

GOVERNOR PRINTZ'S DAUGHTER AND THE ISLAND OF TINICUM

BY WILLIAM E. SAWYER*

JOHN PRINTZ arrived with his family at Fort Christina (Wilmington, Del.) on February 15, 1643.¹ Six months previously he had been commissioned to be Governor of New Sweden,² which comprised all of present-day Delaware, western New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania. His instructions required that the Delaware River be "commanded." For this purpose Fort Christina was clearly inadequate. The bold shore of the island of Tinicum (Essington and Lester), then extending farther into the Delaware River than it now does, he wisely selected as the site of the new capital.

This location would enable Printz to control the river, its proximity to the Dutch Fort Nassau (Gloucester, N. J.) would facilitate control of a potential enemy, and its insular position would make it relatively secure from Indian attack. Printz called his new garrison at Tinicum "New Gothenburg."³

Everything went wrong at New Gothenburg. The little colony was stricken by disease. Printz had troubles with the Indians, French, Dutch, and English. The community was destroyed by fire. The winters were bitter cold. Sweden seemed to take no interest in the colony. And Printz gave the impression of being very cruel.⁴ Finally, even he could endure the situation no longer, and he set out for Sweden in December, 1653, leaving his domain in the hands of his son-in-law, John Papegoja.⁵

*Dr. Sawyer has taught at both the high school and the college level, and is now Associate Professor of History at Pennsylvania Military College.

¹ See pamphlet by the present author, *The First 150 Years of Delaware County* (Chester, Pa., 1957). Also Amandus Johnson, *Instruction for Johan Printz* (Philadelphia, 1930), 23.

² *Ibid.*, 18.

³ Samuel Hazard, *Annals of Pennsylvania, 1609-1682* (Philadelphia, 1850), 70.

⁴ Amandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664*, 2 v. (Philadelphia, 1911).

⁵ Johnson, *Instruction*, 192-193. Even Papegoja was miserable here. In 1644, he had written to Sweden: "I would request that I may get . . . away for it is very difficult for me here. For everything that I do, I receive only . . . ungratefulness. Besides, they carry a secret hate towards me, so that if they would find a small fault in me, they would possibly murder me." *Ibid.*, 162.

About 1645, Governor Printz's daughter, Armegot, had married Mr. Papegoja, who had arrived in New Sweden two years earlier.⁶ The marriage does not seem to have been a happy one, though the couple had five children, two girls and three boys.⁷ On August 30, 1654, Madame Papegoja moved to Tinicum (Essington) from Fort Christina (Wilmington, Del.) with her children and servants, and settled on her father's estate.⁸ Within a year, however, New Sweden was in the hands of the Dutch. The last Swedish governor along the Delaware said of the conquerors that they "robbed Mr. Papegoja's wife of all she had."⁹ John Printz in Sweden wrote, "The wife of Johan Papegoja is . . . entirely plundered. . . . But two little Papegojas . . . she has sent over here (to Sweden), and they have arrived safely."¹⁰

About a year after the Dutch conquest of New Sweden, Madame Papegoja petitioned the authorities at New Amsterdam that letters patent should be issued to her for her father's land at Printz dorp (Chester) and at "Tinnakunk" (Tinicum).¹¹ She described the latter estate as follows: "now since three years being abandoned, was again covered with bushes, and the dwelling-house nearly destroyed by the Indians, and I have been obliged to repair it, by three Finns."¹²

The Dutch Governor Stuyvesant and his council, in response, accorded her permission, pursuant to the terms of the Swedish capitulation, "to take possession" and "cultivate the lands of her lord and father in Printz dorp."¹³ Nothing was said as to Tinicum, but Madame Papegoja continued to live there. We learn from a letter written by the Dutch Vice Director William Beekman in 1660 that she requested the right to make payment in lieu of taxes of a fat ox, fat hogs, bread and corn.¹⁴ She complained that she could not move because of her investment in buildings and be-

⁶ Albert Cook Myers, *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware, 1630-1707* (New York, 1912), 137.

⁷ Johnson, *Swedish Settlements*, II, 686-687.

⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 520. The Papegoja residence at Fort Christina was taken over by the new governor (Risingsh). Hence the family had to move out. *Ibid.*, II, 520.

⁹ *Pa. Archives*, Second Ser., VII, 294.

¹⁰ Johnson, *Instruction*, 199.

¹¹ *Pa. Archives*, Second Ser., VII, 294.

¹² Hazard, *op. cit.*, 330. The original dwelling house had been burned to the ground in the great fire of 1645. Johnson, *Instruction*, 130.

¹³ Berthold Fernow. *Documents Relating to the History of the Dutch and Swedish Settlements on the Delaware River* (Albany, 1877), 130.

¹⁴ Hazard, *op. cit.*, 313.

cause of her attachment to the Tinicum (Lutheran) church. She even offered lands without compensation to prospective colonists, but she could induce nobody to settle in her neighborhood.¹⁵

On May 29, 1662, however, she sold her property to one Joost De La Grange, who purchased the estate at Tinicum "together with the housing and stock thereupon, for the sum of six thousand guilders, Holland money." One half was to be paid in cash, two thousand when she reached Holland, and the remaining thousand in one year thereafter. De La Grange immediately took possession of the estate, and Madame Papegoja sailed for Europe, arriving in Holland on July 31.¹⁶

The bill of exchange was presented in Amsterdam soon afterwards and payment was refused. The energetic woman must have taken immediate passage back to the New World. In November, she had a legal judgment against De La Grange, from which decree the defendant entered an appeal.¹⁷ Even intervention by the Dutch Vice Director Beekman was futile. He went to Tinicum on December 21 and used "every exertion to settle differences respecting the protested bill of exchange but did not succeed."¹⁸

Governor Printz died in 1663, and a fresh difficulty was thrown in the way of his daughter Armegot's collecting the money. Her three sisters in Sweden objected to the payment of the 3,000 guilders still due from the purchaser until a new power of attorney had been executed by them.¹⁹ In the meantime, Armegot erected a house at Printz Torp (Chester).²⁰

To add to Armegot's discomfiture in prosecuting the suit, Joost De La Grange had set out for Holland in order to collect money due him there, so that he might pay her the balance of the debt.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 307; Fernow, *op. cit.*, 300. John Papegoja was rarely at home, being constantly on the high seas between Sweden and the New World. Finally, he returned to Sweden for good in 1661. His advancement in the Swedish Navy was rapid. He probably died at his estate known as Ramstorp in 1667. Myers, *op. cit.*, 137.

¹⁶ *Pa. Archives*, Second Ser., VII, 799.

¹⁷ Hazard, *op. cit.*, 342.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 342.

¹⁹ *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, I, 183.

²⁰ Printz Torp is the Swedish spelling; Printzdorp the Dutch spelling. This estate in Chester at the confluence of Chester Creek and the Delaware River was later sold to Robert Wade, a Quaker, who erected Essex House there, the first dwelling place of William Penn in Pennsylvania. John Hill Martin, *Chester, Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1877).

On the way over, he became ill and died, leaving a widow and a minor son. His widow, Margaret, remained in possession of the Tinicum property. Soon afterwards (1664), the English conquered the Delaware Valley, and accompanying their armed forces was one Andrew Carr, who subsequently married the widow.²¹

Apparently to forestall any action Madame Papegoja might take to get Tinicum, the English Governor Lovelace at New York issued on October 1, 1669, a patent to "Andrew Carr and Margaret, his wife, formerly the wife of Joost De La Grange, deceased, to confirm to them a certain island in Delaware River." After this patent was granted, Andrew and his wife resided at Tinicum for some time without any proceeding being instituted against them. Then one day Margaret fell heir to an estate in Holland, and they all went to Europe to claim this inheritance.²²

Captain John Carr was left in charge at Tinicum as attorney for his brother. Within a short time after the departure of Andrew Carr and his family, Armegot Printz Papegoja brought suit for the recovery of the island. She got Governor Lovelace to summon Captain John Carr before a special tribunal held at New Castle. And there, by consent, the case was removed to the General Court of Assizes held at New York in 1672. The case began on Wednesday afternoon, October 12, and continued until Friday afternoon, October 14, when upon the verdict of the jury, judgment was entered for the plaintiff. The Carrs were ordered to pay "the principal, with costs and all just damages."²³

On March 2, 1673, Governor Lovelace appointed four commissioners to "appraise and set a value upon the island of Tinicum, in Delaware River."²⁴ The commission stated that "whereas Jeuffro Armgardt Printz, alias Pappgay, did obtain a judgment upon the verdict of a jury, at the last general court of assizes, against Andrew Carr and . . . his wife, for the sum of 3,000 guilders, Holland money, or 300 pounds sterling, together with all due . . . costs of suit, . . . they . . . report that 50 pounds shall be allowed for interest of principal debt, leaving the other . . . costs to the determination of the law." The governor confirmed the appraisal and the sheriff was empowered to put Madame Papegoja "into

²¹ *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, I, 179.

²² Hazard, *op. cit.*, 400.

²³ *Ibid.*, 401.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 403-404.

possession of said land, and the stock thereupon, if not sufficient, levy on other property of Carr."²⁵

Three years later, the renewed legal document recites that Madame Papegoja of Upland (Chester) obtained a judgment at the assizes at New York in 1672, against Andrew Carr and his wife, for a sum for which a "special warrant of execution was granted"; but that since "the same was not fully executed; at her request . . . the former execution may be renewed, the governor requires Sheriff Cantwell to proceed according to said judgment in what remains unexecuted."²⁶

On March 22, 1676, Madame Papegoja sold Tinicum Island to Otto Ernest Cock for 1,500 guilders, since the property was "very much decayed and worn out." She also gave the power of attorney to the purchaser to receive possession of the estate from the sheriff.²⁷ Two years later, Arnold De La Grange,²⁸ Joost's son and heir, who was now of age and was traveling with his mother and stepfather, came to the province, and went directly to Tinicum to claim the island for himself. Otto Ernest Cock replied that he knew nothing of the matter. If De La Grange had any lawful claim to the estate, he ought to apply to the courts, not to him. If he wished to purchase the island, he could have it for three hundred pounds sterling, or at an agreed upon price.²⁹

Thereupon, Arnold De La Grange sent a lengthy petition to Governor Andros in New York. Arnold told the story of the sale to his father, of the suit instituted against John Carr during his stepfather's absence in Europe, of the misnomer Priscilla instead of Margaret in the title of the suit. He maintained that the judgment had been defective because it had been rendered against a man beyond the seas, or against a legally helpless married woman,

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 403-404.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 423.

²⁷ *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, I, 179.

²⁸ The De La Grange family was probably a French Huguenot family which had lived in Holland before coming to America. Arnold was a shop-keeper in New York in 1679 when visited by Labadist missionaries who described him as "dressed up like a fop." He seems to have held title to several tracts of land along the Delaware. In 1681 he moved to New Castle, where he owned a windmill. When William Penn arrived in that town, Arnold was one of the justices of the court there. In 1684-1685, he was involved in the purchase from Augustine Herrman of over 3,000 acres of land on the Bohemia River in southern Cecil County, Maryland, for the Communitist settlement of the Labadists. In 1692, he was a regular inmate of that community, Myers, *op. cit.*, 286.

²⁹ *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, I, 179.

and affected the vested right of a minor who had not been represented in the case.³⁰

Arnold De La Grange asked Governor Andros to assist him either by a hearing in equity or an order requiring Cock to refund the sum paid by his father. Nothing seems to have been done with the petition. But Arnold began a legal action against Cock at the Upland Court on June 14, 1681.³¹ The case was settled two years later. The plaintiff, having acquired possession of the estate, sold it in 1684 to Christopher Taylor, who was then subject to the jurisdiction of William Penn.³²

Meanwhile, Armegot Printz Papegoja was having a hard time. On August 23, 1672, she wrote that she lived alone and had only one servant. She petitioned Governor Lovelace of New York that she would like to have her servant exempted from military service, and in order to pay him she requested a liquor license. The English Governor replied: "I would . . . excuse her manservant from ordinary attendance at trainings in the company in which he is enlisted, and also give her licence to distil in her own distilling kettle some small quantities of liquors."³³ Eventually, Armegot returned to Sweden and died at her husband's estate on November 26, 1695.³⁴

The colony at Tincicum had once been the capital of New Sweden; as time went on, it became less and less significant. On November 21, 1679, two Dutchmen visited the settlement and recorded their impressions of the former citadel: "The southwest point . . . is barren, scraggy, and sandy, growing plenty of wild onions, a weed not easily eradicated. On this point three or four houses are standing, built by the Swedes, a little Lutheran Church made of logs, and the remains of the large blockhouse, which served them in place of a fortress, and the ruins of some log huts. This is the whole of the manor."³⁵

³⁰ Fernow, *op. cit.*, 618-619.

³¹ *Records of Upland Court*, 189.

³² *Ibid.*, 189.

³³ Hazard, *op. cit.*, 399.

³⁴ Johnson, *Swedish Settlements*, II, 691.

³⁵ Dankers and Sluyter, *Journal*. Tincicum Township today is no longer an island. Since the Bow Creek area has been filled in to make way for the Philadelphia International Airport, Tincicum is now a peninsula. Because of its excellent location it has many factories, including those of the Lester Piano Company, the Westinghouse Corporation, and Linde Oxygen, a subdivision of the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation.