City. A stiff breeze was blowing and the sea was high. In crossing the bar a heavy sea struck the yacht and capsized her. All on board were drowned save Mrs. Bettle, Mr. Clark and Captain Steelman.

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

Rockaway and Other Wrecks.

The "Rockaway," a newly launched excursion steamer, was wrecked near Pennsylvania avenue, on March 25th, 1877. The boat had left Norfolk for New York, on the previous Saturday, in tow of the Old Dominion steamship "Wyanoke." She was built that year near Norfolk, Virginia, and was designed for the excursion trade between New York and Rockaway Beach. The hawser parted during a heavy sea, after nightfall, and the new craft went to pieces. No lives were lost. The "Rockaway" was capable of accommodating four thousand passengers, and was one of the finest boats of the kind ever built.

The schooner "Anson Stinson" came ashore just below Mississippi Avenue in 1880. The entire crew was sick and the captain had been buried at sea. The vessel was a total loss; cargo partly saved. The same year the schooner "Lydia Reed" was wrecked and lost.



Schooner "Robert Morgan" Ashore in 1884.

In 1882, on December 29, the sloop "William Lee" grounded on Absecon bar and was lost.

In 1883, on February 17, the schooner "Enterprise" went to pieces opposite the inlet.

On January 9, 1894, the handsome three-masted schooner "Robert Morgan," from New Haven, came ashore at the foot of New York avenue. She was left stranded high and dry at low water and people walked and rode around her. Children played in the sand between the "Morgan" and the ebbing tide. She remained imbedded in the sand for more than five months and was visited by thousands of people who came to Atlantic City. An admission fee of ten cents was charged, and photographs of the wreck found a ready sale at twenty-five cents. When finally floated, on the 11th of June, she was comparatively uninjured.

The Geestemunde and Vizcaya

The German bark "Geestemunde," Captain Ferdinand Lenthe, came ashore during a high wind opposite Trenton avenue, on the evening of September 12, 1889. She was bound from Stettin, North Germany, for Philadelphia, laden with 800 barrels of cement and 4,250 empty coal-oil barrels, and was fifty-five days out. The crew of eighteen men were taken off by John Trenwith, of the Seaview House, and the crew of the life-saving station, but the cargo was a total loss. The vessel went to pieces two weeks later. Before going to pieces she was an object of much interest on the beach.*

The Spanish steamer "Vizcaya" and the schooner "Cornelius Hargrave" were in collision off Barnegat on Thursday night, October 30, 1890. Both vessels went down. Of the ninety-three people on board the "Vizcaya," only thirty-four were saved by the steamer "Humboldt" and the tug "Hercules." The officers and crew of the "Vizcaya" numbered seventy-seven people. She had sixteen passengers. Ten of the crew of the "Hargrave" were also saved.

The ship "Francis," Captain A. Smith, from San Francisco to New York, 111 days out, with a crew of twenty-five men and a cargo consisting principally of wines, having caught fire, was beached on the bar opposite Little Egg Harbor Inlet, at 9.30 P. M. on May 8, 1897. The life-saving crew immediately went to their assistance and saved the crew, but the flames were beyond control, and at two o'clock on the morning of the 9th she was abandoned. The flames burned all night and were seen from the Boardwalk of Atlantic City. The fire was attributed to spontaneous combustion. Casks of wine from this wreck came ashore in Atlantic City, but were recovered for the owners by E. A. Higbee, Esq., of Somerspoint, the collector of customs, the finders claiming salvage.

The schooner "Mattie B. Russell," Captain J. G. Drinkwater, from New York to Baltimore, ran ashore off Great Egg Harbor Bay on November 12, 1897. The crew was saved, but the vessel and cargo were lost.

AN OLD-TIME WRECKER.

Atlantic City possessed no more picturesque pioneer than Captain Amasa Bowen, who died in July, 1899, at the advanced age of 82 years. Born in Atlantic County of a long line of seafaring ancestors, he became a mariner in early life and had many tales of shipwrecks on Absecon Beach.

Ryan Adams, the first of the wrecking masters, long since dead, employed Bowen when he was a youth. In those days shipwrecks were frequent along the Jersey coast and the coasting skippers in time of storm had little protection. Sometimes there were as many as six vessels ashore on this beach. When a wreck occurred Adams would speedily gather a crew of fearless men and go to the rescue of the imperiled crews of the helpless vessels. Bowen used to relate thrilling accounts of the terrible loss of life that followed the failure of the wreckers to reach the helpless sailors. Sometimes it happened that a wreck occurred when Wrecking Mas-

*The flag pole which stood in front of the Hotel Osborne for a time, and which was one of the masts of the old Geestemunde, was presented to the Atlantic Fire Company and erected in front of their building on Arkansas avenue. The pole is ninety feet long and is thick enough to hold a score of flags in the stiffest gale that ever blew.

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

Gussie Bowen's Bravery. ter Ryan's crew were at their homes on the mainland. It was then the custom to signal them by sending up a tall column of smoke.

After the Government established a life-saving station here Amasa Bowen succeeded his old employer, Ryan Adams, as its keeper, and remained in charge of the station until about 1894, when he was displaced by a younger man, Timothy Parker.

During the "seventies" Mr. Bowen was associated with Lewis H. Conover, a pioneer long since deceased, as proprietor of what was then called the New Excursion House, at Connecticut and Atlantic avenues. One day a gang of excursionists invaded the house and during an altercation with Bowen would have killed him but for the bravery of his daughter, Augusta. Mr. Bowen was lying prostrate on his back and had been nearly stabbed to death, when the daughter ran to his rescue, and standing over her father's bleeding form bravely defied his assailants. She undoubtedly saved his life. This daughter is now Mrs. Augusta Tomlinson, of Atlantic City.

After his retirement from the life-saving service Captain Bowen, though close to eighty years, sailed a yacht from the Inlet. One day in the winter of 1898-99 he went to Brigantine in his yacht, attempted to return home and when found was helpless and half frozen in his boat. The exposure caused his death.

Steaming northward, through the dense fog that prevailed along the Jersey coast on the night of December 23, 1900, the British steamer "Antilia," with no coast beacons to guide her anxious navigators, suddenly came into contact with the bar that runs seaward from the mouth of Great Egg Harbor Inlet. The Longport and Ocean City life-saving crews put out at once and found the "Antilia" resting in an easy position. They landed the only two passengers, but the crew of twenty-three men preferred to stand by the ship. Wrecking steamers came to the rescue of the "Antilia," and pulled her off in a few days, with slight injury. She was bound for New York from Nassau, with a general cargo.

A tragic suicide from the cat yacht "Edith" was witnessed five miles off Atlantic City late in the afternoon of August 6, 1900, by Captain Hyle Parker and six passengers. A young man, probably twenty-one years of age, plunged from the bow of the boat into the sea, and upon coming to the surface, drew a revolver from his coat pocket and shot himself in the head. The tragedy was enacted so rapidly that those on board the boat had barely time to realize what had happened before it was all over. Who the young man was is to this day a mystery. During the trip outward he sat silent in the boat, but was

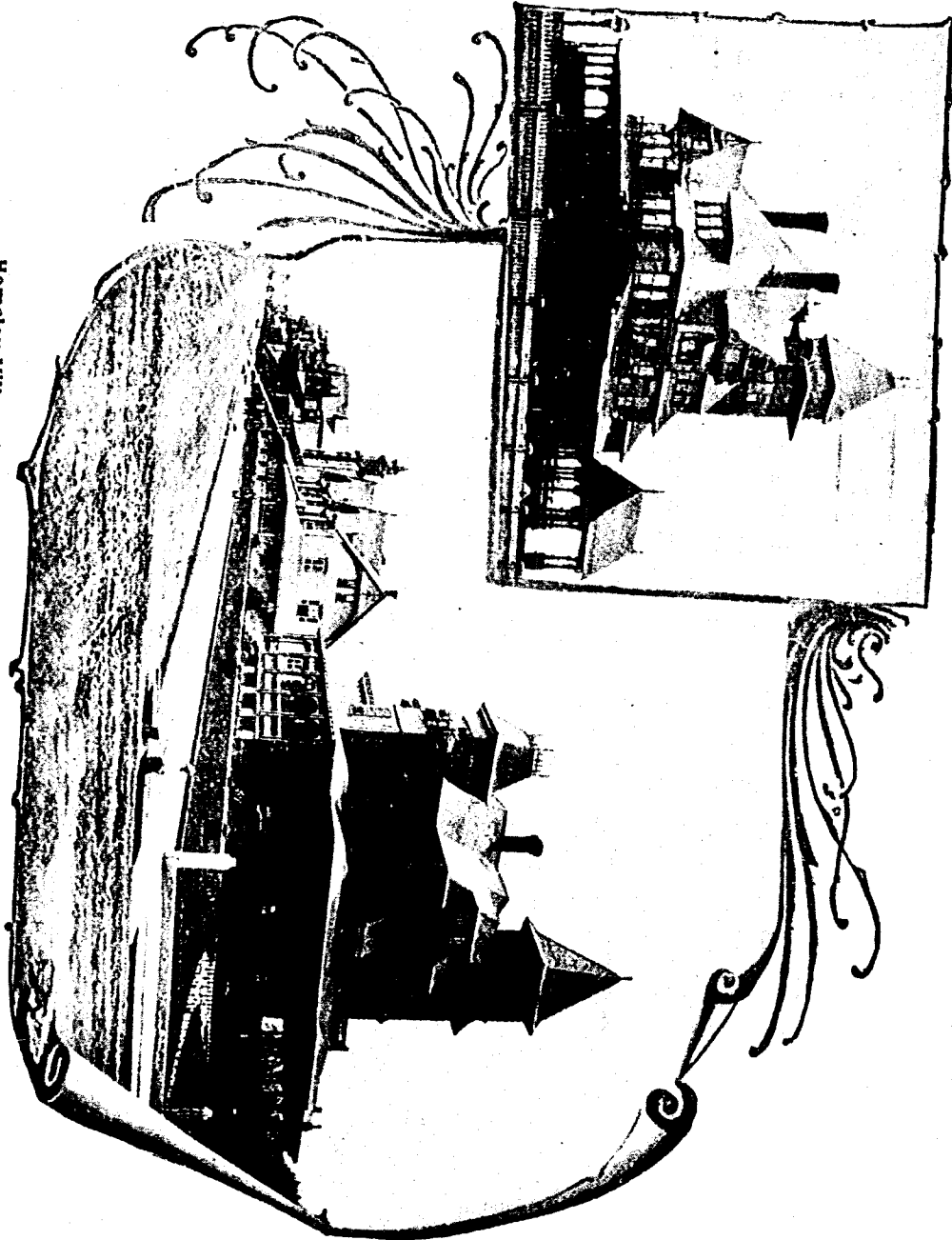
**Wreck of the
Coleman.**

noticed to shift from one side to the other, until he finally fixed himself on the seat nearest the bow.

A somewhat similar suicide occurred three years before, when an unknown man, whose identity has never been learned, went out to sea with Captain Somers. He was alone in the boat, and after going some miles from shore, untied a package and laid on the seat a revolver and four window sash weights. The sash weights he tied to his legs below the knee. The captain, realizing that the man intended suicide, attempted to prevent him from carrying out his intention. The revolver caused him to change his mind. After tying the weights to his legs, the man drew a dollar from his pocket, threw it to the captain and then jumped overboard, disappearing like a shot.

The wrecking of the two-masted coasting schooner "A. T. Coleman," and the rescue, from the rigging, of the captain and crew of three men by the Government life-savers, was witnessed from the Boardwalk by 2,000 persons on the afternoon of January 20, 1901. The "Coleman" was in a water-logged condition when she ran ashore directly opposite New Jersey avenue. Five minutes afterward the life-saving crew launched the life-boat. The sea was dangerously rough, and a two-mile pull was necessary. Twenty minutes after the schooner went aground the crew took to the rigging. Their peril was observed from the shore, and within a very short time the hotels were emptied of visitors, who thronged the Boardwalk. Heavy seas time and again broke over the men in the life-boat, but they sturdily stuck to their task, although it seemed a hopeless one. After an hour's struggle they got alongside the wreck, and in a few minutes the captain, Benjamin B. Sharp, and Marcus Sharp, of Dorchester, N. J.; Jacob Willis, of Atlantic City, and Joseph Harris, of Augusta, Ga., were taken aboard. Before the men were landed on the beach, nearly frozen, the schooner had disappeared from view. The "Coleman" was loaded with lumber from North Carolina. Half of the cargo floated with the tide into the Inlet and the other went to sea, but a week later was blown ashore on Brigantine

Hemstley Villa—View at Pacific and Maryland Avenues in 1902.



Mark L. Conover, of Atlantic City, is one of the few living witnesses of that marine horror of half a century ago—the wreck of the "Powhatan". The thermometer was below the freezing point on April 15, 1854, and the wind blew furiously all that day. As darkness set in the "Powhatan" was abreast of Long Beach. The captain had lost his bearings on account of the storm and before midnight the vessel was aground at a point known to mariners as "Hell's Hole". In describing this marine horror Mr. Conover said he helped to handle bodies as they washed ashore until it made him sick, and then going to his home at Smithsville he found other work awaiting him. A hundred or more of the bodies had been loaded upon wagons and carried to the little village for burial. There was nothing to bury them in, and he made crude boxes, in which the bodies were buried in a trench, just outside the gates of the old Friends' burying ground, but which has since become the Methodist Cemetery. These bodies came ashore at Brigantine. Others that came ashore on Long Beach were buried at Tuckerton and those which came ashore at other points were buried in other parts of the county. None were buried on Absecon Island.

At Long Beach the victims were plundered of their money and valuables by ghouls until the county authorities put a stop to it. As each body was placed in a wooden box everything of value was taken from it by the county authorities, and after months of waiting, as no one appeared to claim them, they were sold to defray the expenses of burial.

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

**Loss of the
Bark Sindia.** Beach. A part of the ship remained where she went down, forming a dangerous obstruction in the Inlet channel. The wreck was destroyed by dynamite on the following June 4th.

The steamer "Ranald" anchored off Atlantic City on the afternoon of June 3, 1901, dangerously listed by a shifted cargo of bulk asphalt. The vessel sank at ten minutes past one o'clock that night. Persons who had been watching her saw her lights burning as usual. When they looked again, a few minutes later, the lights were gone, and the sea had closed over the ship. The crew of twenty-four men, with the mate and Captain Hamilton Cassidy, were brought ashore by Captain Abraham Casto, of the sloop yacht "David Schuyler," who stayed by the doomed steamer until she went down. The listing of the vessel was caused by the melting of the asphalt in the tropical sun. She sank in thirty-seven feet of water. The steamship "Monroe," of the Old Dominion Line, lost her propeller and was badly disabled, by coming in contact with this sunken wreck, on Sunday, May 31, 1903. The "Monroe" was bound for New York.

During a storm on December 15, 1901, two vessels came ashore on the New Jersey coast. The schooner "Mark Gray," bound from Boston to Georgia in ballast, was stranded twelve miles above Barnegat. Captain Leach, who was in command of the "Gray," and the crew of seven men, were all saved by the beach guards, who went to the rescue in their surf boats.

The second wreck was that of the English bark "Sindia," which struck on the bar off Ocean City. This vessel had a crew of thirty-three men, beside the officers. All hands stuck to the ship until daylight, when they were taken off by the life-savers. The "Sindia" was a steel vessel of 2,929 tons register, and was built in Belfast, Ireland. She was commanded by Captain McKenzie, and was on her way to New York with a general cargo, from Kobe, Japan, valued at \$500,000. Captain McKenzie was injured while being taken ashore. The "Sindia" was a total loss. Her cargo was practically destroyed, and the loss was over \$300,000. A submerged wreck held her

**Rescue of the
Sparta's Crew.** so firmly in its grip that the wrecking
masters abandoned their efforts to save
her. At this writing (1904) her four
masts and portions of her hull are visible off Ocean City.

SEVEN OLD WRECKS RECALLED.

The submerged wreck which held the "Sindia" was believed to be the three-masted schooner, "S. Thorn," which went ashore about thirty-five years before and sank in the sand.

The schooner "Lottie Klotts," sailed by Captain Thomas Endicott, father of Judge Allen B. Endicott, went ashore about the same time the "Thorn" was lost, while bound from Cuba with sugar. The schooner was lost, but its cargo was saved.

The wreck of the bark "Lawrence," lost while on her way to New York from a Mediterranean port, on Ocean City's beach, was visible a short distance from the "Sindia."

The wreck of the brig "Huron," which carried sugar; the bark "Ann Julia Brewer," which had cotton and molasses from New Orleans, and the brig "Dashaway," all lay to the south of the "Sindia," and to the north lay the wreck of the steamer "Eutaw," once a Government transport, but a commercial vessel trading between New York and Philadelphia when she ran ashore.

The hulk of the brig "Perseverance," which was lost about 1800, with a valuable cargo from a foreign port, was partially exposed at a place east by south of where the "Sindia" lay, with her hull immediately over and held by the wreck of the "Thorn."

* * *

"Steamer sunk, crew picked up and brought here; all safe. Captain Silas Boyce."

This brief message coming from Algiers, La., on January 9, 1902, to the wife of the captain of the fishing steamer "Sparta," dispelled the mystery of a marine disaster near Atlantic City. Not for years had the city been wrought to such a pitch of excitement, and the news brought joy to the households of the absent fishermen. The "Sparta" was last seen by a resident of Atlantic City the previous week on the fishing banks, twelve miles at sea. Repairs were being made to her machinery when Captain Hyle Parker left the "banks" for home. A severe storm came up, and the little steamer disappeared from reckoning. On board, when she left the Inlet for her last trip, were Captain Silas Boyce, Albert Sooy,* George Berke, John Stewart, James Crosby, James Gale, Theodore Van Sant, Engineer Cummings and Wilson

* Albert Sooy was instantly killed by the fall of a 500 pound trip hammer while driving piling for the foundation of the new Hotel Chalfonte, Atlantic City, on January 25, 1904. Sooy was leaning over in the path of the hammer, when it was released and he was struck so hard that his neck was broken and his head partly crushed. For several years he had been head of the crew of fishermen on Young's Pier and was well known to thousands of summer visitors. He was fifty five years old.

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

Lee and Cloverdale Wrecks. Brown. The following statement of the terrible experience through which the fishermen passed was made by Captain Boyce:

"We left Atlantic City on January 2, 1902, and about 9 o'clock at night encountered heavy winds. Our feed pumps gave out before daylight, but the boat was kept afloat until Friday morning, when the wind changed to a northwest gale. We anchored, and although the depth of water increased a foot an hour, the men, with buckets and syphons, managed to keep the craft afloat until 3 o'clock, when the coast line steamer "Eldorado" came along and took us off. We were landed at Algiers, Louisiana."

These men were rescued in much the same manner as Captain S. S. Hudson, of Mayslanding, rescued fifty-one shipwrecked persons a few miles off this city on June 21, 1860. In that disaster twenty lives were lost.

The British freight steamer "Cloverdale," 300 feet long, struck on Brigantine Shoals on the morning of February 2, 1902, during a fog. Her cargo consisted of 4,000 tons of tea and 3,000 tons of other merchandise from China and Japan. Vessel and freight were worth \$1,000,000. The "Cloverdale" had a crew of twenty-five men, all of whom remained aboard. Captain Harding sent word ashore that the steamer was twenty-five days from Algiers, her last stopping place, and she was bound for New York, coming by the way of the Suez Canal. The Atlantic City light, which acts as a warning to mariners of the proximity of the shoals, was not seen, owing to the thick weather. She lightened her cargo and floated about a week later.

In plain sight of hundreds of people on the Boardwalk and piers, the schooner "A. L. Lee," of Somerspoint, struck on the Absecon bar, at the mouth of the Inlet, on the morning of December 10, 1902, and became an abandoned wreck. The crew of four men, three of whom were from this city, were taken from the rigging of the "Lee" by the life-saving crew, after two hours of terrible suffering from the bitter winds and freezing water which washed over the vessel from stem to stern. The schooner struck upon the bar while making an attempt to enter the Inlet about eleven o'clock that morning. She was bound from Haverstraw, New York, with a cargo of brick. The life-saving crew immediately manned their boat and started down the channel to the rescue. They made no progress in the

Loss of the Abbott teeth of the gale blowing forty miles
and Pascuel. an hour and were compelled to land
and take their boat down the beach to

a point to the windward of the imperiled vessel. The next attempt to launch the boat was made from a point opposite the St. Charles Hotel, and this time, after a hard pull at the oars, the life-boat was brought near enough to the schooner for a line to be thrown from the stranded craft to the life-boat. The crew entered the life-boat and were brought ashore. They were Captain R. S. Gaskill, Steward N. F. Bowen and "Den" Anderson, of Atlantic City, and Mate Charles Creamer, of Tuckahoe.

The full-rigged Spanish ship, "Remedios Pascuel," loaded with hides and bones from Buenos Ayres, and bound for New York, ran on the shoals at Ship Bottom Light, about twenty miles above Atlantic City, early on Saturday morning, January 3, 1903.

The "Remedios Pascuel" was commanded by Captain Tablo Ganato, and carried a crew of twenty-one men. When she struck the crew were terror-stricken and made a dash for the boats. Their fears were calmed by the captain, who, having heard the roar of the breakers on the beach, said that the shore could not be far off. Rockets were sent up, but no answer to them came until daybreak on Saturday morning, when they were taken ashore by the life crew. Portions of the cargo were saved, but the vessel was lost.

During a dense fog that hung over the ocean on the night of January 20, 1903, the square-rigged ship, "Abiel Abbott," Captain Hawkins, from Turk's Island to New York, loaded with salt, went ashore at Ship Bottom Light House, twenty miles northeast of Atlantic City, and became a total wreck. The crew of nine men were swept overboard and clung to the wreckage till morning, when the lifesavers picked up five of the men in an exhausted condition. The other four men were rendered unconscious by the cold, could not retain their positions on the wreckage and were drowned. Life lines were shot from a mortar over the boat's bow, but it could not be reached by the men on board. All of the small boats were washed away or broken when the spars fell; the men had to cling

SHIPWRECKS AND DROWNINGS.

The Brighton's to the wreckage and were soon drifting out to sea. When the fog lifted in the morning the life-savers saw the men on the spar, about two miles out to sea. They went to the rescue and succeeded in bringing the five men ashore.

Banana Cargo. The "Abbott" was wrecked within one mile of the wrecked ship "Harold B. Cousens," which went ashore on January 12, 1903, eight days previous, and within a hundred yards of the big Spanish ship "Remedios Pascuel," which went ashore three weeks before. The "Abbott" was a total loss. She was 589 tons register, was built in 1875 at Boston, and her home port was New York.

In a dense fog, on the night of March 30, 1903, the Norwegian steamship "Brighton" stranded on a bar 200 yards off the upper end of Pacific avenue, Atlantic City. Four passengers and her crew of twenty-two men were taken ashore by the life-savers. She was loaded with bananas, cocoanuts and rum from Port Antonio, Jamaica, and bound for New York. The "Brighton," a vessel of 1,250 tons, was steaming up the coast in a storm. Her commander, Captain Otto Keogh, endeavored to keep to sea above Cape Hatteras, but a dense fog enveloped the boat most of the day. A gale tossed the vessel out of her track, and about midnight on March 30th Captain Keogh discovered himself among the breakers. The Atlantic City lighthouse, which might have warned him of danger, could not be seen in the fog. Even signal rockets failed to penetrate the fog and darkness. At daylight the life-savers boarded the ship, going out over a stormy surf in a life-boat. The crew lifted the hatches in order to lighten the boat and bananas by the bunch—thousands of bunches—were sent over the side and washed ashore, where a great crowd of people gathered them. Indeed, Atlantic City went "banana crazy." Thousands of bunches were brought ashore from the stranded steamship, and the town from one end to the other was a banana market. Atlantic City was crowded with Lenten visitors, some of whom gleefully exhibited to their friends a bunch of the green fruit. Hucksters and agents from the fruit dealers, not only here, but from Philadelphia and New York, scrambled over each other to buy for twenty or

Crew of the Red Dragon Lost. twenty-five cents a bunch of the green fruit that was worth anywhere from \$1.20 to \$1.50 in the customary markets.

Great bunches of the fruit were seen on every kind of conveyance—wagon, hack, baby coach, donkey cart, rolling chair and street car. On hotel bills of fare were bananas raw, bananas fried, banana fritters and plain bananas. Every day for a week was banana day. One enterprising agent of a Philadelphia fruit house hired seven boats to gather up the spoils, and in one day he sent four thousand bunches to Philadelphia. Wrecking steamers worked for a week, trying to pull the "Brighton" off the bar. She was finally floated on April 7th and proceeded to New York. Her entire cargo was valued at \$40,000, but only the bananas were thrown overboard. The vessel was practically uninjured.

During a terrific gale on September 16, 1903, the fishing sloop "Red Dragon," of Atlantic City, was lost near Harvey Cedars, with all on board. The drowned men were Captain Dewitt Clark, Frank Ducasse, familiarly known as "Sinbad," John Elms, S. L. Swanson and Daniel Murdock, all of Atlantic City. The first four left families. Captain Clark and "Sinbad" were both well known sailors, and had followed the water for twenty years, fishing or sailing. Both were extremely venturesome, and had been out in many bad storms before. It was his fearlessness of the water that won for Ducasse the name of "Sinbad," the fabulous old man of the sea, mentioned in the "Arabian Nights."

The fishing schooner "Rival," Captain C. W. Farmer, of Gloucester, Mass., bound for New York with a cargo of fresh mackerel, came ashore on Brigantine Shoals about 6.30 o'clock on the morning of April 8, 1904. The captain and eighteen sailors were rescued with some difficulty by the crew of the South Brigantine life saving station. The schooner filled with water, and proved a total loss.

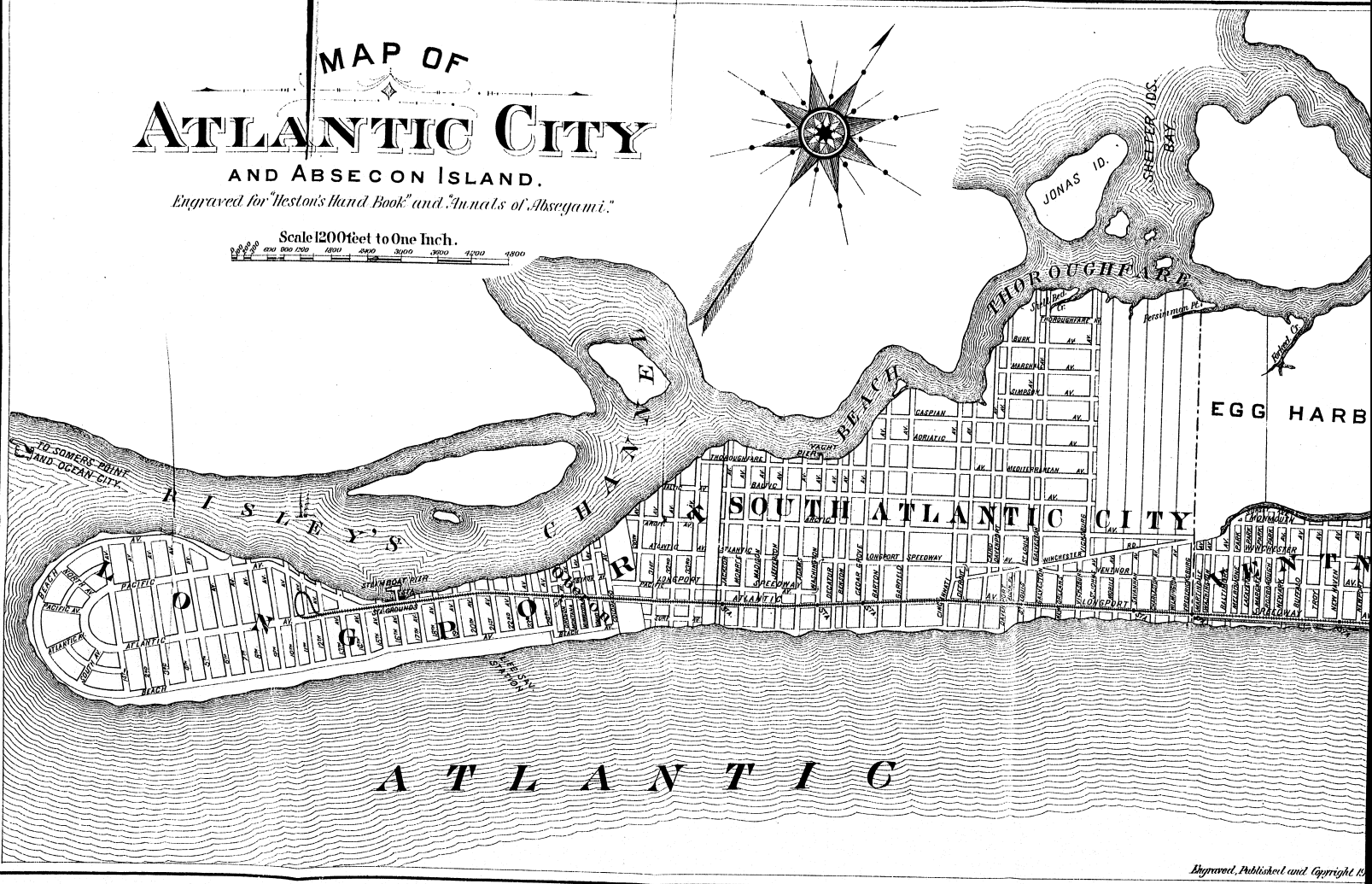
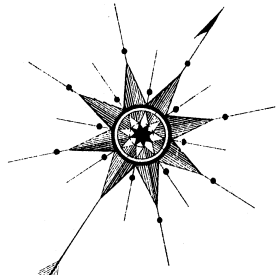
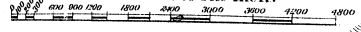
Numerous other wrecks might be mentioned out of the more than three hundred of which there is a record. Before the establishment of life-saving stations on the coast and the building of the light house, in 1857, there was scarcely a night during severe weather that a vessel did not come ashore.

MAP OF ATLANTIC CITY

AND ABSECON ISLAND.

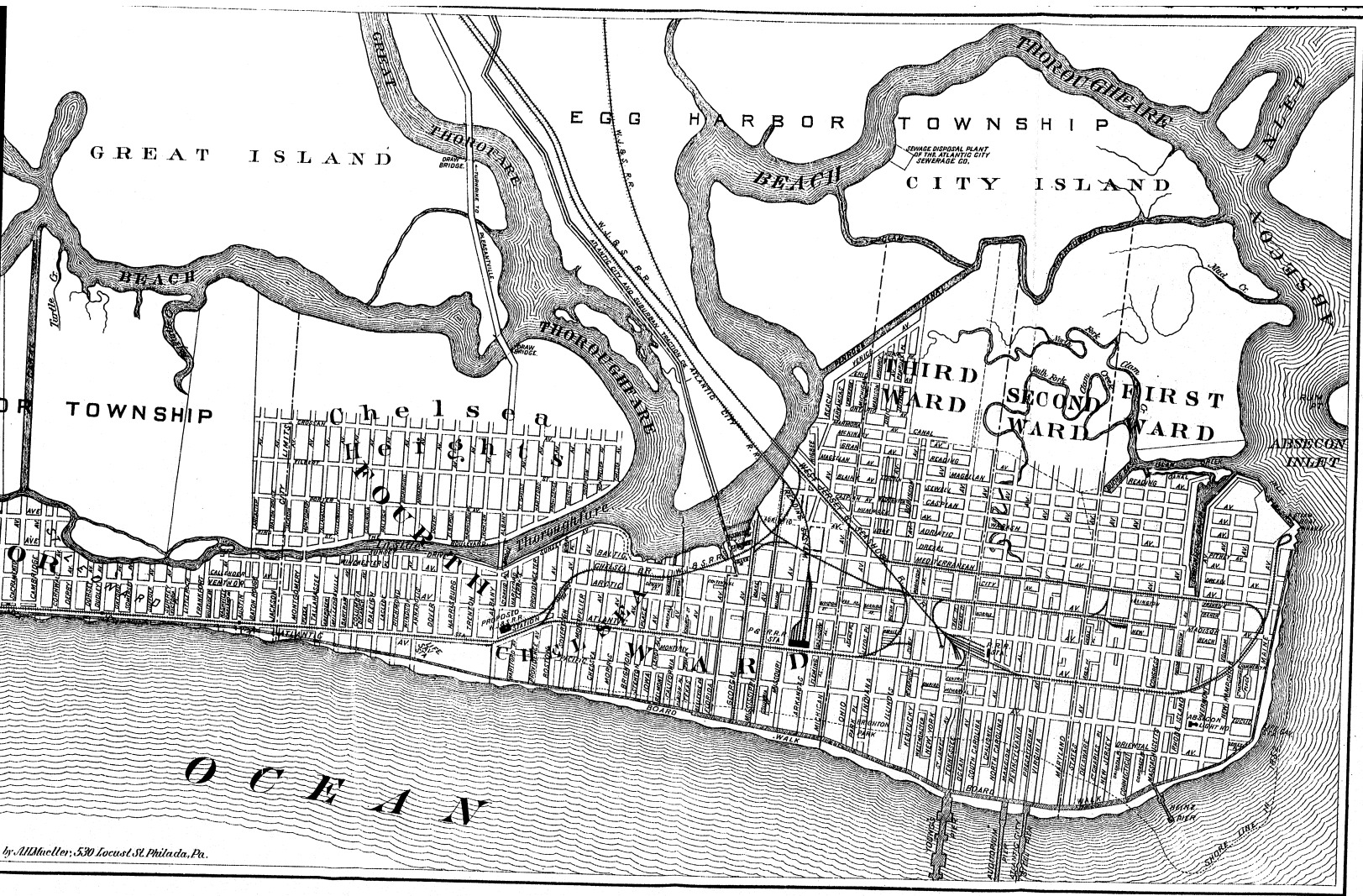
Engraved for "Heston's Hand Book" and "Annals of Absecon."

Scale 1200 feet to One Inch.



A T L A N T I C

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