

# "Mauve Decade" Drew Many Visitors to City

## Bayonne Sophisticated in "Gay Nineties"—Was Summer Resort

(By BETTY CAVANNA)

The mauve decade found Bayonne a gay place, and those Junes in the 90's were pleasant times, with the big homes along the shore filled with the first of the summer visitors and the LaTourette House thronged with honeymooners and guests and local couples in for an evening dance. Span silk stockings vied with lisle hose on the inconspicuous but tantalizing ankles of correct young ladies who danced the maze and the waltz with their beaming if uncomfortable partners.

Here was frivolity, they thought, here romance. And two by two they wandered in and out of the ballroom, from the latern-hung porches to the shore front and back over the broad lawns. More often than not a chaperone accompanied them, but occasionally a couple set the town agog by less conventional "announcing."

The Governor's Ball at Sea Girl was still an anticipated festivity, and society folk were all talking of it, and the magnificent Fourth of July celebration at the LaTourette House was a nearer and none-the-less exciting event. Prominent orators were always present to talk to the holiday throng, and the Kill van Kull was to be the scene of a gala festival and water pageant. The fireworks in the evening were to be unsurpassed, it was whispered, and taken all in all, Bayonne was a very pleasant place in which to spend the summer.

### Many Summer Guests

Summer days might be long and drowsy, or crowded with activity. The visitors who came to Bayonne as to a summer resort were always out for a good time. After early morning canters along the bay there were always tennis games, in which nimble young things tapped balls lightly across the nets to adoring swains who more often than not missed them and laughed, not a bit embarrassed at their lack of skill

The Danforth Tennis Club and the Lawn Tennis Club flourished, and the best of the members competed and were made much of in annual tournaments.

Musicales and dramatics furnished evening diversion. The Ariel Dramatic Society presented entertainments, and occasionally held a credit masquerade dance, always an important affair. Church societies, rather than socials, as they are now called, were almost weekly affairs, and the Art Union was a woman's organization which met frequently at the home of one of its members, Mrs. P. G. Vroom.

The Bayonne Philharmonic Society held occasional concerts at Schuyler Hall, which vied with old Salter's Hall, which was frequented by Pamrapo society folk during the lecture and concert season.

### Women's Topics in 1892

In the winter of 1892 Mrs. Abbey Morton Diaz came here to give a course of four lectures, and gave charming if uninformative lectures on such daring topics as "The Woman Question," "Our Present Civilization," "Life, or What Is it to Live?" "Intemperance," (not "temperance," mind you) and, of all things, "Progressive Morality."

It was a great day when a trip to New York was made. It took a week to prepare for and close to a week to recover from such an adventure as a visit to the Fourteenth Street Theatre, now Eva LeGalinne's experimental workshop, the old People's Theatre, or the Third Avenue Theatre, all of which were in their heyday. Stereopticon entertainments presented by local churches were for the most part the extent of local theatrical information.

Transportation to the "big city," however, was considered good by the Bayonne residents who had lived in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Bayonne shore, particularly the Kills and the lower part of Newark Bay, first attracted the successful New York group who bought up farmland and turned what had previously been a scattered fishing village into a town surrounded by elaborate country estates. As early as 1850 there was

a regular stage route from the LaTourette House to the Chancellor Dock on the Kills. In the winter large omnibus sleighs, each dragged by four horses, transported holiday visitors, here for skating and other winter sports, to and from the hotel.

### Steamboat to N. Y.

Then in 1860 the Thomas P. Way started its Newark-New York trips, and the steamboat stopped at the foot of Broadway to pick up passengers and food products from Bayonne's farms. A little later the Dummy railroad was started, and progress became paramount. A ferry from the Christmas season of 1609, when Hendryke Hudson sailed up the body of water he called the Het Kill von hel Kull and was attacked by Indians in canoes.

Compared with those times the 90's were astonishing in their sophistication. Fashion was becoming increasingly important and basques and matching coats and frocks gave place to white serge suits and plumed hats and puffed sunshades. China silks were "in" at the turn of the century, and scotch cloth tops on stylish button boots were enough to make any young lady catch her breath. Ankle-length blue serge sport skirts worn with red silk blouses may have been a bold invitation to a waiting bull, but they were all the rage in '92, and every young Miss who wished to be more than a wallflower affected a long chain, worn around the neck, and attached to her high belt or chatelaine, "which bore all manner of fancy articles."