



JOHAN PRINTZ  
GOVERNOR OF NEW SWEDEN  
1643-1653

“THE SWEDISH SETTLEMENTS ON THE DELAWARE, 1638-1664.”—BY AMANDUS JOHNSON, PH.D.

BY GREGORY B. KEEN, LL.D.

[The original of the portrait of Governor Printz here reproduced is in the church at Bottnaryd, the little village where Printz was born, near Jönköping, capital of the Province of that name, in southern Sweden, of which Printz was Governor after his return from New Sweden until his death. Printz and his two wives are buried in the adjoining churchyard. The arms in the right hand corner of the picture are those of Printz, conferred upon him by Queen Christina before he went to New Sweden.]

THE history of the Swedish settlements on the Delaware by Dr. Amandus Johnson is, and probably always will be, the most complete account of that colony in Swedish or in English. It should be deeply interesting to every intelligent inhabitant of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey, since it relates the first successful attempt of a European nation to occupy and develop the territory of those States. The author, who is an American of Swedish parentage, began his investigation of the subject five years ago, making three journeys to Sweden, two to Holland and England, and one to Finland, in search of documents and other materials pertinent to his work. In his preface he asserts that he “has examined and read every document on the subject known to exist,” and no one who notes the multitude of his citations and the variety of sources from which they are drawn will be disposed to doubt the truth of so broad a statement. The extraordinary number of books consulted is equally significant of the zeal and thoroughness with which the author has fulfilled his task. Nothing more could be desired of him provided his use of the information so laboriously acquired be as judicious as his search for it is earnest and sincere. That this is the case no one will deny who takes the trouble or gives himself the pleasure of reading Dr. Johnson’s book.

The work is issued in two volumes, of over nine hundred pages, with six maps and one hundred and sixty illustrations, many of them of great value and interest, and not a few made expressly for it. It is divided into five Books, the first of which gives the European background, so to speak, of the subject, the remaining four dealing with the actual history of the colony from 1635 to 1664, each subdivided into two Parts, the first of which treats of the activities in Europe, and the second of which tells the story of the settlements during the period covered by that Book.

The first Book, or Introduction, comprising eighty-three pages, is divided into two Parts, the first of which presents a most interesting picture of the political, social, and religious conditions in Sweden from 1611 to 1660, and the second of which contains, it is believed, the most complete account of the economic conditions of that country, and of the trading companies at this time, which has appeared in English.

The second Book, containing one hundred and thirty-four pages, speaks of the founding of the New Sweden Company and the occupation of the Delaware by the Swedes under the two first Governors, Peter Minuit and Peter Ridder. It shows the great difficulties encountered in organizing the enterprise, notwithstanding its endorsement and financial backing by Axel Oxenstierna and other illustrious counsellors of Queen Christina. It describes the hardships and privations of settlers in a new country, as well as their fortitude and energy in overcoming the obstacles encountered. It tells of the melancholy death of Minuit on his return voyage to Sweden for reinforcements. It contributes fresh information as to the personality and character of his successor, about whom so little is known. And finally it clears up questions regarding the relations of the immigrants to their neighbours, Indians, Dutch and English.

The third Book, comprising two hundred and forty-eight pages, gives an account of the reorganized New Sweden Company and its expeditions to New Sweden from 1642 to

1653, and the history of the colony during the governorship of Johan Printz. It describes most fully the social and economic life of the colony, and the dwellings, customs and religious worship of the people. This is followed, as before, by a recital of their relations with the Indians, Dutch and English, this subject being treated with remarkable skill and fairness to opposing claims and interests. And the final chapter gives the best account yet written of the government of New Sweden during this period. Printz is presented to the reader in his true aspect as an able ruler of his colony, and one who, with more substantial support from Sweden, would have shown himself to be quite a match for Peter Stuyvesant.

The fourth Book, containing one hundred and fifty pages, is devoted to the last period of the colony under Swedish rule, comprising the administrations of Johan Papegoja and Johan Rising. It is interesting as indicating the improvement in the social life of the people, and includes a chapter on the literature of New Sweden. It concludes with a graphic account of the overthrow of Swedish authority by the Dutch of New Netherland.

The fifth Book, comprising fifty-four pages, gives an account of the American Company (the reorganized New Sweden Company), of the twelfth and last expedition to New Sweden, and of the Swedish settlements under Dutch rule, from 1654 to 1664. It also mentions the efforts of Sweden to regain the colony from 1653 to 1673.

One of the most remarkable features of the work is its very valuable Appendices. These occupy one hundred and forty-two pages. They include biographies of persons prominently connected with the history of New Sweden, lists of officers, soldiers, servants and settlers in New Sweden from 1638 to 1656, documents and translations of documents, and an incomparable bibliography of the subject—filling forty-eight pages, locating manuscripts, and giving titles of printed books.

What more could be desired but a good index? The index of this work is the best I am acquainted with, occupying sixty-eight pages, and made personally by the author, who, not content with giving numbers of pages after important subjects and names of persons, indicates the matter referred to on each particular page.

All honor to the writer of this masterpiece of historical investigation, and to Gustavus Adolphus College, of St. Peter, and our University of Pennsylvania, which trained him to produce it. Thanks to the Swedish Colonial Society, which enabled him to publish it.

The book is dedicated by the author to His Majesty, Gustaf V., King of Sweden.

It is issued in two forms. One, the University edition, is offered to all who desire to purchase it. The other, printed on special paper, in binding of Swedish blue, embossed with the arms of Governor Printz, which were adopted for the colony of New Sweden, and containing additional illustrations, is for distribution to the members of the Swedish Colonial Society. In this edition, after the index, appears the Constitution of that Society, with a list of its officers, councillors, and members. This is its first publication, and it may interest readers to learn something of this newly formed association. It was founded in Philadelphia a little over two years ago. Its object, as its constitution expresses it, is "to collect, preserve, and publish records, documents, and other material, printed or in manuscript, and to commemorate events relating to the history of Swedes in America." King Gustaf V., of Sweden, graciously accepted the office of High Patron of the Society. His Excellency Count Johan J. A. Ehrensvärd, Minister of Sweden to the United States, succeeded the late Minister, His Excellency Herman L. F. de Lagercrantz, as Honorary President of it. Its active President is Chevalier Marcel A. Viti, Royal Vice-Consul of Sweden at Philadelphia. The Society numbers at present, about three hundred members. Among these are the President, four Vice-Presidents, the Recording and

Corresponding Secretaries, the Auditor, Curator, Librarian, Historiographer, and several Councillors of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. About two-thirds of the members are descendants of the early Swedish settlers on the Delaware, while the remainder include many prominent scholars and historians, and persons interested in the purposes of the Society.