

FILE U.S. - CITIES THAT TOWN

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NEW JERSEY'S FIRST SUMMER RESORT

Cape May, at the southernmost point of New Jersey, where the State dips its toe into the Atlantic Ocean, is the oldest of its many seashore resorts. The Indians discovered it and liked it long before the shot of a musket broke the quiet of the forest or before the ring of a woodsman's axe was heard in the land.

The Cape became a vacation resort for the Lenapes. They wore paths to it with their moccasined feet, fished along the shore, and dug for clams and oysters all summer. Piles of shells found along the seashore today are reminders of these visits. When it was time to return to the fields to harvest their maize, the red-skinned summer visitors dried oysters, clams and fish to take back with them for use in the winter.

Peter Hyssen, the Dutch captain of the whaling ship, WALRUS, purchased the land from the Indians before 1640. He paid for it in the usual way with copper kettles, knives, beads, and other trinkets. This is thought to be the first recorded purchase of New Jersey land. The area was four miles wide and four miles long.

There were many whales off the New Jersey coast in the early days, and whalers found the Cape a convenient place to bring their catches and cut them up. Besides the Dutch whalers, there were others from Long Island and Connecticut who put up sheds at the Cape as early as 1640. There was no permanent settlement until 1685.

These early settlers were peaceful Quakers, tending rigidly to their farms and their simple home-life. Even when pirates like Captain Kidd and Blackbeard Teach came to fill their empty water casks from Lilly Pond they were not disturbed. Kidd, a privateer out of New York, turned pirate and was pursued by the King's officers. He was captured and hanged in New York from the yardarm of his ship. His captors complained that they had received no cooperation from the Cape May people because the Quakers there disliked "gaols" (jails), and refused to help in sending anyone to jail. Many of them had suffered in prison in England because of their religious beliefs.

A report by Colonel Quarry to the British Lords of Trade in 1699 shows that Captain Kidd did use Cape May as a hideout. The report says:

I have, by the assistance of Col. Basse, apprehended four more the pyrates at Cape May. Hee (Kidd) hath been here (Cape