

Amstel House

Fourth Street - northwest corner of Delaware Street
Present Owner. New Castle Historical Society

For the site of this **house**, which was one of the earliest plots to-be granted **in** the "Second Row" (4th Street) during the Dutch period, the original deed has not been discovered in this search; but patents for nearby lots indicate that it belonged to Roeloff **deHaes** I, **who** was brought to Fort Caemir in 1651, when Peter **Stuyvesant** built the fort and founded the town. It belonged to **deHaes** or his estate in 1656. In 1701, the plot was resurveyed to his grandson, Roeloff **deHaes** II, "**according to its ancient bounds**" bounded **s.w.** by "**the** street that goes to Maryland^N (Delaware St.), **n.w.** by Otter St. (5th), **s.e.** by Beaver St. (4th) and **n.e.** by the lot of Joseph Griffin, **being** 68' or 70' **in** breadth and 300' long between Beaver and Otter Streets.

Roeloff **deHaes** sold the property **in** 1707 to Christopher Stanley, with all houses, fences **etc.**, and the same bounds, except that **Delaware** Street is described as "**the** street leading from the river to the woodsⁿ, Christopher Stanley of **New** Castle died the next year leaving his property to his wife Mary and sons, Christopher and Robert. Whether the purchaser of the property was **Christopher** senior or junior has not been discovered, and no transfer for this property has been found up to the **time** it was owned by William **Goddard** in 1738. A **William Goddard** is described as a "**merchant**" when he settled the estate of John **Grant** in 1726, and **it is** possible but not proved that Grant may have owned the property in **New** Castle heir of the Stanley **family**.

The property appears in the records of 1738 as belonging to **William Goddard**, "**yeoman**", against whom Andrew Hamilton has **secured**

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a Judgment for debt of 200 pounds 40 shillings. **Goddard's** real estate in **New Castle** was sold by the sheriff - the **Amstel House** site as "house and lot" appraised at 140 pounds, going to **William Mackey** of Philadelphia, merchant. Mackey sold it the same year to Dr. John Finney for 110 pounds. The bounds are the same except that the width is called 60' instead of 68' or 70', and the bounds n.w. and n.e. are by the "fence of the land formerly belonging to **Thomas Spry**." Dr. Thomas Spry died in 1685 so to fix the bounds, this indenture goes further back than the owners at the time of sale to Dr. Finney, at which time **Nathaniel Silsbee** owned the adjoining lot to the northeast.

Appraisal at 140 pounds in 1738 meant that there was some substantial improvement on the ground. The small old brick house later incorporated as the kitchen wing of **Amstel house** was the house bought by Dr. Finney, according to circumstantial evidence from available records. The surmise that the main part of **Amstel** house was built before Dr. **Finney** bought the property in 1738 is not borne out by the surviving data studied in this search. Dr. John Finney had been in **New Castle** since 1724, in which year he was appointed a member of the council of the town by Governor **Keith**. He was a successful practicing physician who owned a number of **New Castle properties** in 1738 when he bought the house and ground at Fourth and Delaware **Streets**. He may have begun the building of **Amstel house** soon after the purchase.

Dr. John Finney was the son of Robert and Dorothea Finney who came from Ireland to settle in Pennsylvania before 1725. In 1733 Robert Finney bought a 900 acre tract in **London Grove Township**, where

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Francis Allison later started the school that led to the **establishment** of Newark Academy and Delaware College. Robert Finney was the chief founder of the New London Presbyterian Church.

Dr. John Finney married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert French, and after her death in 1730, married Sarah Richardson. His sister Letitia married **William McKean** and was the mother of Thomas **McKean**, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Dr. Finney held many offices of trust; in 1764 he became one of the Trustees of the Common. **His** son David Finney was an outstanding attorney and a judge in the state supreme court. Dr. John Finney died in 1774 leaving much property to his wife and children. **Amstel** house became the property of his son John who lived in Londonderry Township. It was leased by him to Nicholas Van Dyke, the elder, who lived there until 1785, at **which** time he was governor of the state. His daughter **Ann** had been married in this house the previous year, to Kensey Johns Sr. in the **presence** of General George **Washington**, who was a wedding guest, and after Governor Van Dyke gave up the house, **the** young people leased it, and lived here until **Kensey** Johns built his mansion **house** at Third and Delaware Streets,

The house was owned from 1795 to 1832 by Joseph **Tatlow** (who bought it from John Finney Jr. for 600 pounds), owner of a stage line from New Castle to **Frenchtown**, and by his heirs; in the latter year it was bought by John Moody and remained in the Moody and **Burnham families** until it was sold by John B. **Burnham** in 1904.

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Professor Henry Hanby Hay, a later occupant of the house, did much to stimulate interest in preserving the house as an architectural treasure, which was ably supplemented by Anne Rodney Janvier in her "Stories of Old New Castle," and other active work.

In 1829 the New Castle Historical Society bought and restored the building and maintain it as a museum.

The present width of the property is 86', indicating that part of the adjoining 120' plot was at some time - not yet determined in this search - acquired as addition to the 60' width. The lot bought by Joseph Tatlow.