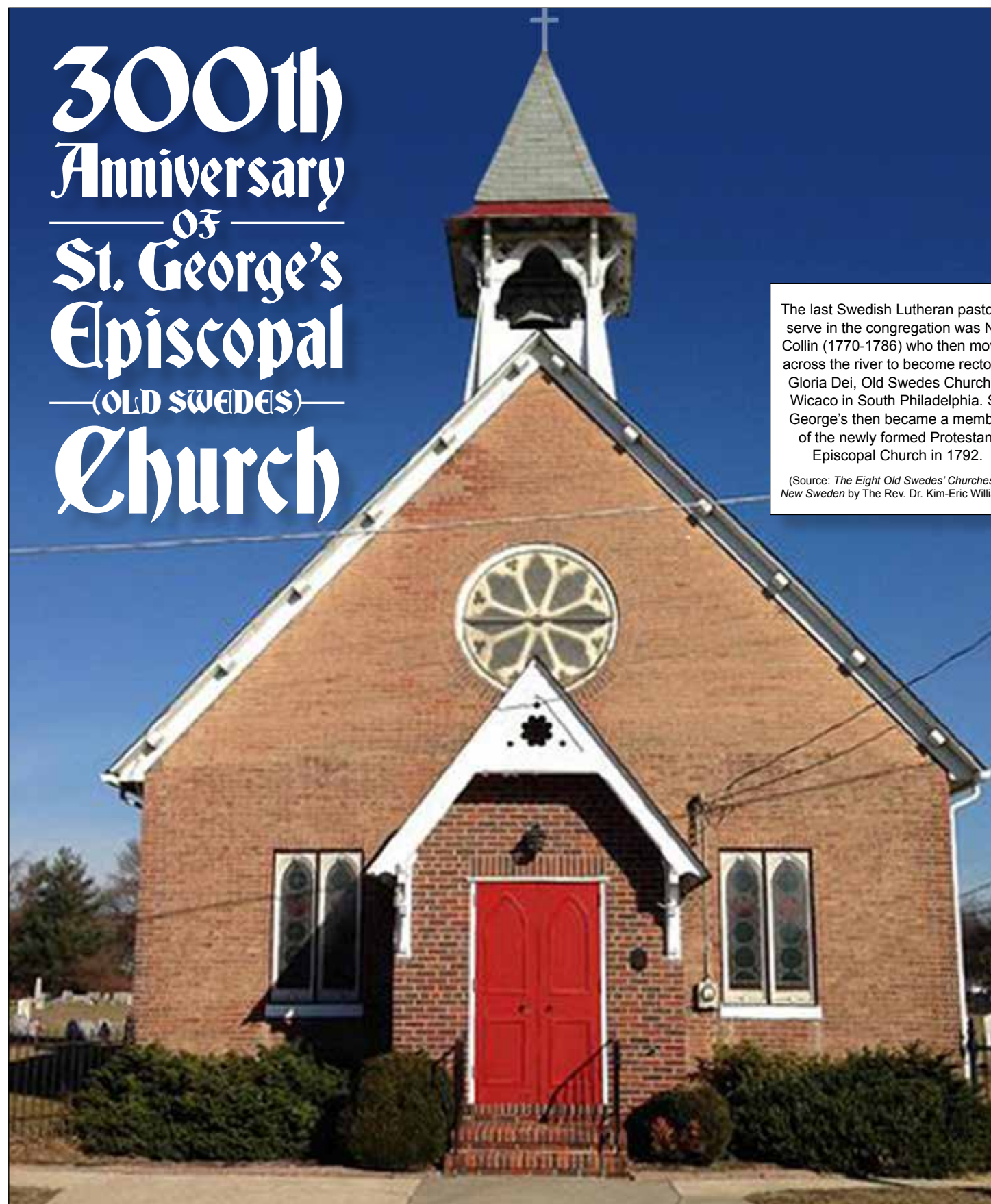


# 300th Anniversary OF St. George's Episcopal (OLD SWEDES) Church



The last Swedish Lutheran pastor to serve in the congregation was Nils Collin (1770-1786) who then moved across the river to become rector of Gloria Dei, Old Swedes Church at Wicaco in South Philadelphia. St. George's then became a member of the newly formed Protestant Episcopal Church in 1792.

(Source: *The Eight Old Swedes' Churches of New Sweden* by The Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric Williams)

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## St. George's gets its day in the sun...but it rained

By Aleasa Hogate AM-518

On March 29th, St. George's congregation, historians, reenactors and dignitaries celebrated the 300th anniversary of the decision made on December 3, 1714, to build St. George's Church. In spite of the cold and rain, approximately 60 guests, plus reenactors, demonstrated the true pioneer spirit of the early settlers in New Sweden Colony as they gathered in a large tent in the pouring rain to pay homage to the founding fathers of Pennsville, New Jersey. The program was held on the grounds of the Pennsville Historical Societies Farmhouse museum.

The early settlers from Pennsville, NJ (Penns Neck in 1714) included Swedes and Finns who had to travel across the Delaware River to church at Crane Hook on the Delaware River, just below the Christina River. In 1697, a new Swedish Lutheran priest, Rev. Eric Björk, was sent from Sweden to serve Crane Hook. He encouraged this congregation to build a new

church. Although the members from Penns Neck and Finns Point made up 40% of the congregation, the church was built north of the Christina River, which made the journey for the West Jersey residents even longer. The Penns Neck parishioners remained faithful to the congregation and helped build the new church. They remained members of the new church, "Holy Trinity," one of our national landmarks still being used as a church, until they were finally able to build and dedicate their own log church, St. George's.

Although all the outdoor activities had to be canceled on the day of the celebration, the "Little Key," a multi-oared sloop, similar to the one the early settlers may have used to travel to church across the Delaware, was pulled inside the tent. The New Sweden Centre reenactors in colonial clothing were seated in the boat, serving as the backdrop for the program and a reminder of the dedication of the early settlers who braved the water and weather on the Delaware for decades before

### Stidhams\* associated with St. George's (Penns Neck) Church

**Erasmus [30] Stedham, Jr.** and his wife, Christina Hendrickson Stedham, moved to Penn's Neck, NJ in 1739 and became members of St. George's Church on 13 Jun 1739.\*

**Benedict [38] Stedham, Jr.** dug a cellar for the Upper Penns' Neck Church in 1721.\*

There are undoubtedly others as well, though not listed in any official records, as other Stidhams\* were known to have lived on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River at various times and probably attended services there from time to time, even though they may have not been members of the congregation.

\**The Descendants of Dr. Timothy Stidham, Vol. 1*, by Jack Stidham (2001)



Aleasa Hogate, in costume portraying her New Sweden ancestor, Elisabeth Dalbo

PHOTO BY ALFRED NICOLISI





Milt Draper (left), a New Sweden reenactor, portraying one of the early colonial Swedes, with the Rev. Dr. Gregory Johnson, Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Wilmington, portraying the Rev. Eric Bjork, the priest at Crane Hook, and later, Holy Trinity.

they were able to build their own church.

Martha Rogers, member of St. George's Church, organized this historical commemorative event. Local and state officials, including NJ Senator, President Sweeny, participated. A reenactment was performed representing the meeting held in 1714 at which the original congregation voted to build a log cabin church on their side of the river. Apparently the log church was sold in 1808. Wouldn't it be neat if we could find that old log church?

After the opening program, tours of the current church, built 1872, and the Pennsville Historical Society's Farmhouse Museum were provided. A Swedish smorgasbord luncheon was also held in the church hall.

On June 6th, Pennsville will be celebrating two other anniversaries. The 350th anniversary of New Jersey and the 10th anniversary of the New Sweden Heritage Monument on the Delaware river.

For more details contact [info@colonial-newsweden.org](mailto:info@colonial-newsweden.org) or call 302-276-3813.



From the left: Martha Rogers, a church member and coordinator of the event (also: a founding member and past president of the Pennsville Township Historical Association; Fr. William Boatwright, the current Priest at St. George's church; and Julie Acton, Director Chairman of the Salem County Board of Chosen Freeholders

# Colonists' Day, 2014

A day for Wilmingtonians to educate and celebrate their historic colonial roots

By Aleasa Hogate AM-518

Colonists' Day on April 5th in Wilmington, Delaware gave historians, genealogists, colonial reenactors, history buffs and the general public, an opportunity to pay homage to the early Swedish and Finnish settlers of the Delaware River Valley. This year's event celebrated the 376th anniversary of the New Sweden Colony, established on the banks of the Christina River in 1638 by Sweden, where Fort Christina State Park is located, at 1122 7th Street in Wilmington, Delaware.

The procession of colonial reenactors and representatives of the Lenape Tribe of Delaware, entered Fort Christina Park at 10:00 a.m. and paraded to the Carl Milles monument, dedicated in 1638. The Landing Day ceremonies were conducted by the Delaware Swedish Colonial Society with a traditional wreath laying and a circle of friendship dance lead by Chief Dennis Coker of the Lenapes. Miss Molly Draper, the charming granddaughter of Art and Donna Draper of the Delaware Swedish Colonial Society, presented Chief Coker with a fresh bouquet of yellow daffodils. Molly and her family are direct descendants of Charles Christopher Springer, who was a reader in the Crane Hook Church in 1688, when it was without a pastor.

Following the ceremony, everyone proceeded to the grounds of Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Church where all the other activities were held this year.

Representatives of Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey historical and genealogical organizations participated in this year's event.

Colonists' Day continues to provide a venue where visitors can learn about the colonial history of the Del-



Left to right: Mark Hogate, Donna Draper, Aleasa Hogate, Molly Draper (little girl in front), Bill Hutchinson (portraying Peter Minuit), and Chief Dennis Coker

aware River Valley and enjoy the displays and demonstrations of early colonial history, including spinning, weaving, Swedish bread making and more. It also provides an opportunity for historical organizations, genealogical societies, colonial reenactors and those interested in honoring our early settlers to share and network about their various projects, sell their colonial wares and promote their programs and events.

Planning has already begun for next year's event, which will again be sponsored by the Delaware Swedish Colonial Society, Old Swedes Foundation and the New Sweden Centre. Organizations interested in promoting their unique colonial-era specialties: reenactors, crafters and vendors are invited to participate.

For more information, contact: [info@colonial-newsweden.org](mailto:info@colonial-newsweden.org) or call 302-276-3813.



While visitors were taking tours of Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Church, New Sweden Centre educator, Ruth Runkle, played the organ, which is located in the balcony of the church.