

T.E.

THIRD STREET

Original Corner Plot next to Harmony Street
Present Thomas Holcomb House now #44;
the Public Library; and #34 -----

(See Photos #69, #123 and #70)

In the Dutch period, the Green or Market Plain extended to present Fourth street, which was the site of the "Second Row" of early Dutch grants. No record has been found of any lot granted on the site of present Third Street until the English period under the Duke of York, 1664 to 1682. The earliest patent discovered is of 1671 to Harmen Reynersen, who is in possession of one of the two lots then on Third Street between the Dutch house site and present Harmony Street. The lot to Reynersen was next to the Dutch house site, about 73'* wide and bounded north by the lot of Hans Baenssen (usually abbreviated to Baens).

Holcomb Property, X44

The Hans Baens property, in 1671, the corner site, nos #44, is not described in any surviving records found in this search. After the death of Harmen Reynersen, owner of the adjoining lot, his widow, in 1678 sold "house and lot" to John Ogle. John Ogle acquired also this corner property (#44), formerly of Hans Baens, next to Harmony Street. About ten years later in 1687 the widow of John Ogle sold to Hendrick Vandenburg for 28 pounds "a certain house and lot or lots of land -- bounded to the northeast with the Brewers Street (present 4th Street), to the southeast with the

* The surveyor in 1771, about 73 feet.

Market Place and to the southwest with the log house of George More (Dutch house site), containing in breadth before and behind 150 feet.....with all the housing" etc. The width was nearer 138 English feet as succeeding indentures and present measurements indicate. Whether the main house is on the corner lot or is the house formerly of Reynersen is not clear.

In 1634, John Richardson owned the corner lot, described as 88' wide which he sold that year to Cornelius Kettle of "Swanwyck", who with Gerty, his wife, in 1724 sold the 68' corner lot to James Merriweather, "currier" for 60 pounds, together with all and singular the messuages, houses, etc. The price would mean that there was a dwelling or building on this corner lot that was 88' on the Market Plain, 166' on the street to the north, and 75' on the Brewers Street (4th Street). The following year, 1725, James Merriweather sold to Francis Land for 40 pounds, the same property. This was evidently a mortgage for in 1729 Merriweather had title to it again.

The next sale of the 88' corner plot was in 1735, by James Merriweather, currier, and Elizabeth his wife to Sylvanus Hussey, "tanner and currier" for 200 pounds. A year later Hussey sold to Stephen Lewis, also a tanner, for 100 pounds. This sum probably means that Lewis held a mortgage on the property, and the 200 pounds that Hussey paid, indicates that a new or substantially improved dwelling and other improvement had been made to the property by James Merriweather. He owned a plot or a share in a tannery property near the south end of present Third or Fourth Streets.

Stephen Lewis had the corner property seven years and died intestate in 1743. His widow, one son and four daughters inherited from him a substantial estate which included household silver that descended to his grandchildren. The house at Third and Harmony remained in the possession of his descendants for the next century. Esther Lewis, daughter of Stephen, married Zachariah VanLeuvenigh (of the "VanLeuvenigh house", s.w. corner of the Strand and Delaware Street) by whom she had one daughter Rebecca and then died. Rebecca VanLeuvenigh married Richard McWilliam and lived in the present McIntire house, #8 the Strand.

When Rebecca VanLeuvenigh died in 1622, she was the sole owner of the corner property at Third and Harmony, and in her will bequeathed to two granddaughters, Sarah Ann and Catherine Rebecca Thompson, "share and share alike, all of a certain house and lot with the appurtenances thereon, situate in the town of New Castle on the street in which the Academy is and fronted by the said Academy," etc. Catherine Rebecca married and died without children. Her sister Sally Ann, who became owner of the whole property, married Burgess B. Long. She and her husband, in 1836, sold the property to Jesse Moore who may have been a relative. Moore in 1843 sold "the lot of land together with the dwelling house erected thereon" to John Janvier Jr., for \$2,500. John Janvier appears as the owner on the map in Beers Atlas of Delaware published 1868, and the ownership has remained in the Janvier family. Mrs. Thomas Holcomb II, the present occupant, is the daughter of the late

Francis DeHaes Janvier of the Strand.

The date of building of the present house is not indicated in any of the deeds and wills searched; the conclusion from the search is that what was probably a small dwelling of Hans Baens was replaced or incorporated in a larger dwelling house by Cornelius Kettle, a prominent citizen, who had the property from 1694 to 1724; and that James Merriweather, currier, who had it from 1724 to 1735, further enlarged or rebuilt the house then on the site.

The date of erection or of remodeling to its present form may be discovered from some New Castle resident when that source can be further canvassed, and may be approximated by the architectural features.

The house is a sturdy simple brick dwelling showing two stories on Third Street and the gable end and long wing on Harmony Street. There is some visual detail both inside and out that would suggest that the wing was of earlier origin as the history could indicate. It is in good condition and the present owner has enclosed the property with a high brick wall. Very little additional work would be required in a preservation program as the house is in good character with the town.