

THE STRAND

Site of the Bedford and McWilliam Houses
#6 and #8 The Strand; #6 now owned by
Mrs. Jennie K. Garrison, #8 by heirs
of Elizabeth Stahl McIntire

(See Photo #14 and 15)

Original Plot - 2

The earliest known Dutch owner of part of this plot was Martin Gerritsen. Soon after the English came (1664), Sergeant John Erskin (Askew, Arskin) was given a plot here, confirmed by Governor Francis Lovelace in 1669 as "a certain house and garden" now in his tenure and occupation, bounded by John Henry's fence on the north and Martin Gerritsen's fence on the south. Martin and John had secured from Governor Richard Nicolls in 1667, confirmation of their joint ownership, with two others, in a plantation near Christina Creek. It is likely that this Strand plot also was jointly owned, for a deed of confirmation to Hendrick Jansen for this plot, 62-1/2' on the Strand by 108' deep toward the Green, in 1675, recites that Jansen bought half from Martin Gerritsen and the other half from John Askew (see summary of "Burnt Lot" - 0-1).

The Hendrick Jansen who bought this site has not been positively identified by the present search. There were three Hendrick Jansens in the Dutch period. One was Hendrick Jansen Van Jeveren (from Jever) who owned the site of the present garden north of the Read house before 1667 and secured a patent for it from the English. Two Hendrick Jansens were related to the large Jansen family that owned plots in Swanwyck and elsewhere and who intermarried with the Jacquet and other Dutch families. In 1680 a Hendrick Jansen married the widow of Jurian Jansen of Swanwyck

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and about this time the house on the Strand on this site was occupied by Jan Hendricksen, who according to name custom of the Dutch at that period was probably Hendrick Jansen's son. The property was finally inherited by Hendrick Jansen's daughter, Johanna. She married a man whose name is not accurately decipherable in the records but looks like "Mt. Bur". Johanna and Samuel "Mt. Bur" sold the property in 1708 to Thomas Tresse Sr. of Philadelphia, ironmonger. The children of Tresse Sr. sold the house and lot together with the water or "bank lot" on the River side of the Strand to Dr. Samuel Monkton of Philadelphia, for 74 pounds. Monkton's wife and son sold to John Van Gezell of New Castle in 1723 for 75 pounds. Whether the Philadelphians who between Jansen's time and Van Gezell's, owned this site of two historic New Castle houses, lived in them or resided in New Castle is not certain, but the Jansen's and Van Gezell's were closely identified with New Castle and the surrounding country. John Van Gezell is a "saddler" in an early indenture, and a "shopkeeper" throughout most of his property-buying and selling to the time of his death in 1783. He was the son of Gertrude Van Gezell who was a widow in New Castle in 1717 when John's brother, Cornelius, made a will in her favor.

That John Van Gezell's house in 1729 was on the site of the "Bedford house", #6 the Strand, is indicated by the mortgage to Richard Grafton that year of the north part of the lot, which is described as between his then present dwelling and the house and

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lot adjoining his whole property to the north. There was at the time a house on this north part of the lot, site of #8 The Strand, that may have been, or have incorporated, the early house of Jansen's time, 1675. In that year, 1675, the back part of the present Colby house, \$110 Delaware Street, was built with the same type of foundation masonry.

Correlation of the contemporary records suggests that Van Gezell first lived in the house on the site of #8, and that between 1723 and 1730 he built or rebuilt and enlarged #6 and moved into it. He cleared the 1729 mortgage on #8 and in 1733 sold the north 25' of his plot with the house on it to Henry Gonne of New Castle, shopkeeper. Henry Gonne was probably the son or grandson of Moses D'Gonne who owned the site of the Tile house in 1678. See Tile house summary and attached Orig. \$8.

At that period when Van Gezell and Gonne lived in #6 and #8, the ground of this part of the Strand was high and the doorways were close to the street. Later grading exposed the basement walls and made the present high stoops necessary.

John Van Gezell may have had his saddle shop at the back of his property, but not on Second Street for he early sold off the back 100 feet in two plots to Hester Glen and John McGhee. (See Second Street summaries.) But it is more likely that the shop was across the street on his "bank lot" running down to the river.

Since John Van Gezell, by the available evidence, either built #6 the Strand as a new house between 1723 and 1729 or rebuilt the original house on the site then or later and lived on the Strand plot sixty years until his death here in 1783, the house could fittingly be called the Van Gezell house rather than the "Gunning Bedford house". Governor Bedford's residence was here during the year he served as governor, 1796-7, but how long before that has not been determined. So far in this search, John Van Gezell has not been found to have held public office. He was a warden of Immanuel Church for several terms and a witness at Court to property indentures. The Van Gezell's were of Dutch ancestry as indicated by the surname, and in the will of John's brother Cornelius, John's name is written Johannes.

Between the bequest of this property to his daughter Gertrude in 1783, and the ownership of it by George Read II in 1802 or 1803 when Caleb P. Bennett leased (?) or bought (?) it and established his Delaware hotel, no certain history of the house has been found. Whether it was leased or owned by Gunning Bedford who married the sister, Mary, of George Resa, the signer, has not been discovered. The house and lot at #114 Delaware Street which also was ^{left} by Van Gezell to his daughter Gertrude, was soon afterward referred to as the property of George Read, who was executor of the will. This property also may have belonged to George Read soon after 1783. When the records of administration papers of the wills

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of Van Gezell and George Read can be examined the problem may be resolved; or the clarifying indentures may be lost in those Recorder's books that were destroyed by fire.

Caleb Bennett, proprietor of the Delaware Hotel, later became governor of the state, 1833-36. He is said to have been devotedly loyal to his Quaker faith, although he wore ruffled shirts, knee britches and silver shoe buckles all his life.

The house was owned and used as the Farmers Bank between 17⁸16 and 1852, when the bank moved to the new building on the corner site adjoining. The house had continued as a dwelling during its use as a bank. One of its occupants was the distinguished attorney, Andrew C. Gray, father of the late eminent lawyer, statesman and judge, George Gray of Wilmington. Andrew C. Gray had his law office in a small brick building on Delaware Street, west of the bank building.

Original Plot - 2 - North Part,
now #8, owned by the heirs of
George and Elizabeth Stahl McIntire

(This search has been so un-rewarding to date, November 16, that the data is being kept in note form in the hope of further discoveries, J.E.)

Both of these houses (#6 and #8 The Strand) are In good general condition and should be kept intact and protsctad against future defacement or removal. Some very minor alterations might be suggested after further study, such as door, window or dormer details that night prove to be of late design.