

# New Crane Hook Church Historical Marker Dedicated

This article is a reprint of a press release by *Today's Sunbeam*, a Salem County, New Jersey community news organization, which explains the New Jersey readership focus.

**J**uly 13th, Wilmington—In a late-day ceremony on Delaware's 9, just one mile north of the Delaware Memorial Bridge. Martha Rogers and Aleasa Hogate of Pennsville, N.J. witnessed another recognition of the role the people from New Jersey played in the development of the Delaware Valley culture, when Delaware's Senator Margaret Rose Henry and a number of other dignitaries dedicated a newly cast historical marker that commemorates the existence of the Crane Hook Church where the early Swedish and Finnish settlers attended.

The marker recognizes the fact that, in 1667, a log blockhouse church was built at Crane Hook on the Delaware River below the Christina River. It was possible for this church to be built because Swedish Lutherans had been granted the religious freedom to erect their own church by William Penn in 1664. The worshipers were primarily Swedes and Finnish-Swedes (Sweden controlled Finland at the time they emigrated), but also

included people of English, Dutch, Holstein, or German origin, a multicultural community that evolved into the American melting pot. According to a pew list of the congregation, about 50% of the congregants came from New Castle County, 10% from Cecil County, Maryland, and 40% came by boat from across the Delaware River in New Jersey, a dangerous commute in stormy weather.

The church served its congregation until, under the leadership of a new pastor, Rev. Eric Bjork, the congregation of Crane Hook Church, built Holy Trinity Church in 1697-99. The historical marker will help preserve the legacy that the people from New Jersey were part of the oldest Christian congregation in Delaware—Holy Trinity "Old Swedes" Church, one of Delaware's historic treasures and a national landmark.

2013 is the 375th anniversary of the founding of New Sweden Colony. Plans are underway for a Royal visit and other activities throughout the Delaware Valley.



PHOTO BY JOHN WOOTTEN, JR.

**Delaware Senator, Margaret Rose Henry, gives her remarks at the dedication (above).**

**Jim Meek, New Castle County historian (left) holds the new sign as Thomas Summers, Outreach manager for Delaware Historical Market, pulls off the cover, unveiling the new marker. Senator Henry looks on (right).**



PHOTO BY JOHN WOOTTEN, JR.

The members from New Jersey who first attended Crane Hook Church and helped build Holy Trinity Church established their own church in 1714, St. George's Church at the corner of Church Landing Road in Pennsville, NJ. On August 24th, 2013 St. George's Church is planning a "kick off" for their 300th anniversary celebration.

For information contact [info@colonial-newsweden.org](mailto:info@colonial-newsweden.org) or call 302-329-0464.

## Inscription of Historical Marker NC-193

# Crane Hook Church

Built in 1667, Crane Hook Church was located one mile east of here on what is now Pigeon Point Road. The Church took its name from the land located between here and the Delaware River. Under Dutch leadership, this area was colonized by the Swedes and Finnish-Swedes in the early 1660s. The English took control of the Delaware colony in October 1664 and afforded the religious freedom needed to build this Swedish Lutheran church. Built of logs in a blockhouse style, the Church's projecting second story served as a defensive structure against external threats. Worshipers were primarily Swedes and Finnish-Swedes, but also included people of English, Dutch, Holstein, or German origin. According to a pew list of the congregation from the 1690s about 50% of the congregants came from New Castle County, 10% from Cecil County Maryland, and 40% came by boat from across the Delaware River in New Jersey. Lars Lock from Sweden was the first pastor of Crane Hook Church. After his death in 1688, the congregation was led by lay reader Charles Springer until the arrival of Erik Björk in 1697. Björk was one of the three Church of Sweden priests sent to America to serve the remaining Swedes on the Delaware River. With the help of the congregation, Björk immediately began planning and constructing Holy Trinity Church (Old Swedes) in Wilmington to replace Crane Hook Church.

PHOTO BY JOHN WOOTTEN, JR.



**Rev. Dr. Kim-Eric Williams, Historian of the Swedish Colonial Society, talks about the Crane Hook Church before the unveiling.**

PHOTO BY JOHN WOOTTEN, JR.



**Left to right: Rebecca Wilson, Old Swedes Foundation; Aleasa Hogate, New Sweden Centre; Martha Rogers, St George's Church; Kay Wootten-Schechinger, TSS; Lynn Riley, Delaware Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs**

Flags representing the area's colonial rulers: Sweden, Holland, Great Britain and the United States.



PHOTO BY JOHN WOOTTEN, JR.



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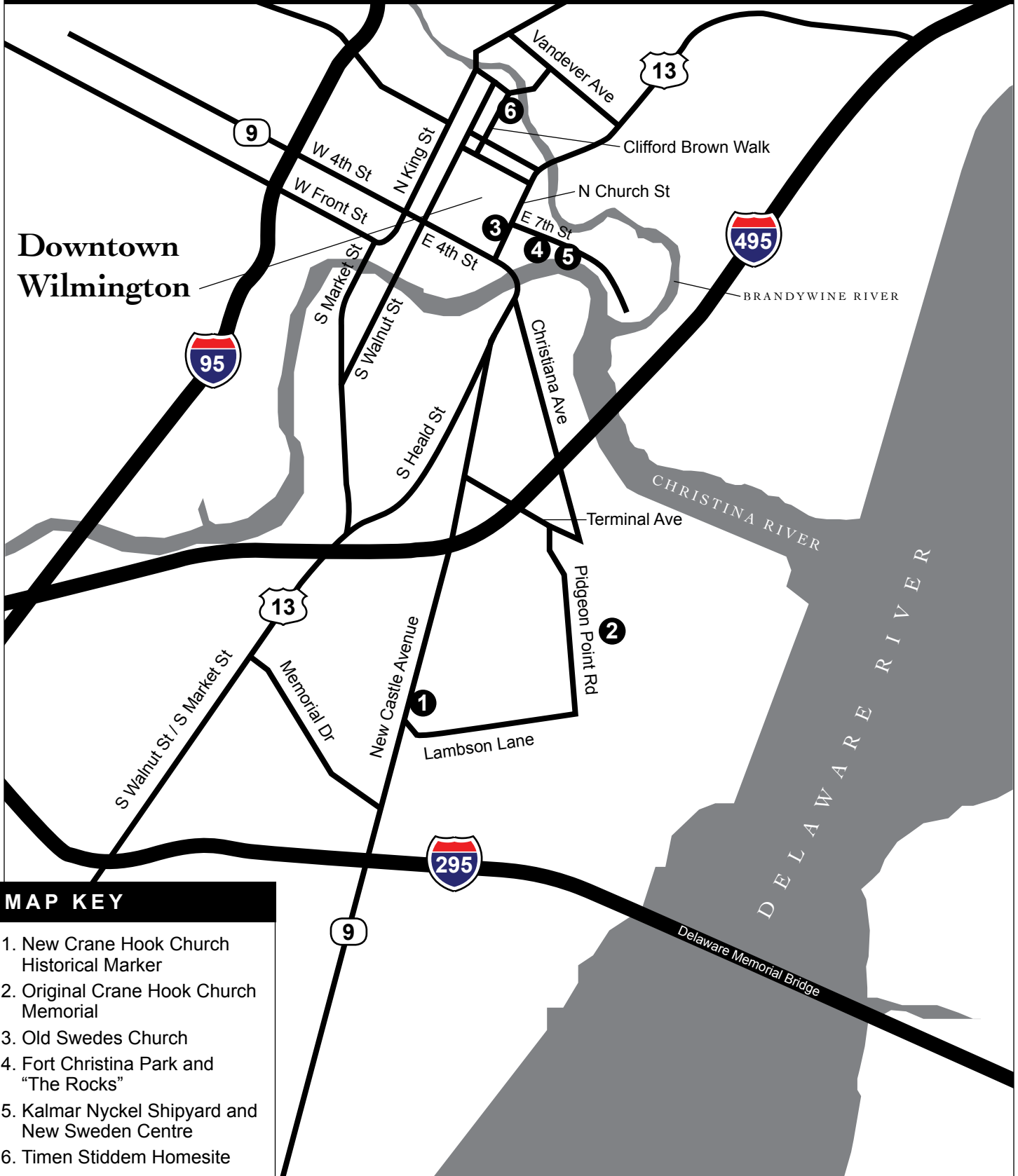
The Rev. Ginny Wilder of Trinity Episcopal Parish in Wilmington says a few words.



PHOTO BY JOHN WOOTTEN, JR.

Aleasa Hogate and her grandsons affix a wreath to the marker at the conclusion of the dedication ceremony.

# Crane Hook Church Historical Marker Locator Map



## MAP KEY

1. New Crane Hook Church Historical Marker
2. Original Crane Hook Church Memorial
3. Old Swedes Church
4. Fort Christina Park and "The Rocks"
5. Kalmar Nyckel Shipyard and New Sweden Centre
6. Timen Stiddem Homesite



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DELAWARE ARCHIVES

## Original Crane Hook Church Monument

The newly-installed and now formally dedicated historical marker took at least 10 years to accomplish, the fruition of which culminating at the July 13 ceremony. Plans are now moving along to relocate the actual Crane Hook Church Monument (currently located on the premises of the Magellan Oil Tank field) to the grounds of Holy Trinity Church in Wilmington. The photo above from the Delaware Archives, shows the monument as it appeared in the 1890s.

The photo at right is a delegation of the original marker committee during a tour of the current site on the Magellan Oil Tank fields in 2006. Left to right: David Stidham, TSS President; Max Dooley, Old Swedes Foundation; Gareth Gunther (DM-453); Aleasa Hogate, New Sweden Centre (AM-518); Gladys Gunther, wife of Gareth; and Lynn Riley, Delaware Historic and Cultural Affairs. More about this monument can be found in TSS Issue #33 (Winter 2007).

