

612

STORIES of New Jersey

May) about ten days and the people frequently goes on board him. Hee is in a sloop with about forty men and a vast treasure.

For years many people have dug in the sands in hope of finding the famous Kidd treasure. Nothing, however, has been found except those sparkling but worthless stones known as Cape May diamonds.

During the Revolution, British men-o'-war would land boats and raid Cape May for cattle and fill their water barrels from Lilly Pond. The inhabitants were so angry over these raids that they sacrificed their own fresh water supply by digging a ditch from the ocean to the pond, making the water brackish and unfit to drink. This discouraged the enemy from coming.

After the Revolution, aristocratic Philadelphia citizens sailing on Delaware Bay, began landing at the small fishing village on the Cape and came to like it. It was an ideal place for bathing. The water was not too deep, and the beach was firm with a gentle slope. The settlers finally realized that there was money to be made in providing food and lodging for the visitors. In 1801 Postmaster Ellis Hughes of Cape Island (as the village was then called) put the following advertisement in the Philadelphia Daily Aurora:

The subscriber has prepared himself for entertaining company who use sea bathing, and he is accommodated with extensive house-room, with fish, oysters, crabs, and good liquors. Care will be taken of gentlemen's horses. Carriages may be driven along the margin of the ocean for miles, and the wheels will scarcely make an impression upon the sand. The slope of the shore is so regular that persons may wade a great distance. It is the most delightful spot that the citizens may retire to in the hot season. A stage starts from Cooper's Ferry (Camden) on Thursday in every week and arrives at Cape Island on Friday; it starts from Cape Island on Friday and Tuesday each week and arrives in Philadelphia the following day.

The ambitious postmaster also called attention to the view of the lighthouse, built at the Cape in 1744, the many ships that came there, and the cool ocean breezes. He gave the routes for those traveling in their own carriages, and mentioned that there were boats for those who wished to travel by water. Eager vacationists sailed slowly down the Delaware, or drove through the bad sandy road from Camden in dearborns (four-wheeled carriages) dragged by tired nags.

The "accommodations" to which the postmaster referred in the advertisement consisted of a huge barn-like building with one room, called the Atlantic Hotel. At night, a large sheet divided it in half. The men slept on one side and the women on the other. Later it was improved and became the resort of many prominent and wealthy men. Commodore Stephen Decatur came there season after season for sixteen summers.

The hotel prospered. The year after the historic advertisement, boats ran regularly from Philadelphia to Cape May. In 1818 Congress Hall, another hotel,