

one off Harmony Street it would seem probable that the first pier erected in 1795 as advertised in the Philadelphia paper and measuring 50 feet by 30 feet was the pier erected or "sunk" off Delaware Street.

On April 6, 1802, Congress appropriated \$30,000 for the erection of piers in the Delaware River provided that the sites therefor were ceded to the United States.

On January 1, 1803, the Delaware Legislature after reciting the Act of Congress and that it was proposed that a part of the Government appropriation be used for piers at New Castle, vested in the United States, not only the piers already erected but also the sites of the proposed new piers.

Latrobe's map in 1804 and other records at the time refer or call the piers then in the harbor as the "U.S. Piers." This, I think, does not mean that they were erected by the United States but has reference to the fact that the piers were ceded to the United States in 1803.

After 1803 the control, repair or replacement of the piers in the New Castle harbor has been the exclusive responsibility of the Federal government. It must be clearly kept in mind that the piers heretofore mentioned are not to be confused with the piers now remaining in the harbor and some others which were placed there and since removed.

The erection and repair of piers by the United States was accomplished upon several separate occasions notably in 1826, 1836 and at later times. These constitute an entirely different subject matter from the original piers herein discussed and must be the subject of an entirely different investigation.

This is a fertile field for someone else to plow and one not too difficult, for it is believed that, unlike the present, almost all the material may be found in one place — the appropriate governmental offices in Washington.

The Homes of Senator Nicholas Van Dyke

It is a well known fact that on October 6, 1824, Lafayette was present in New Castle at the wedding of Miss Dorcas Montgomery Van Dyke, the daughter of Senator Nicholas Van Dyke, to Charles I. duPont. This fact is well authenticated by history itself. It is also well established by unbroken tradition and the recorded recollection of an eye witness that the wedding took place in the house at the west corner of Delaware and Third Street (formerly Pearl Street), occupied for a long time by David Boulden and now the residence of Dr. Harry A. Carl. Wonder has been expressed as to why the wedding took place in that house when, as was supposed, Nicholas Van Dyke lived in the handsome house he had built a few years before at the corner of Delaware and Fourth Streets (formerly Vine Street), for a long time owned by Dr. David Stewart, then by Mr. and Mrs. Newlin T. Booth and now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Bridgewater.

This short article represents an attempt to show that the house where the wedding took place was, at the time, the actual residence of Mr. Van Dyke and to indicate where he lived at various periods of his life. The information herein is partly gathered from three sources. First and foremost are the statements of Mr. Van Dyke himself in his published offers to sell or rent his various properties. Secondly are the preserved notes of Mr. Joseph H. Rogers, who tells us when and where his father James Rogers lived in three of the properties of Mr. Van Dyke, and finally the records of the Trustees of New Castle Common. Since the Trustees of New Castle Common were first named in 1764, Mr. Van Dyke was the only person to have been elected twice. Twice he was elected and twice resigned because on two occasions he moved to his Hermitage Farm where he had built the handsome home now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. B. S. Deemer. The Hermitage farm was then outside the limits of New Castle and it is required that a Trustee must live within the town.

Of the early education of Nicholas Van Dyke we know but little. Almost all we know is that on October 22, 1779, (then not quite 9 years

*An unpublished manuscript in the possession of the author's daughter,
 Mrs. Edward W. Cooch, Jr.*

of age) he entered the private school conducted by Samuel Armor in the old Friends Meeting House in New Castle. This Samuel Armor was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1768 and was the first Master of the Wilmington Academy, established in 1771 in the Town Hall of Wilmington, then located over the "Lower Market" in Wilmington. He was the first master of the new Wilmington Academy, erected in 1773, and seems to have continued as such until 1779 when he removed to New Castle. A side light on educational matters is shown by Armor when, after his first year at New Castle, he insisted that the "three hundred bushels of wheat assured him" should be valued at the price in the markets of Wilmington or Philadelphia rather than the automatic rate of one dollar a bushel.

From New Castle, Samuel Armor seems to have gone in 1783 to Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland. After Armor left New Castle he seems to have been succeeded as master of the school by Matthew Tate. Whether Nicholas Van Dyke continued under the tutelage of Tate is not known.

Nicholas Van Dyke entered Princeton, then the College of New Jersey, in the sophomore class and was graduated in 1788.

The President of Princeton in a letter to George Read on October 2, 1787, stated that Nicholas Van Dyke was "without doubt the first in his class." After graduation he studied law with his brother-in-law, Kensey Johns, who was later for some thirty odd years Chief Justice and Chancellor of Delaware. Van Dyke came to the Bar in 1791, when his contemporaries like George Read, James A. Bayard and Caesar A. Rodney had few, if any, superiors in the Nation. Nicholas Van Dyke soon took his place among the leaders of the Bar and was declared by one who knew him well as a "sound lawyer and superior to them all as a fluent, graceful and successful advocate and in the skillful management of his cases."

A very interesting and informative brochure, "The Professional and Political Life of Nicholas Van Dyke," was published by Dr. John A. Munroe, in *Delaware History*. It showed clearly the fixed and steadfast purpose of the lawyer and statesman, adhering to one positive and unanswering line of conduct during his entire life. Notwithstanding this fixity of purpose of his public life, yet his domestic life, or rather the scene of his domestic life—his home—seems to show an entirely different course of conduct. Although he built three of the handsomest houses in New Castle, and owned a fourth, he never seems to have lived in any one of them for more than a few years at a time. In 34 years of married life he seems to have moved eight times.

Nicholas Van Dyke was born in New Castle December 8, 1770. While it is not entirely certain where he was born, it is thought he was born in a house rented by his father from Thomas McKean and located on the northwest side of what is now The Strand almost opposite Packet Alley. Van Dyke, Senior, was a tenant of McKean in 1776. This is shown by a note made by George Read under these circumstances. Read in 1776 was the tenant in the house then occupied by him. In 1776 the British Forces were in control of the Delaware River and Read and Van Dyke were forced to leave their homes. Read, in accounting for rent due from him took a deduction for the time he was unable to occupy the house and on this account he made the following memorandum.

Note: G. Read and his family as well as divers other families were obliged to leave the Town of New Castle in the latter end of March 1776 upon the British Man-Of-War coming up the river and having the said town in their power. Mr. Nicholas Van Dyke was then a tenant of Mr. McKean's house and there under an express lease for a certain no. of years yet paid no rent during absence.

It is thus assumed that Nicholas Van Dyke was born in 1770 in the house then owned by Thomas McKean. He was admitted to the Bar in 1791 and on December 6, 1792 married Mary Van Leuvaneigh, daughter of Zachariah Van Leuvaneigh.

Just where Van Dyke lived when first married is not known, but on February 13, 1794 he acquired title to what is now called the "little yellow house" on Third Street, adjoining the Kensey Johns house and now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon B. Young. The Van Dykes did not live in this house very long and they soon purchased the tavern and lot of land at the west corner of Delaware and Pearl Streets, (now Third), where there was subsequently erected the house in which the wedding took place in 1824. This tavern had been occupied as such in 1789 by Robert Thompson.

Nicholas Van Dyke and his family did not live long in this tavern house and on December 19, 1799, he offered it for sale. Since the advertisement is interesting in its description of the property, it is inserted in full.

To be sold

A two story brick house & kitchen with a large lot of ground thereto belonging situate on Delaware and Pearl Streets in the Town of New Castle in the State of Delaware now occupied by the subscriber.

The house is fifty one feet front and about twenty feet deep; has three large rooms and an entry on the first floor, and six chambers on the second. On the lot are also erected convenient stables and carriage house, with spacious hay lofts over them. The garden is large and will admit of very handsome improvement. This property was lately occupied with much success as a tavern, is now in good order--and its situation, in the centre of the town--on the most public street, and near to the Court House, gives

it superior advantages for any species of business. The terms of sale will be made to accommodate the purchaser.

Also a number of building lots in the Town of New Castle handsomely situated.

Nicholas Van Dyke

The tavern house was not sold and in 1803 was still occupied as a tavern by one Johnson, and in 1805 was advertised for rent by Nicholas Van Dyke stating that it was then occupied by Robert Baldwin.

The reason the tavern house was advertised for sale in 1799 by Nicholas Van Dyke seems to have been because in the meantime and on November 3, 1798, he had purchased from the Estate of Gunning Bedford the large lot at the corner of Delaware and Vine Streets (now Fourth) and on which he built the handsome house now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William B. Bridgewater.

In this new house the Van Dykes moved but not for long. On April 1, 1806, he purchased from David Finney the Hermitage farm near New Castle, and must almost immediately have built the spacious home he there occupied. On February 3, 1807, he advertised his new house in New Castle for sale. The advertisement was as follows.

FOR SALE

The subscriber, intending to reside at his farm near the town of New Castle, offers for sale that new two story Brick House in which he now resides, situated at the corner of Delaware and Vine Streets in the said town of New Castle, with a lot of ground and garden to be laid off eighty feet on Delaware and one hundred and eighty feet on Vine Street. The house is forty-six feet front by thirty-eight feet deep--contains four spacious rooms and an entry on the first floor handsomely finished in the modern stile, five chambers on the second and four on the third floor, with dry cellars under the whole. There is a pump of excellent water near the kitchen door, and the garden is stocked with a variety of choice fruit. The terms of payment will be made very easy to the purchaser.

Nicholas Van Dyke

The house was not then sold but was rented by James Rogers. This is shown by the written recollections of Joseph H. Rogers and by the fact that in 1810 James Rogers took out an insurance policy on his law books with the Farmers Bank (which then issued insurance policies) and in which is recited that Rogers lived in the house of Nicholas Van Dyke at the given location. Van Dyke had removed to the country some time before October 30, 1809, because on that day his successor was elected as a Trustee of New Castle Common, to which Van Dyke had originally been elected in 1795. In 1809 Nicholas Van Dyke was a Representative in Congress. On June 14, 1809, in a letter from Washington to his wife, he says, "I sigh for the shade of the Hermitage."

Nicholas Van Dyke and one John Bird married sisters and in 1810 John Bird suffered severe financial reverses and died. His residence was sold and was purchased on December 24, 1810, by Nicholas Van Dyke. Van Dyke must soon have returned from the country to his own home and James Rogers moved to the house formerly of John Bird. Here Joseph H. Rogers was born in May, 1817.

On January 30, 1815, Van Dyke was living in New Castle and was, for the second time, elected as a Trustee of New Castle Common.

On February 1, 1816, there appeared a most amazing advertisement. Nicholas Van Dyke said that he contemplated leaving the State of Delaware and offered for sale all of his property consisting of three large brick houses in New Castle and four large farms.

Nicholas Van Dyke was then 46 years old with a wife and at least five children; he was in the very first rank in his profession and a member of the State Senate, and of such standing and popularity that in a few months would be elected a Senator of the United States.

Where he intended to go and, more particularly, why he was going is, to me, unknown. It is quite possible that, at the time, economic conditions and especially as to farming was at a low ebb for on the same day his brother-in-law, Chief Justice Johns offered for sale all of his property, except his home, and consisting of four farms. The suggested explanation seems inadequate and if the economic conditions had been as indicated, the properties could not be expected to produce their real value.

The advertisement of Nicholas Van Dyke was as follows:

The undersigned contemplating a removal from the State of Delaware offers for sale three brick dwelling houses with valuable lots of ground in the town of New Castle all fronting on Delaware Street.

No. 1

The subscriber's present residence
[This was the property now known as 400 Delaware Street.]

No. 2

Now occupied by William Waugh as a public house.
[This was the property now known as 300 Delaware Street and owned by Dr. Carl.]

No. 3

Now occupied by Jas. Rogers, Esq. [This was the property at 212 Delaware Street, now owned by Dr. McGuire.]

Also the following farms

No. 1

Called the Hermitage near New Castle.

No. 2

Now occupied by Henry Morton about one mile from New Castle.

No. 3

Belle Vue Farm near Hamburg, now occupied by Andrew Barnaby.

No. 4

Laurel Hill in Red Lion Hundred, now occupied by J. S. Van Dyke.

No. 5

A small tract of arable & woodland adjoining Laurel Hill and to be sold with the farm.

NS Van Dyke
New Castle, Del.

None of the properties was sold at the time. Some years later in 1825, No. 3, (being the house formerly of John Bird) was sold but with this exception all of the properties were owned by Van Dyke at the time of his death. Nicholas Van Dyke did not leave the State of Delaware, as in 1816 he stated that he contemplated doing, but soon thereafter he again moved to his farm called the Hermitage. On December 20, 1817, his successor was for a second time elected at a Trustee of New Castle Common, showing that he had removed from New Castle some time prior to that date.

On August 18, 1820 Van Dyke states that he lived at his Hermitage farm in the following advertisement.

To be rented

A large brick house in the Town of New Castle with a garden and grass lot, carriage house and stables

or

The Hermitage farm near New Castle where the subscriber now resides. Possession may be had of either property immediately and with the farm may be had a valuable stock of milch cows, oxen and plough horses with carts and farming implements.

Nicholas Van Dyke

Between 1820 and 1824 there seems every reason to believe that Nicholas Van Dyke demolished the old tavern house at the corner of Delaware and Third Streets (formerly Pearl Street), which he had owned since 1799, and erected the new and handsome house on the site in which the wedding took place on October 6, 1824. There is no indication from any source that Van Dyke himself did not occupy the new house at the time of its erection.

It has been suggested and stated that Nicholas Van Dyke built the house where the wedding took place for his son Kensey Johns Van Dyke, but this seems to me to be not correct and this view may be somewhat borne out by the following facts. While Kensey Johns Van Dyke was admitted to the Bar in New Castle in 1819, he evidently removed at least for a time to Lancaster, Pennsylvania and was admitted to the Bar there on January 26, 1824. Nicholas Van Dyke had another son Nicholas Van

Dyke, Jr., who died unmarried on June 22, 1820, at 26 years of age. This Nicholas Van Dyke, Jr. had his law office where now is built the house known as 16 East Third Street. Nicholas Van Dyke, Jr. left the property by will to his brother Kensey Johns Van Dyke and the latter sold it on March 9, 1824, and the deed stated that he then lived in Lancaster. This was only a few months before Dorcas Van Dyke married Charles I. duPont showing that Kensey Johns Van Dyke did not then live in the house.

And so, as I believe, we find that Nicholas Van Dyke and his family at the time of the wedding of his daughter, Dorcas on October 6, 1824, lived in the new house he had just built. One might think that he would stay there for the balance of his life but this, seemingly, was not the case and he evidently made one more move.

It will be remembered that in 1810 he had bought the house formerly owned by John Bird. This house was directly opposite the Court House and is now owned and occupied by Dr. and Mrs. H. T. McGuire. This house in 1825 was tenanted by James Rogers and on June 15, 1825, Van Dyke sold it to James Rogers, who on the following day sold it to James Booth, Jr., soon to be Chief Justice of Delaware. This probably required that James Rogers move to a new location and may have occasioned the final move of Mr. Van Dyke. Mr. Joseph H. Rogers in his recorded recollections of the various houses occupied by his father, James Rogers, and in speaking of the house formerly of John Bird says:

Then from there, after Mr. Van Dyke moved to the Hermitage he [James Rogers] moved into the house that David Boulden lives in . . . that is the house that Lafayette attended the wedding of Dorcas Van Dyke to Mr. Charles I. duPont. I don't remember the wedding but I remember his reception at the time.

Mr. Joseph H. Rogers states that his father, James Rogers, remained in that house until he, in turn, moved to his own house in the country at "Boothhurst" in 1840. Joseph H. Rogers also states that he lived with his father in that house until 1840 and as he was then 23 years of age, his notes seem entitled to especial accuracy.

It will be noted that Mr. Rogers states that Mr. Van Dyke moved to the Hermitage farm. I have no doubt of the moving, but I have some doubt as to the place to which Nicholas Van Dyke moved. I think it quite probable that he moved to his own house at the corner of Delaware and Vine Streets (now Fourth Street).

I confess I have little direct evidence of the fact but the following seems clear. Mr. Van Dyke was at the time known to be in a critical state of health and he died within the year. Two weeks after the sale

of the house formerly of John Bird, Mr. Van Dyke on June 28, 1825, made his will. In this will he devised the house at the corner of Delaware and Vine Streets (now Fourth) to his wife, Mary, together with all the furniture and contents (except his law books). To me it seems more probable, in view of the then state of his health, that he moved to the house where his wife would live with the furniture for the balance of her life. In his will Nicholas Van Dyke left the house where the wedding had taken place (which in his will he called "my new brick house") to his son Kensey Johns Van Dyke for his wife and then to Fidelia Van Dyke, the daughter of Kensey Johns Van Dyke.

In a printed publication it is stated that Nicholas Van Dyke built the last mentioned house and "presented it to his son Kensey Johns Van Dyke who lived in it until his death in 1826." This seems to me to be not quite correct. Mr. Nicholas Van Dyke did not part with the house during his life time. If the notes of Joseph H. Rogers are correct in stating that he and his father, James Rogers, lived in the house until 1840 it would seem that Kensey Johns Van Dyke never lived in the house at all but was entitled to the rent from the death of Nicholas Van Dyke in 1826 until his own death on March 7, 1829. The notes of Mr. Rogers are confirmed by the published "Reminiscences of New Castle, Delaware" by Miss Elizabeth Booth. Miss Booth, who lived at the corner of Third and Delaware Streets (where the Hotel Louise was afterwards built), says that her sister, the wife of James Rogers lived in the next house to the west and her brother James Booth lived in the next house to the east.

Entirely apart from the purpose of this article, some passing notice may be given to the unusual fatalities that seem to have accompanied all of the children of Nicholas Van Dyke. Nicholas Van Dyke and Mary, his wife, seem to have had six children--four sons and two daughters. All seem to have reached maturity, but none survived beyond their early thirties. As to Dorcas, her marriage in 1824 is entered upon the records of Immanuel Church and, in a manner, furnished the real basis for this article. Her burial, too, in July, 1838, is recorded in these records but, if it be assumed that the burial took place in Immanuel Churchyard, then no memorial indicates her final resting place.

This article is primarily concerned with the various periods that Nicholas Van Dyke occupied the several handsome houses erected by him. It cannot, of course, discuss the very excellent architectural taste and workmanship in the houses themselves. The article leaves certain interesting questions unanswered because the pertinent information is almost entirely lacking. One would like to know whether professional architec-

tural skill was obtained by Mr. Van Dyke in connection with the plans and specifications of the buildings or whether they represented his own views and aspirations without professional assistance. One knows that in those days many gentlemen of culture included in their studies an extensive knowledge of architecture. Professional architects were few and New Castle was a rural community not easy of access. More particularly we would like to know of the master builders of the day to whom the general or specific plans were given and whose superb workmanship has left to us the outstanding examples of their art. These have become the source of envious interest of countless architects, builders and of all persons appreciative of things of beauty and intrinsic merit.