Indian Deed for Petty's Island, 1678

In the summer of 1678 four Indians signed a deed turning over to Elizabeth Kinsey the island in the Delaware River opposite Kensington. This document, which has been in private hands every since, has recently been given to the Quaker Collection at Haverford College by Richard R. Wood of Riverton, New Jersey. The deed is written on the half sheet of an ordinary piece of paper 12½" x 8½", folded. On the reverse side is the endorsement of Gunnar Rambo releasing his claim to the island, and a memorandum by David Lloyd that he had recorded the document in the Rolls Office.

The island has been called variously Shackamaxon Island, Treaty Island, and Petty's Island. The first two names are associated with William Penn's reputed treaty with the Indians at Shackamaxon; the third and present name came from a later owner, John Petty.1

The purchaser, Elizabeth Kinsey, was the daughter of John Kinsey, one of the commissioners appointed by the Trustees of West New Jersey to head up the settlement in that province in 1677. He sailed to America on the Kent, but died as the ship came up the Delaware; he was buried at Burlington.2 Elizabeth's brother, also named John Kinsey, arrived at about the same time and took over family responsibilities. "He was afterwards a man of distinguished services, in several public stations."³ Inasmuch as the deed is dated July, 1678, it is probable that Elizabeth Kinsey also came to America in 1677.

Elizabeth married Thomas Fairman, one of the witnesses to the deed, on December 7, 1680. They were married at the home of John Kinsey.

3 Samuel Smith, The History of The Colony of Nova-Caesaria or New Jersey . . . (Philadelphia, 1765), 103.
Woolston in Burlington under the care of Burlington Monthly Meeting. Although no one knows when Thomas Fairman arrived on the Delaware, apparently he was a man of substance, for it was his home which William Penn chose for his residence when he came to Pennsylvania in 1682, and it is referred to as the Fairman mansion. Fairman was active in the early years of Pennsylvania, serving Penn in several capacities, especially as a surveyor. He died in 1714; Elizabeth Kinsey Fairman died in 1720.

According to scholars, there was a fundamental difference between the attitudes of Indians and English settlers toward property ownership. When the colonists bought land, they believed they were purchasing exclusive use of it; the Indians, when they sold land, believed that they were agreeing to share the land with the purchaser. In this sale of Petty's Island, Elizabeth Kinsey recognized the Indian viewpoint and agreed that the aborigines might continue to hunt and fish on the island and dig for tuckahoes, an edible root which was an important part of their diet. In return, the Indians promised not to kill her hogs or set fire to her hayfields.

It is interesting to note that Elizabeth Kinsey promised to furnish the Indians with rum and powder each year. This contradicts the statement of John E. Pomfret in his book The Province of West New Jersey, 1609-1702, where he says, “The Quakers . . . were careful not to allow them strong drink.” It also runs counter to the law enacted in Pennsylvania in 1682 which forbade giving Indians “rum and Brandy, and such like distilled spirits.” It may be added that the gift was not a large one—a “muche” was only one fifth of a pint.

Apparently, the Indians had also sold the island to Gunnar Rambo, and it was necessary for Thomas Fairman to obtain a release from him twenty years later. Rambo was one of the early Swedes on the Delaware and later served in the Pennsylvania Assembly. One of the witnesses to this endorsement on the back of

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5 Ibid., 360.
6 Pomfret, 105.
7 Charter and Laws of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1879), 111.
the original deed was Daniel Pegg, a brickmaker who was in Pennsylvania before Penn received his grant. The stream called Peggs Run, which flowed where Vine Street now is, was named for him. The other witness, was another of the early Swedes. The two witnesses to the 1678 deed, in addition to Fairman, have not been identified.

It has not been possible to learn anything about the five Indians who are mentioned in the documents, but possibly Colehickamin is the same as Ockanickon, an Indian who died about 1661 and was buried in the Friends Burying Ground at Burlington. The endorsement by David Lloyd, master of the rolls in Philadelphia, is self-explanatory.

Haverford College

EDWIN B. BRONNER

To all persons whom these presents shall Come we Wesakesouscutte Pesakesen Colehickamin and ojerekqua owners of the greate Island lying before Shaksemasen in the river Delaware for six hundred gilders to us paid by Elizabeth Kinsey we doe herby Sell convey assuer Confirm and make over to the said Elizabeth Kinsey and her heirs all the said Island be the quantity what it is reserving only to u[s] liberty of hunting fishing and getting takah[o] upon the same, promising as farr as we can to save her hoggs from killing, and her hay from burning, for which care shee is to give us every yeare sixteen Muches of rum and sixteen muches of powder—and we doe by these present weighting—warrant the said Island to her and hers for

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11 DeCou, 25. A search of the small book by Albert Cook Myers, *Walter Wharton's Land Survey Register, 1675-1679* (Wilmington, Del., 1955), did not produce any Indian names similar to those on this document.
12 This was a generous price for the island. A gilder, or guilder, was worth roughly two shillings, which makes the price £60 English money. Peter Minuit paid only sixty guilders for Manhattan Island in 1626. Henry H. Kessler and Eugene Rachlis, *Peter Stuyvesant and His New York* (New York, 1959), 282.
ever against us and against all p'sons. in confirmation we subscribe oure hands an[d] seals the 12th of July 1678 markes

Sealed Signed
and delivered
in the presence of
[name illegible]
mark of
Erick P poleson
Thomas ssairman

Know all men by these presence that I Gunner Rambo of the County of Philadelphia have assigned and doe by these presents for good and valluable Consideration assigne and make over unto Thomas ssairman his heirs and assigns for Ever all my Right and title of in and to the greate Island opposite to Shackamaxon which was assigned to me by kackeneris Relation to Wesekascutte Pesekeson and ojereguia and doe warrant the same from me and my heirs for Ever—as witnesse my hand the 10 day of June 1698
Sealed and delivd in the presents of the marke of
Daniel Pegg
Michel M Loyken

Recorded in the Rolls Office at Philadelphia the 9th day of the Twelfth Month 1698/9 in Booke 3 vol 5 pag 249

Ex'd
Da'd Lloyd

13 No effort has been made to reproduce the mark which appears beside each Indian name.