

T.E

THE STRAND

Tile House Site  
Original Strand Plot, 60'  
Present Owner Lesley H. George  
Approximately that of present #54

(See Photos #23, 31 and 32)

Original Plot - 11

The Tile house site in 1657 was a 60' x 300' plot extending from the Strand west to the Green. This plot belonged to "William Maurits" - William Morris, an Englishman from Cornsall, who had become a Dutch citizen. Maurits also owned the adjoining plot to the south (see summary of that plot, 0-10, now the south part of the garden of #54, Read alley and part of the Read house). William Maurits may have owned also, the adjoining plot to the north extending 60' to Harmony Street and 300' deep to the Green. (No deed or other record of ownership for this corner lot during the Dutch period and first decade of the Duke of York period has been found so far.)

For the Tile House site the early ownership is determined by deeds and court records for the adjoining plot to the south, which gave the Tile house lot as its north boundary. Following Maurits, however, there is no further record until 1678, when the lot is cited in court as recently the property of "Moses Degan" (Moses D'Gonne, a boatman), purchased from him by John Boyer. Boyer was applying in the court for a certificate of ownership, which was granted, to enable him to secure a legal deed from the governor at New York.\*

\*New Castle County Court Records, Vol. I, p. 266.

(Original Plot 11, continued)

No further record of the property has been found for the remainder of John Boyer's lifetime, but immediately after his death in 1703 or 1704, the house and lot were bought from the two "daughters and co-heirs of John Boyer" by Joseph Wood, who at that time owned the house and lot next door to the south.\* The Tile house lot had "a small house" on it at the time Boyer bought it from D'Gonne. According to the numeral tie bolts on the Tile house, 1687, Boyer replaced D'Gonne's small house that year by the house later described as "a large brick dwelling".

Jan Harmensen, the carpenter, who lived next door (in the house afterward in the possession of Joseph Wood), may have been the craftsman engaged to build the Tile house; he was a prominent builder at the time, and appraiser of property for the court, and he was Dutch. The Boyer family, long in the service of the Dutch was of French origin, probably Huguenot who had fled from France to the protection of Holland. /

Alexander Boyer, the father of John, was deputy-commissioner for the Dutch on the Delaware River in 1648, with headquarters at Port Nassau, near the site of Gloucester, New Jersey. He was also interpreter for the Dutch with the Indians, and in that capacity came with Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch director-general, when he built Fort Casimir in 1651. Alexander Boyer remained at Fort Casimir, until after the Swedes captured the fort in 1654. The Swedes

\*No dimensions of the Tile house lot are given in this sale but later indentures show that it was 60' x 300'.

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did not like him because of his "contempt" for their authority, but as he had "a Swedish wife" he was offered the privileges of a Swedish colonist. He accepted, but left soon for Manhattan, returning the next year when Stuyvesant made his conquest of the whole river from the Swedes.

Alexander Boyer brought his family from Manhattan - his wife and three children, John, Josyn, and Thomas. John when he was old enough became a soldier, his sister Josyn (Josie) married a soldier, John Marshall. Boyer, Marshall and two other soldiers, Robert Scott and John Cousins, were granted jointly in 1669, a tract of 400 acres near "Christina Town" - to be cultivated and planted by them. They sold this farm in 1675 to Justa Andries.

John Marshall, Josie Boyer's husband, died and she married William Semple, of New Castle, a justice of the court. John and Josie were among those who requested naturalization by William Penn in 1683. John had already served as sheriff under the Duke of York in 1680-81, and perhaps longer.

The surname of John Boyer's first wife has not been determined. In a court case in 1680, her first name is Aeltie, a familiar given name in New Castle indentures of the early Dutch-English periods.

In 1702, when Joseph Hansen, large land owner in Red Lion Hundred, conveyed to John Boyer 100 acres north of Dragon Swamp, Hansen made the transfer "out of the love and affection that I bear

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unto my brother-in-law as also for divers other causes and considerations". The only sister of Joseph Hansen, according to their father's will, was Ann, who may have been John Boyer's second wife. (It is possible of course that John Boyer had another sister born later than the three children mentioned in the Dutch records of 1660, who might have married Joseph Hansen; or Josie might have married him after her second husband, William Temple died in 1682.)

Alexander Eoyer had a plantation up the river a short distance above New Castle; he also had a lot of ground on what is now Fourth Street just south of Delaware Street. No mention of him has been found after the English came in 1664, so he may have died between 1660 and 1664 or soon afterward. Property is mentioned in 1667 as "formerly belonging" to him, but surviving records are sufficient to prove that Alexander Boyer was one of the founding settlers of New Castle; and also that he was a man of ability and integrity, judging from the positions he held during the period of Dutch activity on the river.

In the same year, 1678, that John Eoyer bought the Tile house lot with the "small house!", from Moses D'Gonne, he and D'Gonne were granted adjoining lots 60' x 300' feet on Land Street, now Second Street, north of Harmony. The disposition of these lots has not yet been determined, but John Boyer must have sold his in 1686 or the following year, for he is taxed for two town lots in 1686 and for one lot in 1687 - the year of the building of the Tile house.

John Boyer's daughter's inherited along with the Tile house, the bank lot opposite, and this was include? in the sale to Joseph Wood.

Joseph Wood was a land-owner on Long Island as early as 1673. When he came to the Delaware has not been determined; he witnessed a property transfer at New Castle in 1696, was in possession of the lot adjoining the Tile house site in 1701, and that same year acquired two plantations immediately north of New Castle. In 1700, at the request of Bessel Alrichs the retiring sheriff, William Benn appointed Joseph Wood sheriff in Alrichs' place.

Joseph Wood must have held a large mortgage or claim against the Boyer estate, for the deeds to him convey the property for 5 pounds to bind the bargain "as also for divers other good causes and valuable considerations."

John Boyer had more land in Red Lion Hundred than the 100 acres conveyed to him by his brother-in-law Joseph Hansen in 1702. That same year John Boyer sold (to Henry Parker) 200 acres on half of the former dwelling plantation of Joseph Hansen. This may have been a mortgage, for in 1705, Joseph Wood, at the time he was buying the Tile house from Boyer's daughters, bought a plantation of 350 acres from Joseph Yansen in the same general location. Thomas Boyer, John's son, had re-surveyed to him that same year 100 acres in this region. Whether this tract had belonged to his father and was re-surveyed because of his inheritance, has not yet been

determined in this search, but that some of the Boyer property in Xed Lion Hundred descended to Thomas Boyer is indicated in the records. Some of his descendents moved to Kent County, Delaware, and some to Maryland. Those who remained in New Castle County bought the shares of those who left in the farms. No further records of the two daughters of John Boyer have been found to date. One was married to Faul Thomas, yeoman, of New Castle County. The other to Thomas Gill-Johnson, yeoman, formerly of New Castle, but at the time of the sale of the Tile house, of New Jersey.

In 1716, Joseph Wood sold the Tile house property to Dr. Patrick Reilly, physician of New Castle, who during his lifetime owned much valuable property in New Castle and had a large brick yard near the river south of the town.

After Dr. Reilly's death and the death of his wife, who was executor, the Tile house property was seized by the sheriff and sold for a claim against Gideon Griffith (who had married Margaret, the widow of Dr. Reilly, and was administrator of what was left of Dr. Reilly's estate). Dr. John Finney, the highest bidder, bought the "large brick house" and lot in the Front Street for 150 pounds 5 shillings. Other indentures show that this sum did not represent the total Dr. Finney invested in the house, for in a re-sale of the property by Dr. Finney to Gideon Griffith for 155 pounds, the title would not become effective until Griffith had paid in addition a mortgage debt to John Richardson, amount not

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stated. Later, a debt of Dr. Finney against Griffith in connection with this house was 200 pounds.

The property at this time had an adjoining plot at the corner of Second and Harmony Streets which Dr. Reilly had bought from William and Rebecca Barney, the latter one of the heirs of Johannes DeHaes. (See Summary of Harmony and Second Street plots.)

To recover the debt of Gideon Griffith to Dr. John Finney of 200 pounds, the Tile house and ground was sold by the sheriff and sold to Anthony Whitely in 1754. His widow, Abigail Whitely acquired the property in 1758. She married John Fassmore, survived him, and her executors sold the house and land to Israel Israel in 1782. From Israel it went to William Armstrong, innkeeper, in 1796, the same year he bought the property adjoining to the south where he kept a tavern.

William Armstrong divided the 60' Tile house plot as he did the adjoining 63' plot to the south, both of which extended from the Strand to Second Street when he bought them. To Anne Yeates in 1803, sold the house, "known by the name of Tile House" with ground measuring 36' on the Strand, extending back 91' at this width and then narrowing for the balance of the total depth of 177'. The front width of 36' included an alley on the south side, running back 68' to a well. The alley and the well were to be for use in common between Anne Yeates, and Daniel McArthur to whom

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Armstrong was selling at the same time, the balance of the Tile house plot south of the alley - 25' front by 39' deep. Armstrong retained the original Tile house ground behind this small front lot, in connection with his tavern adjoining the 25' lot on the south.

(For the 25' lot originally belonging to the Tile house, see end pages of this summary.)

About the middle of the 19th century, Anne Yeates (Wooster) and her brother John sold the Tile house to Thomas Eobinson, who died in 1873. From the Robinson family the plot was acquired by Lawrence Cormer who sold the same year, 1883, to Alexander B. Cooper. Carolyn B. Rogers acquired the Tile house plot from heirs of the Cooper family in 1909.

At what time and under whose ownership the Tile house began to suffer from neglect has not been determined. A visitor arriving at New Castle by ship in 1822 writes:

"Went ashore into the main front street, to see the house built in 1687, after the manner of the houses in Holland, of brick said to have been imported from there. The bricks are very small, yellowish, and now rough-cast with plaster. It presents its gable end to the front street -- the roof is remarkably deep, making two stories in itself. The end walls are higher than the roof and have regular steps on their upper surface above the roof. The year, 1687, is in iron letters, as clamps, on the front wall. One feels a sentiment of veneration at seeing such vestige of antiquity."

The house, as here described, was painted after the middle of the century by a member of the Rogers family. The original is now in the possession of Mrs. Edmund Rogers of New Castle. At some



tine it had acquired two front doors. Not enough information has been available to date regarding the occupations of the owners during the 19th century to list the commercial purposes for which its front rooms or part of its front was used for years.

Alexander B. Cooper, writing in 1908 said that until about 1885, the house stood in its general outlines as it had stood for years, but was in a very delapidated condition, and was pulled down about that time, except for its foundations and about 8 feet of its front wall. The photograph taken in the 1880's, recently discovered by Mr. Thomas Holcomb, shows the delapidated condition, and also the arched wall which then closed in the alleyway that in 1803 led to the well at the back.

The present house, built for Mrs. Carolyn Rogers, after she acquired the plot in 1909, by Mr. Laussat Rogers, was not built upon the exact site or foundations of the original Tile house, the north wall of which had been used as a party wall by Gr. James McCallmont who built #56 the Strand before 1800. An alley-way was left between the new Rogers house and the house formerly of Dr. McCallmont. The Rogers house has been remodelled, since it was first built, into its present form.

McArthur Site, formerly on the  
South 25 feet of Tile house plot

No indication has been found in the records that a dwelling or shop had been built on the part of the Tile house lot south of that house before 1603 when William Armstrong, innkeeper, having bought the whole Tile house property now divided it, selling the Tile house on a 36' lot, to Ann Yeates, and selling the remaining 25' by 39' deep, to Daniel McArthur. The lack of mention does not establish the absence of a building, however, and the price, \$500, for this small lot (with use of the Tile house alley and well) could have covered a building of some kind in the year of the purchase, 1803. Three years later, 1806, Daniel McArthur sold the property as "house and lot" for \$1,000, to Atkinson and Thomas Rose. Thomas bought Atkinson's share for \$500, and in 1809 Thomas Rose, merchant, sold the property "beginning at the corner of William Armstrong's dwelling house and tavern" and bounded north by the Tile house, for \$2,000. The purchaser named, "Lewis Rush" of Philadelphia, has not been found in any other indentures to date, and further search will be made later. The property is mentioned in 1824 by Dr. James Cooper Sr. (who then owned William Armstrong's former "dwelling house and tavern" next door) as having escaped the fire. Whether Dr. Cooper owned this house also has not been discovered.

Whether the house shown on the south 25' of the original Tile house site, in the photograph taken about 1880, is the same as the

Importance of its predecessors difficult to determine

Ability of reconstructing the Tile house and perhaps