

Property of the Tinicum Twp. Historical Society

# The History of Tinicum Township

The first permanent European  
settlement in Pennsylvania

1643–1993



350 Years of History

by

Members of the Tinicum Township Historical Society

# Property of the Tincum Twp. Historical Society

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The seal on the front cover of this book commemorates Johan Printz as Governor of New Sweden. He served in that position from 1643–1653. Governor Printz lived and governed for 10 years in what is now Tincum Township.

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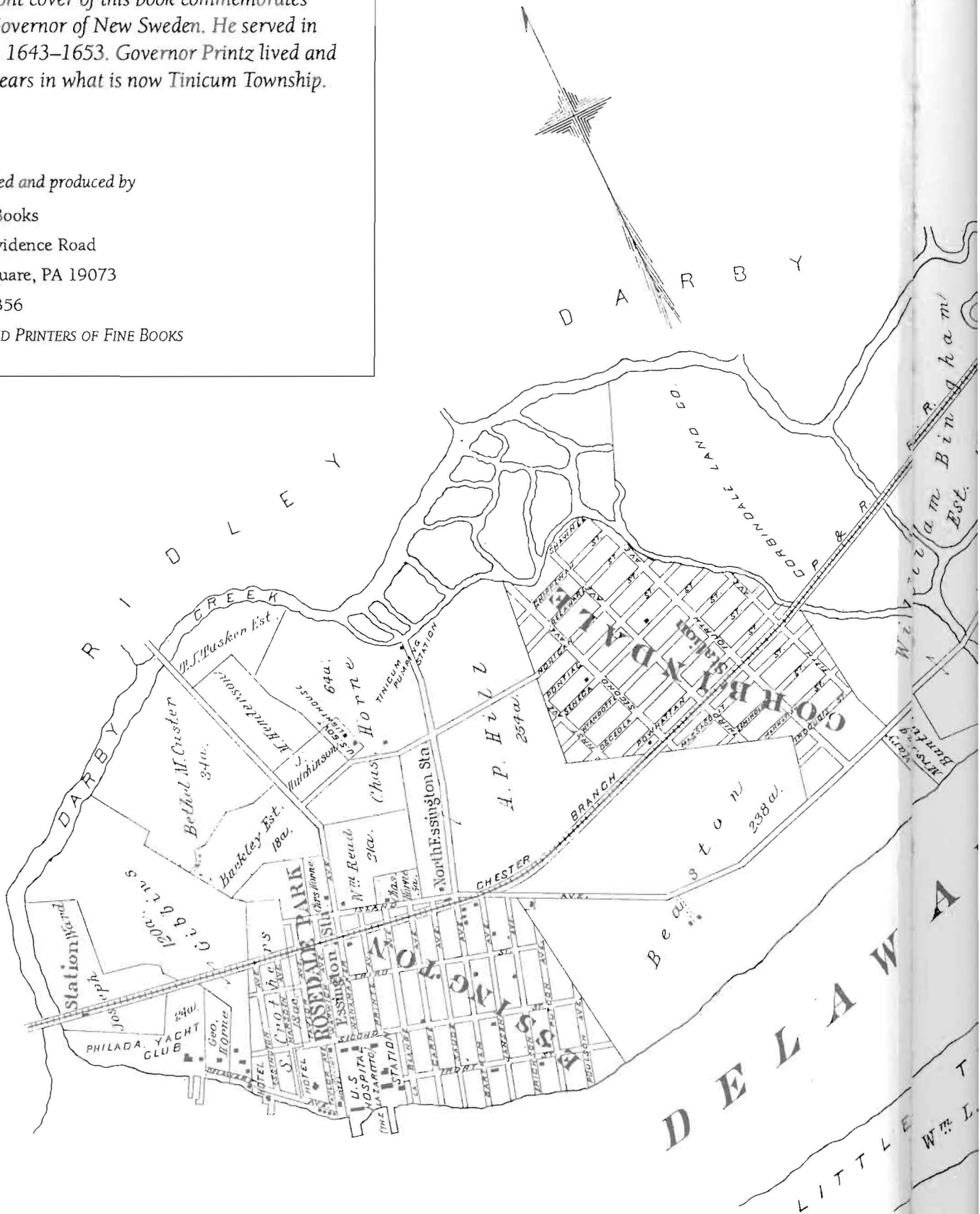
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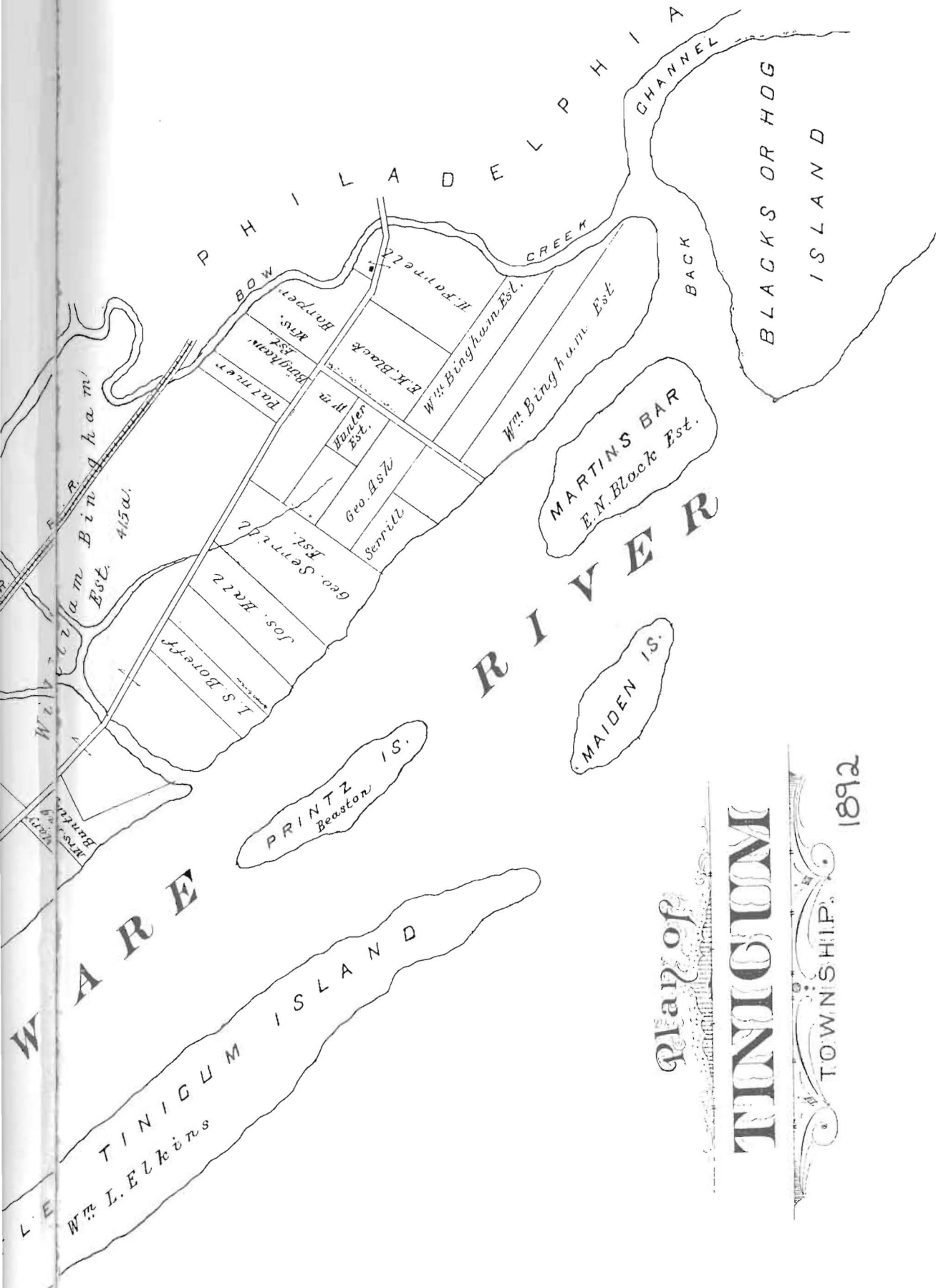
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Plan of  
**TINCUM**  
 TOWNSHIP.  
 1892

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*This book is dedicated to all the people who love Tinicum Township.*

## Preface

Tinicum Township covers about five square miles bordered by the Delaware River, Darby Creek, and what was Bow Creek and the Back Channel around Hog Island. This area was originally used by Native Americans for hunting of wild game. When the Swedes settled here 350 years ago, Tinicum was made up of islands surrounded by tidal marsh. This first small community of farmers lasted for over one hundred years.

As our neighbor Philadelphia became a major seaport, the face of Tinicum changed. The establishment of yacht clubs for wealthy Philadelphians created a large pleasure boat industry.

Other major changes occurred early in the 1900's with the arrival of heavy industry. The Hog Island Shipyard and the Westinghouse Electric Company transformed vast amounts of farm land into an industrial complex. This in turn created a residential building boom. By the 1920's, Hog Island Shipyard was gone leaving a large tract of open land which became the Philadelphia Airport.

If we reflect on all this, we might find that our present concerns with the airport over expansion is nothing new. Surely the Native Americans resented the changes made by the Swedish settlers. The farmers did not like the rich Philadelphians' improvements. And sportsmen resented the pollution and noise created by the heavy industry.

In Tinicum, as in all parts of the world, change is inevitable. What is here today won't be here tomorrow. The goal of the Tinicum Township Historical Society is to document and preserve our rich history. This book reflects our pride in the heritage of Tinicum. As in the mythical "Camelot," the remembering of the past is vital to the future. We hope that our effort of preservation will be treasured for generations to come.

## *Acknowledgments*

We would like to thank all of the people who contributed to the development of this book. We would especially like to thank the members of the book committee: William Duncan, Donna Hardy, John Hardy, Philip Keller, Wilhelm Moller, Anna Mae Phillips, and Christine Templin. We would also like to thank our publisher, Paul Harris, for his guidance through this difficult task.

### *Thanks to the following for the use of their photographs throughout this book*

Anchorage Marina, Philestina (Emplit) Aniba, Kyle Barrett, Robert Burnauer, Jerry Burrier, James Burnshaw, Nick Canzanese, Margie (Elbeck) Cousins, Pete Costa, Albert "Pooch" DeMarcantonio, Roy "Hubby" Dunderdale, Elise (Schmidt) Erby, Martin Earnest, Essington Fire Company, Besse Fox, Mary (Vallo) Guthen, Harvey Lehman, C. Robert Mills, JoAnn (Fox) Marr, Ann (Wolf) Olsen, Elise (Gunnerson) Queflander, Ethel (Bothner) Richardson, Rev. John Schilling, John Sobe, Christine (Fox) Templin, Annetta (Risle) Weldon.

- 1592 July 20, Johan Printz was born.
- 1607 English settle Jamestown, Virginia.
- 1620 December 21, Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock.
- 1621 Founding of the Dutch West India Company.
- 1623 Captain May (Dutch) erects Fort Nassau at Timber Creek, New Jersey, for use while trading with the Indians.
- 1624 A few Walloon families settle on Burlington Island, New Jersey, staying only two years.
- 1626 King Adolphus signed the Swedish South Company Charter.
- 1632 King Adolphus died in battle.
- 1638 Kalmar Nyckel sailed up the Minquas River led by Peter Minuit (former employee of Dutch West India Co.) to start a settlement. Fort Christina was built.
- 1640 Peter Hollander Ridder succeeded Minuit as Governor of New Sweden.
- 1643 February 15, Johan Printz landed at Fort Christina to rule the New Sweden Colony. He moved the capital to Tincicum Island, a location more advantageous to control the River  
November 6, Johan Printz granted Tincicum by the Swedish Crown.
- 1644 October 14, William Penn was born.
- 1645 The Printzhof burned.
- 1646 Construction of the new Printzhof was complete. September 4, Reverend Campanius consecrated the first church.  
September 28, First burial, Katherine Hanson (a child).
- 1647 February 20, Armegot Printz marries Lt. Pappegoya (first wedding in Pennsylvania).  
May, Peter Stuyvesant replaced Governor Keift at New Amsterdam.
- 1651 Stuyvesant purchased land from the Indians in Delaware and built Fort Casimir.
- 1653 Johan Printz returned to Sweden.
- 1654 May, Governor Rising arrived to command New Sweden. He captured Fort Casimir.  
June 17, a great Indian council was held at Tincicum with ten satchems in attendance.
- 1655 September 4, Holland sent five ships with Governor Stuyvesant to concur the Swedes.  
September 15, Rising surrendered Fort Christina.
- 1660 Peter Stuyvesant presided over Court, held in Tincicum.
- 1663 Johan Printz died.
- 1664 September, New Amsterdam surrendered to England.  
October, Sir Richard Carr stormed Fort Casimir.
- 1669 October 1, The Duke of York deeded Tincicum Island to Andrew and Margarite Carr, purchased from Armegot Printz Pappegoya.
- 1672 Tincicum was again deeded to Armegot P. Pappegoya because Andrew Carr died before payment was complete.
- 1675 Tincicum was sold to Otto Ernst Cock, Justice of the court of Upland.
- 1678 Arnoldus de la Grange son of Margarite de la Grange-Carr, brings suit to court for his right of ownership to Tincicum and wins.
- 1684 Christopher Taylor purchases Tincicum.
- 1698 John Morton was born.
- 1742 Philadelphia established its first quarantine station on the mouth of the Schuylkill River.
- 1775 April 19, The Revolutionary War began.
- 1777 The British Navy cut holes in the Tincicum dykes to prevent their use as defense.
- 1780 August, Tincicum became a Township (previously being part of Ridley Township). The petition had 23 signatures.
- 1786 September 25, The Pennsylvania Legislature declared Hog Island part of Tincicum Township.
- 1790 Census shows population of Tincicum – 158.
- 1799 August 7, Philadelphia (then the new country's Capital) bought ten acres in Tincicum from Morris and Ruben Smith to build a new quarantine station.
- 1800 Census shows Tincicum's population – 272.
- 1801 The Lazaretto Quarantine Station was opened.
- 1838 January 15, The Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad was opened.
- 1840 A drawbridge was constructed over Darby Creek at the Morris Ferry.
- 1843 Elizabeth Griffiths, daughter of the Physician at the Lazaretto, started a school in the old Dutch house.
- 1847 The U.S. Customs building (adjacent to Lazaretto) was leased to John Pedrick, a ship's carpenter.

## a Historical Timeline

- 1850 Census shows: population of Tincum at 178, 26 houses (and families) and eleven farms.
- 1856 The Taylor Company purchased twenty acres from the Tincum Fishing Company and erected a commodious house for a Social Club.
- 1859 **September 11**, The Philadelphia Yacht Club bought the Tincum Fishing Company property.
- 1860 Census shows population of Tincum – 193. Seventeen volunteers from Tincum (from a voting population of twenty six) went to war, leaving only four men eligible for the draft.
- 1865 **January**, Reid and Steward, farmers in Tincum have the first steam thrasher in Delaware County.
- 1870 Census shows Tincum population – 147.  
**June**, The yellow fever epidemic began at the Lazaretto.
- 1874 William Miller bought the Riverside Hotel (now Walber's) from Jacob Pepper.
- 1871 U.S. government rebuilt the 280-foot wharf at the Lazaretto.
- 1875 The P.W.& B.RR became the Chester branch of the Reading Railroad.
- 1880 Census shows population of Tincum – 224. The Federal government took over quarantine operations and moved the station to Marcus Hook. **December**, Samuel Crothers recorded in Media, a plan for a town to be called Corbondale.
- 1888 The Lester Piano Company built a plant in Corbondale and renamed the town "Lester."
- 1890 Census shows population of Tincum – 188.  
**November 10**, Richard H. Hoy recorded a subdivision plan for "Essington" at Media.
- 1891 Gilbert Griffin built the Rosedale Inn on the reported site of the Printzhof.
- 1892 Gilbert Griffin recorded a subdivision plan to be called Rosedale. The Corinthian Yacht Club rented the old Tincum Hotel and held the first race in June. (They bought the property in 1893.)
- 1899 Harry Rasmussen started a boat building business in Essington.
- 1900 Census shows population of Tincum – 472
- 1901 Harry Bennison began a marine plumbing business in the Lazaretto building.
- 1902 The Church of Saint John the Evangelist started services at the Seaman's Library. The Philadelphia Athletic Club leased the Lazaretto, calling it "The Orchard Club."
- 1907 Charles Walber purchased the Riverside Hotel and renamed it Walber's.
- 1910 Census show population of Tincum – 1,135. Four fire hydrants are installed in Essington. Their locations are: Philadelphia Yacht Club, Corinthian Yacht Club, Lenhart's Hotel and the Barraco Leather Factory (on 3rd St.)
- 1913 Robert Glendenning and George Thomas started a "School of Flying" with six planes at the Lazaretto.
- 1914 **July 28**, World War I began.
- 1916 Colonel Robert Glendenning led the Philadelphia School of Aviation at the Lazaretto. The Army Signal Corps was based there, called Chamber's Field.
- 1917 **April 16**, The United States entered the war.
- 1918 The rear channel light was removed.
- 1919 **Spring**, fire destroyed dance pavilion at Walber's.
- 1920 Census shows population of Tincum at 2,500. The leather factory was destroyed by fire.
- 1921 Tincum became a first-class township.
- 1923 **June 14**, The Swedish Colonial Society erected a monument to New Sweden at the Corinthian Yacht Club.
- 1928 7.24 acres of riverfront land west of Taylor Ave. became "Governor Printz Park" when it was donated to The Swedish Colonial Society.
- 1930 **January 26**, Saint John the Evangelist Church building dedicated.
- 1936 Frank Mills bought the Lazaretto property.
- 1937 The first archeological dig at Printz Park by Donald A. Cadzow, state archeologist, reveals a complex series of foundations.  
**December 18**, Governor Printz Park deeded to the State of Pennsylvania.
- 1939 World War II began.
- 1943 The War Emergency Housing Project was built (the Manor Property).
- 1947 **July 28**, Lighthouse keeper's house burned.
- 1949 First Baptist Church dedicated.
- 1959 Manor Property Housing razed.
- 1979 **May**, Subdivision approved for Governor's Landing homes.
- 1987 Tincum Township Historical Society formed.



# I. FIRST INHABITANTS

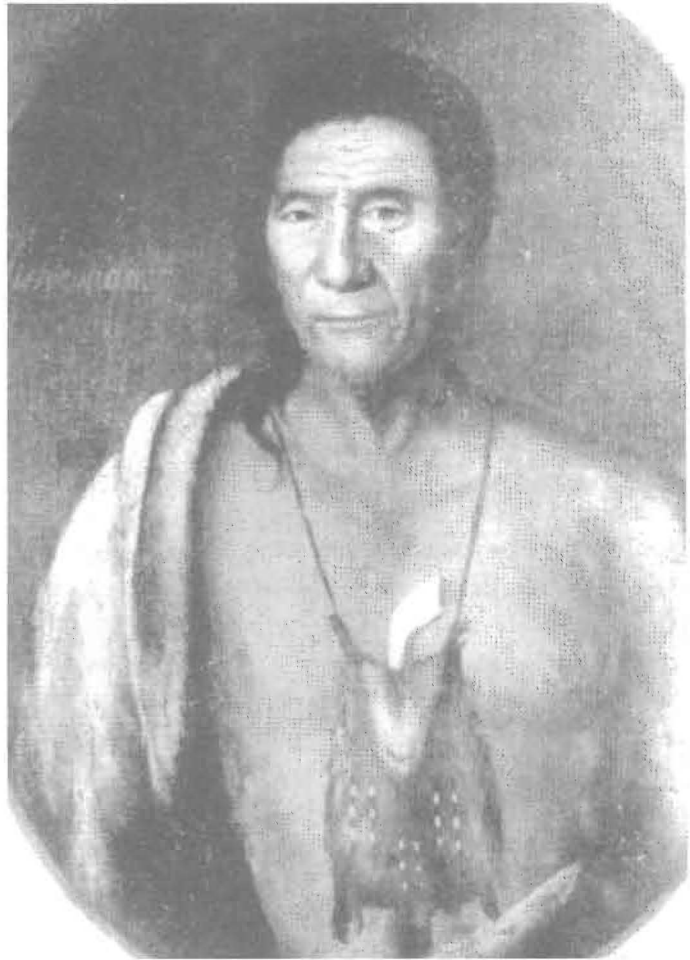
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## The Indians of Tinicum

The Indians who inhabited the region we call the Delaware Valley, consisting of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware, before the arrival of the white man, were known to themselves as the Lenni-Lenape. In their Algonquian language, Lenni-Lenape had the meaning of "the real people" or "the original people." The name Lenni-Lenape is still used today by the Indians, however, we know them better as the Delawares, a name given to them by the English who had settled in the area. The land the Indians inhabited knew no borders and extended from the Allegheny Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. The Indians hunted, fished and farmed where and when they wished and moved on when they felt that an area had sustained them long enough. They did not build permanent settlements, therefore, it is difficult to find any clue of their existence in any one area, but for certain they did occupy Tinicum Island and made use of its treasure chest of natural blessings.

We know that the Indians were capable farmers and shared their knowledge of farming with the early colonists. They introduced corn, potatoes, beans, squash, tomatoes and tobacco to the colonists as well as local knowledge of the fishes and wildlife in the area. The colonists returned to Europe with some of these products and spread the word of the New World and its inhabitants.

The Indians had a form of government not much unlike our own. Their Chief ruled as a monarch, but only through the wishes of a Council and through the consensus of the tribe. William Penn remarked, "How powerful the Kings are, yet they move by the breath of their people." The Indians had developed concepts and procedures of government, religion, education, social responsibility, morality, and personal honor and were a culture of the highest purity. Not being a material culture, they left no record of permanence in the manner of dwellings or monuments to their civilization. In their religion they gave reference to a Creator and the expectancy of a judgment in the afterlife.



TISH-CO-HAN, Lenni-Lenape Chief (from 1735 painting)

## II. EARLY SETTLERS

### Swedish History

Swedish history in the Tinicum area begins with the ship *Halveman*, (Half Moon) which was the first recorded vessel to sail into Delaware Bay. It belonged to the Dutch East Indian Company and was commanded by Henry Hudson. His log of that historic voyage in August of 1609 described a great bay and river. The following year Sir Samuel Argall, an Englishman, entered that bay from the Jamestown

colony in Virginia naming it "Delaware" after Lord De La War.



THE FABRIC OF A FRIENDSHIP is represented by this tapestry, "Nova Suecia, 1638-1655," designed by Kurt Jungstedt and woven in Aubusson, France. The original hangs on permanent display in the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia.

In 1614, Argall was followed by the Englishman, Cornelius May, in the ship *Fortune*. This expedition was backed by the Dutch West India Company in New Amsterdam in 1621. A second expedition in 1624 landed in Gloucester, New Jersey, and was responsible for building Fort Nassau. This fort was abandoned a short year later due to hostile conditions. A third expedition in 1632 was led by Captain David Pieterse De Vries, who found the ruins of the fort, gave up and went home.

In 1635, George Holmes and Thomas Hall led a party of Englishmen from a colony on the Connecticut River.

Their purpose was to make

lodgements on the Delaware River at the original site of Fort Nassau. They were greeted by a Dutch garrison that had refurbished the fort, were taken prisoner and sent to New Amsterdam.

In 1637, the Admiralty of Sweden issued passports for the ships *Kolmar* and *Nyckel* under Captain Peter Minuit. Their orders were to build a fort down river from Fort Nassau on the land purchased from the Indians. This fort was to be called "Kristina" in honor of the Swedish queen.

In 1642, an expedition sailed from Gothenburg, Sweden, led by Lieutenant Colonel Johan Printz, who was to be commissioned the governor of New Sweden. Arriving in the ships *Fama* and *Swann*,

with a crew of Swedes and Finns in February, 1643, he set up his seat of government on Tinicum Island, Pennsylvania. Two major structures were built at that time; the first was a fort at New Gothenburg, the second was the governor's mansion known as *Printzhof* (translated Printz Hall).

The emigrants of New Sweden consisted of three classes. The freemen were privileged to settle wherever they chose and received grants of land from the governor. They were also permitted to travel back and forth to Sweden. Next were the company men who were hired by contract. These men engaged in trade with the indians and built cabins for the settlement. They later opened the way inland and developed farms throughout the regions of Ridley, Upland, Kingsessing and Chester County. The final group consisted of vagabonds and criminals. These were in slavery and were required to serve their sentence in New Sweden. They built stone fortifications and earthen dykes to contain the tides' flow along the many creeks in the area.

During the first years under Governor Printz, many settlers died due to severe hardship and scarcity of food. In 1647, reports indicated a total number of 80 souls in the settlements of New Gothenburg and Kristina. In February of that year, the ship *Golden Shark* carried Lieutenant Pappegoya to Sweden. He was a special messenger for Governor Printz. His mission was to report the desperate conditions at the settlements. Pappegoya, who was probably Governor Printz's son-in-law, returned from Sweden without receiving any promises. After 10 years service, Governor Printz returned to Sweden and appointed John Pappegoya to take charge in his absence.

Sometime in 1654, the ship *Eagle* arrived at what is now New Castle, Delaware with Johan Claudius Rising who assumed the responsibilities of the settlements. His first official act was to challenge the Dutch at Fort Cassimir in New Jersey. With the force of men and cannon he captured it and confiscated the properties.

On October 17th, 1654, he held a council with the Lenni-Lenape Indian Sachem (chief) at Printzhof. They signed a treaty of friendship, which was kept faithfully without further incident. One of his motives was to have the indians on his side should the Dutch attack the settlement.

Indeed when the Dutch received news of Rising's activity they ordered an expedition of several ships and 600 hundred men to regain control of Fort Cassimir. Some of the men used in the force had been among the prisoners taken to New Amsterdam in 1635. Peter Stuyvesant, Governor of New Amsterdam, was in command of this expedition. His mission was successful in removing the Swedish presence from not only Fort Cassimir but also from Forts Kristina and New Gothenburg.

Shortly after this, the Dutch rule was overpowered by the English. King Charles II sent his brother James, the Duke of York, to accomplish this task. This is how the history of the Swedish settlement in the Delaware County area ended.

Their contributions were important to colonial America. Besides being the first European settlement in Pennsylvania, they introduced the first Lutheran church, the first flour grist mill and cabin construction, built roads and farms, made concise maps of the region's creeks and properties, and set up the first form of government courts with jury systems.

By these contributions, the Swedish colonists helped pave the way for William Penn's landing in Upland Chester and the founding of Penn's Woods.

### III. CHURCHES OF TINICUM TOWNSHIP

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#### Lutheran Churches

##### *Swedish - American Lutheran*

Pennsylvania history began in Delaware County on Great Tinicum Island. Here was situated the first seat of government and the first church of any denomination was built by the Swedish Lutherans in this very place, making Tinicum one of the cradles of Lutheranism in America. Although New Sweden was formed in 1638, it was not until after the arrival in Tinicum of the third Governor, Johan Printz, in

1643, that the first church was built. It was completed in 1643.



Artist's conception of the first Lutheran church in Pennsylvania.

On the night of November 24th, 1645, the church perished in a disastrous fire, which destroyed all the buildings in the settlement except one storage barn.

These settlers were loyal to their country, its language and its customs. "Divine service," says Johan Printz. "is performed here in the good old Swedish tongue."

Religion and their missionary zeal encouraged them to attempt to bring to the Indians a knowledge of the "true religion." To this end, the Lutheran missionary, Reverend John Campanius, also the first pastor from Sweden, translated the Lutheran catechism into Lenni Lenape tongue.

A new church was dedicated on September 4, 1646, by pastor John Campanius. This church served a large parish which included parts of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey. This pioneer church was not a crude affair. The church fathers in Sweden instructed the settlers, "to adorn the church after the Swedish fashion in distinction from the Hollanders (Dutch) and English, shunning all leaven of Calvin." Holy Communion was celebrated each Sunday and Holidays, using the Maize of 1614. The church was built of logs and bricks. One of these bricks has been mounted in the vestibule of the pre-



sent St. John's Tincum Lutheran Church. Outside the church was a free-standing wooden belltower. The interior of the church must have been very beautiful, having an altar of fine quality with elaborate silver hangings brought from Sweden, brass candlesticks and a crucifix. The bell and baptismal font, which were used then, are now in possession and use by Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia. A Swedish wood carving of the cherubim, a sacred relic of the first Tincum Lutheran Church is now in Gloria Dei Church, Philadelphia.

A five-ounce silver chalice was furnished by pastor Campanius, but it can not be found today. In Tincum, the only physical remnants of this early church are a few bricks and a stone doorstep. Even the exact site of the church and its adjoining grave yard can not be accurately identified.

In those days, when churches were few and far between, people came by boat from distant shores and by walking many difficult miles. Records reveal that the church was crowded to the door.

Trouble with the Hollanders and a shifting population to other sections meant the end of the first Tincum Lutheran Church. In 1700, the congregation agreed to lend their spiritual and material support to the new Lutheran Church that was being built in Philadelphia, known as Gloria Dei, which remained a Lutheran church for almost a half-century. Many of the bricks from Tincum were transported up the Delaware River in 1699 to be used in the new building. The Tincum congregation disbanded, feeling that Gloria Dei was more centrally located and could accommodate more people.

### *Lester Evangelical Lutheran Church – St. John's Lutheran Church of Lester*

The Reverend Silas D. Dougherty, Superintendent of the East Pennsylvania Synod, canvassed Lester in January 1903, looking forward to beginning a Lutheran Church in Tincum. He met with favorable responses and made arrangements to hold Sunday School in the original "Stain and Fill" Building of the Lester Piano Company. The Sunday School was organized March 15 of that year and began with nine classes and ninety-one students present. Because of the large number of German people in the community the first services were conducted in both German and English.



St. John's Lutheran Church of Lester (lady in foreground is the grandmother of Marge Martin)

In May 1904, the church building at 4th Avenue and Iroquois Avenue was completed. Through the years, the congregation was served by 17 pastors, the first of which was Reverend W. C. Heffner and the last was Reverend Norman P. Melchert.

### *Tincum Memorial Evangelical Church of Essington*

In December 1918, a small group of friends met at the home of Mr. & Mrs. A. T. Kasley, 511 Saude Avenue, Essington for the purpose of organizing a Sunday School. After only a few weeks, the group had grown to the point where the house was too small and they moved to the old school building and then later to another building which has since been razed to make room for the Governor Printz Highway. In 1919, Dr. Silas Dougherty organized the congregation and served as acting Pastor until 1929. During this period, a frame building was erected on Powhatan Avenue on the site of the present Essington Post Office but in less than a year the church was destroyed by fire. Reverend W. S. Hinman accepted the call to become the first pastor on April 18, 1920. Ground was broken for the present church building at Jansen Avenue and Seneca Street, Essington on September 29, 1921. This was planned as the Parish Hall, the sanctuary was never built due to the Depression. A new Rectory was built in 1953.

In January 1962, the two churches in Tincum became one as St. John's and Tincum Memorial congregation merged. The new name was St. John's Tincum Memorial Lutheran Church. Since then it has been changed to St. John's Tincum Lutheran Church.

The present building was extensively renovated several times. In 1975, stained glass windows were installed. In 1980, a pipe organ, built in 1911 was renovated and installed by the people of the church. A new chancel and altar with maple floor were installed through the labor of the membership and dedicated on September 29, 1991.



Tincum Memorial Evangelical Church of Essington

## Protestant Episcopal

### *The Church of St. John the Evangelist*

The Church of St. John the Evangelist was established in June of 1902 by Reverend Francis C. Stienmetz, rector of Christ Church in Ridley Park with the assistance of a faithful layman, Mr. Lewis R. P. Downing. They began holding services in a seamen's library building that had been erected by Mrs. Brock of Philadelphia as a memorial to her young son who had drowned in the Chesapeake Bay. Although his name is lost in time, his memorial lives on.



St. John's Episcopal Church, 3rd & Wanamaker

The cornerstone of the present Norman structure was laid in 1929. On January 26, 1930, the completed building was dedicated by the Right Reverend Francis Marion Taitt, Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. The construction of the present church was made possible by the Diocesan Campaign Fund and was built at the cost of \$60,000.

The Mission in Essington continued under the direction of the rectors of Christ Church until 1944 when the responsibility was transferred to the Reverend Paul R.R. Reinhardt, rector of St. James in Prospect Park, Pennsylvania.

Building of a rectory was begun in 1954 and completed almost entirely through the efforts of the men of the parish. This stately home was first occupied by the Reverend Harry Riddle Johnson, Jr. who was the first full-time Vicar of the Mission. In May, 1958 the Mission was granted full parish status in union with the Convention of the Diocese of Philadelphia and was incorporated as the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Essington, Pennsylvania.



On October 5, 1958, the Reverend Francis F. E. Blake was instituted as the first Rector of the Parish by the Right Reverend William Payne Roberts, Bishop of Shanghai, acting for the Right Reverend Oliver J. Hart, Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. During Father Blake's incumbency, the present pews, rood beam and choir stalls were installed. An altar dossal, riddles, and frontals were added to the chancel. Shrubbery, maple trees and fir trees brought from Maine were planted. Father Blake's ministry here was a "calm and placid" one; but he had to resign his rectorate because of ill health.

Following Father Blake came the short incumbency of the Reverend Frank C. Irvin which was also marked by tranquility. Few changes were made and Father Irvin continued the liturgical development of his predecessors.

The next incumbent was the Reverend William Leon Weiler, who was instrumental in obtaining the present altar as a Memorial. This was dedicated after he left St. John's to pursue further study at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. After these studies he went to lecture at the University of Muenster, West Germany. Father Weiler is currently the Protestant Episcopal Church's Liaison Officer with the Congress of the United States of America.

The Reverend C. Leighton Erb, commenced his incumbency in September, 1967. Under his leadership the old "tracker organ" was refurbished by Mr. Edgar H. Mangam of Philadelphia. Additional ranks of pipes were installed, along with an electronic manual. The restored organ was re-dedicated September 29, 1968 on the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels.

With the repayment of a loan made to refurbish the organ, many other repair projects were accomplished by the vestry. The "Civil Defense Room" was divided into a choir room and parish lounge. On February 8, 1968 there was a dedication of the first series of stained glass windows. The cruciform window over the baptismal font was executed by the Willets Stained Glass Studios of Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania and installed as a memorial to Thelma Hood. In rather rapid succession other windows in the nave of the church were replaced with stained glass. During the year 1969, dedication services were quite prevalent. The last one was held on December 14.

With a grant from the Church Foundation, the rectory windows were replaced with aluminum storm windows. A loan from the diocese enabled the parish to concrete the floors of the undercroft, the "Civil Defense Room," storage room and the garage. An outdoor flag pole and an American and an Episcopal Church flag were added.

Just before the Strawberry Festival of 1971, the stucco facade of the Parish House was patched and repainted to add a festive background for this main social event of the year. The chimes on the organ were dedicated in May of 1972. On July 23rd of the same year, a silver baptismal basin was dedicated. In October 1972, an electric clock was received as a memorial for the Sacristy. In December of that year a beautiful oriental rug for the Sanctuary was received as a Christmas present from St. Mary's Guild.

In 1975 the renovation of the parish kitchen became realized. The present carpeting of the church was presented as a memorial. The year of 1977 saw the converting of the "Civil Defense Room" into a parish lounge and choir room. As this was the year of the parish Diamond Jubilee, the lounge is now known as the Diamond Jubilee Lounge. Additional stained glass windows have been dedicated as memorials from 1976 through the present. Also, in 1976, a "re-table" to hold flowers and lights was dedicated. In October 1980, the dedication of an outdoor bulletin board and two new entry doors with stained glass cross inserts was held.

Before the Reverend Doctor C. Leighton Erb retired in 1987 (after 20 years of faithful service) he

dedicated the last stained glass inserts in the church Doors. For the next three years the Reverend Arnold A. Hiltz was Interim Rector. He guided the parish painlessly into the 1979 Prayer Book, Rite 1, liturgy and delegated much authority to the lay men and women of the Parish.

The Reverend Alfred E. Morris started his incumbency on October 1, 1990. Under his leadership a strong youth group was started and the church school continued to grow. To date several more memorials have been dedicated. These include a ceiling light fixture in the nave, floor tiles in the entrance way of the parish hall, a Book of Gospel Lessons, a new Bible and two wooden hand rails leading to the chancel. Thus the good work begun ninety years earlier in the Seamen's Library has brought forth this fruit to the glory of Almighty God.

## Roman Catholic Church

*Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque*



St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Church (picture taken in August, 1943)

On a Sunday morning, June 5 in the year of our Lord 1921, the Reverend Daniel A. Coghlan celebrated the first mass in the new parish of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. The new parish consisted of approximately 90 Catholic families residing on the island of Tinicum. The Mass was celebrated in a home located in the 600 block of Saude Avenue in Essington, made available by the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company.

Prior to this period, the Catholic population of Tinicum Island was required to travel to surrounding parishes, including Saint Michael's Church in Chester, Pennsylvania, to be provided with opportunities for mass and parochial school attendance.

The present site of the Church property was purchased February 19, 1922 by the Philadelphia Diocese from the Stankowitz family. It included a two-story building operated as the Evergreen Hotel. This building was converted into a rectory and a school.

At the same period, the United States Emergency Fleet Corporation offered its two-storied Post Office frame dormitory to the parish. The frame building was transferred intact from Hog Island to the church property in Essington, Pennsylvania.

The parish now owned a potential wooden church building, rectory building and four acres of ground. Work began on the transformation of the interior into usable space. The first floor was made into the church. It included an altar and pews. The second floor was converted into four classrooms, with partitions for eight grades. An external metal stairway (fire escape) was added. The rest rooms were installed in an exterior building that housed the heating boiler. The entire building was completely electrified.

The bulk of the labor was supplied by the men of the parish and supported by the women through social functions, parties and other entertainment. All funds raised by these functions went toward the cost of the renovations.

In September 1922, the rectory was ready for occupancy. In 1923, the church and school transformation was complete. Just fourteen short months after the founding of the new parish Mass was celebrated for the first time in the converted building by the pastor.

With the opening of the school facilities, the teaching sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary directed the schools pupils. These sisters had to travel from the Saint Raphael parish of the Eastwick section of Southwest Philadelphia by trolley car to conduct daily classes.

After a period of time, a home on Wanamaker Avenue adjacent to the railroad crossing was rented as a convent. Later a convent was leased on Warwick Avenue in Essington and finally a permanent home was built on church property next to the school.

In 1924, Father Francis Hub who was small in stature, but made up for it in his dynamic energy and personality, accepted the pastorate. Under his direction a parish hall was erected and was formally opened for social affairs.

In 1925, local parochial school students from the surrounding communities enrolled in the new school. A group of first graders increased the school population to 50 individuals.

The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart not only taught the basic standard reading, writing and arithmetic as required by state law but also the religious course preparing the pupils for their confirmation and first communion. In addition to this a music teacher gave piano lessons. This was appreciated by the Catholic High School orchestra and band and the parish choir.

The boys graduated to West Catholic High School for Boys in the city of Philadelphia and Saint James High School in Chester, Pennsylvania. The girls were sent to West Catholic High School for Girls and Notre Dame in Moylan near Media, Pennsylvania.

In the period from 1944 to 1948, a decision was made to build the Industrial Highway through the township. As part of the right of way, approximately 122 feet of church property on Powhatan Avenue was appropriated by the State of Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. This resulted in the cutting in half the church/school building. The remaining portion was modified to accept this action. The part facing the new highway was boarded up in an effort to continue parish functions, with the school activities using the remainder of the building and the church moving to the parish hall.



St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Church (circa 1950)

Plans for a new church/school and rectory were submitted and approved by the archdiocese of Philadelphia. Ground breaking was conducted in 1949 by Father Francis Hub and in 1950 the church was completed. The corner stone was added during the dedication ceremonies by Cardinal Dougherty of the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

Incorporated into the construction were windows imported from France that were unique in design and manufacture. These were featured in articles in the *Readers Digest* and *Time* magazine as being the only ones in the United States used in a church building and the new school was constructed in 1951 along with the Convent. In the mid 1950's the old Evergreen hotel that housed the rectory was razed and the occupants moved to a private dwelling on the west of church property.



The untimely death of Father Francis Hub caught the parish unprepared on April 18, 1956. He was laid to his final rest beside the doorway of the church that was so much a part of his life.

In 1958, the construction of the rectory was completed under his successor Father Joseph Muldoon. It is a rather large structure as it was anticipated that the teaching fathers from the then new Cardinal O'Hara High School in Springfield, Pennsylvania would use it as their home – (something that did not take place). This concluded the building program of the St. Margaret Mary Alacoque parish in Tincum Township.

The parish flourished for a number of years under the leadership of four pastors without any major crisis or calamities until the decline of those seeking a clergy life. In June 1983, the sisters vacated the convent to join St. Eugene parish in Primos, Pennsylvania and in June 1990 the parish school was closed and the students transferred to other nearby parish schools.

Today St. Margaret Mary Alacoque parish remains in a state of flux as does every other parish in the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

## The First Baptist Church

Evangelist Jack Rutledge was called to Tincum by one of the local churches to conduct a series of meetings in October 1935. The Lord blessed these services. Many souls were saved and many Christians were revived. As a result of this, an empty store was rented on Powhatan Avenue to continue the meetings. This group was led to establish a fundamental church in Tincum called the Tincum Gospel Tabernacle.

The meetings continued in this building until March, 1936. At this time, George Headley was called to be the first pastor. On May 25, 1940, Reverend Headley resigned to accept a charge in Lindenwold, New Jersey. He was followed by Reverend B. B. Smith 1940/41 and Reverend George W. Swope 1941/43.

In 1944, Reverend William Oscar Blount, dean of the Bible Institute of Pennsylvania, started his ministry here. The same year building lots were purchased on the northeast corner of Second and Jansen Avenues in Essington. Restrictions on building materials and finances hindered the erection of a church during the war years. Later these lots were sold and more appropriate lots were purchased on the northwest corner of LaGrange Avenue and the Industrial Highway. Reverend Blount concluded his service with the Tincum Gospel Tabernacle on May 4th, 1947 to perform administrative duties at the Philadelphia Bible School.

Reverend Robert J. McConnell was called as pastor in October, 1947. Under his pastorate, the name was changed from Tincum Gospel Tabernacle to the Tincum Bible Church and the present church was erected. Ground-breaking exercises were held on March 28, 1948, the corner stone was laid July 25, 1948 and the building was dedicated April 3, 1949. Reverend McConnell resigned in September, 1949, and was succeeded in October, 1949, by Reverend Warren A. Brewin.

At a special congregational meeting held in the church on April 17, 1950, it was decided that the church become an Independent Baptist Church. Its name was changed and legally incorporated as "The First Baptist Church of Essington and Lester." The sign "JESUS SAVES" was donated to the church in 1950 and has served as a testimony to all who have passed by.

The mortgage was burned January 16, ground was broken for the parsonage July 17, and Reverend Thomas B. Walker was installed as the new pastor in 1955.

A grand piano was purchased in 1954, followed by an Allen electronic organ in 1956. In the 1970's, a steeple was added and the "JESUS SAVES" sign was removed.

The pastors since Reverend Walker are:

Reverend Donald R. Heinrich 1967 – 1971

Reverend James L. Lowe (interim 1971 – 1972)

Reverend George Yurick 1972 – 1986

Reverend Eddie Smith 1986 – 1990

Reverend James L. Lowe (interim 1990 – 1991)

Reverend Jack T. Lamont Sr. (1991 – present)

Two of the church members have become pastors – Walter Mickley and Calvin Engel. Pastor Engel was ordained in the church, December 26, 1950. Reverend Mickley went on to become pastor of the First Roseland Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois.

This church has always had a strong support for missionaries, both local and worldwide. These include Sunday Breakfast Association in Philadelphia and Union Gospel Mission in Chester.

Summer Vacation Bible School was supplemented by "The Trailer Girls," Joyce Murray and Eleanor Riker, who held after-school programs from the 1950's into the 1970's. Presently the church has AWANA Club on Friday evenings.



The First Baptist Church

## IV. HISTORICAL STRUCTURES

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### Historical Essington Lighthouse



Schooner Ledge, Rear range lighthouse

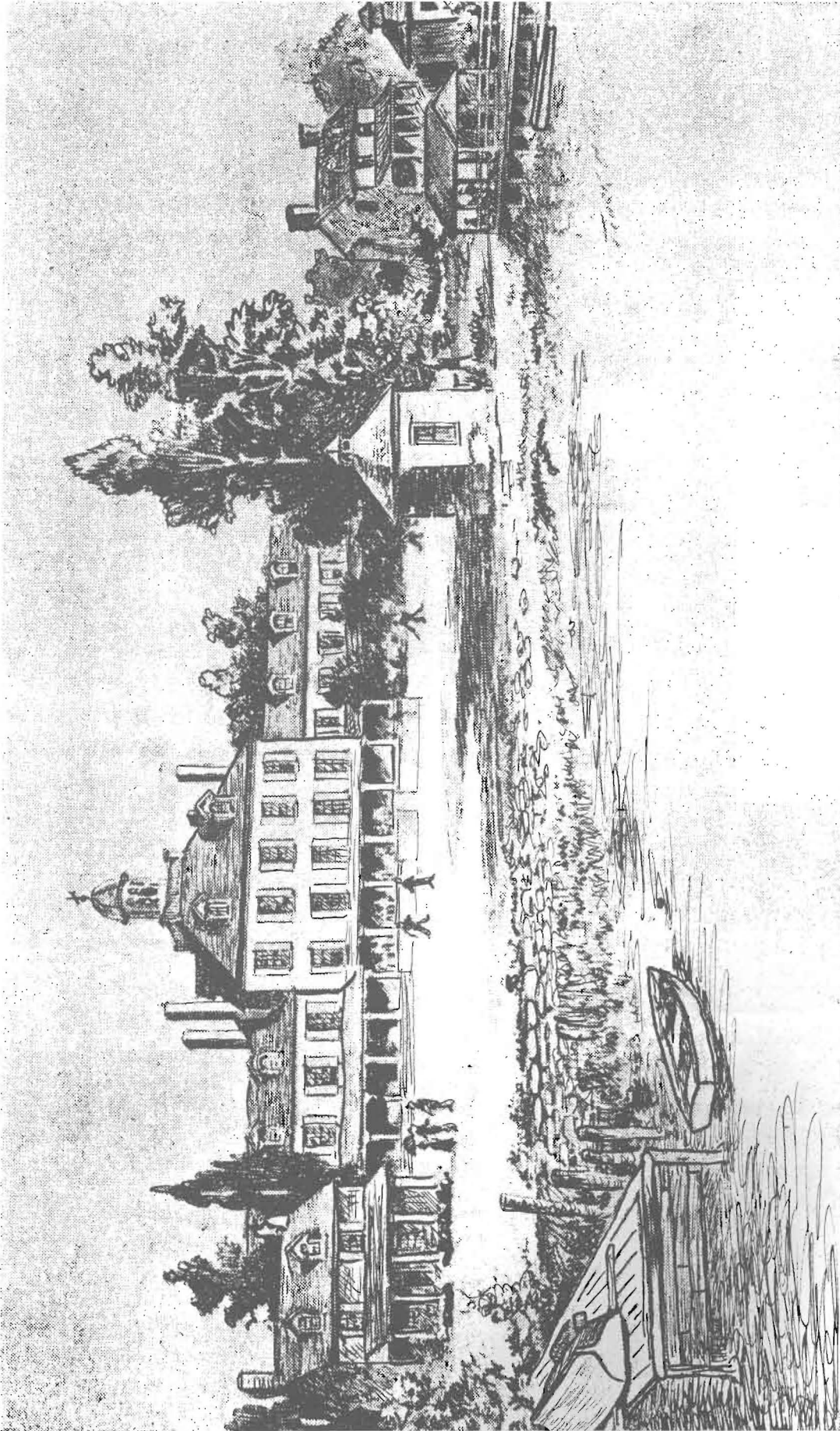
The earliest authenticated history of the Fourth District Lighthouse is entered in a 1901 Light List publication locating the position and structure on the northeast side of Darby Creek. It further indicates the location as north side of the Delaware River about 1 mile from the Lazaretto with a light 100 feet above high water and a capacity of 24,000 candle power. The description of the structure as black, pyramidal skeleton iron tower with day mark of horizontal slate on either side of the upper end of the stair cylinder.

A plan map of Tinicum circa 1892 shows a tract of United States Government property near the Darby Creek location on Charles Horne Estate confirming the Department of Commerce publication of 1901.

Today's location is at the intersection of highway Route 420 and the on-ramp of north I-95 toward Philadelphia. The concrete-stone foundations are still

visible at this location partially covered with weeds. A fire on July 28, 1947 destroyed the remains of the Light House Keeper's dwelling as reported by the *Chester Times*. A record of a 1916 publication by the Department of Commerce indicated a dismantling of the steel part of the Tower for rail shipment at the cost of \$2185.00.





Drawing (above) of the Lazaretto shows it in the late 19th Century when it was owned by the Philadelphia Athletic Club and known as "The Orchard." It looks much the same today.

## The Oldest Landmark in Tinicum Township

### "The Lazaretto"

"Lazaretto" is a name derived from Saint Lazarus and given to isolation hospitals dealing with communicable diseases.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, Yellow Fever was rampant in the city of Philadelphia. The people's fear of this dreaded disease caused the Board of Health of Philadelphia to relocate the Lazaretto that was behind Old Fort Mifflin on Providence Island. On August 7, 1799, ten acres of land were purchased on Tinicum Island from Thomas and Rebecca Smith for the sum of \$2,000. Work began immediately on the new Lazaretto and in 1800 it was completed. Quarantine was established in 1801 and continued through 1893. Many poor souls saw their last days there; some still lie in unmarked graves within the confines of the old quarantine station.

The quarantine station consisted of a number of buildings; the main, or administration building, still stands and is occupied today. It was a three and one-half story structure measuring about 50 feet square, built very solidly of brick as were most of the other structures on the station. It is of Georgian design complete with a graceful cupola. It was modeled after the Philadelphia Hospital, then located at 8th and Pine Streets in the city of Philadelphia, and contained twelve rooms, each 20 by 20 feet with 10 foot high ceilings. There were bath and toilet facilities, storage rooms, three large attics and two large kitchens. The building was heated throughout with steam as was the entire station. The station superintendent and his family occupied this structure.

Attached to the main building, on the east and west, were wings measuring about 65 feet in length and 26 feet in width containing six rooms measuring about 22 by 27 feet with a kitchen at the end of each wing. These wings were first used to house the sick and convalescing until the hospital was completed. After the completion of the hospital, they were used for those under quarantine.

On the first floor of the east wing of the main building was an apparatus for disinfecting the mail from the patients to the outside. All treated mail from a special chamber was marked "sterilized" and forwarded to the local post office.

Verbal communication was maintained through a telephone service between the station and the Telephone Exchange at Fourth and Market Streets in the city of Philadelphia. There was also a telegraph available in the administration office.

In front and on either side of the main building at approximately 120 feet were two smaller brick structures; the one to the west, presently owned by the Riverside Yacht Club, was occupied by one of the deputy quarantine physicians as a dwelling and later by the War Bird pilots of World War I. The one to the east, long since razed, was occupied by the five-man crew of the boarding tug Lizzie Crawford.

When the hospital was completed, it was located northwest of the main building with approximately 300 feet of separation (along present-day Second Street near the corner of Wanamaker Avenue). The building was about 72 feet in length and about 24 feet in width; it was a two-story structure and contained two wards on each floor. The second floor also contained a nurse's room, a dispensary and bath and toilet facilities. Adjoining on the west side of the hospital building was a 16 x 24 foot kitchen. Also adjoining on the east side was a similar building that was used as a dead room or morgue.

A stable and carriage house, still standing at the entrance to the seaplane base, was situated to the northwest of the main building about 100 feet away. Also on the grounds was a laundry and a storehouse for disinfectants, a well-built power house that was placed over a 300-foot deep artesian well and an ice house.

The water supply for the entire station was drawn from the artesian well, by using a hot-air engine, and was stored in a 3,000 gallon tank located within the main building. It was distributed from the main building to the rest of the station on demand. The entire property was under drained. There was not an open well or cesspool of any description on the station; the drainage flowed into the river below low water mark through a sewer constructed for that purpose. All dejections and discharges from the patients were disinfected prior to entry into the sewer system.

On the government property that adjoined the quarantine station there was a barrack built of stone (destroyed some years ago by a fire). The barrack was two and one-half stories high. On each of the two main floors were two large rooms about 74 by 28 feet each with a 10 foot hallway along the front of the building. The eastern-most rooms were subdivided into three rooms; two of these had been fitted out as large bathrooms, each containing twelve tubs abundantly supplied with hot and cold water and heated with steam. The other room was used for drying off and dressing.

Projecting southward into the Delaware River was a pier with an adjoining dock to the east. On this wharf there was located a steam disinfecting plant containing a twenty-five horsepower upright boiler for steam generation.

The quarantine station was equipped with cots, bedding and bed clothing sufficient for the immediate accommodation of 500 persons and the unoccupied portions of the land were ample to accommodate 200 more. There were also about 100 wall tents available. The quarantine station was moved to Marcus Hook in 1893. The Lazaretto then became a popular picnic ground for Philadelphia politicians, city employees and councilmen and their families. At the turn of the century, the Tinicum harbor became a teeming pleasure resort area. The Lazaretto was leased by the city of Philadelphia to a private club for those of means.

In 1915, it became the Philadelphia Seaplane base and at the onset of WWI the U. S. Army used the property for aviation training. After WWI it reverted back to a seaplane base that is still in operation.

Orchard Club  
(postcard, 1908)



Orchard Club Essington Pa

## FAMILY DWELLINGS

### Tincum Township 3rd Ward

With the event of World War I and the nation's need to build a maritime fleet to support military operations overseas, the Westinghouse Electric Corporation saw the opportunity to expand its Pittsburgh Marine Division and with Government urging and approval, purchased a tract of land in Tincum. The intention was to build a manufacturing plant and support the need at the Hog Island shipyard for propulsion equipment to power the Liberty Ships being built there. Whereupon a farm was purchased in 1916 from a Mr. Harry Beaston and the firm of Church & Company was engaged to build a manufacturing plant on a portion of this property.

Building construction began April 6, 1917 and with utmost speed, the first castings were poured in the Grey Farm Foundry by November 20, 1917 approximately 7 months later! With the completion of the manufacturing plant, the company employed Clarence Brager (architect) in 1917 to develop plans for some 200 houses in what is now known as the 3rd Ward (Westinghouse Village).



"Westinghouse Village" – this photo taken in the 1920's shows homes on Saude Avenue



This project was approved by the U.S. Government corporations and 23.5 acres of land was set aside from the middle of Jansen Avenue and north from the middle of Powhatan Avenue. Altogether, 192 houses were built on Jansen and Saude Avenues and Seneca Street. None of the proposed houses were built on Bartram Avenue. The Bartram Avenue lots were later sold to abutting property owners. It may be added that the village streets and sewers were given to the Township of Tinicum in 1926-1927.

It was the policy of Westinghouse to recognize the need for land in Tinicum Township, and conversely the Township was cooperative with the company in this need. A list of transfers of title to various sections of company property to the 3rd Ward would include:

3.42 acres on which the sewerage disposal plant is located,

1.7 acres north of the Industrial Highway and east of the Waverly Improvement tracts for the location of a Town Hall.

1.75 acres between the rear of Town Hall property and Seneca Street (currently the site of a recreation field and Library).

11.9 acres between Seneca Street, Delaware and Chippewa Streets (currently used as a recreation park). And 2.2 acres on the easterly side of the Sewerage Disposal plant currently used by the water department.

In 1921 and 1958, a parcel was donated to the Tinicum Lutheran Church-a total area of 1.18 acres. In 1942, Westinghouse sold a tract along Jansen Avenue between the Industrial Highway and Seneca Street to the Waverly Construction Company, where some thirty houses were built. The remainder of this tract was divided into 30 parcels and sold to the abutting owners, thus enlarging their back yards.

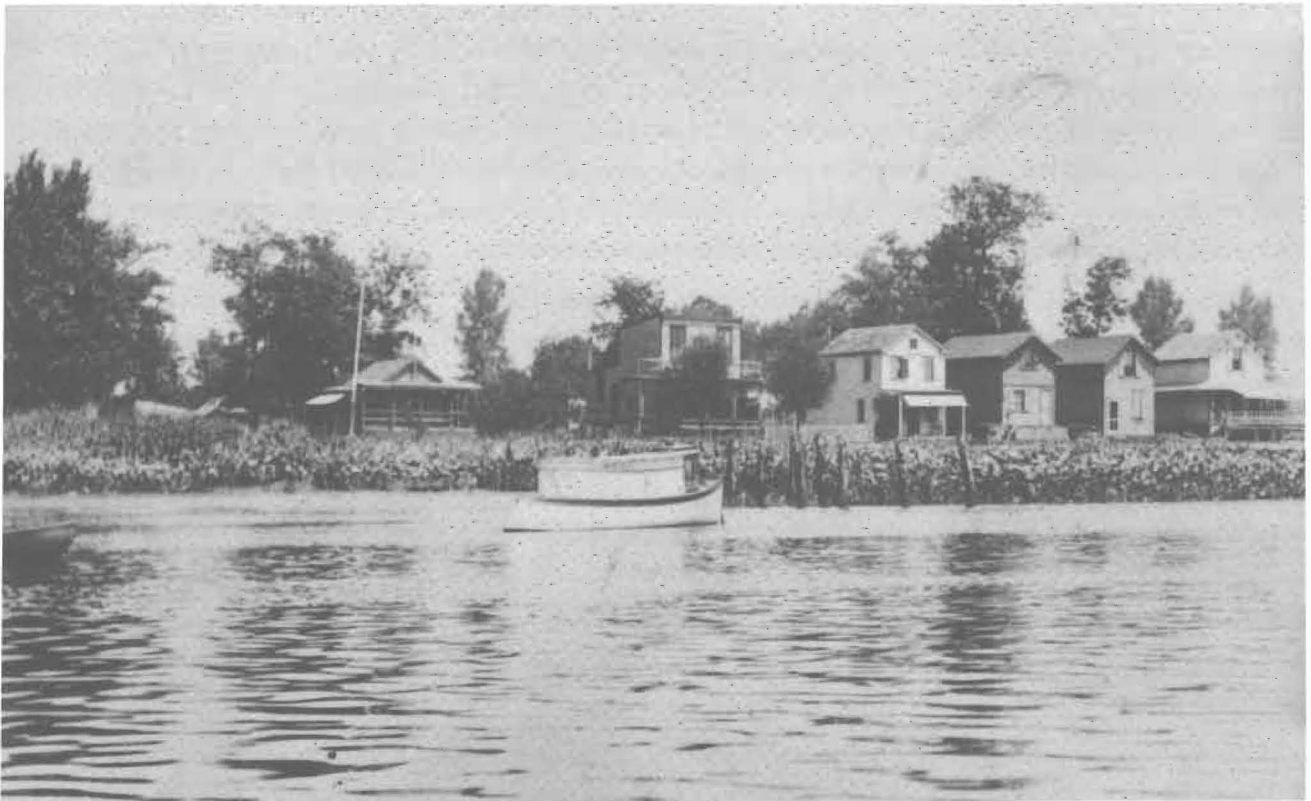
In December, 1958, the Tinicum Swim Club was incorporated, and with the conveyance of approximately 5 acres of land located on the south side of Chippewa Street west of 2nd Avenue, Westinghouse sold this property at a cost of \$15,000 in order to bestow benefit to the people of Tinicum Township for recreation and enjoyment.

## Riverfront Residents

During the latter part of the 19th Century there was a substantial number of frame structures located along the back channel in Philadelphia, in back of League Island between the Schuylkill and the Delaware Rivers. These structures were used as cottages by some residents of South Philadelphia to hunt and fish.

When the U.S. Navy decided to expand its operations in the City of Philadelphia and build the shipyard, League Island was chosen for this enterprise.

The owners of these cottages were given a choice to move them or have them torn down. Many chose to try and move them to a different location. A committee was formed to look for a good location where they could be relocated. The committee came upon Tinicum Island as an ideal spot. After negotiating for property owned by a Mr. Amsterdam, a series of lots was obtained. These lots were located between Bartram and Jansen Avenues on the water front. The ground however was not suitable for building and needed some preparation before these cottages could be relocated to their



View from the Delaware River (circa 1903) of six of the original houses  
from the Philadelphia Naval Yard "Back Channel"  
(houses were moved to Tinicum by barge).

new destination. A lottery was held by the committee to determine ownership of each lot. After ownership was established, each owner began to prepare his lot and build foundations for his newly relocated home.

Meanwhile a plan was devised to facilitate the movement of these cottages. The means of transportation was determined to be by water because of the close proximity of the river. Next, the method to move them had to be decided upon. First, a suggestion to use a series of logs was made but this was rejected because of the lack of the suitable type of logs to do the job. After scouting around, some large old barges were located. Some were found upriver, some down and others were located across the river in New Jersey. Using the tides to their advantage a series of these barges was assembled in the back channel. During the time of the barge search, some of the other members of the committee were busy preparing for the move. Each building was jacked off the ground and long timbers were placed under them to act as skids. These skids were secured to the underside of the frame. Another series of timbers was laid on the ground to act as a path. Rollers were placed between the timbers to act as wheels.

The bows of the barges were brought in close to the shore line. Water was then pumped into the bilges to make the barge settle low into the water. This was done to compensate for the weight of the load that was to be placed on the deck. On a mean high tide the barge was shoved into the shore line until it struck bottom, twelve by twelve square pieces of timber were gently worked under the stern and mid point to keep the barge level during loading and take the weight of the water in the bilge.

On the approach of the next tide with the house now setting on rollers it was slowly moved to the waters edge and across a bridge to the barge. Once the load was properly set on the barge the rollers were removed and the load was secured to the barge. Immediately after loading a barge, the water was removed from the bilges to allow for the barge to float. And then the barge was moved into deep water. After several barges were loaded and floating they were lashed together to form a chain. On an ebb tide, they were slowly nudged down the channel toward the Schuylkill River with several power launches guiding them. The river was forded and the barge convoy proceeded into a channel behind Hog Island and toward their new destination.

Once at the new location, the reverse action of the procedure to load them took place. These cottages later became the permanent homes of the new residents of Tinicum Township. A few exist today.

## Tinicum Manor

When World War erupted for the United States on December 7, 1941, the Delaware Valley had become an important defense supply area. Its many large industrial complexes were built along the Delaware River.

Housing became critical for the many workers that came to the area to find employment in these facilities. To help alleviate a housing shortage, a farm owned by the Horne family located east of



Aerial view of Tinicum Manor property (taken in the 1940's)



Wanamaker Avenue and north of Powhatan Avenue to the marsh was purchased. It was bounded on the east by the Westinghouse Village. This farm was procured by the United States Government and a series of single-story, multi-family cinder block dwellings were erected. They resembled military structures, drab but substantial.

When hostilities ended, the Federal Government sold the property and dwellings to Tincum Township for a nominal fee. Many of the returning veterans settled here until other housing was found. The Township became the landlord to many tenants. It soon became a burdensome and costly proposition to maintain. As the units became vacant they were demolished and eventually the area became a recreation field as it remains today.

## The Dykes

Going back in time to the arrival of the Swedes, the terrain of Tincum Island was drastically different from today. More than half of the island was low and marshy. The Swedes remedied this by building a series of dykes to the north and east along what we know as Darby Creek, and to the east along the Delaware River. They served to connect these two bodies of water along Bow Creek on the east side of the island. This system of dykes allowed the Swedes to reclaim these low-lying lands for their farms. When the Dutch acquired the island, they allowed the Swedes to continue farming it.

This arrangement was further continued into the British rule until the Revolutionary War. During the war the dykes were destroyed by the colonists, flooding the area and slowing the advance of the British.

Up to the time of the construction of Interstate I-95 there was evidence of the dyke system used to reclaim the land. The drainage system was formed into a grid type pattern. There were ditches about four feet wide and about four feet deep that paralleled the old road (Powhatan Avenue). They also ran



This small island is a remnant of the dyke system

east and west from Wanamaker Avenue, and they ran north and south to Darby Creek. The system continued east from Wanamaker to an embankment that extended from Jansen Avenue to Darby Creek.

This was all destroyed during the construction of I-95. However, there is still some evidence of its past existence along Darby Creek to the west and north of the village of Essington. It is now used to help contain the water for what is known as "the Lagoons." The evidence east of Wanamaker Avenue is harder to recognize.

The portion of the system along the Delaware River was damaged during a storm in the 1932, causing extensive flooding of the eastern portion of Tinicum Island. During the Great Depression the WPA reconstructed the system.

During the 1940's the Army Corps of Engineers used this system of dykes to contain silt removed from the Delaware River in its channel deepening program. The reclaimed land is now occupied by the Philadelphia International Airport and its associated buildings. Some of the land is being used for office complexes, air freight facilities and the Radisson Hotel and Route I-95. Only a segment of the system can be viewed today and it is best viewed from the river.

## Fort Mifflin

Approximately six acres of Fort Mifflin rest in Tinicum Township. At the time of its building, there were many isolated islands which have since been joined to the banks. Its architect was Pierre Charles L'Enfant, who also drew up the plans for our nation's capital. The fort was originally built by the British in or about 1772 for the protection of the city of Philadelphia. Fort Mercer, a sister fort was built on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River.



FORT MIFFLIN.

FROM A MAP PREPARED BY CAPTAIN JOHN MONTRESSOR, SIR WILLIAM HOWE'S CHIEF OF ENGINEERS.

The British never finished the construction of the fort. At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the American Colonists took possession of the fort and through the efforts of Benjamin Franklin began its fortification. A garrison of 500 men had the precarious duty of protecting the fort against the British Navy. One of their first defenses was the installation of a *chevaux-de-frise* across the channel of the Delaware River at two locations. This obstacle consisted of long logs with iron spikes attached that were sunk below the surface of the water. When the ships came up the river their hulls were punctured by the sharp stakes.

This defense was soon overcome by the British. The siege of the fort came from behind and destroyed it. Only 150 of the 500 Colonists protecting the fort survived. They were able to make their escape across the Delaware River into Fort Mercer, New Jersey. This siege delayed the British Army allowing General Washington's troops to set up their camp in Valley Forge.

In 1798 John Adams, President of the United States, ordered that Fort Mifflin be rebuilt. The Fort next saw activity during the War of 1812, but no military action. During the Civil War it was used as a prison and saw activity as a military garrison. It was used for storage of ammunition in World War I. In World War II, it housed an anti-aircraft battery. Also during the Korean War, the fort was used by the military for storage of ammunition and as the headquarters for river dredging operations.

Presently, Old Fort Mifflin is a National Historical Landmark and open to the public. The Army Corps of Engineers maintain a field office and supply yard near the Fort. Its history has paralleled our own and had an impact on our very survival.

## Governor Printz Park



Statue of Governor Johan Printz by Carl Lindborg. In the foreground is a "hopscotch" game installed by the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission featuring quotes of Governor Printz.

In the 1920's these grounds were little more than a place to get rid of unwanted trash. In 1927, a prominent member of the Corinthian Yacht Club purchased the 7.2 acres to preserve the buffer between the club and the encroachment of an undesirable tenant. He later made a gift of the property to the Swedish Colonial Society to be used as a park for the general public.

In January 1937, excavation started to locate the site of the dwellings of the Swedish settlers. During these digs many items were found to prove that this was indeed the location of the settlement. After the excavation, the landscaping of the area began for preparation of the 300th anniversary. The ground was leveled and trees planted. A parallel set of gravel paths were put down the center of the area from Second Street to the river. These have been a casualty of time. Near the river on the west side, the remains of a foundation of a structure that once stood there were left exposed. It is not too visible today.

Today, as in the past, these grounds serve not only the local residents but many others. They give people a view of the river that would otherwise be obscured from them. Governor Printz Park is today a place to relax, enjoy the cool river breezes and learn a little about Pennsylvania's first settlement.

## The Canal

When the Westinghouse Electric Company relocated to Tinicum Island in the early 1900's it was known that they would need considerable amounts of water. Beside the normal plant use such as fire protection, employee washrooms and general drinking purposes there was a need for water to make steam to drive and test their product *The Steam Turbine*.

To obtain this great quantity of water it had to be taken from the Delaware River. First a holding area had to be built. This required digging a ditch about one hundred feet wide and about two city blocks long, at a depth of about twenty five feet. The river end was dammed to form a containment area. This reservoir was known as the Westinghouse Canal. Located at the mouth of the canal leading into the river was a pipe about three feet in diameter, extending into the river about 50 feet. Atop the earthen dam there was built a platform that controlled the opening and closing of a gate valve allowing water from the river into the canal.

On the opposite end of the canal at Second Street an intake pipe was installed with a protecting grate. This was used to take water from the canal into the plant. After crossing Second Street it was diverted in several directions. One was a basin made of concrete to hold water for fire protection. The other holding areas were located strategically throughout the plant. The water level varied from time to time according to the need of the plant. An outlet canal was built parallel to the intake canal from the turbine test floor. The outlet canal was very shallow and open to the river. Actually it was used as a grease pit. It followed the intake canal to approximately 50 feet from its end and then it made a sharp left turn east. A low earthen bank prevented it from entering the river until about three to four hundred feet east. This was to prevent contamination of the intake water.

At about the center-point, the banks of the intake canal were tapered to allow entrance into the water. This was probably not by design but by people using the canal as a favorite swimming hole. At least the water was cleaner than the river water most of the time. By the water being drawn into the canal below the surface it eliminated the oil slicks that sometimes dominated the river.



Aerial photograph, circa 1980) of twin canals (intake and outlet from Westinghouse Electric Company)

On the river end of the canal there was a short section of pier that was used by those who liked to go "skinny-dipping." But this was only for the best swimmers as the tide was exceedingly strong at this location. Another favorite place for swimming was the containment bank for the outlet canal which had an excellent sandy beach.

About twenty feet from where the intake of the canal ended was another bank that paralleled the river for several hundred yards west. There were piers extending into the river from this point used for docking boats and fishing.

On the north side, near the end of the bank was an old sail boat about fifty foot long. A man named Captain Preston made this his home. He was a real "old salt" and used to cuss up a storm when he related his seagoing experiences for all those that gathered to hear his tales. He was only one of many characters who inhabited our waterfront community adding to its history.



## V. INDUSTRIES

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### **Commercial Fishing**

During the 1700's and well into the 1800's there was lucrative shore fishing on the Delaware River below the Quarantine grounds that extended along the river for about a half-mile. In the spring of the year, the shad came into the Delaware Bay and swam up the river to spawn in the head waters. The river teemed with fish. During the spawning season as many as a hundred men could be engaged in the harvest. They lived in cabins along the banks of the river.

A net, about a mile in length, was used to make the catch. It would be deposited in overlaying folds on the deck of a boat. The bottom edge was weighted down and the top was fitted with floats. This allowed the net to trap the fish. One end of the net was made fast to a capstan on the shore. The boat was then rowed up the river close to the shoreline for about a half mile or so playing out the net as it went along. The boat was then guided across the river to a point about a quarter-mile off shore. It was then propelled down the river. All the while the net was running off the stern of the boat. The bow of the boat was brought ashore to the capstan and the net made fast. The net in the water formed an immense loop and was slowly drawn in by the means of the capstan. Gradually the loop was made smaller, forming a bag about ten or fifteen feet in diameter containing the catch. This catch was then lifted out of the water by a crane and transported to a suitable spot on land where the fish were sorted by size and species. The net was then spread out to dry.

This unique location became useless for commercial fishing in 1860 because of the deposits of mud made by natural silt on the shore and also by the innovation of gill net type fishing, (it was a method of catching fish without hauling them to shore). The land then reverted back to its natural state.

### **The Blatz Boat Building Yard**

Mr. Henry Blatz came to Essington in 1909. He was one of the first boat builders in the area. The boat yard was located between Jansen and Erickson Avenues. It was built on a low-lying piece of property that disappeared beneath the water on an extreme high tide. Front Street was so low between Jansen and Putcan Avenues that the sewers were placed on the top of the ground.

There was a large shed erected on the east side of the yard near the waters edge. This shed contained two sets of ways used to set the keel for building boats, these were later replaced with rails. The hull and the deck were finished in this shed. It was then launched and floated to the east side of the yard and moored next to a dock in what was called the ditch. The ditch was no more than Jansen Avenue prior to improvements.

Down the center of the yard was a small railway that was used to move boats to the rear of the yard for storage. There were twelve-by-twelve timbers laid on the ground on which to set the boats.

Many times it was necessary to walk on planks set on these timbers to make your way through the yard to keep from getting wet feet. The driest point of the yard was a platform set on pilings along



Workers at Blatz Boat Building Yard (Andrew Fox, Jr. on runningboard)

the west side that went from a point close to Front Street to the front bulkhead. A gangway led from the bulkhead to the floats on the river that were used to dock boats.

A late summer storm in 1932 devastated the yard. The whole boat yard had to be completely rebuilt. The 50-foot yacht *Milleville* that was built at the yard, had been moored in the ditch during the storm. It was physically pitched up and set down on a piling that punctured the hull. Many other boats from the yard were left on Jansen Avenue almost at Second Street. After the storm, the ground was raised to a level slightly above Front Street and the yard ceased to be a boat building yard and became a boat storage yard.

After Mr. Blatz died, the yard passed to a Mr. Katchel who changed the name to Apex Yacht Yard. It operated under this ownership for many years and was sold to a Mr. Brown. The property now is occupied by the Anchorage Marina that has no yacht storage facilities. It operates a docking facility with the means to remove and place medium size boats in and out of the water. The property that the yard had occupied now has three buildings on it. These are now used by many small businesses.

## The Essington Yacht Yard, Inc.

The Essington Yacht Yard was established in 1890 by Mr. George A. Smith Sr. It was built on nine acres of ground adjacent to the Lazaretto on United States Government property. It was the largest yacht yard in Tinicum Township. The original purpose of the yard was for building a superior boat and a marine engine. The yard had the capability of starting the boat from the keel and finishing it right down to the last cleat. The last boat to be built at the yard was *The Carolina*, a 45-foot schooner. It was completed in 1927. The yard then became a storage and repair facility.

The yard was split down the center by a road that separated the areas between the large and small craft. The small ones were on the west side and the larger ones on the east. The yard had the capability of storing well over 200 boats. The largest structure in the yard was actually two wooden sheds with an old 2½ story stone government building between them. The yachts that occupied these sheds were of the larger and more expensive variety. Many were 50 to 75 feet long. These massive sheds and their contents were completely destroyed by a spectacular fire in about 1957.

The main building was located near the waters edge on the east side of the road. It contained a small rigger's loft, a heater room and a large winch system on the ground floor. The second floor contained a large marine supply store and the business office. A show room was attached on the river side of the building at ground level. An outside set of stairs gave access to the second floor and

the roof. This roof was railed to allow visitors a safer view of the river. It also allowed an access to any boat that happened to be on the large railway.

A large building on the west side of the road, next to the restaurant, "Walber's On The Delaware," contained the remnants of the old boat building facilities and the carpenter shop. The engine and machine shop was located at the head of the yard. There was a small paint shop to the east of the main building.



Essington Yacht Yard (1939)

A large permanent pier extended just beyond the low water limits. It was about thirty feet wide and consisted of bulkheads on three sides. These were filled with anything and everything available and topped with concrete. On the east side of the pier there was a tripod hoist to lift small craft from



the water and to remove sailboat masts and rigging prior to yard storage. To the extreme east of the pier was a large basin used for summer docking. There were also docking facilities to the west of this central pier.

The yard had four separate railway systems. Two extended from the river to Second Street. The one on the east side of the yard had a switch to allow a split on each side of the long shed that extended to Second Street. One other railway was heavy duty and terminated at the main building. This was used to handle most of the larger yachts used on the river from the 1920's through the early 1950's. There were two railways on the west side of the yard. One extended to the head of the yard near the machine shop and the other terminated inside the old boat building shop.

Boats were lifted from the water using these railways by the means of trucks. They were lowered down an incline into the river along the railway system. A single steel cable was used to accomplish this feat. This cable was also used to pull the truck from the river using a stationary winch that was located at the east side of the main building. The cable ran between the rails through a snatch block, that was secured at an anchor point, and then returned to the winch. Along the railway there were other strategic anchor points throughout the system. This allowed for flexibility in placing a yacht at any point in the yard. Normally after the truck reached level ground it was hitched to a tractor to accelerate the movement. The tractor was also used to move the boat sideways to its final resting point on bedlogs. These bedlogs kept moisture from entering the keel during storage.

In 1961, the yard ceased to operate as a storage yard and for a short while maintained facilities for removing and launching boats of medium size. Today, Walber's motel has been built on the water front and is now incorporated with "Walber's On The Delaware" restaurant. The old pier was completely removed and a steel plank bulkhead installed about seventy feet from low-water level. Slips have been placed in the front of Walber's restaurant for small craft. On the east side of the old yard, the Island Marine has leased space for storage. A mobile hoist is used to move boats in and out of the water. At the head of the old yard is a building that houses a dentist's office and other new businesses.

## The Harry Rasmussen Boat Building Yard

Mr. Harry Rasmussen was born in Denmark on March 31, 1860. After receiving his education, he was apprenticed to a large ship building firm and remained with them for four years. After his apprenticeship he shipped out on a sailing vessel for a two year period. He next was engaged as ship's carpenter on the *Mary Lawton* out of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The vessel was wrecked in a heavy gale off the coast of Newfoundland. Mr. Rasmussen was one of the four survivors.

His rescue ship brought him to South Chester, Pennsylvania. After recovering, he went to work in Camden, New Jersey and engaged in ship building for two years. From there, he moved to Dover, Delaware where he was employed in the construction of ships and schooners. He was designer and builder of the famous vessel, the *Yankee Doodle*. It was said the *Yankee Doodle*, "was able to show a clean pair of heels to everything in its class."

Harry Rasmussen finally came to Essington in 1899 as a boat builder. He established boat building facilities along the river front in the 1900's. The yard was located between Saude and Carre Avenues.



Henuber's (Tinicum Yacht Yard), which used to be Rasmussen's, shown here in 1987 before demolition  
(Philadelphia Police and Fire Boats were built in this shed)

Over 175 boats of many classes and kinds were built there. The yard was later operated by the Henuber family as the Tinicum Yacht Yard for repair and storage of yachts. There were also excellent docking facilities located there. There was a plan at one time to build a 34-unit condominium complex on this property to be named *Waterwatch*.

## Bow Creek and Hog Island

Early maps of Tinicum identified the northeast end of Tinicum Island as being a marsh land partially submerged at high water. Surrounded and flowing through this area, were several creeks. Among them were Long Hook, Middle, Church and Bow. All of which emptied into a back channel around Hog Island and into the Delaware River. This marsh drainage system isolated Quistconck (The Indian name for Hog Island) and Martin's Bar from the adjacent lands.

Hog Island was purchased from the Indians in 1680 by Otto Ernest Cock, one of the Judges of the Upland Court and a member of the First Provincial Council organized by William Penn's Government. Martin's Bar was later granted to Thomas K. Wallace in 1681.

By the year 1800 many changes had occurred. Boundary lines separating Philadelphia and Delaware Counties had been established by Bow Creek and the Back Channel. The estates of

William Bingham, Jacob Alburger, and John Black were among the largest recorded.

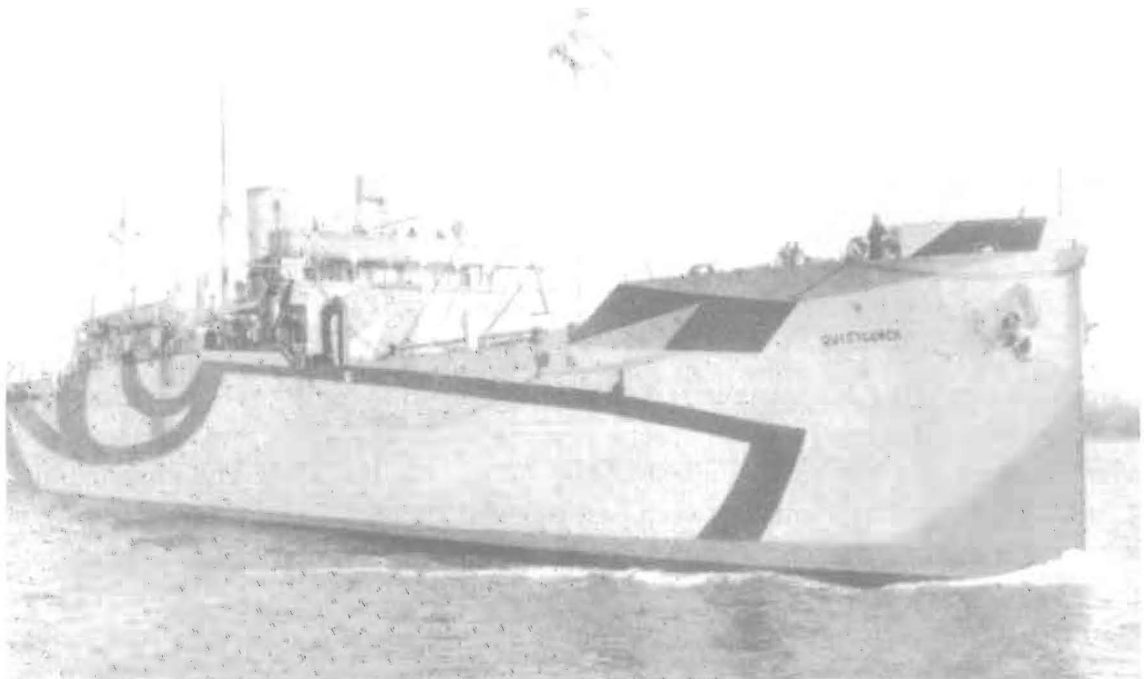
The back channel between Hog Island, Martin's Bar and Big Tinicum Island was later filled in, obscuring the fact that these islands ever existed. A system of earthen embankments were built to reclaim more of the low lying areas.

By 1869, travel was possible through Tinicum from Kingsessing, the southwest section of the City of Philadelphia, by way of the Tinicum Island Road. This road extended to the City of Chester and points west.

Travel was now possible by rail on the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad system. In 1875 this railroad system became the Chester Branch of the Reading Railroad Company. The Pennsylvania Railroad's 60th Street Line paralleled this line in Essington, where there was also an interconnect between the two railroads.

The history of this area was radically changed by the occurrence of World War I. In September 1917, under the auspices of the American International Shipbuilding Corporation and the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation, a colossal shipyard encompassing 900 acres was built on Hog Island. This yard was the world's largest shipyard of the time. The emergency undertaking required the coordination of transportation companies, road builders, construction workers and engineers. The combined efforts provided all that was necessary to produce facilities for the employment of 36,000 shipbuilders.

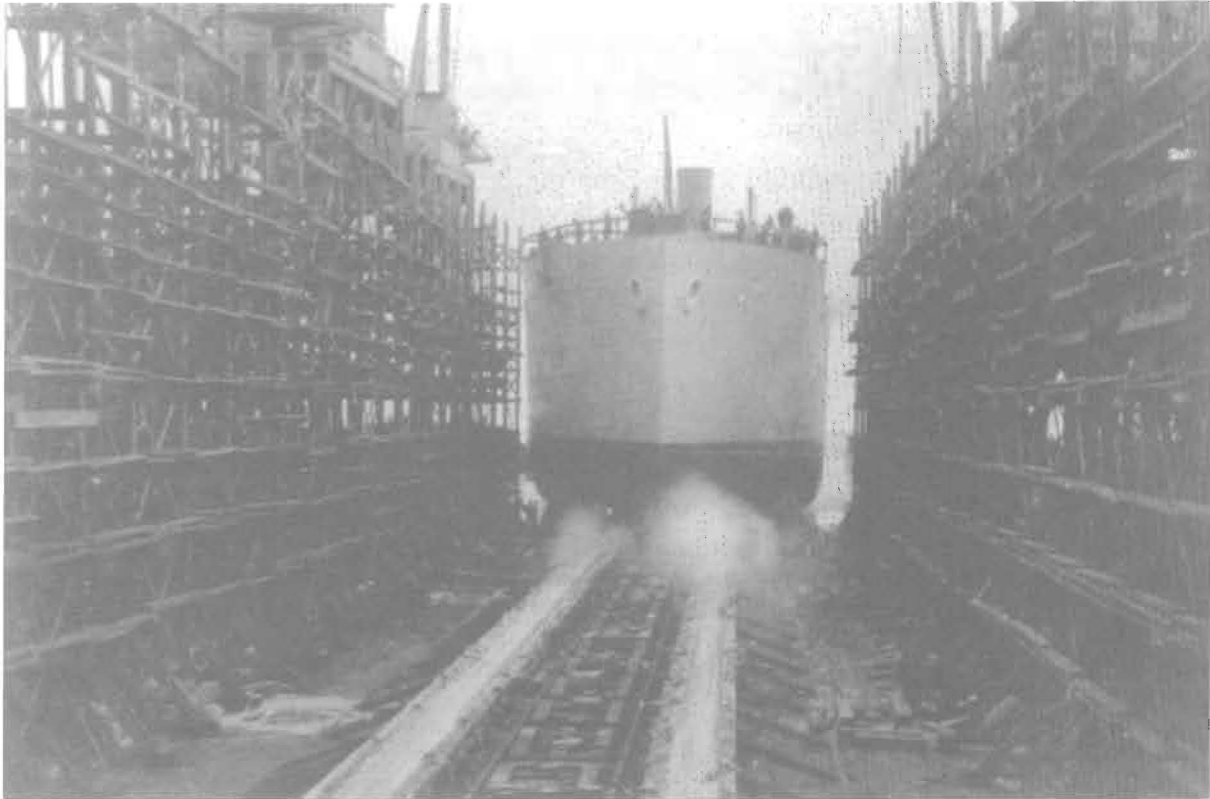
*The Hog Island News* published in their newsletter of June 22, 1918, that the Philadelphia Rapid Transit (P.R.T.) Company received \$2,000,000 from the United States Government. These funds were to be used for the building of a new line on Tinicum Island Road and to purchase 100 new trolley cars.



USS 'QUINCY' - QUINCY - DELIVERED DECEMBER 7, 1918.

First Liberty ship launched from Hog Island

On Monday, August 5, 1918, a record crowd of thousands assembled in the shipyard to view the launching of the first Liberty Ship, *Quistconck*. A special train on the Pennsylvania Railroad arrived from Washington D.C., bearing President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. It also brought many other dignitaries to witness and celebrate this momentous occasion. The president's wife christened this first ship at 12:36 p.m. with a bottle of champagne. As if by magic, the ship slid smoothly and evenly down the ways accompanied by cheers from the crowd and whistles from factories, locomotives and many boats on the river.



The launching of the *Schodack* from Way #12, January 18, 1919

The launching program of the Hog Island Shipyard was completed in a blaze of glory on the afternoon of July 21, 1920, after having built a total of 122 ships. On that day a world record ship launching event took place. Seven ships, totaling 54,775 dead weight tons, were launched in the record time of eighty-seven minutes. The last of the seven vessels to leave the ways was called the *Catahoula*.

After World War I, Hog Island reverted to its original topography. The buildings were all demolished, except for the general warehouse, a concrete portion of which remained until long after World War II. The traffic demands diminished and Route Number 37 of The Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company returned to normal between Eastwick and Tinicum on the Chester Short Line. The Southwestern Line and the shuttle car operating from Essington to Bow Creek became unprofitable. In June 1912 an agreement with the Philadelphia Railways Company provided services to Bow Creek until it was abandoned in 1925. The land use again changed after the shipyard closed and farming became the new industry.

In late summer of 1932, a storm of hurricane-force winds battered the eastern seaboard. Southwest winds drove the waters of the Delaware River toward a cove. As the wind grew in velocity more and more water was driven into the cove from as far back as four miles. This was a lot of water with no place to go, consequently it breached the earthen barrier in several places. The low-lying areas that had been protected by the dykes were now submerged. When the storm subsided and the calm came, the eastern end of the island between Bow Creek and Long Hook resembled a lake. When the river tide reversed to an outward flow the pressure of all this water, plus the weakened condition of the earthen banks and poor maintenance on the Long Hook sluice gate caused the bank to collapse. This allowed some, but not all the water to escape. For when the tide returned, the flow was again reversed, thus retaining much of the water.



Island Road during the flood of 1932 (looking toward airport)

The two railroad beds were washed out along with the trolley line. Tinicum Island road was several feet under water. Some homes and farms were completely isolated and the people and livestock evacuated. A rifle range that was used to train regular Army and National Guard personnel was inundated and abandoned. For a while, transportation was disrupted to the southern part of the City of Philadelphia. The Federal Government brought in men, equipment and material for repair and strengthening of the dyke system to prevent the reoccurrence of this event. Later the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the American Dredging Company pumped tons and tons of sand into the low areas. Little Tinicum Island was built-up along its full length to eliminate the possibility of a similar condition happening.



The next change occurred when the Philadelphia city authorities requested the Delaware County government to condemn Hog Island properties for the expansion of the Philadelphia International Airport into Delaware County. The values of Hog Island and Bow Creek properties were appraised and owners were vacated in 1948. Everything between the river and the Reading Railroad and from Fourth Avenue to the Philadelphia line was demolished. This area was filled in with river sand by the American Dredging Company under contract to the United States Army Corps of Engineers based at Fort Mifflin. Tincum Island Road was re-routed and the road bed was rebuilt 12 feet above flood stage.

As for Bow Creek, one would be hard put to find its location today. It has been erased from the area as were Middle and Church Creeks. Long Hook Creek presently drains the wetlands of The John Heinz Environmental Nature Center. Long Hook can be viewed in several locations, north of the Industrial Highway at the Henderson Complex and south of the village of Lester along Forth Avenue.

What was once Hog Island and Bow Creek area is now the location of The Scott Paper Headquarters Building, the Henderson Group Buildings, the Radisson Hotel, United Parcel Service, and many other companies. The major portion however is the Philadelphia International Airport.

## **Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company**

The Westinghouse Electric Company facilities were located on 53 acres of land in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with virtually no real estate available for expansion. This caused the company to search extensively for a new location where they could expand their operations and meet their need for increased steam turbine manufacturing capacity. After a careful comparison was made of advantages and disadvantages offered by different sections of the country, Tincum Township, Delaware County, was selected because of its accessibility to various sources of transportation, the most important being water.

In 1916, a 520-acre farm known as the "Hill Farm" was purchased. This property was co-owned by Harry Beaston and others. A transaction was consummated between Harry Beaston and Henry Shutte, who appears to have been a straw buyer for Westinghouse. This is evidenced by two deeds that exist on the property. One deed conveyed the land from Harry Beaston to Henry Shutte and the second deed conveyed the same piece of land from Henry Shutte to the Westinghouse Electric Company. There were also a number of lots adjacent to the main tract of the Hill Farm that were acquired about the same time. These were later sold or deeded to Tincum Township to provide for recreational, municipal and school usage. Although Westinghouse's expansion was started as a peace time enterprise, the building of the South Philadelphia Works, or "South Works" as it was called, could hardly have been better timed.

Before the building construction was completed, the entire output of South Works for the World War I period was purchased by the United States government. This was for the production of steam turbine reduction gears and auxiliary equipment for naval and merchant ships, most of which were built at Hog Island Shipyard. From 1917 to 1919, the Division outfitted 240 ships with propulsion equipment.



Aerial view of entire Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company (circa 1980)

In February 1918, employment at South Works totaled 770 employees, however, within six months the employment figure had risen to 2,950. After a slight decline at the end of World War I, there was an increase to a high of 3,750 by February 1921. In the post-war years, however, a steady decline began, reaching a low of 1,150 by July 1933.

During the Depression of the late 1920's and 1930's, many products were made in an effort to keep the plant operating and the employees working. Gas turbines for use in the Oklahoma oil fields were manufactured in the 1920's. In the early 1930's, diesel locomotives were manufactured until 1937. Following the phase-out of the diesel locomotive, a giant structure was manufactured that would be used to hold and position the massive mirror for the Mount Palomar telescope. A few gun turrets were machined as well on an experimental basis.

Two other ventures that took place during this period were the building of stationary and automotive gasoline engines for use in railcars, which were sold under the name of the J. G. Brill Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the manufacture of Number 4 switcher engines. The car body was built in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the engine truck frame was built at Baldwin Locomotive Company in Eddystone, Pennsylvania.

During the middle 1930's, the foundry at South Works was closed and the stoker operation was transferred to Attica, New York. The operation was eventually sold to the Detroit Stoker Company, an organization that is still in operation today.

In 1940, the Merchant Marine Plant, an extension of South Works, was constructed by the Defense Plant Corporation, a United States government agency. With the establishment of the Merchant Marine Division, South Works had the ability to contribute to World War II's effort to manufacture propulsion equipment for naval and cargo ships. The Merchant Marine Division's activities were concluded at the end of World War II, however, not before 329 naval vessels and 595 cargo ships and tankers, totaling 21 million horsepower, had been produced.



Interior view of the #1 Shop (Heavy Manufacturing) showing one of the many overhead bridge cranes which featured radio or pendant controlling with capacities ranging from 3 tons up to 350 tons.

The highest level of employment ever attained at South Works was reached with just over 13,000 employees. The Aviation Gas Turbine (AGT) activity was organized during World War II. A gas turbine engine was designed and built for installation in United States Navy aircraft. AGT was transferred to Kansas City, Missouri. South Works had complete facilities for the design and manufacture of steam and combustion turbines. Electric utility companies used them to drive boiler-feed pumps. A complete line of air-cooled, generator-driven steam turbines was built at this facility, including condensing, non-condensing and automatic extraction types which were sold to industries and municipalities.

The Combustion Turbine Division had proven itself a leader in the combustion turbine industry. Continuous research, improved technology and simplicity of design had made the combustion turbine one of the division's most successful developments. Approximately 80 percent of all the electricity used in the United States daily came from precision-built steam turbine generators. Steam turbine generators were the backbone of our nation's electric power generation system. The Large Turbine Division's leadership in developing and manufacturing more efficient equipment for the generation of electric power made possible a new era of comfort and convenience for our homes. Electric power, combined with new products, is accelerating the use of labor-saving devices in the home. Electric appliances cook food, wash and dry clothes and perform numerous other household tasks. People are entertained by television, radio and computers.

Construction of buildings to meet the Division's ever changing requirements had been continuous. For example, the "G" Building office was constructed during the 1940's; the Salvage building in 1942; and "E" building (which, because of war time shortages, was constructed with all wood

beams) in 1943. In 1953, the AGT test cells were built, as well as the "M" building for engineering and drafting. The Development Lab was constructed in 1955. A newer development lab was constructed in 1970.

South Works was a complete community within itself, with its own fire, police, medical departments, ambulance and food service. The Westinghouse Company was considered the leader in the field with such accomplishments as the four-gear turbine, which, in 1962, drove the S.S. *United States* to all time speed records for the Atlantic crossings in both directions and won her the title of "Fastest Ship in the World." This was the most powerful propulsion equipment ever built for a ship at that time.

In 1951, the Newport News Shipbuilding Company of Newport News, Virginia contracted with the Steam Division to build four main propulsion turbines and gears for the world's largest aircraft carrier, the *James V. Forrestal*. The Steam Division also built the steam propulsion equipment for the U.S.S. *Nautilus*, the nation's first atomic-powered submarine. Water desalinization was expected to be a major source of water supply, particularly in the state of California. In order to bid on a 150,000,000 gallon-per-day plant and meet contractual requirements, a plant was built in Orange, California. Although Westinghouse was not awarded this contract, the Orange plant later built several desalination plants and reverse osmosis equipment, together with low-pressure heaters and condensers. In 1975, the reverse-osmosis business was sold to the Union Carbide Company.

Throughout the 1960's, South Works was a major supplier of nuclear steam generators to the United States Navy for their nuclear program. Due to the increase in commercial nuclear business, there emerged a definite need for additional manufacturing capacity for steam generators. It was this situation that triggered the start of construction of the Tampa, Florida plant in early 1967. The Tampa operation was transferred to NES in 1968. The Heat Transfer Division sold the pump business to Canadian Babcock & Wilcox Company in 1967.

In the same year, planning commenced for construction of a nuclear turbine plant in Charlotte, North Carolina, and a year later the planning phase for the Winston-Salem, North Carolina Turbine Components plant.

In 1971, the Field Service Department became a Division and the charter for selling, manufacturing and design of the W191 Gas Turbine and earlier vintage frames was transferred to Canadian Babcock and Wilcox. Once again, small steam turbine design and manufacturing became the responsibility of Large Turbine Division in 1972. It was during this year that the Gas Turbine Division expanded its facilities by constructing a manufacturing plant in Round Rock, Texas for the manufacture of W501 gas turbines. Unfortunately, the bottom fell out of the gas turbine market soon after the Texas plant's completion, forcing the closing of the facilities in 1975.

In August 1975, the Heavy Industrial Motor Division assumed responsibility of the Round Rock, Texas building for the manufacture of large motors. The Power Systems Cooling Tower Department was also established in 1972 for the design, marketing and installation of cooling towers. The department was short-lived and closed in mid-1974.

In October 1978, the Condenser and Feedwater Heater portion of Heat Transfer business was sold to Marley Company, including most of the machine tools in "U" building and the entire Orange, California plant.

There were some physical changes made to the South Works plant site including the dismantling



of the Hammer Shop in 1977 and the Blade Shop in 1980. The application of insulation and siding to the "A" and "B" building complex was started in 1979 and completed in 1980. The results of this program were considerable conservation of energy as well as beautification of the buildings.

In the 1970's and early 1980's, structural changes occurred in the United States' economy. Double-digit inflation skyrocketed costs in all corporations. Corporation budgets and employment costs created serious problems. Eventually different manufacturing locations were sold or moved in an effort to decentralize, reduce overhead costs and give each location more self-reliance to adapt to conditions for profit contribution.

The Large Turbine Division at South Works in Lester, Pennsylvania was one of the Westinghouse Company's locations that became subject to this concept. The dismantling process and transfer of manufacturing capability to Sunnyvale, California, Charlotte and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Orlando, Florida reduced South Works' real estate at Lester, Pennsylvania to empty buildings and real estate. These were sold and it is now Tinicum Industrial Park, thus ending the 70-year local partnership with Westinghouse Electric Company from 1916 to 1986.



## Lester Piano Manufacturing Company

In 1885, when the founder of Lester Piano, Mr. George L. Miller, decided to rename his retail piano store located at 1308 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, he used the telephone directory to find a name that seemed to fit his likes. He pointed to the name Lester and decided this was what he would call it. Little did he realize that a town would be named in honor of his company's contribution to the community.



Lester "upright" player piano originally purchased around 1900 by John I. Cubbin of East Falls, for his wife Elizabeth.

By 1890, Mr. Miller was producing two pianos a week and needed larger and better facilities. He looked to Tincum Township in Delaware County. At that time, the town of Lester was known as Corbindale. Advertisements were being circulated for the settlement of the Alburger Farm estate with lots of 25' x 100' and 25' x 125' being sold for \$50 to \$140 each with the easy installment payment of \$5.00 per month. Mr. Miller seized the opportunity and moved Lester Piano Company from Chestnut Street in Philadelphia to his

acquired property on Fourth Avenue bordered by Seminole Street and the branch of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad. This location in Corbindale, Tincum Township, Pennsylvania gave him access to rail and water shipping routes that he needed for his company's success.

The company grew from producing two pianos a week in 1890 to its peak production, in 1953, of 125 pianos a day. The Lester Piano Manufacturing Company by then had acquired 26 acres of land and was occupying 400,000 square feet of floor space, providing employment for 500 people, 20 of whom were blind and used their highly-developed sense of hearing to tune the pianos.

The pianos were of excellent quality and at one time were used exclusively by both the Philadelphia and Baltimore Orchestras, as well as many schools, colleges and universities throughout the nation. In addition to being used throughout the academic world, the U.S. Government used Lester Pianos throughout the Armed Forces and on the Presidential Flagship. Mr. Eugene Ormandy, past conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra once commented on the magnificent quality of the Lester Piano.

During the war years of 1942 to 1945, the manufacturing facilities of Lester Piano were converted

over to make airplanes and gliders for the government. Immediately following the war the Company again began to produce their fine instruments.

Through the years, Mr. Miller and his descendants were continually trying to improve the quality and manufacturing techniques of Lester Piano. He added special drying kilns for the wood used in the pianos and spent millions on improvements to the manufacturing facilities. However, times were changing and the market for pianos was becoming more and more competitive. With mass produced pianos being offered at prices that Lester Piano could not compete with, the Company began to lose more and more of the market and soon drastic changes were to take place.

In 1961, Mr. George J. Miller, grandson of the founder, closed the doors to Lester Piano forever. Its 73 year history was grand and historically significant to Tinicum Township. In 1962 the remainder of the plant was sold and the 400,000 square feet of manufacturing space became known as the Lester Industrial Center. Apparently the new owners were successful in renting the space out and many different companies occupied the Industrial Center until 1976 when fire completely destroyed the entire complex, thus reducing the original Lester Piano Works to rubble. The demolition company removed the last signs of Lester Piano and the land once again was as clear as it was when George L. Miller purchased it from the developers of the Alburger Farm in 1890. The fire that destroyed Lester Piano was believed to be the work of an arsonist and, due to an inadequate sprinkling system, the fire's intensity destroyed everything. It took until 1978 for any claims settlement to take place and, through the efforts of some concerned citizens of the community, the property was going to be rezoned residential. However by means of a zoning loophole, the owners were able to override the wishes of the community and the property reverted back to its heavy industrial zoning. Today the area once occupied by Lester Piano is home to industry mostly associated with the airport.



Lester Piano Company once stood at this location (4th & Reading R.R.)

## Industry of Tincum Township

To the early settlers of the New World survival was extremely important. Survival meant food, clothing and shelter as it does today. The early settlers cleared the land, built sufficient houses and planted crops that would sustain them. They had to wait for the next ship to arrive for clothing or trade with the local natives or other settlements or learn to make them themselves. They could not hop down to the local Sears, K-Mart or J. C. Penney. This must have been the start of the cottage industry.

At first Tincum Island was a farming community, especially dairy farming, along with fishing and boatbuilding. This prevailed through the Revolutionary War and beyond. In the last decade of the eighteenth century Tincum gained importance with the location of a quarantine station and hospital for contagions, although this could hardly be called industry unless you want to call it the health business. Following this was the placement of many fine hotels and inns. As the island gained popularity as an excellent water recreation area for the affluent, several exclusive clubs were built here. Even the old hospital became a club for a short time. Passing through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, many changes took place on Tincum Island. The farms began disappearing along with fishing. However, the hotels and inns were able to survive.

Also, the boatbuilding continued to flourish and even got a little larger. In September 1917, under the auspice of the American International Shipbuilding Corporation and the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation, a gigantic shipyard, the world's largest, comprising of 900 acres and employing 36,000 people was built near Tincum Island. It was located on what was known as Hog Island just to the east of Tincum Island but within the boundary of Tincum Township. The shipyard served World War I with many fine ships. When the war ended the land reverted back to its original state.

In 1888, the Lester Piano Company located in Corbindale on the east side of Fourth Avenue below the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. Later, as a result of their move there, the name of the town was changed from Corbindale to Lester. For many years the company manufactured a fine musical instrument. They were known worldwide.

However, this came to an end. The company was not adaptable to change. The Matlack Trucking Company is using the land for parking their trucks. Several other trucking companies are also located there.

In 1916, land was acquired by the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company from East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This plant played an important role in the two world wars. During World War I it employed 2,950 people and during World War II there were 13,000 here. This operation lasted seventy-five years. Westinghouse moved off the island in 1970. Today there is an industrial park in the old plant.

With the arrival of these large companies the township began to grow and prosper. In 1918, the Reading Railroad Company built a locomotive turn-around facility with a small inspection and maintenance shop. There was also a classification yard here. This facility was located on the west side of the island near Darby Creek. This has also come to an end.

In the 1930's Linde Air Corporation, a branch of Union Carbide, constructed a plant on Powhatan Avenue just west of Wanamaker Avenue. This plant produced bottled-gas products. Soon the facility

became inadequate and a move was necessary. Land was acquired on the river just south of the original plant. This too was closed. Today this facility contains the Piasecki Aircraft Company and the original plant is occupied by Scott Paper Development Division.

There were many more small companies that were not covered in this chapter. This was not because they were unimportant but not enough was known of their operation or they may be covered elsewhere in this book.



George Wunder's garage at 2nd Street & Erickson (circa 1925)



Women employees at the Essington Metal Works (Hofkin's)

BACK ROW: Florence —, Ann LeClair, Grace —, Ann Smith Wood, —,  
 MIDDLE ROW: Lill Fox, — Mahler, Marian —, — Forsythe  
 FRONT ROW: — Hess, Sarah Sheirer, Isobel Cole, Ann Brooks, Josephine DeBlander



## VI. TRANSPORTATION

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### **The History of Rail Transportation in Tinicum Township**

Transportation in the early part of the 1800's was mainly accomplished by horse or boat. The transportation of people and goods by water afforded easy travel for heavy loads, but was restricted to where rivers and canals ran. Horse-drawn vehicles, on the other hand, could go almost anywhere, but was limited to the volume of traffic it could handle. Long lines of horse-drawn wagons were common on major "turnpikes" of the day.

Before large-scale use of railroads, there were other types of transportation that used rail. They were businesses that dealt mostly with the mining of stone or other mineral products. They used a tram railroad consisting of metal rails on wood or stone ties. The cars that were in use on these railroads were mostly open top with cast iron wheels. One of the first tram lines was built around 1809 in Leiperville not too far from Tinicum. These cars were probably hauled by horses or mules.

Rail travel for people and every day goods actually received its start from the canals. Canals needed to be very flat to afford travel in either direction. When the canal needed to go over a hill, it either used a series of water locks or an incline plane railroad. This railroad consisted of two sets of tracks side by side, one for going up and the other for going down the hill side. A stationary steam engine was commonly used to move these "rail cars" up and down the incline plane. The incline plane would only have two cars on it and they would be tied together by a cable. When one went up, the other went down. Sometimes these rail cars were actually cars that were loaded and unloaded, and other times they were just a frame with wheels onto which the whole canal barge was loaded.

Also in the early 1800's there was some experimentation in Europe with self-propelled steam engines traveling on rails. It was not until the 1820's that the steam engine was introduced into the United States. At first, these engines were wild-looking, noisy contraptions that were no more than a carnival oddity. In the beginning, the steam engine could not haul much and was not good in wet weather. But with further development it was transformed into a useful device for transportation. The original plan was to use the new "Iron Horse" over hilly ground to connect the canal system together. But with the technical advances in the power of the steam engines, all-rail routes were proposed, totally eliminating the canals and the transfers between them.

After the usefulness of railroads was realized, applications for charters started to pour in. On April 2, 1831 a charter was issued for the Philadelphia and Delaware County Railroad, with a right-of-way from Philadelphia, passing through Tinicum, to the Delaware state line near Wilmington. The rail line was started soon afterwards, and eventually opened for general use on January 15, 1838. It was the first of four separate railroads that would connect downtown Philadelphia to downtown Baltimore, Maryland. On January 18, 1836 the Philadelphia and Delaware County Railroad changed its name to the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad. The second of the four railroads,



the Wilmington and Susquehanna Railroad, originally went from the Pennsylvania/Delaware state line to the Delaware/Maryland state line. The third railroad, the Delaware and Maryland Railroad went from the Delaware/Maryland state line to the Susquehanna River. The fourth railroad was the Baltimore and Port Deposit Railroad, going from the Susquehanna River to Baltimore, Maryland.

All four railroads built their respective lines to connect with each other except for a piece from the Pennsylvania and Delaware border to Wilmington, Delaware. The Wilmington and Susquehanna Railroad turned over the rights to build this part to the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad in the last half of 1837. The rest of the line from Baltimore to Wilmington opened on July 22, 1837. That section between Wilmington and the Delaware/ Pennsylvania state lines was still under construction. A steamboat by the name of *Telegraph* was pressed into service between Wilmington and Philadelphia until the missing section of track could be built. The full line was opened on January 15, 1838.

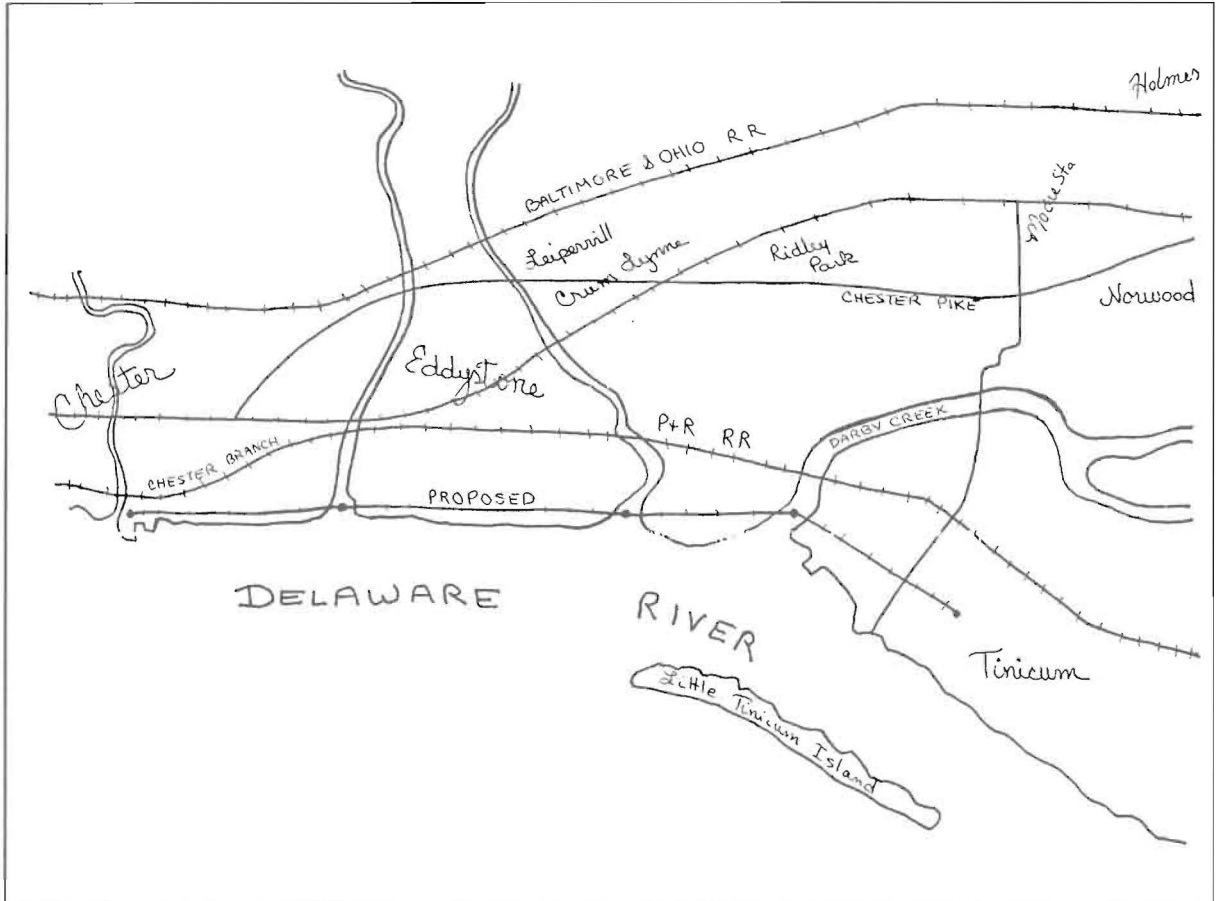
Shortly after the completion of all four independent railroads, it was decided on February 5, 1838 to merge the other three into the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, and to keep this name for the new railroad. This merger was made to eliminate the transfer points between them making an uninterrupted rail route between the two terminating cities.

There were still two obstacles to overcome for a downtown-to-downtown railroad. The railroad actually terminated on the west bank of the Schuylkill River until the bridge could be built in the latter part of 1838 to take the passengers to the station at Broad Street and Washington Avenue in Philadelphia. The other obstacle was a ferry across the Susquehanna River. A 3,269-foot long bridge was completed on November 28, 1866 at a cost of \$2,266,983 that replaced the ferry crossing.

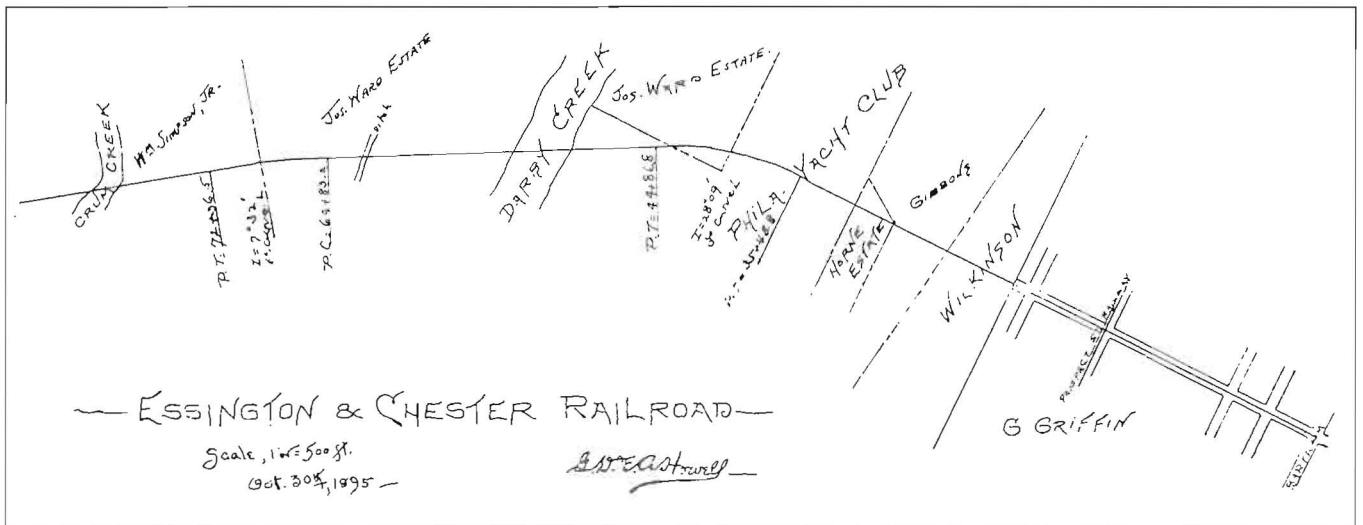
Because the railroad ran on low-lying ground through Tinicum, the line was very vulnerable to flood damage. In a move to reduce this liability to a minimum, the railroad's main line from Gray's Ferry to below Chester was relocated in 1871 to higher ground through Prospect Park and other boroughs north of Tinicum. This move left the old main line track through Tinicum redundant and this was later sold to the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad which became the Reading Railroad in the early 1900's.

In the 1800's there was much talk about street railways. Many street car railways were already in operation in Philadelphia propelled by both horse and electric overhead wire. A street car ran on almost every street in Philadelphia moving people about their business. The Philadelphia and Delaware Street Railway was the first trolley line proposed to pass through Tinicum on its way from Philadelphia to the Delaware state line. The trolley line received its charter on January 30, 1893 and on November 15, 1894 was granted the right to build on almost any street in Tinicum Township. This trolley line never built any lines in Tinicum, but did manage to build some in the city of Chester.

In October of 1895, there was a proposed, but never built trolley line connecting Essington at Third and Bartram Avenues to the city of Chester. The main line went from Essington down Third Street and then over private right-of-way to Eddystone, where it went down Delaware Street to Market Street in the city of Chester. The first trolley line actually built in Tinicum was the Prospect Park Street Railway which started operating in August of 1895. The line ran down Lincoln Avenue (Route 420) from the Pennsylvania, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad tracks in Prospect Park to Lazaretto Road then down Lazaretto Road to Wanamaker Avenue where it crossed the Philadelphia



This is a map of the proposed Essington and Chester Railroad which was to be a trolley line that would follow the river (recreated from a map of circa 1895).



A more detailed map of the proposed Essington and Chester Railroad.

and Reading tracks in Essington. It then continued down Wanamaker Avenue to 2nd Street where it turned west to Taylor Avenue and then south to the river beside Walber's restaurant. There was a branch-line off the main route at 2nd and Wanamaker Avenue that continued down 2nd Street east to Erickson Avenue. The line opened for business with two open-bench Brill cars numbered "1" and "2."

Sometime in 1898 or 1899, the Southwestern Street Railway built a short extension from Fort Mifflin to the Lincoln Park Ferry on Hog Island. This was a summer-only line and lay unused for most of the year.



Essington station on the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad (circa 1900).  
This view is looking towards the Delaware River down Wanamaker Avenue.

In December of 1898, the Prospect Park Street Railway decided to connect with the Southwestern trolley line on the north and the Philadelphia and Delaware Street Railway on the south. The proposed northern extension was to start on the end of the 2nd Street branch and continue north towards Bow Creek. The original plans called for the line to go up Erickson Avenue to Island Road and then down Island Road to Bow Creek.

The kink that would be made by going up Erickson Avenue was eliminated by extending 2nd Street a few blocks toward Bow Creek to meet Island Road. The line extension was completed to Bow Creek in about a year with the opening day on January 5, 1900. The "connection" at Bow Creek was not a physical connection because passengers still had to get off one trolley, walk across the bridge over Bow Creek, and board another trolley to continue their travel. The southern connection was built from the intersection of Wanamaker Avenue and Island Road south towards Darby Creek, but construction did not start there until permission was granted to bridge over both Darby and Crum Creeks. The tracks down to Darby Creek were completed on July 1, 1900, taking about three weeks.

The J. Frank Black Company that built both the northern and southern extensions was retained to try to connect with the Philadelphia and Delaware Street Railway. In October of 1900, a merger of the Prospect Park Street Railway and the Philadelphia and Delaware Street Railway was agreed upon to create the Philadelphia and Chester Railway. The first board meeting of the newly-formed trolley company was held on the 31st of October in 1900, and the first order of business was the connection of the two lines. The southern connection happened sometime in 1901, along with a physical connection to the north with the Southwestern Street Railway across Bow Creek. Through service from 3rd and Jackson Streets in Philadelphia to Chester was inaugurated soon after, but the ride took an hour and fifteen minutes. Because of the length of the ride, and competition from the

Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, the trolley line never attracted the ridership it needed to stay in business.



The view from Darby Creek looking at the Route 37 trolley heading into Tinicum.

The Philadelphia and Chester Street Railway went into receivership in early 1909 and was reorganized on June 29, 1911 into the Chester and Philadelphia Street Railway. Likewise the Southwestern Street Railway went into receivership on May 17, 1909 and was reorganized into the Philadelphia Railway on the 21st of April 1911.

The Chester and Philadelphia Street Railway fared better than the Philadelphia and Chester Street Railway, but not without its problems. Soon after the Chester and Philadelphia Street Railway was formed, the bridge collapsed over Darby Creek on the Moore line near the John Morton Homestead. Between March and August of that year, the entire Moore line from Darby Creek down to the Delaware River at Walbers was completely redone. After the reorganization into the Chester and Philadelphia Street Railway, route changes were put under contract. This realigning of the main line from Philadelphia to Chester was talked about as early as July 1st 1907, but the Philadelphia Rapid Transit did not want to extend its 87th Street line down to Bow Creek. The old Philadelphia and Chester Street Railway received permission to build in Philadelphia and to connect up to 87th Street, but never exercised its option to do so. The route to Philadelphia was moved from the old Southwestern Line to a route that ran down Island Road from Wanamaker to Jansen Avenue where it connected along a short private right-of-way to Powhatan Avenue and then on to Bow Creek. On the other side of Bow Creek, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit extended the Island Road line in Philadelphia from 87th Street down to Bow Creek near Powhatan Avenue in Lester, where a physical connection was made across Bow Creek.

On February 14, 1911 the Chester and Philadelphia Street Railway entered into a contract to turn over operations of the trolleys on the line to the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company for a 65-35%



split of the fares. Even though the "Chester and Philadelphia" would now only get 35% of the fares, it gained ridership which it could not get on its own. This new line, named the Route 37, opened for through service from City Hall in Philadelphia to 3rd and Market Street in Chester on February 15, 1911. Not three months later, a contract to double-track most of the line was proposed and finally completed in June 1912. With all of these enhancements to the main line, travel time dropped to one hour from City Hall in Philadelphia to Third and Market Streets in Chester. The old route took an hour and fifteen minutes, but that route stopped at Third and Jackson Streets in Philadelphia. The extra trip up to City Hall took an extra 15 to 20 minutes, so overall the new line cut about a half hour off of the travel time.

The realignment of the main trolley line through Tinicum made the old main line along Second Street and Island Avenue from Wanamaker unwanted trackage. On June 21, 1912, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company contracted with the Philadelphia Street Railroad to extend their cars from Hog Island into Essington, terminating at Wanamaker and Second Street along the old right-of-way.

The Moore Line also underwent change during this time of reorganization. Service on the short part of the Moore Line from Second Street and Wanamaker Avenue down to the river was discontinued on June 21, 1912. At the other end of the Moore Line, permission to cross the "Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington" tracks was finally given on September 25, 1912. Shortly after that time a connection with the Folsom division of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company was created and through service to Essington was commenced on October 20, 1912 as Route 72.

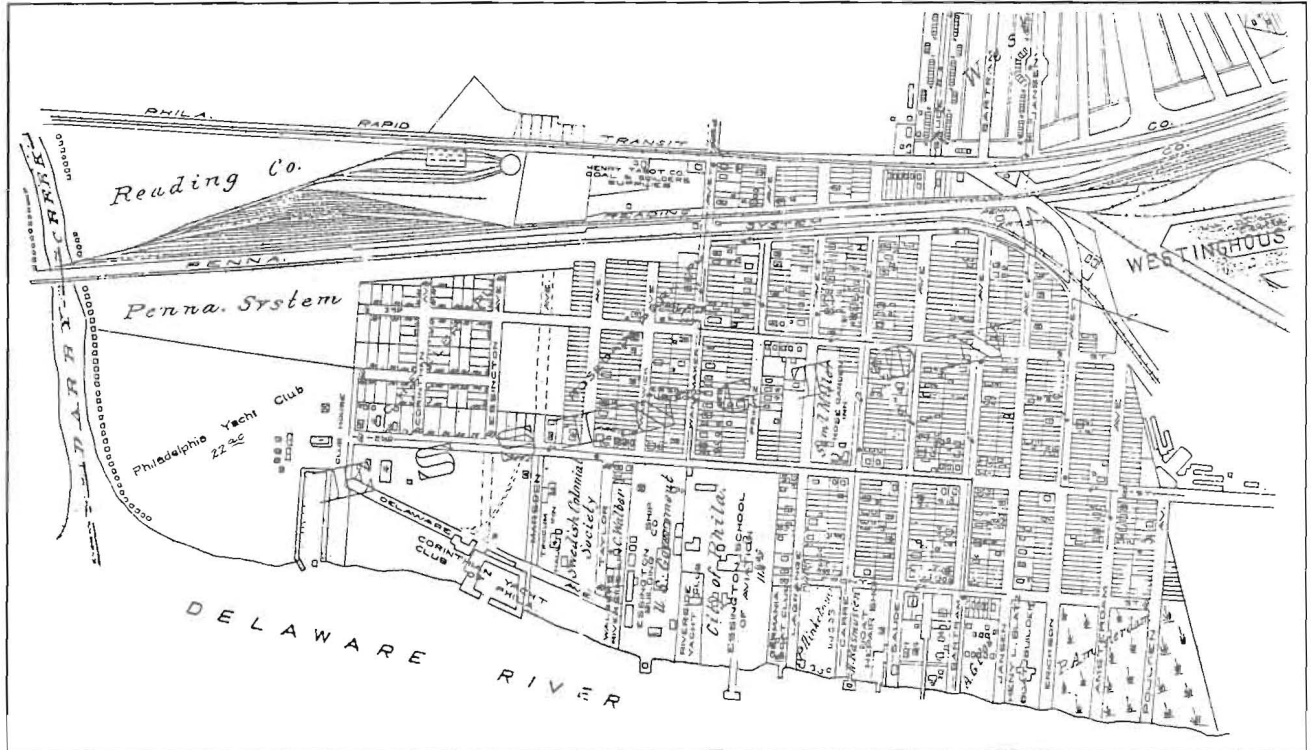
The Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company raised its stake in the Chester and Philadelphia Street Railway by buying 51% of it in 1915. The Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company held on to its shares of the "Chester and Philadelphia" until its successor, the Philadelphia Transportation Company bought out the rest of the "Chester and Philadelphia" on September 17, 1943.

The Philadelphia Street Railway was to get a stay-of-execution, because the federal government wanted to build the world's largest shipyard on Hog Island. When the Lincoln Park Ferry stopped running, the trolley line found itself with no access of its own into the shipyard. It was to share a large new terminal with Route 45 of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Railway. From 1918 till the close of the Hog Island Shipyard, the trolley was very active. The line into the yard closed down for good in December of 1924. The line into Essington, that the Philadelphia Street Railway ran for the Philadelphia Rapid Transit, ceased operations by the end of 1925. The end of service on the old main line along Second Street and Island Road was the last presence of the Philadelphia Street Railway in Tinicum Township. The trolley line hobbled along in the city of Philadelphia until the Philadelphia Rapid Transit bought it out in 1932.

The Hog Island line of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit opened for business on July 14, 1918 as Route Number 45 (this number used to indicate the now-abandoned Fairmount Trolley Line). The original route was to follow the Route 37 line to a point near 94th Street on Eastwick Avenue. The New Hog Island line, Route 45, broke off of the Route 37 line at Island Road and Eastwick Avenue in Philadelphia and then went directly into Hog Island Shipyard to the new shared terminal. But this route was short lived, and on November 3, 1925 the Hog Island line (Route 45) was gone.

The late teens of the 20th century was also a very active period for the regular railroads as well. With the arrival of the Hog Island shipyard both the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad wanted access to it. The "Philadelphia and Reading" already had a line that





A map of Essington showing the Reading Line's Darby Creek yard (circa 1929).

went by it, but the Pennsylvania Railroad had to extend its 60th Street line down to the ship yard. The Pennsylvania Railroad did not stop there, but continued down around the new Westinghouse plant, and then alongside the "Philadelphia and Reading" all the way to Chester. This extension gave the Pennsylvania Railroad access to the heavy industry developing along the Delaware River water front. "The Philadelphia and Reading" decided to build a train yard in Essington. It was situated along Island Road between Darby Creek and Wanamaker Avenue. The Darby Creek yard was equipped with about two dozen holding tracks and a three-track engine house. There was also a turntable that was used to turn the steam engines around. Some time before the late twenties, the "Philadelphia and Reading" changed its name to The Reading Lines.

On January 25, 1920 the Moore Line, Route 72, discontinued all service past Island Road in Essington. By August 14, 1938 the Moore Line ended all trolley service to Essington. The line was then replaced by the Route 71 bus route.

Early in 1946, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit asked the Public Utilities Commission if it could discontinue rail service below the Westinghouse Loop. On August 28, 1946, the bridge over Crum Creek was damaged by fire and through-service was stopped. The trollies from Philadelphia stopped at Wanamaker Avenue, and the trollies from Chester stopped in front of the Baldwin Plant in Eddystone. Through trolley service from Philadelphia to Chester never again passed through Tinicum. Permission to end rail service at Westinghouse was granted on November 24, 1946. Occasionally, trolley service on the Route 37 was interrupted past the 94th Street loop by floods and high tides. Buses replaced the trollies south of this point until trollies could once again be used. The Route 37 trolley was absorbed into the Route 36 trolley on November 5, 1955 going as far as the Westinghouse Loop. By September 9, 1956, the last remaining trolley line in Tinicum Township ceased operation.



Photograph taken in the 1970's of the Reading Line's engine house in the Darby Creek yard in Essington. This view is looking towards Philadelphia.

The Reading Railroad discontinued the active use of its Darby Creek yard in the late 1960's. Also in the 1960's the Pennsylvania Railroad merged with New York Central to form Penn Central Railroad. In 1976, the federal government stepped in to rescue the failing northeastern railroads and created The Consolidated Rail Corp., or Conrail. At this time, both the Penn Central and the Reading Lines were merged into Conrail along with a half-dozen other railroads. At this time, the old Reading line became the major route and the old Penn Central Route became the branch line. Over the next few years, some of the redundant trackage in Tinicum was removed for maintenance purposes. By the end of the 1970's there was almost no evidence of a train yard having being in Tinicum.

Around 1987, Conrail decided to upgrade the old Reading line through Tinicum instead of using the tracks owned by Amtrak in Prospect Park for the movement of its trains. This saved Conrail operating expenses they would have normally paid to Amtrak for the use of their lines. This increased the traffic on the line through Tinicum to levels not seen for many years. Current rail activity sees about one freight train a day passing through Tinicum with both mixed freight and coal trains. The Tinicum Industrial Center is the main site in the township using the railroad to ship or receive goods. One notable customer is the Budd Company which uses part of the Tinicum Industrial Center to receive and store shipments of sheet steel in big coils. They then truck the coils up to a plant north of Philadelphia as needed.

The future of rails in Tinicum is uncertain. The freight line will probably remain for some time for through-service. The Tinicum Industrial Center might remain as a drop-off point for some goods



This is a current view of the twin railroad bridges over Darby Creek. The bridge in the foreground is no longer in use.

shipped by rail. The Philadelphia Airport and its related business might also generate some rail traffic. There might even be a resurrection of trolley lines because of economic or environmental issues, as is happening in Los Angeles.

## The Seaplane Base

In the early 1900's the riverfront in and about Essington was a resort used by many affluent Philadelphians, local residents and business people. The dawning of aviation had begun and many of these people wanted to be a part of it. Robert Glendining and George Thomas were two that shared this desire. In 1915, they purchased their first Curtis flying boat, and transported it by rail from upstate New York to Essington. They were able to acquire a lease on the Lazaretto and its property from the U.S. Government and used it as a seaplane base.

An employee of Curtis Aircraft, Mr Frank Mills, left New York and joined the team as an instructor and mechanic. Through the efforts of these three pioneers of aviation the establishment of a seaplane flying school was begun and continues today. Joseph Pew, Jr., son of the founder of Sun Oil, was one of the first students to learn the art of flying seaplanes in Essington.

With the advent of W.W. I, the U.S. Army took over the seaplane base and in 1916 they renamed it Chandler Field. They established two squadrons of personnel with Col. William Ocker as the Commanding Officer. Col. Ocker has been credited with many advancements in the development of military flight instrumentation.

Frank Mills continued on as an instructor with this military flying school. In 1917, a winter freeze had the river solid with ice and the aircraft grounded. With the necessity for experienced pilots for the war, the Army decided to move their squadrons of trainees south to Lake Charles, Louisiana. Thus ended the military's interest in a flying school at Essington.

When the war ended, Frank Mills and his growing family returned from Louisiana to Essington. He procured a lease from the City of Philadelphia for the Lazaretto and its grounds to continue the seaplane base. For a period of 18 years, Frank Mills operated the Essington Aviation School. In 1936 he purchased the Lazaretto with the proceeds from the sale of his home on 2nd and Taylor Streets. The Mills family are the only private citizens to ever own the Lazaretto.

Frank Mills, Jr., William and Robert Mills continued in their father's footsteps with the seaplane base. All three were pilots. William and Robert served as navy pilots during the second world war. At the end of the war, Robert returned to continue with training pilots and his brother William started a marina in conjunction with the seaplane base.

In the 1970's, Robert Mills was involved in the Seaplane Charter service between Philadelphia and New York City. This however proved to be a very unprofitable charter service and was discontinued.

Today the seaplane base is used to check out experienced pilots for their F.A.A. certification in seaplane qualifications. Philadelphia Seaplane Base has contributed much to the history of aviation in our community, our country and the world. There is a museum located at the base that is full of aviation history and local memorabilia. The present-day Philadelphia Seaplane Base is the oldest established seaplane base in the United States. It is owned and operated by Robert Mills, Frank's only surviving son.



Philadelphia Seaplane Base



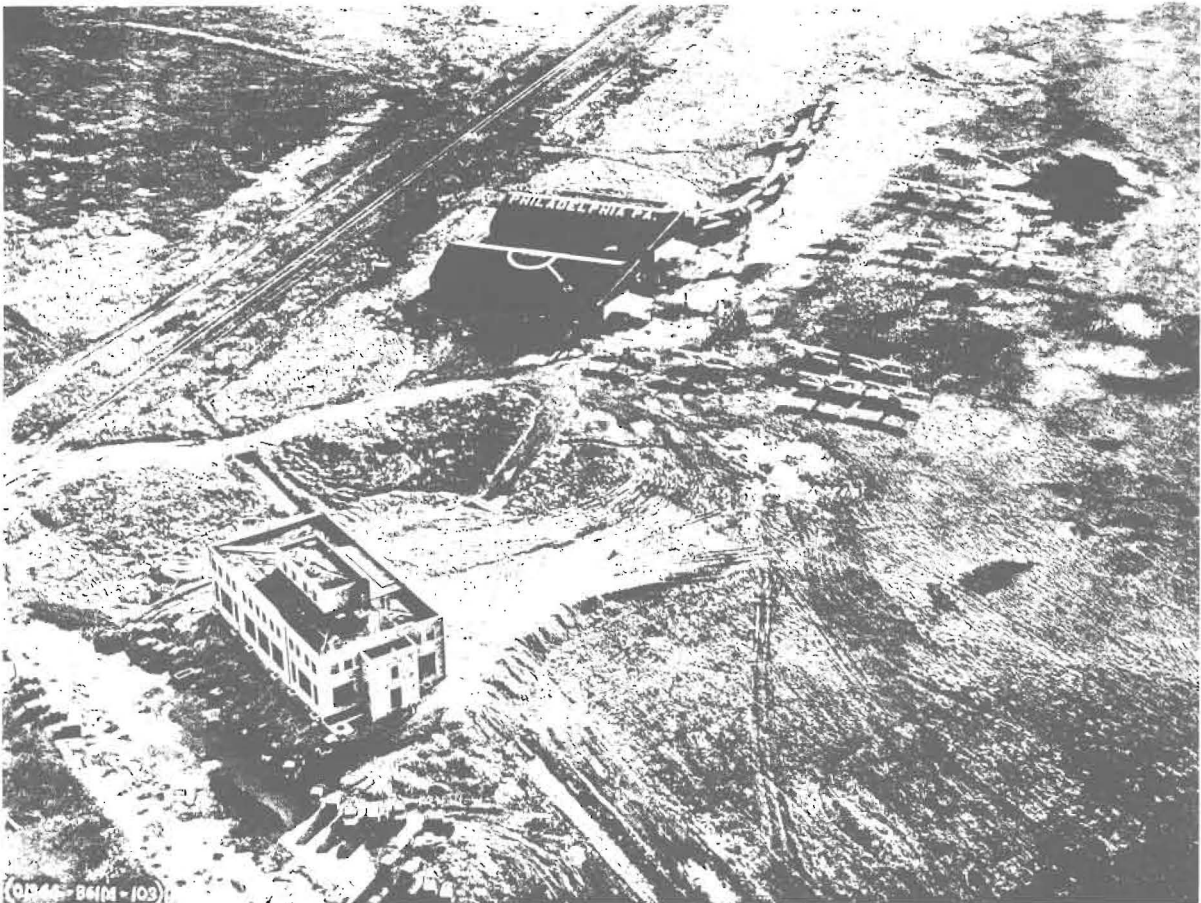
## The Philadelphia Airport

The Philadelphia International Airport (PIA) had its beginning in 1925 and was operated by Ludington-Philadelphia Flying Service Incorporated, which would later become Eastern Airlines. It was located in a low-lying meadow known as "Model Farm," bordered by Island Road, Essington Avenue and the Delaware River. Its first building was a wooden frame hangar, covered with corrugated metal. It was used as a maintenance shop and shelter for early aircraft. It was first known as Philadelphia's Municipal Aviation Landing Field.

This was the era of open-cockpit aviation. Standard equipment for flying was overalls, leather helmet with goggles, a jacket and a long white scarf. The tune of the day was, "Come Josephine, fly with me in my flying machine." This was truly the day of the "dare-devil."

In 1932 the area around the old Hog Island Shipyard was marshlands having reverted back to its natural state. The city of Philadelphia purchased it from the Federal Government for \$3,000,000 with the intentions of expanding the airport services. The area required extensive buildup and this was accomplished by the Army Corps of Engineers in their channel deepening program.

With the growth of aviation Philadelphia's Municipal Aviation Landing Field became The Philadelphia Municipal Airport on June 20, 1940. A new terminal building was built and dedicated to accommodate the increase of passenger service. There were four large hangars built to entice the airlines to service and maintain their aircraft at this location. The airport was known for a short



Aerial photo of original Philadelphia airport located at "Model Farm."



while as the Southwest Airport and in 1945 became Philadelphia International Airport.

With the coming of the Jet Age further expansion of the Airport was needed. They built a terminal complex on the Industrial Highway near the Delaware County Line, and built a long runway to accommodate the larger aircraft. In the Fifties the Airport's expansion took it into Tinicum Township and its need for expansion continues.



Aerial view of the Philadelphia International Airport (circa 1990).

## On the Road to Progress

Like many of the main highways and roads of our nation, those in Tinicum Township probably had their humble beginning as a foot paths used by the original inhabitants. When the first European settlers came, they used the waters that surround the island as the main means of travel. They still had to rely on the foot paths on the land.

It was not until the eighteenth century that there were signs of road building on the island. The first road beds consisted of felled trees that were placed over the wet meadows. A road was recorded on Road Docket B page 46 at Chester Court of General Sessions on May 30, 1769. That road went on a dam over Bow Creek, passing through Tinicum Township in a northwesterly direction to Darby Creek. Harper's Ferry continued the route to the John Morton Homestead in what we know as Prospect Park. It was used by horse-drawn vehicles until the invention of the automobile. This was what we know as Tinicum Island Road or "the old back road."

In the early part of the twentieth century, the Seiberling family laid a bed of oyster shells over the old logs to firm the road. As automobiles increased in number, the need for better roads was inevitable. The state of Pennsylvania installed two ribbons of concrete over the old road bed.

Later, Westinghouse needed part of the road for their plant expansion. The direction of the road was changed to parallel the river from the Lester Bend to connect Second Street at Erickson Avenue. In exchange for closing part of the road, Westinghouse paved Jansen Avenue from the Second Street to the railroad. They also paved Seneca Street from Westinghouse Village to Fourth Avenue in Lester and from Fourth Avenue to Lester Bend.

Tinicum Island Road became the main artery to South Philadelphia from Chester. This road was used extensively during both World Wars. It was literally a traffic nightmare. Many news article were written about it. Heavy rains caused flooding. The road was too narrow.

With the completion of the Industrial Highway (Route 291) after World War II, some of the pressure was taken off the Tinicum Island Road. This also took most of the traffic out of the lower end of Essington. Even before the Industrial Highway was complete, there was a definite need for a bigger and better road.

With the enlargement of the Philadelphia International Airport, the wetlands of the township were destroyed in the name of progress. Large quantities of river sand were deposited over them elevating Tinicum Island Road twelve feet above flood stage. Today, very little exists of the original road through the old marsh areas.

To build I-95, the wetlands on the northwest side of the island were destroyed. A dredge was brought up Darby Creek and chewed its way parallel with the Industrial Highway to Wanamaker Avenue. When it was finished all that remained of the wetlands was a pair of lagoons north of the present I-95 and west of Wanamaker Avenue. The road bed for I-95 that passes over the old wetlands was raised above flood level. The highest points of the road are where it passes over Darby Creek on the west side of the island and over the railroad and Bartram Avenue on the east side.

During the building of the road there were several hazardous areas. One in particular was called "The Car Wash." It was responsible for many, many accidents. With the completion of the highway this situation has been alleviated. Only time will tell what future highways will mean to Tinicum Township.

## VII. FIRE PROTECTION

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### History of the Essington Fire Company



1974 photograph of the Essington Fire Company

The first organizational meeting of the Essington Fire Company was held on February 21, 1907 at Lenhart's Hall. At this meeting the proposed by-laws were read and the fire company petitioned the court for a charter. Until the charter was granted, all members were asked to purchase buckets at their own expense to fight fires and a bucket brigade was formed. On April 7, 1907, Judge Johnson granted the charter and the Essington Fire Company was officially formed.

President Joseph Shisler opened the first official meeting of the Essington Fire Company. For a few years the meetings were held in a building donated by the Orchard Club. Later in 1907, the company made plans to purchase their first piece of fire apparatus from Hanley Hose Company of Chester, Pennsylvania.

From 1907 to 1909, the company held dances, lawn parties, and strawberry festivals to raise funds. Also, certain members loaned money to the company to help subsidize their expenses. Early in 1908, the company acknowledged a Ladies Auxiliary. This group contributed substantially to the fire company treasury.

From 1910 to 1915, the company acquired property on LaGrange Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets. In 1920, the company purchased its first piece of motorized equipment, an International truck. This vehicle remained in service until 1922. At that time a four cylinder

Packard, which was equipped with a 350-GPM pump replaced the International. The Packard was later modernized by replacing the four cylinder engine with a "Twin Six" or "V-12." Memories of fire calls made with this truck became a fire legend.

During this time, the Essington Fire Company moved to Second Street and Taylor Avenue. Many stories have been told of dances and other fund raising events held at this location. This was "HOME" until 1948.

In 1927, the Ladies Auxiliary was formally organized and chartered. This organization was led by Mrs. Rose Bristow for many years. Donations by the Ladies Auxiliary during these early years aided the fire company in its financial struggles.



LADIES AUXILIARY

BACK ROW: Mrs. Malone, Jenny Conley, Mrs. Schultz, Anna Dougherty, Edith Greenly, Alice Eisle, Mrs. Charles Stryker, Rose Bristow  
FRONT ROW: Mrs. A. Rossé, Mrs. F. Preston, Mrs. Boyd, Mrs. E. Clarke, Mrs. Annie Goodwin, Mrs. C. Boell, Mrs. S. O'Brien, Ruth Jones

In 1937, the company acquired a Reo Speed Wagon on which was mounted a 500 gallon Hale pumper. It was the first real modern fire fighting apparatus the company owned. It too became a fire legend. In 1939, the Ladies Auxiliary purchased a Haney ambulance from the Taylor Hospital in Ridley Park and donated it to the fire company. This was the beginning of the Essington Rescue Squad. This service is still in practice today as the Tincum Township Ambulance Service sponsored by the Essington Fire Company.

In the early years of its service, the ambulance was housed in August Rossés garage on LaGrange Avenue. Mr. Rossé received the calls and operated the ambulance siren. Some of the members of these early crews are still active members of the company. In 1944, the Fire Company purchased a 1935 Dodge ambulance which was equipped with one of the first inhalers in Delaware County.



## On the Home Front from the Junk Pile



This sleek looking emergency truck not long ago appeared like something ready for the salvage dump. Today it acts as a fire engine and general aid to the community of Essington, thanks to John S. Messerick

After World War II, Mr. John F. Messerick turned a Reo truck, equipped for civil defense work, over to the company. This was one of the first emergency lighting equipment trucks in the county. The role of the fire company now included highway rescue as well as water rescue.

To perform these new roles, the company purchased a 1941 International fire truck equipped with a 500-GPM pump. This replaced the Reo Civil Defense Wagon. The International was equipped with flood-lights, salvage equipment and rescue equipment. The lights became valuable for both fires and accidents. This truck responded with the ambulance on all accident calls. Before its retirement in 1962, the truck had responded to all types of emergencies throughout the county and even some in the state of Delaware.

In 1948, the company moved to its present location at Third Street and Carre Avenue. Also in this year, the company purchased a 1948 Cadillac ambulance. This was the first of many new ambulances purchased by the company.

In 1949, the company purchased a 12-foot metal rescue boat with a single outboard engine. In 1958, a 16-foot boat was purchased. This was equipped with two outboard engines, grappling hooks and a trailer for transport. The 1937 Reo fire truck was replaced by a 1958 Mack 750-GPM pumper. This truck became the backbone of the company's fire fighting equipment for many years.

From 1957 to 1960, the company faced many financial problems. These problems were partially resolved by the members through fund raising projects. In 1960, the company purchased a Seadraves Ford Fire Rescue Unit. This unit was capable of both fire fighting and performing emergency rescues. It also served as the equipment truck with a 3500-watt generator and lights. This unit enabled the company to retire the 1941 International in 1962.



In 1971, the company expanded its water rescue with the purchase of a 20-foot Pro-line Fire Boat equipped with a 70 HP engine and trailer. This boat had a 250-GPM pump, two 25-foot 1-1/2" hose lines, hand lights, grappling hooks, flood lights, marine radio, depth finder and power tilt. Through mutual aid agreements with the United States Coast Guard and the Pennsylvania Water Patrol they were to handle water emergencies on the Delaware River between Philadelphia and the State of Delaware.

In 1972, the company added a new Ford Sanford 1000-GPM pumper. This truck was used as the first piece on all structural fires. It had a 500-gallon water tank, two pre-connected 1-1/2 inch hose lines, two pre-connected 2-1/2 inch hose lines and a pre-connected 12000-GPM Stang Gun, eight self-contained breathing apparatuses, plus various fire fighting tools and appliances. In 1974, the 1958 Mack was converted to a 1000-GPM pumper. It also carried 175 gallons of water and a 300-foot booster line. The main hose bed contained 2600 feet of 3-inch supply hose. This truck is considered the hydrant piece on all fires. In 1975, a Dodge van Starline ambulance was purchased to replace the 1971 Cadillac ambulance. The new ambulance has received certification from State and County Emergency Health Services offices. In 1976, a Ford Seagrave fire rescue truck was purchased to replace the 1960 Ford Seagrave Fire Rescue Unit. This truck is equipped with a 500-GPM pump and carries 350 gallons of water, 300 feet of pre-connected 1-1/2 inch hose, a 10-ton Blackhawk jack. The Jaws of Life with Shears, XL-98 Homelite Rescue Saw, pre-connected oxygen-acetylene cutting torch, 3500-watt Onam generator, 150 gallons of high expansion foam, rescue basket, oxygen unit, flood lights, rescue blankets and is one of the best equipped rescue units in Delaware County. In 1979, the company purchased a Ford Yankee Coach Type III Modular ambulance. The new ambulance was equipped with a piped oxygen system, a suction system, 1000-watt inverter, and ambulance to hospital communications. This ambulance met and exceeded federal regulations KK-A-1822 standards.

In 1981, to provide the best in fire-fighting equipment for the residents, the company purchased a Ford Emergency-One 1250-GPM pumper. This truck replaced the 1958 Mack, which had provided many years of service to the Essington Fire Company. The new truck carries 500 gallons of water, has a top-mount pump panel for safety of the operator, eight discharges, four intakes, and two pre-connected 1-1/2 inch hose lines. The main hose bed contains 2600 feet of 3-inch hose.

In 1982, the company entered into a mutual aid agreement with Taylor Hospital to provide Advanced Life Support service. In 1984, the company purchased a computer for the Ambulance and Fire Company records and business. In 1986, a special meeting was called to purchase an Emergency-One Unit for \$125,064.32. In 1987, a double housing took place with the new Emergency-One fire truck and a 1985 Braun ambulance. In 1988, the company purchased a new rescue boat for \$12,538.00. This was a 22-foot Chris Craft with a 150-HP motor.

On December 1, 1988, the senior member of the company, Mr. Joseph Fox was given a testimonial dinner for 69 years of service. In 1990, the company purchased an Emergency-One Hush custom built pumper with a seven man cab, a 500-gallon tank, and a 1250-GPM pump.

In 1992, the company celebrated its 85th anniversary and presented "Fifty Year" awards to James Abbott, Edgar Brill, Joseph Christiansen, Carl DeMarcantonio, Sr., George Devorude, Andrew Soles, Joseph Young and Philip Tantores.

There are 106 life members on the rolls with about 20 of these still active. There are 122 active members, 10 members are ambulance members and there are 37 contributing members. The membership totals 275. This service is a volunteer service and is an extension of the area hospitals.

An Aid car now responds on emergency calls with the Essington ambulance and is manned by a paramedic and an emergency medical technician. The personnel can provide that second chance a person needs to live and has already saved lives in Tincum Township.

At present time the Essington Fire Company has in service two major pumpers, one rescue unit, one ambulance, two rescue and fire fighting boats, a chief's car and a utility van. This volunteer fire company has operated as an efficient and effective team for 85 years. All active members must take part in training to remain in service. The Essington Fire Company and the Lester Fire Company share fire fighting duties in Tincum Township. The men and women of the Essington Fire Company take great pride in serving their community to the best of their ability.

## History of the Lester Fire Company



1911 photograph of the Lester Fire Company "Presented by the Lester Piano Company"

The volunteers have been providing fire protection for the community since July of 1909. The company was chartered in that year with only 25 members. Today the company has an active membership of 40 members, and a general membership of over 250.

The first fire apparatus was a chemical wagon, containing two 35-gallon tanks of the usual soda acid mixture. This vehicle was pulled by hand. A few years later the firemen added a hand-drawn hose reel. In those days there were only two hydrants in Lester: one at 4th and Iroquois Streets, and the other at 3rd and Massasoit Streets. Today there are approximately 35 throughout the community.

The first firehouse was a wooden frame building located at the Tincum Republican Club. The

firemen obtained their first actual headquarters a few years later when George Miller permitted them to use one end of his large stable on 4th Avenue. This building served the company well until 1948 when Tincum Township built the present \$45,000 building.

The first motorized apparatus was purchased in 1923. This was a Ford chemical truck. In 1928, this was replaced by a 300-gallon Reo pumper. The company obtained a truly modern apparatus in 1937 with a Diamond T pumper. It was equipped with a 500-gallon pump with a 200-gallon booster tank. A second truck was given to the firemen in 1952 by Westinghouse Electric Company. The truck was a 1923 American LaFrance. This was replaced in 1955 by an Ahrens Fox 750-gallon pumper which carried a full line of fire fighting equipment. The firemen added a 1959 GMC Rescue Truck fully equipped for all emergencies. This truck is operated by a squad of 22 men and two women from the Ladies Auxiliary, all trained in first aid and rescue operations.

In 1964, a truck committee was appointed to investigate and recommend a 1000-gallon pumper to replace the 1937 Diamond T. As a result they purchased a 1964, 1,000-gallon GPM, Hanh pumper. In late 1967, a modern Cadillac ambulance was bought and placed in service on January 1, 1968. In mid-1974, Tincum Township built a \$90,000 addition to the present building. This was needed due to the growth of the company. In early 1970, the Lester ambulance service purchased a 1967 Dodge van which was fully equipped. In early 1978 a truck committee was formed to look into replacing the 1955 Ahrens Fox. A few months later the company purchased a 1965 Mack 750-GPM pumper from Palmyra Fire Company. This was placed into service in May of 1978. A few years later, the second Mack pumper, a 1968 model, was purchased from Palmyra Fire Company. In December of 1989, a 1990 Ford Ashley ambulance was purchased to replace the 1978 Dodge ambulance. In June 1990, a Ford Ultra Master van-type truck was purchased to serve as an up-to-date air bank to serve Tincum Township and local fire companies.

In November 1992, the Lester Fire Company purchased a 1980 Emergency One pumper from the Essington Fire Company to replace the 1964 Mack pumper. The best equipment, dedicated men and women, cooperation of the community and many hours of training have enabled the Lester Fire Company to operate as a first class volunteer fire company for the past 83 years.

Lester Fire Company's  
first building



## The Westinghouse Fire Department

The Westinghouse Fire Department was formally organized in the Essington Works by F. D. Frasch, Fire Marshall, on June 19, 1918. A membership of 22 men was selected from the Maintenance Department. Their familiarization with the plant layout and their availability during an emergency would not effect production. Departmental rules and regulations were established and were strictly adhered to. Fire drills and courses of study relating to control and prevention of fires were conducted on a regular basis. Jack C. Strain was chosen to be the first captain. T. W. Bischoff was chosen to be the electrician, and Norman A. Walls, Fred Horne, and T. Weldon were chosen to be hosemen.



On February 16, 1919, a new piece of equipment was received. It was a combination chemical and hose car, made by American LaFrance. It contained a 40-gallon chemical tank, which could be recharged within a few minutes. Plain water was used in an emergency. The car was equipped with 200 feet of chemical hose and 750 feet of linen hose and with a fluid stream of 50 feet. It could reach a distance of 1000 feet from a hydrant. The receipt of this piece caused jubilation within the



Fire Department. A parade was held to display the unit and to ease the minds of plant workers and village residents. The line of march started at the fire house and proceeded through the plant to gate #3, through Westinghouse Village, and finally back to the plant.

The duties of the fire brigade included the protection of homes in Westinghouse Village. To change the plant site to include the adjoining village was an unusual challenge. An underground main system of 8-inch pipe was laid to completely encircle the village of four hundred homes. It required about a mile of pipe. The water pressure was maintained at 70 pounds per square inch. Eleven hydrants were located at convenient locations. These were equipped with a Jones coupler that allowed water to shut-off and control use elsewhere. A Faraday fire alarm system was installed with a mile of weather-proof wire strung around the village. Four pull-boxes were connected to this system, and located on the corners where Saude and Jansen crossed Powhatan Avenue and Delaware Avenue. A sixteen-inch bell was centrally located in the village. It was sounded three times to warn residents of a fire. An alarm was also located in the fire marshall's house. Which was the first house on Jansen Avenue. The alarm was also relayed to the power house within the plant which alerted the fire personnel on duty. Two hand-drawn and hand-operated chemical engines with a capacity of 40 gallons were attached to 50 feet of hose. This was located in the center of the village. These engines were also used by the local volunteer firemen.

There was cooperation between the Westinghouse Fire Department and the nearby communities. Evidence of this community participation was displayed during a fire at Walber's Riverside Hotel on May 25, 1920. The fire spread to include the total destruction of the Essington Ship Repair and Storage Company destroying many yachts. Estimated loss was assessed at a half-million dollars. Further display of this cooperation was the containing of a large fire at the Corinthian Yacht Club on February 11, 1920. The fire started in an oil stove and destroyed a section of the wooden structure with an estimated loss of \$5,000. The Westinghouse Fire Department responded along with the fire companies of Essington, Lester, and the surrounding communities. A spirit of community cooperation continued until the day the plant closed.



## VIII. RECREATION

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### **Barrett Brothers Circus and Mardi Gras Shows**

John W. "Pop" Barrett was born in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Canada in 1893. After a brief bit of acting on the stage and a long distance running career, he left Nova Scotia to seek his fortune in the United States.

In 1914 at the age of 21, he joined the circus. For the next seventeen years he visited every city in the United States. He was a vendor, had his own side show, and then became a road manager. He was with Barnum, Ringling, Sells-Floto, and Haegenback-Wallace circuses.

He was married to Cecilia Phillips in 1916. She was born on the Caughnawaga Indian Reservation, Quebec, Canada. She was a full-blood Iroquois Indian. She was also a circus performer in the Wild West shows. They had seven children; Joseph, Mary, Helen, Doris, Juanita, Gloria and John Jr. The last two died as infants.

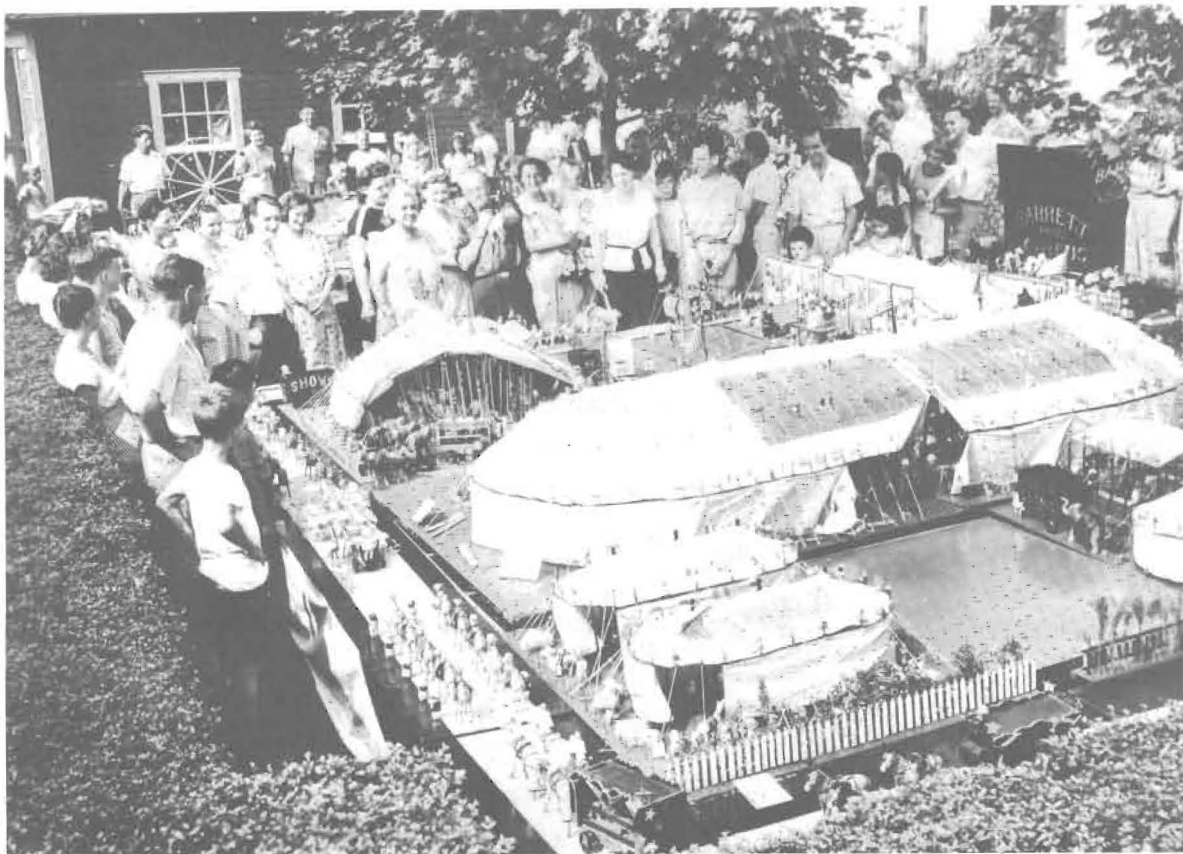
In 1931, he shook the sawdust from his feet and moved his family to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A year later they moved to 2nd and Carre Avenue in Essington. The move was prompted by his hiring at General Steel Casting Corporation.

"Pop" still had circus fever in his blood and to keep the fever down he decided to build a miniature circus. He logged seventeen thousand hours of work on the project. The miniature circus had 88 circus wagons, 33 tents and 28 railroad cars. He used blueprints from his place of work to build his model trains. They were on the scale of three-quarter inches to one foot. It also had 14 loudspeakers that enabled him to reproduce the sound of the steam calliope, the roar of the lion, and the blare of the circus band. Barrett Brothers Circus and Mardi Gras Shows, as it was called, traveled the country. It was in exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

From 1945 to around 1963, "Pop" Barrett would annually assemble the miniature circus in his yard on 2nd and Carre Avenue, on the Sunday nearest his birthday. People from far and wide would come see the *Greatest Little Show on Earth*. He really did it for the neighbors, the people of Tinicum Township. His wife Cecilia and he would give out free hot peanuts and cold soda to the crowd. They would sometimes put on their electric act. It had to do with an electric chair named Celo. "Mom" Barrett would sit in it and "Pop" would turn it on. Then he would break a branch from a tree or get a rolled up newspaper and touch "Mom" and it would catch fire. The Barrett Circus was at that time the biggest attraction in Essington.

After "Mom" Barrett died in 1949, "Pop" slowed down his traveling and displaying the circus. He sold the circus to a company in California for a small sum of money. He attempted to build a new one but age and time caught up with him. John Barrett remarried and moved to Neptune City, New Jersey. He died of a stroke in November 1970 and is interred in Yeadon, Pennsylvania.

There are many who remember "Pop" and "Mom" Barrett. They were definitely show performers; flashy, loud, and full of laughs. As for the circus, their grandson Kyle Barrett has been searching to find it.



John W. "Pop" Barrett's scale model of Barrett Brothers' Circus (photo taken circa 1947)

## The Philadelphia Yacht Club

Some men of means had a desire to form a club to promote pleasure boating and camaraderie on the Delaware River. Their early meetings were held in several old hotels in the city of Philadelphia. One of these was the Dagers Hotel that was located near the old Shackamaxon Ferry, not far from the little riverside park where there grew an old shade maple tree. Beneath this tree, in 1681, William Penn and the Indians made a treaty with which each was extremely pleased.

Beginning in 1877, and for some years after that date, the meetings were held in some unidentified rooms at the southwest corner of New Market and Brown Streets. At the meeting of June 8, 1881, a point of consideration was made, on whether or not a house should be leased at Cooper's Point.

This location proved too inconvenient to reach and the next year on September 13th, 1882 two rooms in the West Jersey Ferry House in Camden were leased at the annual rent of \$100. A Down River House committee was formed to find suitable housing for the Club.

Nine years after the historical first meeting in the Dager Hotel the Club members were granted a charter as the Quaker City Yacht Club. In 1890, it managed to gain control of the old Philadelphia Yacht Club, by friendly agreement. A number of Quaker City members were elected as officers

causing the old Philadelphia Yacht membership to resign in discontent. Now the Quaker City members had its charter. The Common Pleas Court was petitioned to dissolve the old charter and to change the name to Philadelphia Yacht Club.

The Down River Committee had discovered a quaint old house, topped by an absurd little steeple that belonged to the moribund Tinicum Fishing Company at Essington. A recommendation was made to purchase the property. The major selling point was that there were then no factories nearer than Chester, Pennsylvania.

At the January 1891 meeting, the members of the Down River Committee reported that the Tinicum Fishing Company property of twenty-seven acres had been purchased. The negotiations were a long drawn out affair. At first, the Fishing Company was asking \$10,000, but the final agreement was for \$7,500. This sum was raised through the issuance of bonds.

The Philadelphia Yacht Club house was built on the site of the old Fishing Company building. The house was strictly in the Colonial style containing 28 rooms. It was heated by steam and lighted by electricity.



The Philadelphia Yacht Club as it appeared early in the 20th century.

Upon entering the club from a porch into the main hallway, a most pleasing view greeted the eye. A novel feature was a cozy inglenook, which was certainly most inviting. Open fireplaces, such as were used in "ye good old days," and the spacious seats and homelike atmosphere offered the guest a silent but hearty welcome.

The dining room, with the seating capacity for 100 guests was one of the most cheerful places in the house and it overlooked a well-kept lawn. The rooms on the second floor had 16 bedchambers, which under pressure accommodated about 50 people. Each room was furnished by a member with no two alike. They took great pride in these sleeping chambers and even vied with each other to see who could have the most attractive quarter. This resulted in furnishings and decorations that were examples of art and oddity not to be found in any other club house in the country. There were also handsome parlors, which were perfect gems of taste and comfort. A billiard room and lockers for the

members' and the servants' quarters helped round out the completeness of the accommodations. The club rooms, parlors and reception room were unique to the extreme. They were decorated with the trophies and other things dear to the heart of true yachtsmen and presented a very attractive appearance.

The club property covered 27 acres of ground and was divided into lawn, golf links, croquet courts and shooting traps. A large stable, with room for 15 horses, was also provided and not far away from the club house was located the anchorage basin. It measured 100 by 500 feet with a pavilion on the outer end of the pier.

An immense bay window on the front of the club house and a quaint circular room at one end gave special attraction to the architectural beauty of the long rambling structure. This gave a commanding view of the Delaware from the interior of the house.

During the summer, the entire building was almost hidden by the low-growing shelter of foliage. A railway connected the basin to the storage sheds providing an excellent means of moving members yachts for storage and repair.

An annual regatta was one of the special features of the club and among the other summer activities. The annual cruises of considerable length were looked upon by members with great interest.

The move was an excellent one, for there was a good harbor and open water for racing. The result was that the club prospered and soon had 153 members. Unfortunately, a few of these with political affiliations seemed to think that the yachtsman should follow old Doktor Martin Luther's alleged advice "Liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang." (Love wine, women and song.) In fact, they were far too boisterous for the comfort of some of the more sedate members who considered this behavior undignified for one of the ten leading clubs. One of the original members, a Francis Shunk Brown stated that he regretted and deplored this sort of thing—but to no avail—until it was too late to prevent a split. In the fall of 1891, a group of these members resigned and formed a small club that was run along quieter lines. This resulted in the formation of the Corinthian Yacht Club.

The club had a slow but steady increase in membership from its organization in 1875 until 1900 when the announced membership exceeded 175 members and a fleet of 50 first-class boats. This number embraced all types of racing and pleasure craft.

A steady decline in membership caused the club to disband and in 1941 the club property was offered to the Corinthian Yacht for a sum of \$35,000 which was declined.

The Linde Air Products Company, a subsidiary of Union Carbide, obtained the property and razed the club house to build a plant to replace one that had been built on Powhatan Avenue. This plant has since been vacated by Linde and is now occupied by the Piasecki Aircraft Company for experimental aviation-associated projects.



## The Corinthian Yacht Club



Corinthian Yacht Club (circa 1940)

The Corinthian Yacht Club was formed when a number of more dignified members of the Philadelphia Yacht Club found the crowd to be too boisterous and broke away to form their own club.

At the first meeting, held January 12, 1892, it was announced that a nearby old fourteen-room hotel on 12 acres of ground with a substantial wharf could be rented for \$500 per year. A rental agreement was signed and a decision was made to purchase the property within a year.

The old hotel was a large, old-fashioned, wooden building of a yellowish hue with mansard roof, wide porches and two wings and had been operated by Peter Goff for sportsmen. Rail and reed bird shooting was popular in the area, crabs were plentiful in summer, there was a clean sandy beach and many varieties of fish were available to catch.

The early house servants were George and Sarah Bordeleys who lived at the Yacht Club with their daughter, Mary. George Bordeleys was a man born in slavery as was Henry Jones, the driver for the club. Henry Jones lived on the Yacht Club property in an old log house with a stone smokehouse.

Two yacht basin areas were built to accommodate member boats. The club was the scene of many races and regattas. Some activities were so popular that steamboats full of spectators and a band would anchor to watch. The Club was also the scene of many ground activities.

In 1902, a small house with a trap pit was built in the north field for trap shooting. When interest in trap shooting decreased during World War I, the trap house was used by Sidney G. Fisher as a



refuge to do his writing. Later the house was destroyed by fire and cleared away, but when trap shooting interest was revived again, a new little house was built between the two yacht basins with a trap below the bank.

A newspaper clipping, circa 1905-07, gives the following account of statistics for the Corinthian Club:

*... and therein are 123 members. In the fleet there are 7 schooners; 22 sloops, cutters and yawls; 5 open boats and 14 steamers and launches. The value of the schooners is estimated at \$50,000; the sloops, cutters and yawls, \$35,000; the open boats, \$2,500; and the steamers, \$250,000. The club property is estimated at \$5,000.*

In the early days, there were three ways to reach the Club from Philadelphia. First, there was a two-coach train that stopped at a tiny station marked Essington where old Henry Jones would meet the members with a one-horse buggy. Another way, considered to be very pleasant, was to drive down Broad Street, cross the Gray's Ferry Bridge and ride through the meadows on a dazzling white, oyster shell road built by Charles Seiberling. The scene was reminiscent of Holland, with brimming ditches that resembled little canals and sails from the river ships showing above the dykes. It was very peaceful—no automobiles and almost no horse traffic. There were nice footpaths alongside the long, level road. Bicycling was a delight. Often groups of female members would bicycle from Philadelphia, but always returned on the train after dinner. The third way to get to the Club was by boat. Sometimes large, luxurious steam yachts would bring large parties to the Club.

The original building must have been confined to the small area that now serves as the Ladies' Dining Room. All four of its walls are outer walls, and there is a fireplace, now hidden, in the east wall between the Ladies' and Main Dining Rooms. The Commodore's Room, lined with portraits of the men who have served as Commodore since 1892, was once a porch or shed attached to the original building.

When the Club first occupied the building, it was enlarged to include the model room and library and part of the present porch. The Corinthian set about making additions on each end of the structure; on the west, the Ladies' Parlor and to the east, the Main Dining Room and then the kitchen quarters.

For many years, the ladies' access to the Clubhouse was confined to the use of the Ladies' Parlor and Ladies' Dining Room. Since it was not customary for ladies to be seen in the Library or Model Room, the only passage between the two areas not denied them was the porch.

The outside walls of the central buildings are covered with paint disguising the brickwork under the coating of white paint. Beneath the paint the construction is laid up in Flemish Bond, a form of brickwork recognized to have been widely used during the period from 1719 to 1728. Thus we can roughly date the origin of some portions of the Clubhouse. The roots of the Corinthian Yacht Club are planted in a home that probably outdated the American Revolution by half a century.

When the Clubhouse was first put to use, the main highway ran within a few feet of its front door. The addition of wings on either end of the building extended into the roadway, and it was necessary to have the Township close the roadway off before construction could begin. The road was then replaced where it exists today as Second Street.

The club was the attraction place for many of its members to spend their leisure time. Although the club is still active it is not now used too frequently due to the conditions of the river basin.

## Tinicum Fishing Company

After the demise of commercial fishing, the title for the Tinicum fishing grounds became divided among a number of owners. A few Philadelphia gentlemen of means organized the Tinicum Fishing Company. They purchased a parcel of ground within the limits of the then almost forgotten form of shore net fishing. They constructed a fashionable club house, and a wharf out into the river that went directly through the old fishing grounds. They settled in to enjoy themselves not in catching fish, but in eating the other fellow's catch with champagne and other delicacies. While the old shore nets had gone into disrepair, there was another net being laid to catch them all unaware.

Paul Carter, a lawyer turned fisherman for the present, quietly bought up pieces of the old divided



Site of the former Tinicum Fishing Company which later housed the Philadelphia Yacht Club.

title. He then called upon the members of the Tinicum Fishing company stating that they were encroaching on his rights to fish. He suggested that they either remove the wharf or buy him out. The members readily refused and retained the services of a Mr. Ward, a learned colleague of Mr. Carter. The parties then squared off for a fight.

The litigations lasted fifteen years and finally reached the Supreme Court. The high tribunal decided that all fisheries in navigable waters were subject to the paramount authority of the State and the wharf erected by the authority of the State had a right of location superior to the fishing. The company flourished for 45 years, after which the Philadelphia Yacht Club occupied the grounds until the 1940's.

## Tincum Township Swim Club

In the spring of the year 1958 a couple of Westinghouse employees contacted the local company management with a request to purchase a tract of land for the purpose of building a swim club.

During this period other neighboring towns were engaged in the similar endeavor of providing swim clubs for their communities. Yeadon was one that was contacted. The Yeadon Swim Club related their experiences on how to start the project. A plan was formulated to guide the Tincum Club along the lines of their approach.

Prior to this idea of a local swim club, residents were obligated to swim in the Delaware River, Long Hook Creek (Sandy Bottom) and the Westinghouse Intake Canal in Essington. These locations were unsanitary, dangerous and many accidents occurred in their unsupervised activity!

The Westinghouse management team of R. Jones and P. Mathews promised to contact corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and give reply to a petition for purchase of the necessary land. After due consideration with Westinghouse headquarters the employees were informed that the corporation was desirous of reducing their real estate holdings in the township and offered a tract of land between Chippewa Street and Darby Creek as a possible site for a swim club location. This offer was rejected by local politicians who were desirous of expanding the municipal sewage treatment plant in this location and so informed Westinghouse management.

A new proposal was then advanced to transfer the sale of property across the street on Chippewa Street toward Seneca Street to include 5.3 acres at a cost of \$15,000. Note the balance of this tract of land was then donated to the Interboro school system.

A new objection was then made by Lester property owners on 2nd Avenue to the proposed site in a desire to square off their properties along the tangent property line of the swim club purchase. To resolve the objection a petition was circulated and signed between the property owners and the swim club to sell the desired parcel sections at the cost based on the price paid per square foot of the 5.3 acres by the swim club.

Thereupon with all local rejections being satisfied, the Company agreed to sell the property to the Tincum Township Swim Club. It was now incumbent to organize the club by electing officers, securing a charter of incorporation and selling membership bonds to purchase the property and build a pool.

The charter was granted in Media Court in December 1958 with R. Cherry, H. Irgang and P. A. Keller as signatories. The charter inclusions requested by the company, included stipulations that no alcohol be permitted on the premises, also that a control of late hour usage be enforced and that the operation of the swim club prevent political office holders from running the club.

An engineering survey and a model design was developed by H. Irgang with blueprints for construction of a steel plate pool, reinforced with an outer steel wall to be built in an L shape design to cost \$60,000. Total cost of the entire project was estimated to cost \$100,000.

An all out effort began to secure family memberships and provide the necessary funds for the purchase of the land and construction of the pool. A 4 x 8 plywood scale model was built and used in the sale and publicity demonstration. The *Chester Times* published a picture of this model and the Tincum Bank of Essington cooperated in providing low cost loans to prospective members. The goal of 400 families at \$200 for bond purchase per family proved successful.

One of the final problems of construction was the need to elevate the pool above ground level to overcome ground water pressure, especially in the deep, diving section. With the cooperation of the General Steel Casting Company in Ridley Township who had a supply of spent core sand used in foundry practice and the help of the Harry Farrell family who donated the labor and the use of his dump trucks many tons of this material was transported from General Steel to the pool construction site to elevate the pool 15 to 20 feet above ground, so that construction could begin.



Clubhouse at the main entrance to Tincum Township Swim Club

With the success of the sales promotion and the finish of the pool construction and buildings the opening of the pool was dedicated for use in the 1959-1960 season.

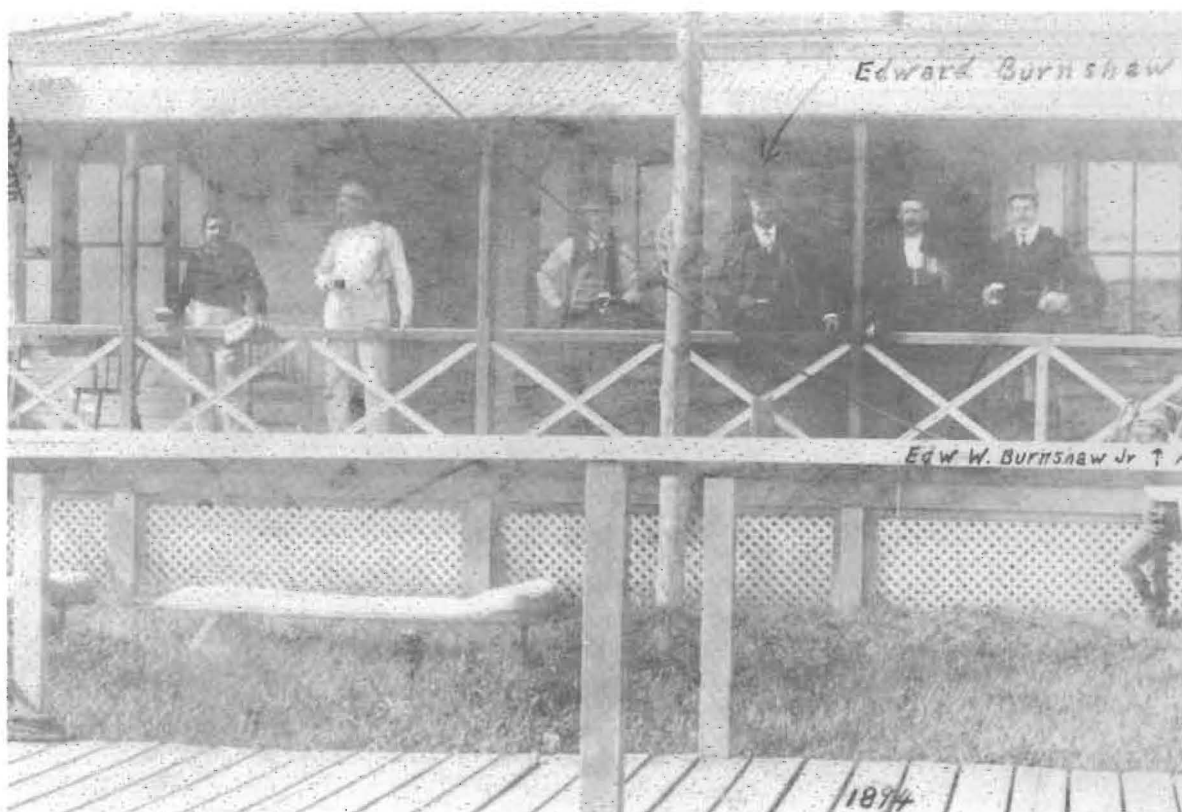
The pool is still in use today.

## Rosengarten Estate

At the latter part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the Samuel G. Rosengarten family had an estate in Essington, Pennsylvania. It was located between Bartram and Saude Avenues on the Delaware River. The estate was used as an amusement area and provided cottages for rent to people visiting the waterfront. It was self-sufficient generating its own power with two large electric generators.

The estate was tree-lined on three sides with large maple trees spaced about 20 feet apart (some of these exist today). Around the inside perimeter of the tree line was a gravel walk. There was an entrance in the center of the property on Front Street between Bartram and Saude Avenues. A hard-surfaced road extended from Front Street to the river. Located a little to the west were two small clubs. The first was a pinochle club which was operated by the estate. The other was a rod and gun club operated by a Mr. Burnshaw. These clubs were for those who wished to indulge in a friendly game of cards or do some serious wild bird shooting.





Burnshaw Clubhouse on Rosengarten Estate (photograph taken in 1894)

At the foot of Bartram Avenue there was a steamship wharf capable of handling the largest of steamships in use during that era. The wharf was used by ships from the cities of Philadelphia, Chester and Baltimore, Maryland. The wharf was not a part of the Rosengarten estate although there was an entrance provided.

The wharf was later used by the Essington Land Development Company who provided free rides from the city of Chester to Big Tinicum Island to promote the sale of properties.

There was year-round recreation on the water front of the estate. Swimming, fishing and boating were very popular. There was an excellent beach. If a person desired to shoot rail or reed birds, there were skiffs, poles and pushers\* readily available. The estate also had a large dance pavilion as an additional feature of entertainment. In the winter if it was cold enough, the hardiest could skate or iceboat.

On June 20, 1898 the pavilion was totally destroyed by an early morning fire. Because there was a lack of facilities to douse it, the fire raged with unabated fury.

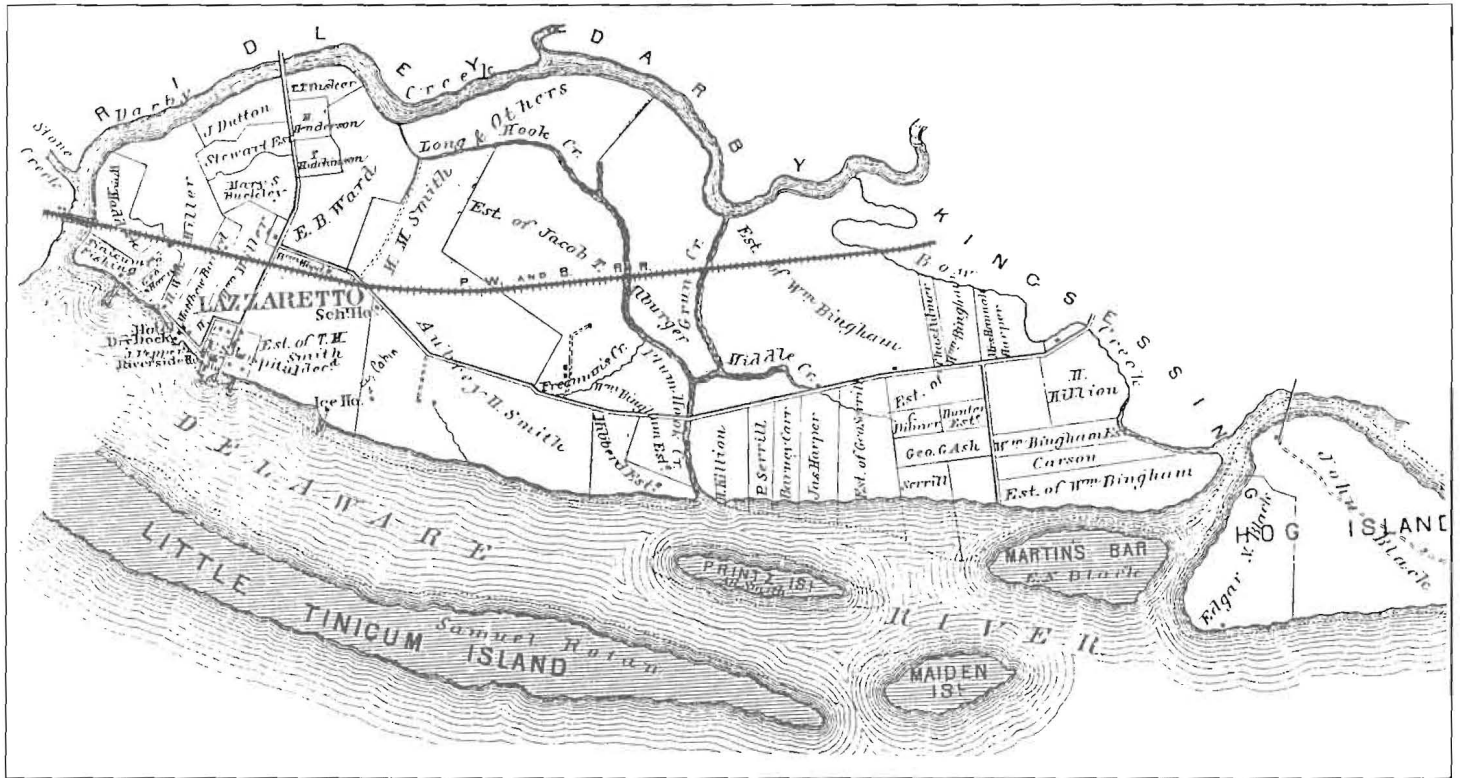
After the death of Samuel G. Rosengarten on May 15, 1908, the property went up for sale. It was purchased by Andrew Fox, Sr. a roofer. He installed a sheet metal shop in the old power plant. He was assisted by his children Elizabeth, Andrew, Albert, Rose, Christian and Joseph. Andrew Jr. later operated a business from the property servicing area homes with block ice.

The name was changed to "Fox's Grove" as it is still known today. The Fox family now owns and operates a marina there.

\* Pushers were local men who poled the skiffs for a fee.



## Little Tinicum Island



Atlas of Delaware County, Pennsylvania (G.M. Hopkins & Company, 1870)

It is not known exactly what Johan Printz saw in 1643, but in the late 1920's Little Tinicum Island consisted of two pieces of high ground, three sand bars and a mud flat. At low tide it was possible to walk from one end to the other but at high tide it took a good swimmer to cover this distance.

The three bars made excellent swimming beaches. People would row to the bars on the still tide and wait for the incoming tide. When the water got too deep and the tide too swift, it was time to go home.

On the New Jersey side of the two ends, there was a strip of sand about 100 feet wide and on the Pennsylvania side was a swampy mud flat that stretched out to the inner channel. On both ends of the island the sandy strip wrapped around toward the Pennsylvania side and continued east and west toward each other for a couple of yards. After this, a "soupy" mud flat covered the center. The highest point of the island was in the center of the island just a little beyond the sandy strip. It was about two feet above high water.

On occasion, the entire island was completely inundated. The width was about a quarter mile at extreme low tide. The mud flats tapered toward both channels. The mud was hard on the New Jersey side.

The high ground at the island's ends gradually became a collecting point for debris that either fell or was tossed overboard from passing ships making Little Tinicum Island become a conglomeration of trash.

The local residents who were fortunate enough to own boats would hunt on the island for whatever the tides had brought in. Firewood was the biggest prize, especially during the Great Depression. Many homes were kept warm during the cold winters from the summer finds, but as people became more and more affluent, fewer ventured out to the island for this purpose.

In the late 1930's and early 1940's the Army Corps of Engineers initiated an accelerated channel deepening program of the river, from the bay to the Port of Philadelphia. They needed a place to deposit the sand and mud brought up from the river bottom. Little Tinicum Island became a prime candidate. A pipeline was laid from a stationary floating dredge to the island and was used to move the sands to the island. Several dredge boats went up and down the river vacuuming the bottom. They deposited their contents back into the river near the stationary dredge.

Within several months the island changed from a pleasure spot to a "no man's land." Also the destruction of the inner channel was beginning, as there was nothing to prevent the run off. The outer channel was swept clean by the tides and the dredge boats, but there was no such luck for the inner channel.

After the dredging, there were only two places left to swim and these were on the island ends. It was many years before the rest of the island was again usable. Even then, care had to be taken because there were many sinkholes left by the dredging. Vegetation gradually got a foothold and then the rich growth seen today.

Several years ago, there was talk of turning the island into a recreational area. This was not cost-effective and so, today, Little Tinicum Island remains in a wild state.

## Rosedale Park

Gilbert Griffin left his home and friends in Ireland when he was 17 years old and came to America to work his fortune, as many of his countrymen had done. In 1862, he landed in the city of Philadelphia, his only possessions being a stout heart, indomitable pluck, a willing spirit and a determination to succeed. He met with good luck immediately, becoming engaged in the restaurant and hotel business.

Mr. Griffin visited Tinicum every season for more than a quarter of a century and had an appreciation of what would best please the travelling public. In 1888 he purchased from George K. Crozer the old Captain Miller Farm, comprising eighty-three acres. Here he had built a pretty Gothic cottage in which he resided with his family. The major portion of the farm was divided into lots, a large number of which were purchased by prominent Philadelphians, many of whom proposed to build upon them.

During the year, and particularly when the fishing and gunning seasons were open, as many as two hundred carriages arrived at Tinicum Island. Mr. Griffin saw that accommodations at the Park were altogether inadequate and he conceived a plan for providing ample room and conveniences for the great rush of visitors.

Accordingly, he enclosed several acres of ground and named it Rosedale Park. Those grounds were attractively constructed with elegant carriage drives, graveled walks, croquet and lawn tennis grounds, flower beds, etc.

## The Rosedale Inn

Rosedale Park, with all its natural and artificial beauty and attractiveness, was only a part of the grand scheme conceived by Mr. Griffin for the pleasure and entertainment of the public. The crowning point was the erection of a large hotel. It was called The Rosedale Inn and was situated one hundred feet from the river and upon the highest point of ground along the riverfront between Chester and Philadelphia. Broad piazzas surrounded the building from which one could view the Delaware and surrounding countryside.

The hotel was four stories high and contained thirty-three rooms. Everything was arranged upon a grand scale; the hallways and rooms being large, light and comfortable. The entire house was heated by steam and lighted by gas, while the sanitary arrangements were first class. The grounds were well drained, an eight-inch pipe running from the large stable at the extreme rear of the park through the grounds and out into the river.



Ole Rosedale Inn (in the past, it was known as the Tinicum Inn and Griffin's Hotel photo from 1906)

The main hallway and stairways were wide, the ceilings were high and the parlors were excellently situated. The Dining Room was especially worthy of note, there being none in any hotel in Delaware County that could compete with it. The dining room occupied the entire south side of the house and the guests, while feasting on planked shad, reed birds or other delicacies, could at the same time gaze through the large windows upon the river or land views of unsurpassed beauty. It was so arranged that it could be readily transformed into three separate, private dining rooms, or thrown wide open into one spacious apartment in which hundreds could satisfy their appetites at one time. The floor was laid smooth and strong with a special view to removing the tables after a feast shall have ended and converting the room into a dancing hall.

The sleeping rooms were large, easy of access and contained two windows with a fine panoramic

view. Each room was connected with the office by electric bells and supplied with every known comfort and convenience.

Good stabling accommodations were furnished to those who desired to come by horseback, while guests who desired to take a ride over the country could secure a carriage. A new road was opened beginning at the park and connecting with the Ninth Street bridge in Eddystone. A committee reported in favor of this road and an excellent driveway of two miles or more along the Delaware River front was built to connect this road.



REED AND RAIL BIRD DINNERS  
AT ROSEDALE INN, ESSINGTON, PA  
G. GRIFFIN, PROPRIETOR

Photograph taken in the 1920's – Advertisement for the Rosedale Inn

Telephone connections were possible between Philadelphia and other points as the office contained a phone; the mail facilities were convenient, the Essington Post Office being located close by; a telegraph office was in the immediate neighborhood and three depots of the Reading Railroad were within easy reach. The Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad station was situated within one mile from the park.

With the pure air, picturesque scenery, the pleasures of driving, boating, fishing and gunning, no better place could be found at which to spend a few weeks or months or even the entire year than the Rosedale Inn at Rosedale Park.



## IX. GOVERNMENT

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### Post Offices

On December 12, 1859, the United States Government established the first post office in Tinicum Township. The site chosen was the Lazaretto, a quarantine station and hospital for the contagions. The purpose of this post office was to provide mail service to the patients and staff of the hospital. It was appropriately named the Lazaretto Station Post Office. During the time from its establishment until 1877, there were three postmasters: Mrs. Margaret B. Wright, Mr. Lewis Kugier, and Mr. Harry H. Luken.

It was a unique office in that it had to disinfect the mail going from patients to the outside. The mail sterilizer consisted of a sheet iron box with double walls. Within the box were a number of wire trays to hold the mail. It was heated with alcohol to a temperature between 300 and 400 degrees of dry heat. This temperature was maintained for a variable length of time. All treated mail from this chamber was marked "sterilized" and forwarded to the local post office for distribution. In 1877, the post office name was shortened to "Lazaretto." Mr. Charles Horne and Mr. Cebert Newhall were appointed postmasters for the next two years.

From 1879 to 1891, there was no post office in Tinicum Township. On July 17, 1891 Mr. Albert N. Diehl became the station agent for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and took up the duties of Postmaster of Essington. The post office was located in the North Essington Station on Island Road and Jansen Avenue. In 1910, the station and post office were moved 6 blocks to the west side of Wanamaker Avenue on the south side of the Philadelphia and Reading tracks.

In 1906, a post office was established in Lester. Mr. William Woolston was appointed the first and only postmaster in the history of the Lester post office. On January 1, 1921, it became a branch of the Philadelphia post office. It remained a branch office until its closure in July 1983. Essington post office assumed responsibility for the entire township once again.

On July 1, 1925, Mr. William L. Creelman accepted the position as acting postmaster of Essington. One of his first duties was to move the office to the east side of Wanamaker Avenue just north of Third Street. It was housed in a one-story, one-room building. It remained there through the terms of Mr. William L. Creelman, Mr. John C. McConnell and Mr. Philip H. Saunders. In 1928, Mr. Christian A. Jansen was appointed acting postmaster of Essington. The office stayed in this location for six more months.

It was then moved next door to a site previously occupied by a drug store. This building was owned and occupied by Mr. George Brown who had a gas station and auto repair shop. The building now houses Yaskin's Hardware Store. Mr. Jansen received his permanent appointment as Postmaster on June 10, 1940. On November 26, 1943, he was drafted into the United States Army and served in New York City at the Army Postal Terminal. This left the office without a postmaster. Mrs. Gertrude L. Heron assumed the duties as acting postmaster and was later followed by Mrs. Hilda Wear.

On January 31, 1946, Mr. Jansen returned to the position of Postmaster of Essington until his



retirement. During his absence on July 1, 1944, the post office upgraded to a second class facility. It served Essington, Westinghouse Village, Westinghouse Plaza (since removed to make way for the Industrial Highway) and Delaware County's Tincum Manor Housing Project (was razed to make way for a recreation area.) The ever increasing area to be served brought about the inauguration of city carrier service on September 1, 1944. The Governor's Landing was added to the carrier service in the 1980's.



Essington Post Office at Saude Street & Powhatan Avenue (1993). The Evergreen Hotel is on the right.

Prior to his retirement, Mr. Jansen facilitated one last move to the present location on Powhatan and Saude Avenues. Mr. Joseph Travascio was the next appointee to the office of Postmaster of Essington. Mr. Ken Heath and Mr. Henry Gibson followed him. The office is presently without a postmaster. It employs ten people, four of these are on the street as carriers.

## Tincum Public Schools

The semblance of a school system in Tincum Township began in a converted building outside gate 3 of the Westinghouse plant. The school served the needs of both Lester and Essington children. Bus transportation was nonexistent and some of the children were required to walk great distances across farms in all kinds of weather.

In 1918, the cornerstones for two new grammar schools in Tincum Township were laid. One was located at Third Street and Powhatan Avenue in Lester and the other on Wanamaker Avenue in Essington. The need for building the new grammar schools was based on a population increase within the Township during the World War I period as Westinghouse Electric and Hog Island Shipyard expanded their operations.



Essington Elementary School (circa 1946) with addition

Mr. Clyde Adams, the architect, designed the buildings. Mr. E. J. Kritzburg was the builder. The war-essential materials were secured by top priority. The identical schools each contained ten classrooms, an auditorium, a medical room and rest rooms. Modern heating, lighting, ventilating systems and fireproof stairways were installed.

These two elementary buildings were constructed to care for the existing needs and future development of Tincum Township's children. Enrollment consisted of grades one through eight with kindergarten added later. The enrollment in Lester School never increased sufficiently to warrant additional building. Essington School however, had an addition built in 1941. The addition housed kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades. The kindergarten even held a pond and a bow window. Tentative plans to build a high school never materialized. The graduates went on to the city of

Chester for further education. Later Ridley Park and Eddystone High Schools accepted some of them.

The dedications of these schools took place on Saturday October 11, 1919. The principal speaker at Lester School was A.G.C. Smith, Superintendent of Schools, who stressed the value of education: "There is no interest in the country that should appeal to you more than the education of the children who have been entrusted to your care." While the main speaker at Essington, Judge Isaac Johnson, stressed that a great republic cannot endure without intelligence and virtues.

These schools served the communities well for about a half century until the School Board received a citation for violations of Pennsylvania's new safety codes. The wooden auditorium floors were flammable and the ventilating duct system could carry smoke and fire throughout the building.

The need for costly repairs to meet and correct the hazards in the two schools required the Tincum School Board to accept Interboro's offer for incorporation. Around 1965, with the approval of the Tincum Board, we became a part of Interboro School District.

With the transfer of the Tincum pupils, the original buildings in Lester and Essington were vacated. The old Essington School was severely damaged by fire. The building was razed and the grounds were converted for recreational use by the Township. Lester School was sold intact to a private purchaser and still stands today.

In 1965, the Tincum Township School located on First Avenue and Seneca Street in Lester was built. This school was designed by the George M. Ewing Company for the total cost of \$1,202,545. It was designed to house six grades. The dedication program included musical selections by the Tincum Elementary Orchestra led by Miss Harriet Dorsett, the presentation of the National and State flags, the singing of the National Anthem, and a dedication address by Mr. Mark Nagy, Assistant County Superintendent of Schools, Media, Pennsylvania.



Tincum School

Tinicum School held classrooms for kindergarten through 6th grade until 1981 when Interboro's Junior High was closed and the local schools were expanded to incorporate 7th and 8th grades. This worked well for a few years but in the later 1980's it became clear that building expansion was needed. There were not only more pupils, but also new subjects to be taught including computer science, shop and home economics.

In December 1988, the ground at the rear of Tinicum School was broken for a new addition. The services of Samuel Crothers and his associate Daniel Jalboot were engaged as architects. The plans were to build six new classrooms, a new metal/wood shop, a second courtyard, a cafeteria, renovate the library and computer room, and install a music practice room. All this would cost about two million dollars. Mr. Frank Davis, the school's present principal, worked many long hours keeping the school running smoothly while the building was progressing. The addition was completed in January of 1990 and an open house was held in March of that year with about 200 people attending. Among the dignitaries involved with the project were State Representative Ron Raymond, Superintendent Edmund O. Sacchetti and Board President John Costello.

Realizing that schools are more than buildings, it seems appropriate to mention some of the people and outstanding programs Tinicum has been noted for. The principals were Miss Ethel Simpson (Rayne) in Essington School and Miss Emilie Miller in Lester School. Miss Miller later headed both schools and was the first principal in Tinicum School. She was followed by Dr. Vincent Costello from 1974 to 1980 when he went on to be the Assistant to the Superintendent. Mr. John Whitig held the post from 1980 until Mr. Frank Davis took the position in 1985.



Mural and museum in the lobby of Tinicum School

Tinicum holds the distinction of being the first school in Delaware County to have its own in school museum. This was accomplished largely by the efforts of Mrs. Agnes Montemuro. The museum displays many artifacts and documents relating to Pennsylvania's history. It was dedicated in October 1987 along with a mural of early Tinicum done by Anna Jarek and Dianne Krieg, former students of Tinicum School. The mural and museum are a vital part of the school's present.

The school's courtyards are not only pretty in the spring but also house some items of interest. The courtyard adjacent to the library holds the cornerstones from Essington School dated 1918 and 1941. It has trees planted by 4H indoor gardening clubs, and flowers planted by students and teachers in previous years. The newest courtyard has a mosaic mural wall done in 1992 by selected art students as part of an "Artist In Residence" program.

At present the school's enrollment is about 450. We are seeing new families move into Tinicum. Essington is changing from an industrial-oriented community. This year its students will join in the celebration of the commemoration of the landing of Johan Printz in the park that honors him. They will be the ones who will write the next chapters. May we all teach them well.

## The Governments of Tinicum Township

When the Swedish settlers came to Tinicum Island in 1643 they were governed by Johan Printz. He had absolute responsibility and power for the care of those who settled at Tinicum and other parts of the Delaware Valley. He was able to grant favors to some and punishment to others; however, he never used capital punishment. An example of his compassion is the story of Swen Wass. This soldier was responsible for causing the fire that destroyed many structures of the settlement. Governor Printz sent him back to Sweden in irons to be tried by the royal court.

Johan Printz's rule lasted about ten years. He returned to Sweden in 1653 and John Rising was appointed governor. His objective was to eliminate the Dutch from the Delaware River area. His capture of Fort Casimir provoked the Dutch into retaliation. Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Amsterdam removed the Swedish threat from along the Delaware River taking Rising prisoner and sending him to New Amsterdam.

The Dutch rule was replaced in 1664 when England's King Charles II sent his brother James, the Duke of York, to lay claim to the land. In 1682, William Penn founded Penn's Woods or Pennsylvania and Tinicum became a part of this English rule.

In May of 1780, Tinicum petitioned to be separate from Ridley Township and in August of that year, the petition was granted and Tinicum became a third-class township. It remained in this status until 1922. At this time it became a second-class township. It was divided into five wards and elected its first Board of Commissioners for a four year term. This board was comprised of:

Addison F. Bancroft	01/02/22 - 10/21/26*
Herman Wittig, Sr.	01/02/22 - 09/21/26*
John C. Strain	01/02/22 - 06/05/44*
Andrew G. Fox, Sr.	01/02/22 - 02/02/28



William Boreman, Jr. 01/02/22 - 01/02/28

The aforementioned first Board of Commissioners was followed by:

Louis F. Revello	12/07/25 – 01/04/32
William S. Robson	10/19/26 – 01.06/30
Henry E. Joss	01/02/28 – 01/04/32
Edward C. Wasch	01/02/28 – 01/04/32
Adam Betsch	01/06/30 – 01/01/34
Howard L. Martin	01/04/32 – 01/01/40
Gilbert Griffin	01/04/32 – 01/06/36
Christian S. Fox	01/04/32 – 01/01/40
Anthony Kiszonas	01/01/34 – 06/16/37
Albert Troxel	01/06/36 – 01/01/40
Henry S. Butcher	07/06/37 – 01/05/42
Gilbert Griffin	01/01/40 – 11/01/42*
Charles Muehsam	01/01/40 – 06/06/42
Joseph C. DeBlander	01/01/40 – 07/06/48*
Benjamin J. Forte	06/06/42 – 01/02/56
John V. Olsen	01/05/42 – 01/02/50
Ralph J. Kirk	11/01/43 – 01/02/56
Harvey E. Pearson	06/12/44 – 01/07/52
Pantelis Catsanos	07/06/48 – 01/02/50
Milton F. Bothner	01/02/50 – 01/02/62
Alfred A. Cook	01/07/52 – 07/28/58*
Elmer E. Csank	01/02/56 – 01/04/60
John W. Gorden	01/02/56 – 01/04/60
Ralph L. Slatten	08/04/58 – 01/04/60
Robert W. Millard	01/04/58 – 01/04/60
John E. McCracken	01/04/60 – 01/06/64
George C. Davis	01/04/60 – 01/06/64
Joseph A. Keller	01/04/60 – 01/06/64
Peter Polinsky	01/01/62 – 01/06/78
William J. White	01/06/64 – 05/02/66
Thomas J. Giancristoforo, Sr.	01/06/64 – 06/18/88*
Charles G. Reese	01/06/64 – 01/02/68
Edward Grueninger	05/02/66 – 01/02/68
C. Robert Mills	01/02/68 – 01/03/72
Harry E. McKelvy	01/02/68 – 10/05/79*

Robert P. Bonsall	01/02/68 – 02/14/68*
Joseph E. Kastor	04/01/68 – 01/07/80
Albert J. Troxel	01/03/72 – 01/03/78
Adam German, Jr.	01/03/78 – Present
Nicholas Canzanese	01/03/78 – 01/03/69
Ralph L. Slatten	11/07/80 – Present
Joseph A. Keller	01/07/80 – 01/03/84
Harvey W. Lucas, Jr.	01/03/84 – 01/04/88
Thomas J. Giancristoforo, Jr.	07/18/88 – Present
Albert DeMarcantonio	01/02/89 – Present
Joseph Rizzo	01/02/92 – Present

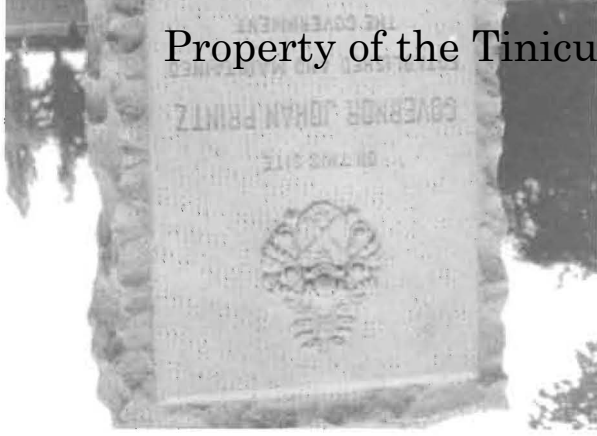
*\*denotes those who died in office.*



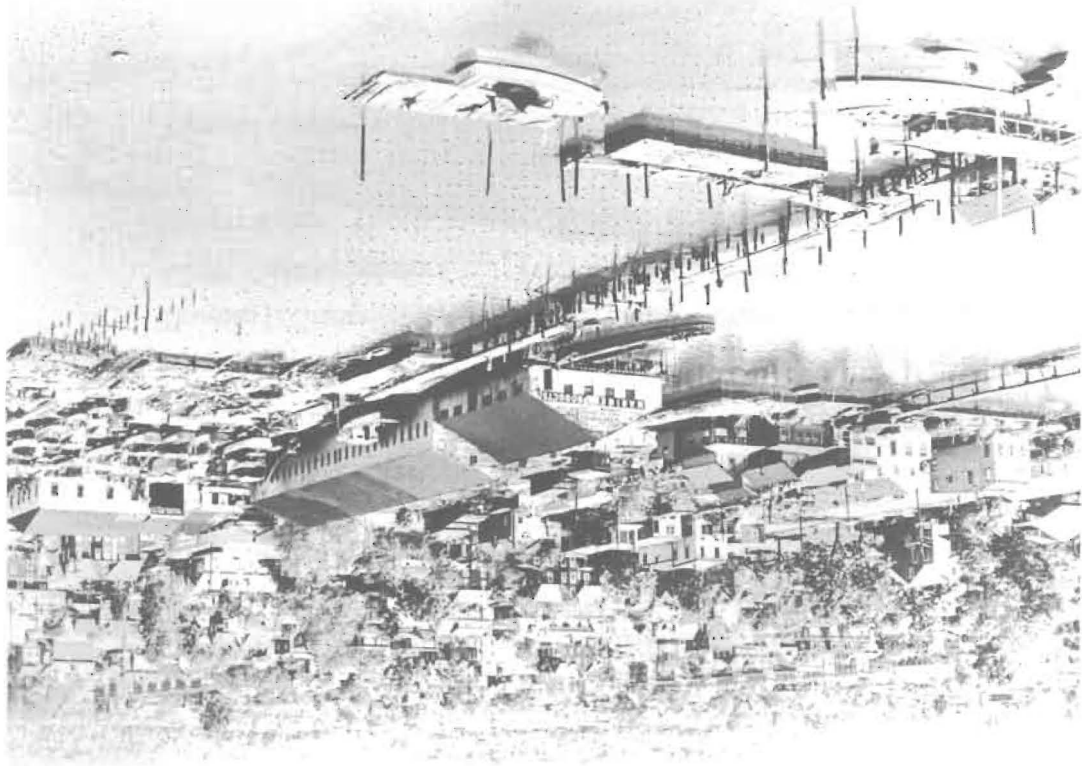
1992 FALL MEETING OF TINICUM COMMISSIONERS

Secretary: Ann Marie Woodall; President, Adam German, Jr.; Albert DeMarcantonio; Rolph L. Slatten; Thomas J. Giancristoforo, Jr.; Solicitor, Robert F. Pappano; Engineer, Herbert E. MacCombie, Jr. (Commissioner Joseph Rizzo absent)

***On the following pages, there appear miscellaneous photographs taken in the Tincum***



Riverfront, 1955



Property of the Tinicum Twp. Historical Society

Charles Walber planking shad



Essington Hotel  
2nd Street, Essington  
(later known as "Lenhart's")



Walber's before additions





Henry Jones worked at the Corinthian Yacht Club. He said that he had been a slave and didn't know his age



Mike DeMarcantonio's Store  
2nd & Bartram Avenue

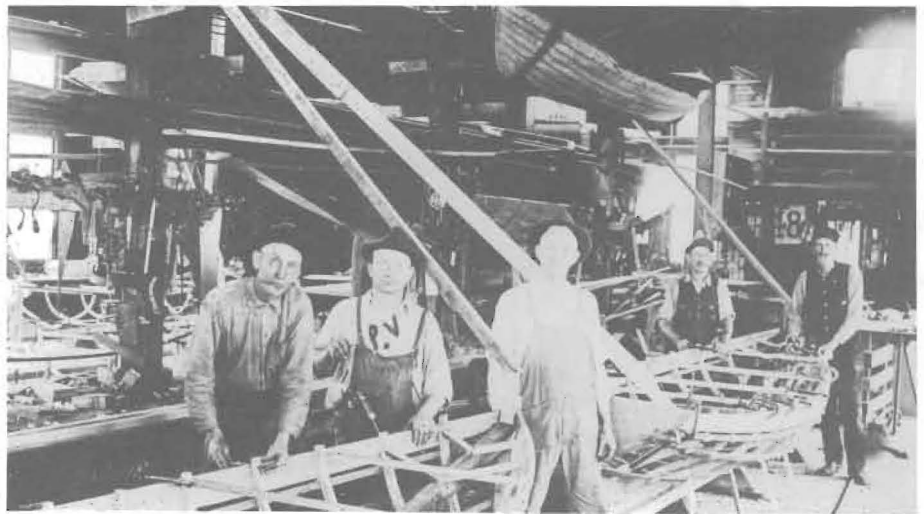


"Sandy Bottom" swimming hole at  
Long Hook Creek at end of Jansen Avenue



Property of the Tinicum Twp. Historical Society

Blatz Boat Yard, 1923



Essington Yacht Yard employees



Township monument before erection of Municipal Building



# Property of the Tincum Twp. Historical Society



Springhouse at the  
Corinthian Yacht Club



Old log cabin which was removed  
to make way for Westinghouse canal



Boy Scouts' Log Cabin  
in the Westinghouse Woods

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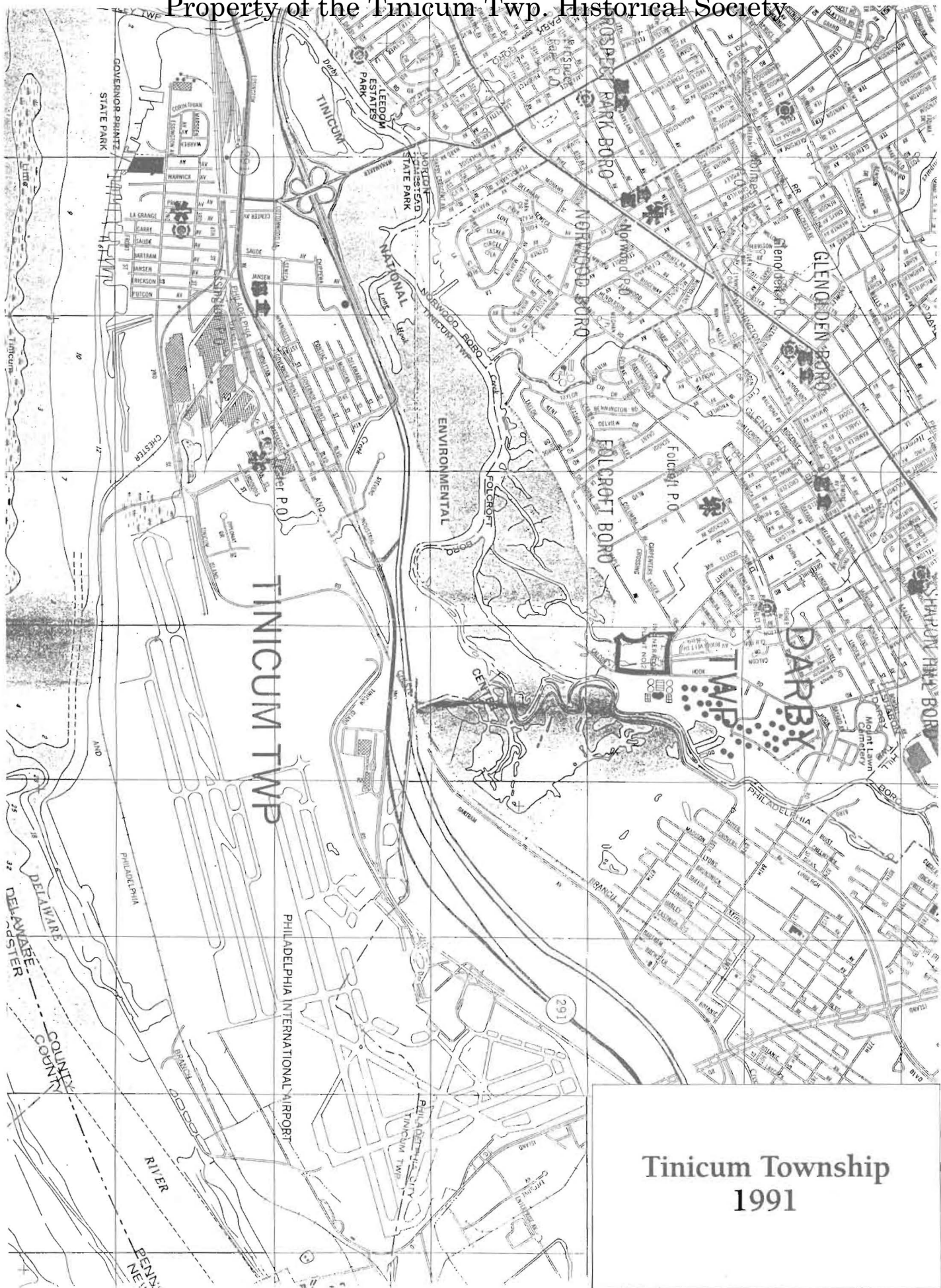
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