

### Gunpowder Plant at Hook Supplied U. S. Forces in War of 1812

(This is Chapter VI in the History of Bayonne which is being offered to readers of this page in connection with the celebration this week of the sixty-sixth anniversary of Bayonne's incorporation as a city.)

With Capt. Tom Ward and his guerrillas driven off the peninsula, the direct contact of the settlement with the revolutionary conflict came to an end. And soon, also, the revolution also came to an end—a successful one.

When George Washington sailed through the Kill van Kull and New York Bay on his way to be inaugurated in New York City as the first president of the United States, many joyful colonists lined the shores and cheered. There were others, however, who kept to their gloomy selves, since they had been in sympathy with the British throughout the struggle.

Hundreds of others came to the tip of the peninsula from other parts of the area to hail the Father of His Country. The occasion is described as follows by Daniel Van Winkle in "The History of Old Bergen":

"His whole journey was in the nature of a triumphal procession, but nowhere was his reception more enthusiastic or his greetings more sincere than on his passage from the Point through the Kills. He embarked in a barge, splendidly decorated, and conveyed by others, with flags and music.

#### Cannons Boom in Greeting

"As he entered the Kills, between Staten Island and Bergen Point, the procession was met by other boats from the shores, gay with bunting. From the shores of Bergen Point, which were lined with the citizens of 'Old Bergen' he was greeted with the booming of cannon, waving of flags and loud huzzas of the

people. Their joy knew no bounds, and until the procession receded in the distance, their applause and rejoicing continued."

And thus the peninsula, with the rest of the newborn country, settled down to the serious business of developing a peaceful, industrious nation. Progress was steady, and only an occasional cloud appeared on the horizon to threaten trouble ahead. One such cloud was contained in this notice published in 1798, for example:

"An act, respecting slaves. Be it enacted by the Council and the General Assembly of this State, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, that every Negro, Indian, mulatto or mestee, within this state, who, at the time of passing this act, is a slave for his or her life, shall continue such during his or her life, unless he or she shall be manumitted and set free in the manner prescribed by law. Passed at Trenton, March 14, 1798."

#### Trouble Foreshadowed

There, though the peninsula settlers of course had no way of knowing it, was the issue which was to throw the nation into a bloody warfare in the middle of the next century.

But for the time being, the settlement was undisturbed. It began to grow soon after peace between Great Britain and the new United States was achieved. New settlers came from all over the state. The soil was rich, the timber was thick and the waters were filled with fish. Life was not too hard, and farmers, after gaining a foothold and assuring themselves and their families of a good living, turned to the interests of the entire community.

One of their first thoughts, naturally, was of the education of the children.

The existing schools were crude and incomplete, but the settlers made the best of the facilities and prepared to provide better ones.

#### First Factory Here

Life proceeded serenely and the war of 1812 had no such disrupting effect on the tranquility of the peninsula as the Revolution had had. However, what was probably the first industry on the peninsula had its inception in the course of the second conflict with Britain. This was the Hazard Powder House at

Constable Hook, and from it American ships and the forts on Governors Island, Ellis Island and Bedloe's Island got large supplies of gunpowder.

Sentiment against slavery grew steadily in the North, and besides the beginnings of an industrial era removed the conditions that made slavery a profitable or otherwise desirable business. Accordingly in 1820, New Jersey legislated the system out of existence.

Incidentally, about this time one of the jokes most popular with radio comedians these days made its appearance the historians show. Here it is, from the New Jersey Almanac of 1826:

"How to destroy flies—a Frenchman who sold powder for killing flies, gives the following recipe: 'Catch 'em and tickle

him under troat, and when he opens his mout to laugh, throw in de powdre and it will choke him."

In those days, unfortunately, there was no way of choking off a joke like this—you couldn't turn a dial as soon as you heard it coming.

#### Bay Gets New Name

- It was also at about this time that New York Bay got its present name. Previously it was known as Oyster Bay because of the fact that during colonial days it was a great source of oysters.

By 1830, the population of the peninsula had mounted to 600, and more and more settlers were turning to these parts. The United States of America—whatever doubts there may have

been about its probable life at the beginning—was now pretty firmly established and appeared likely to continue thriving.

Immigration from Europe increased—the troubles of that continent had multiplied steadily, and eyes were turned to America as the land of opportunity.

Industry on any considerable scale was still a matter of the future. Farming was still the major pursuit, and the pioneers pursued it well. A greater extent of the soil was being cultivated every year. Terhune's mill in the Hook became the center of a flourishing business as farmers from all parts of the Bergen area brought their grain here to be ground.

One Frank Miller gave the peninsula its first taste of com-

merce. He set up a store at what has since become Avenue C and First street. Groceries and tobacco and many of the other commodities that go to make up the "general store" were his stock in trade.

#### The Serpent in Eden

The sinful apple, which drove Adam and Eve from Eden, was already making its evil influence felt here. For behind Miller's store one Berger, a Frenchman, ran a cider press. And the historians say that he contributed to the downfall of the youth by permitting children in the neighborhood to refresh themselves by sucking the cider through a straw.

"The good " which

everybody was to recall so fondly in the future, had arrived.

Here is a picture of the times as gleaned from Shaw's History of Hudson County:

"The current of life ran evenly at the fireside. There sat the venerable Bergener, silently puffing his pipe, looking into the fire with half-shut eyes, meditating for hours together; the good Vrouw, on the opposite side, would employ the time in spinning yarn or knitting stockings. In their quiet way, the inhabitants are said to have followed their callings, principally agriculture. Shad fisheries and the oyster grounds furnished fields for busy enterprise and a profitable employment."

Another chapter in this History of Bayonne will be offered on this page next Saturday.