

SWEDS SETTLED ALONG MAURICE RIVER, NEAR MILLVILLE, DURING 1638

Unmistakable Marks Indicate There May Have Been Village Back of "Legion Farm."

Writer Refers to Scandinavians and Prince Maurice in Book Published in London, 1698.

Millville, January 19.—Although there have been stories, and they seem to be supported by certain later discoveries and evidences that the Swedes settled along Maurice River as early as 1638, there were few who ventured on up the river to the present site of Millville until a hundred years later. Few cabins were built in this immediate locality much before the Revolutionary War, but just a few miles south of this particular section, there is reason to believe that there was a thriving settlement by Swedish adventurers who journeyed up the river at a spot on the eastern shore, between Menantico and Port Elizabeth. The exact location of this first settlement is described as being almost immediately in the rear of what has lately been known as the "Legion Farm," so-called because shortly after the World War that property was acquired as a home for convalescent soldiers. Historians say it was Cumberland County's first settlement by the white man.

Prince Maurice River
In a book entitled "Historical and Genealogical Account of the Province and Country of Pennsylvania and of West Jersey," published in London in 1698, by Gabriel Thomas, a Friend, who a short time before had returned from this country, he speaks of Prince Maurice River, "where the Swedes used to kill the geese in great numbers for their feathers only, leaving their carcasses behind them." How long before the date of his book, he meant, is not stated, but it implies that there were some Swedish settlers there prior to the publication, and there are many Swedish descendants in and around that part of Cumberland County today.

Maurice River, one of the two largest in the county, was many yards wider than it is today, in that locality and there is a likelihood that there was considerable activity there. The river was named in honor of Prince Maurice, who was supposed to have chartered the stream. The reference, at least, implies that there were Swedish settlers along the river prior to the publication of the book.

And that Swedish settlement, described by Thomas, has been pictured in the minds of many who have taken the time to delve into history, as being along the river just below Millville. There are still certain unmistakable signs and indications that, in the distant past, there probably was such a village.

OLD STORE BOOK SHOWS PRICES

And There Appears to be Little Difference Between the Figures of 1875 and Those Today.

Millville, January 19.—Prices in 1875 and 1876 were not far different than they are today. An old store book possessed by Bert Keen displays some interesting figures. The book belonged to William G. Keen in account with Whitall Tatum & Company, dealers in dry goods, groceries, boots and shoes, provisions, etc.

The book shows that Mr. Keen was paying .50 a pound for butter; 18 a pound for lard. Chimneys cost .10 each, gloves .35; mittens .35; sugar was .12 a pound; quart of chestnuts .15; quart of beans, .12; one-half gallon vinegar .20, and oil cost .11 a quart.

Fifty pounds of flour cost \$1.88 in 1876, and butter dropped to .42 a pound. Sausage cost .18; coffee .12. Bushel crack corn sold at .75; one bushel bran .40; one-half bushel potatoes .40. Pork sold for .30 and beef at .30, but there were no notations in the book that revealed the quantity of meat.

Old Burial Ground

A peculiar growth of the trees, old cedars and mounds of a regulation size that might have been thrown up as protective banks and the discovery of a burial ground there some years ago in which were the bones of a number of human beings, all seemed to lead to further proof that perhaps, here, within a few miles of Millville, the first settlement in the county, was established.

One finds it strange and fascinating nowadays to tramp about over the mounds and grass of the spot which may have been the home of the county's original settlers. It is possible that positive evidence might be discovered, were sufficient effort exerted to make further explorations of the ground. There is no use being made of the land today. The river shore is covered with gravel stones and there is a steep incline leading to the eastern shore.

At low tide one finds plenty of mud. From the way the gravel bank has been washed away, it is quite possible that, at one time, the course of the river was a trifle farther to the westward. In fact, the graves were found at the water's edge, which could be taken as good enough evidence that the homes of those Swedes might have been upon the exact spot over which the waters of the river are now flowing.

But, anyway, in the absence of

any positive evidence that there was an earlier settlement in the county, the declaration that the Swedes did establish a little colony below Millville, on the east bank of Prince Maurice River, can be accepted as tradition, if not in fact, and it can also be said that the Swedes, then, were the first white folk to reach Cumberland County.