

*Crane Hook*  
*on the Delaware*

1667 - 1699

An Early Swedish Lutheran Church  
and Community

With the Historical Background of the  
Delaware River Valley

BY JEANNETTE ECKMAN

Drawings by Walter Stewart

*Published for the*

DELAWARE SWEDISH COLONIAL SOCIETY

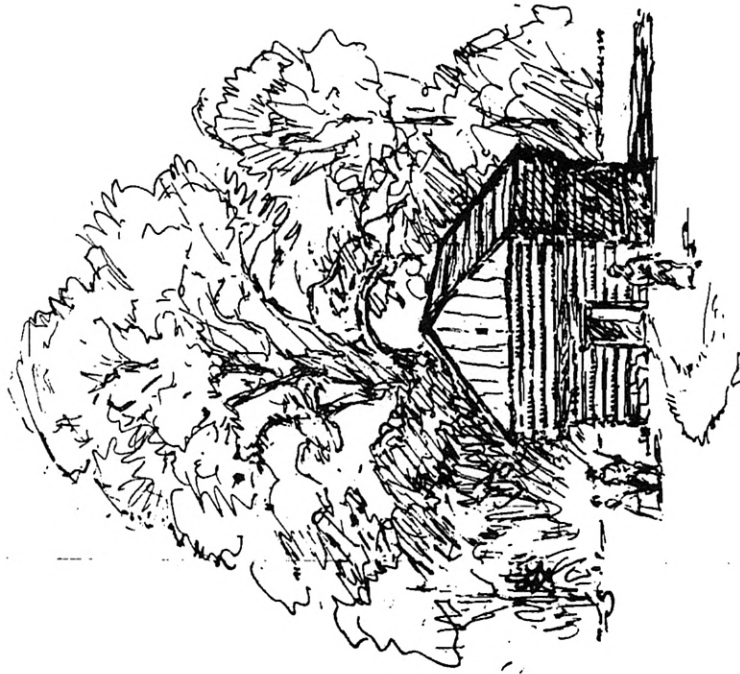
by the Institute of Delaware History and Culture  
University of Delaware • Newark

1958

6

# *Crane Hook on the Delaware*

Copyright  
Delaware Swedish Colonial Society  
Used by NC-CHAP.org with permission



*by Jeanette Ekman*



## FOREWORD

The Swedes who made the first permanent settlement in the Delaware River Valley at the site of present Wilmington under the government of Sweden, and spread along the west side of the river 1638 to 1655, maintained their culture under the successive sovereignties of The Netherlands and England during the ensuing one hundred years. The heart of this culture was the Swedish Lutheran Church. The earliest of the remaining church buildings is Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Church, standing near the site where the first settlers stepped ashore at "The Rocks", now in Fort Christina State Park, Wilmington.

Old Swedes was built by the congregation of Crane Hook Church. Their church was a log building erected 1667 in the midst of plantations and woodland south of the Christina River. The members of the congregation lived from Naamans Creek to the Appoquinimink.

Within this extensive parish along some twenty miles of the west side of the river, the area called Crane Hook occupied about a thousand acres. Including part of south Wilmington east of the South Market Street causeway, it extended south toward the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

Today, some woodland, cultivated fields, truck patches, marsh, and other open spaces remain, but most of the area is industrial, business and residence (small homes and federal and other housing developments). Except in land records and among history students the place-name itself has almost disappeared. A marker intended to commemorate the church site is hidden away on commercial property where it marks not the church site but an early family burying ground, a half-mile distant from the churchyard

charge of customs and other interests of the West India Company there under Stuyvesant. William Beekman, in whose "ability, piety and experience" Director Stuyvesant and the Council had good reason to trust, was commissioned as commissary and vice-director "to attend to the safety of the country, fort, military and freemen," to keep good order, to administer law and justice to citizens and soldiers to the best of his knowledge. He was to live at Altrena but have a house at New Amstel for his office and accommodation when on duty there as customs officer.<sup>15</sup>

William Beekman was the ablest and most intelligently conscientious of the Dutch administrators on the Delaware.<sup>16</sup> From his detailed accounts in letters to Stuyvesant we learn most of what is known of the lives of the Swedes and Finns within his jurisdiction. These letters present also a running account of the affairs of the City's Colony south of the Christina and therefore a picture of the conditions under which the former subjects of Sweden in that territory lived from the autumn of 1658 until the end of the Dutch period. From Beekman we have information concerning the first colonists in the Crane Hook area.

#### First Settlers in the Crane Hook Region

In a letter to Director General Stuyvesant dated "Fort Altrena 25th Jan'y 1660," Vice Director Beekman says:

Same farmers arrived here with the ship *de vergulde Meulen* and have settled as a village here opposite our Fort. They complained to me lately, that they had no more victuals, as they harvested little from their land last summer, they had received their seed-corn from Mr. Alrichs very late, which was English corn and ripened late; therefore it was frozen on the field, so that they have little or no provisions nor can they get any from Mr. d'Hinojossa, notwithstanding he let the people come to New Amstel 4 or 5 times under promise of assistance and he gave them, who count 7 or 8 families, each 1/4 maize, adding thereto that he did this from his private (store). These

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 209-10, 211-14, 219-20; Johnson, II, 664. The officers were: sheriff, Gregorius Van Dyke; captain, Sven Skute, lieutenant, Anders Dalbo; ensign, Jacob Swenson; magistrates, Olaf Stulle, Matts Hanson, Peter Rambo, Peter Cock.

<sup>16</sup> William Wilhelmus Beekman, born at Hasselt, Overyssele, The Netherlands, Sept. 21, 1607, seventh child of a distinguished Dutch family, arrived at New Amsterdam with Peter Stuyvesant, May 27, 1647. At Albany he married Catalina de Boogh, daughter of the prosperous colonist, Henry de Boogh.—Aitken, *Distinguished Families in America Descended from Wilhelmus Beekman* (sic) and Jan Thomastse Van Dyke.

farmers have got a good deal of winter grain into the soil: yet some say, that if they cannot get assistance, they will have to leave, before the new corn ripens, for they have sold their remaining clothes for eatables last winter.<sup>17</sup>

Nothing further is written of the farmers, but Stuyvesant having received Beekman's account of their distress, would not miss the opportunity to offer good farmers excellent terms at New Amsterdam. His hospitality to colonists who wished to leave the New Amstel jurisdiction seemed likely to make trouble between the Company's directors and the Amsterdam Burgomasters. The latter made several complaints to the directors of the West India Company that Stuyvesant enticed away the best and ablest of the farmers in the City's Colony.

That these farmers were Dutch or natives of provinces immediately adjoining The Netherlands can be assumed since there is no evidence that the Burgomasters of Amsterdam sent to their colony during Jacob Alrichs' time any Swedes or Finns. It was not until Alrichs' successor, Alexander D'Hinojossa, was in charge of the City's Colony that Swedes and Finns were sought in Europe for transporting there.<sup>18</sup>

The former West India Company's vice-director, Jean Paul Jacquet, being in possession of the fast land on the south bank of the Christina opposite the fort, the next suitable site for seven or eight plantations "opposite the fort" was either on land between Jacquet and Crane Hook (see the Pieter Classen tract on Crane Hook Map I), or on what became within a few years the 784 acre Crane Hook grant to Swedes and Finns. Pieter Claessen, Dutch farmer from Holstein, where many farmers from the east provinces of The Netherlands had been welcomed to reclaim war-devastated German lowlands, emigrated to New Netherland with wife and two children in 1658. It is easy to believe that he was one of the Dutch farmers described by Beekman, for he had 100 acres adjoining Jacquet when the English came, which was confirmed to him by Governor Lovelace. As a Lutheran he was to become a member of Crane Hook congregation and then of Holy Trinity (Old Swedes).

<sup>17</sup> The ship arrived at New Amstel, Sept. 27, 1658.—*Documents*, II, 50, 68, 70; XII, 231, 292-93. "Corn" as used here means grain: wheat, barley, rye, oats, not Indian corn (maize).

<sup>18</sup> *Documents*, XII, 427, 443, II, 212.

In a census list more than a decade later, the Claessen tract is in a community called Mill Drope and the "responsible housekeepers" there are Peter, John, and William Clauson. "John Tison" listed after Peter in the printed copy is obviously an error for "John his son." Dunlap gives as the origin of Drope, the Dutch word *droep* meaning village, thus completing the evidence as to the site of the village of Dutch farmers, settled 1658.<sup>19</sup>

Whether the Dutch farmers had individual tracts to cultivate or used the land in common is not known. The people of Crane Hook were said to have received their land from the Dutch in one tract. Before the building of Crane Hook Church, however, the land had been divided into typical Dutch grants as deeds and court records show, eight of them, 18 rods wide facing the river with a larger tract at each end (Crane Hook Map I), each plantation having in front of it a stretch of marsh of the same width extending to the water's edge. Each of these plots or plantations, called "home lots" extended 150 rods west to the border of a large tract of forest or woodland, which was held in common by the home lot owners. This arrangement repeated that previously mentioned at "Fyre Hook" (Furu Udden), a typical land grant method in the Dutch period, reproducing the neat patterns of small farm communities in Holland. English confirmations of the Fyre Hook tracts are identical patents to the eight owners by name, followed by a separate patent naming all the owners of the individual plots and granting them an adjoining tract of meadow ground "not mentioned in their several patents, to be held "in common."<sup>20</sup> Similar confirming patents for the Crane Hook owners except for Simon Jansen are missing, but the information concerning those plots is supplied by other documents to be cited later.

During 1659, the last year of Director Jacob Alrichs' time, deaths from epidemic disease, desertions to Maryland and Virginia (in panic because of the death-dealing illness, also because

<sup>19</sup> Wabeke, *Dutch Emigration to North America*, 16; O'Callaghan, *Documentary History*, III, 33; *Original Land Titles*, 143, 158; *Documents*, XII, 529, 648; Dunlap, *Dutch and Swedish Place-names*, 40-41.

<sup>20</sup> *Documents*, XII, 645; *Original Land Titles*, 136-138. Confirmations of Dutch patents by English governors at "Crane Hook," "Second Hook" (Swanwick), "Wild Hook on Skilpaets Kill," near the former Fort Christina and at Crane Hook are for tracts of 25 rods, or more, or less, by 600 rods deep.—*Ibid.*, 134, 135, 156, 157, 159. Among the Dutch grants published in translation by Dunlap, is a grant by Dutch Director Alexander D'Hinojossa to Andries Matysen, Sept. 20, 1664, for a tract at Second Hook measuring 29 by 600 rods.

of threatened attack by the English, along with the too strict regime of Alrichs), greatly reduced the population south of the Christina. In September of that year, Director General Stuyvesant reported to the West India Company directors that Director Jacob Alrichs had hardly thirty families remaining in the City's Colony and only twenty-five of the original fifty soldiers. Cases of the epidemic disease at New Amstel—which from the descriptions by Alrichs resembled the so-called "flu" that caused many deaths in eastern U.S. cities during World War I—were spread throughout the Delaware area. Few deaths are mentioned north of the Christina. On January 14, 1660, Vice-Director Beekman could write: "All our people are now well," but he reported new cases of illness from time to time. In September of that year, Captain Jacob Jansen Huys, Dutch skipper of the galiot, *New Amstel*, which belonged to the City's Colony and had plied between New Amstel and Manhattan since August 1657, wrote concerning that colony: "Were there a tolerably healthy population and a reasonable harvest, and a parcel of good farmers, it would still prosper, and the people who remain would again begin to pluck up courage."<sup>21</sup>

As early as March 1660, the erratic and generally untrustworthy Alexander D'Hinojossa, who, by Jacob Alrichs' will, became provisional director of the City's Colony following the latter's death December 30, 1659,<sup>22</sup> had made his first bid to Swedes and Finns up the river to come into the City's Colony. On January 15, Beekman wrote Stuyvesant: "I learned lately, that about 20 families of Fins and Swedes intend to go and live in the Colony this spring, which the Sheriff (Gregorius Van Dyck) and Commissary (Henrick Huygen) have requested me to prevent." The willingness of the up-river "Swedes and Finns" to move into that desperately unfortunate colony suggests that very attractive terms were being offered by the provisional director.

On April 28, 1660, Beekman wrote: "That they [the families of Swedish and Finnish farmers] want to move into the Colony is because they cannot get land enough near the others [up the river] and that the small parcels of land, which they have now here and there, are too troublesome to fence in." This came about

<sup>21</sup> *Documents*, II, 69; XII, 229, 236, 249, 250, 253-4, 289, 271; II, 124.

<sup>22</sup> A few weeks before the death of Alrichs at the end December, 1659, D'Hinojossa, lieutenant under the director, had written secretly to the Burgomasters at Amsterdam, praying God's blessing on them, declaring his devotion to their interests and presenting himself as able and upright while blackening the administration of the dying; *Alrichs' Documents*, II, 169.

As previously told the Church Glebe was owned by the whole Lutheran congregation on the Delaware and was under separate patent from the land of Lokenius. About 1676 Lokenius had 350 acres of land some of it granted or confirmed by a patent of 1669. The pastor last appears in the records of the court of New Castle on May 3/13, 1681, when an action against him by "Thomas Wollaston Late undersherriffe att New Castle for undersherriffs and marshalls fees amounting to 55 guilders" (begun in the Upland Court March 12/22, 1679), was settled by agreement of the plaintiff and defendant.<sup>68</sup>

During the last years of his life when Domine Lokenius was too crippled to get about, there would have been a reader to hold the customary prayer and psalm services in the Crane Hook church. No name has survived, but as many of the congregation could read there is a wide choice. It was not until after Lokenius died that Charles Springer became the reader at Crane Hook (see Springer's letter to his mother, Chapter VII).

Acrelius wrote that in his last years Lokenius served chiefly Crane Hook church. Fabricius then had charge of both Wicaco and Tinicum. Acrelius tells of Lokenius that:

His old age was burdened with many troubles. Finally he became too lame to help himself and still less the churches, and therefore did no service for some years, until his death ended all his troubles in 1688.<sup>69</sup>

Fabricius, who had been blind since 1683, was now the only pastor on the river. With the aid of Anders Bengtson (his name became Andrew Bankson in English) as lay reader for the upper congregation of Wicaco and Tinicum and Charles Springer for Crane Hook, Fabricius served his large pastorate in the offices of the church as long as his strength permitted. In 1691 he told his congregation at Wicaco that he could no longer perform his duties. Then the wardens of the church wrote a strong appeal (in Dutch) to the Lutheran consistory at Amsterdam, praising the "highly learned" Fabricius and requesting the honored clergymen of the consistory to send to the Delaware a qualified Swedish minister from among those who were students of theology at Amsterdam and might be waiting appointment; or to correspond

<sup>68</sup> *Documents*, XII, 491; *Original Land Titles*, 109-110; *Upland Record*, 131-132; *New Castle Records*, I, 479.

<sup>69</sup> Acrelius, 177.

with Sweden to procure a minister for them there.<sup>70</sup> The letter was given to Dutch merchant traders on ships out of Amsterdam, but no answer came.

The Dutch Reformed church at New Castle had secured the services of the highly learend clergyman Peter Tesschenmaker in 1679. English as well as Dutch and probably Swedes and Finns in the community attended the services at which Domine Tesschenmaker at first preached alternately in Dutch and English. Later the Dutch quarreled with the English members who withdrew from the church. The Dutch failed to make better terms with Pastor Tesschenmaker when he was not satisfied with the support given him for his living. This was little and always so late that he suffered the humiliation of having to collect it himself. He accepted a call to Staten Island and then to Schenectady.<sup>71</sup>

Left without an ordained minister in the summer of 1682, the elders and deacons wrote to the Dutch Reformed classis of Amsterdam on September 25, an earnest appeal for a pastor of their faith, giving a description of their unhappy situation:

We live here among many Lutherans, whose teachers [Lokenius and Fabricius] preach in a very unedifying manner; and among a still greater number of Quakers who are given to errors. Apparently they will not cease their efforts to draw into their fold the fickle ones. Therefore preaching and catechizing in the clean, upright, true Reformed religion is very necessary here, especially as a great many unreliable, dissolute people move in here among us.<sup>72</sup>

Among the signers who thus disparaged the Lutheran preachers, was the leading elder of the Dutch Church, former Vice-Director Jean Paul Jacquet, who, it will be remembered was living a close neighbor to Crane Hook, the plantations of Swedes and Finns extending south, west and north of his land on the Christina.

The Dutch Reformed congregation was not successful in obtaining a pastor and not until 1690 did a clergyman of that faith visit the Delaware. In that year the Reverend Rudolphus

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 177 ff. Anders Bengtson, born in Sweden, came to the Delaware in the Swedish ship "Mercurius" in 1656. See *ibid.*, and Kalm, II, 728.

<sup>71</sup> He was a graduate of the University of Utrecht with a license to preach. He had served the English Reformed Church at the Hague, and that city's Dutch and English consistories sent excellent testimonials to New York concerning his character and preaching ability. Corwin, *Manual*, 728 ff.; *Ecclietastical Records*, II, 832-836.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 823-824, 831, 838.

By the Treaty of Westminster, February 9/19, 1674, Dutch possessions in America were to be returned to England. The news probably reached New Orange before the English governor general, Edmund Andros, arrived in the city that autumn to receive from Anthony Colve the formal transfer on October 31/November 10, 1674. Among the official instructions brought by Governor Andros was:

11. You shall permit all persons of what Religion soever, quietly to inhabit w<sup>th</sup>in y<sup>e</sup> precincts of your jurisdiction, w<sup>th</sup>out giving y<sup>m</sup> any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever, for or by reason of their differing opinions in matters of Religion; Provided they give noe disturbance to y<sup>e</sup> publique peace, nor doe molest or disquiet others in y<sup>e</sup> free exercise of their religion.<sup>53</sup>

Either before or soon after the return of the Duke of York's rule, Magister Jacobus Fabricius returned to the Delaware, resuming his service as pastor of the Swanwyck church. By June the next year the document drawn up December 10, 1672, proposing the union of Crane Hook and Swanwyck congregations under Fabricius was again included in a petition to the governor for its confirmation:

To the Noble, Right Honorable, Major Edmond Andros, Governor-General of all his Royal Highness, James, Duke of York and Albany etc. Territories in America.

Show with all reverence the subscribed petitioners, the community of the unchangeable Augsburg Confession, called the Lutheran, which has its residence on the Southriver, that after the petitioners had addressed an humble petition to the Right Honorable Governor on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May Anno 1675, together with a document drawn up in Council at New Castle on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1672, and presented by petitioners' minister, whereby they divided the river into two parishes, so that all above Verdrigtige Hoek is and shall remain under the pastorate of Mr. Laers and all below Verdrigtige Hoek under the pastorate of Magr' Jakobus Fabricius, and requested and asked with due humility, that your Noble Honor would please to confirm the action and the division for the sake of God's glory and good order, the petitioners expected hereupon a favorable answer and decision and had hoped to receive the same through Capt. Ed. Kantwell, but as the speedy journey and many troubles have prevented your Noble Honor, the petitioners do not know, how to act and they come therefore again to your Noble Right Honorable Worship with the humble request, to confirm the act and the division, also their minister Magr' Jakobus Fabri-

<sup>53</sup> *Documents*, II, 569 ff.; III, 199 ff.; *Ecclesiastical Records*, I, 628 ff. *Documents*, III, 216-19.

cius and to grant a favorable reply to the petitioners, doing which they remain your Noble Right Honorable Worships subjects and mediators with God.

Actum New Castle  
the first of June  
Anno 1675

The Community of the Unchangeable Confession of Augsburg on the Southriver belonging to the Churches of Swaenewyck and Kraenhoeck.

Henrich Janssen

Hendrich Janse van Bremes

Harman Janss

Pieter Velcker

Peter Classen

Peter Witten (De Witt)

Corn (Cornelis) Jansson

Pieter Masslandt

Jan Barends

Sibrand Jansen

Hinrich Fransen

Willem Jansen

Jan Jansen

John Nohmers

Clas Andressen

and all the others<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Documents*, XII, 519. Names from photostat of the original Dutch copy in New York Colonial Manuscripts, XX, 66.





Rambo, Israel Helm, Lars Andriessen and Wolle Swain (Swenson?) The importance of these appointments in relation to the Lutheran churches will be recognized in a court order cited ahead. During a session of the court at New Castle, May 13-14, 1675, the governor being present, it was ordered

That some Convenient way be made passable between Towne & Towne in this River, The manner of doing it to be ordered by the Respective Cotts and Lykewise the charge . . . That the orders about High Ways Bridges etc. be put into Execution by the Magestrats . . . in the Tyme of three months after the date hereof, or the Sherriffe Shall have Power to gett it done. . . .<sup>57</sup>

The magistrates decided that Hans Block's dyke near the river should be strengthened and that an inner dyke with floodgates must be constructed before the cartway could be built through the marsh and bridged over the creek. Hans Block's dyke "being the common and nearest footway from this Town to Swanewick, Crane Hook and parts adjacent":

In case of war with the Savages or other enemies, especially during the winter, when the river is closed, it would be very dangerous for us and our nearest neighbors to go 5 or 6 miles through the woods in order to assist each other; we need each other besides in diverse emergencies every day.<sup>58</sup>

The men of New Castle, Swanwyck, and Crane Hook were summoned to meet at the Dutch church on the Strand at New Castle where an order of the magistrates of June 4/14, 1675 was read to them. They were divided into three companies and ordered to report on a set day for work on Hans Block's dyke, and continue until that and the inner dyke were completed.<sup>59</sup>

After the meeting some inhabitants of the town of New Castle and others from outside protested in "a mutinous and tumultuous manner being led by ffabricius the priester and Jacob van der Veere, John Ogle, Evert Hendricksen and several others . . . The priest was very angry . . . swore and scolded . . . used foul language."

<sup>57</sup> *New Castle Records*, I, 45-47; *Documents*, XII, 526.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 535-536, 533. In May, 1675, for protection against the Indians, a form of commission was drawn up by the court at New Castle for captains of "a foot company of militia" in each of the following places: "New Castle, Crane Hooke, Vertriegige Hooke, Upland, Passayunk, Apoquemi, and Horekill." The names of several captains appear in later records: Capt. Evert Hendrickson of Crane Hook, Capt. Jacob Venlevet, Capt. Israel Helm at Upland. *Ibid.*, 520; *New Castle Records*, I, 324.

<sup>59</sup> *Documents*, XII, 530.

When the meeting was reported to Governor Andros he confirmed the order of the magistrates<sup>60</sup> and sent warrants for the appearance in court at New York, of "Magister Fabricius & John Ogle as Ringleaders" of the disorder. John Ogle was an Englishman whose offense was regarded as all the more serious on that account, but he became too ill to make the journey at the same time as Fabricius. At New York the pastor presented a petition to the governor asking that a commission be sent to New Castle to examine the people as to whether he was guilty, and further requesting that after he was cleared, his costs for travel and loss of time in his employment be allowed him. But the Court on September 15/25, ordered:

That ye said Magister Fabricius in regard of his being guilty of what is laid to his charge and his former irregular life and conversation be suspended from exercising his functions as a Minister, or preaching any more within this Government either in public or private.<sup>61</sup>

At the special court at New Castle May 13-14/23-24, 1675 when the order for highways was drawn up, orders were also issued:

That the Church or place of meeting for Divine worship in this Towne & the affaires thereunto belonging be Regulated by the Court here in as orderly & decent manner as may bee

That the Place for meeting att Crane Creek [Hook] do continue; as heretofore. That the Church at Tinnecum Island do serve for uppland and Parts adjacent. And whereas there is no Church or place of meeting higher upp the River than the 4<sup>d</sup> Island, for the Greater ease & Convenience of the Inhabitants there, Its ordered that the magestrats of uppland do cause a church or place of meeting for that Purpose to be built at Wickegkoo [Philadelphia] th wch to bee for the Inhabitants of Passayunk & so upwards.<sup>62</sup>

It will be noted from these orders that the Dutch Reformed Church at New Castle, as well as the Lutheran churches, were to be regulated by the magistrates. Lack of mention of the Swanwyck Church in the recorded proceedings may mean a decision by Gov-

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 531, 535-536. Before the middle of this month of June, 1675, Fabricius bought from "Peter Methyse" for 100 guilders, a piece of land adjoining his Swanwyck property, reaching from the river to "the new main road lately laid out." Dunlan, "Land Records," 43.

Both dykes were made before the close of 1675. In a later plot of survey the surveyor's drawing shows "ye foot Dyke" (Block's) and "Ye Broad Cartwyck." *New Castle County Book of Surveys (Penn.)*, 338-339 (1681).

<sup>61</sup> *Documents*, XII, 521, 573-538, 540.

<sup>62</sup> *New Castle Records*, I, 45-56; *Documents*, XII, 526.