

Tymen Stidham: The First Doctor of New Sweden

Research

2022

timeline

- March 29, 1638: Arrived aboard the pinnace Kalmar Nyckel at "the rocks" (the ship set sail from Göteborg on January 1 after being turned back by a storm the month earlier), and was present at the founding of Fort Christina, became the first physician to set foot in present Delaware at this time. He returned with the ship (and likely was present when Peter Minuit died during a hurricane in a side trip to the Caribbean near St. Kitts on Aug. 5).
- April 17, 1640: Arrived with the second voyage of the Kalmar Nyckel at Fort Christina after two months at sea (departed Göteborg on Feb. 7). Remained at the colony when the ship returned.
- July 20, 1644: Returned to Sweden on the Fama.
- July 3, 1649: Set sail on the Kattan with his family for the Caribbean with his wife and three children.
- Aug. 27, 1649: The Kattan strikes a reef and sinks. Stidden and his family, along with others, reach by life boat an uninhabited island with no water. They remain on the island 8 days before the Spanish capture the party. The Swedes were taken as prisoner to Puerto Rico. Stidden's family is killed there before the party is released.
- April 1650: Stidden and 23 other Swedes set sail from Puerto Rico on a bark for New Sweden. They are captured by French pirates near St. Cruz. Eventually he is released along with four others, and is next recorded arriving in Amsterdam under the most miserable of conditions. He returns to Stockholm by autumn 1651.
- May 22, 1654: Stidden arrives with the Örn after leaving Sweden for the last time. He becomes a prominent citizen in Fort Christina, later in his lifetime to become Wilmington, an English-controlled town within William Penn's Lower Counties on the Delaware.
- May 1671: Tymen Stiddem is granted a 600 acre tract of land in what is today downtown Wilmington.
- May 8, 1678: Tymen Stiddem purchases an additional 100 acre tract of land in the same area.
- Feb. 22, 1683: Dr. Tymen Stiddem takes the oath of allegiance to the King of England in front of William Penn at New Castle.

December 3, 2015

<https://www.facebook.com/SwedishColonialSociety/posts/989714124432977>

Timen Stiddem, a barber surgeon for the New Sweden Company, crossed the Atlantic Ocean seven times before finally settling in America. He first came with Peter Minit on the Kalmar Nyckel in 1637-1638, but did not stay. On the ship's second voyage in 1640, Timen remained in the colony as the resident doctor. Returning to Sweden in 1644, Timen married and in 1649 sailed again from Gothenburg on the Kattan with his wife and two infant children. A third child was born at sea. The ship ran aground at Puerto Rico and Timen's wife and three children died there as prisoners of the Spanish. Timen Stiddem himself was one of the few survivors to return to Sweden.

Marrying again, he sailed a fourth time from Gothenburg on the Eagle in 1654. Stiddem was residing at Fort Trinity (New Castle) when the Swedes surrendered to the Dutch in 1655, but within a few years he had moved to Christina. Nearby, on the south side of the Brandywine, he acquired lands originally granted to Mäns Anderson and Walraven Jansen DeVos. Stiddem's ownership was confirmed by a patent issued by Governor Francis Lovelace, May 3, 1671. As resurveyed on My 8, 1685, his land measured 294 acres plus 72 acres of marsh.

The name of Timen Stiddem's second wife, the mother of all of his surviving children, is unknown. His third wife was Christina Ollesdotter, the widow of Walraven Jansen DeVos, who survived him.

Timen Stiddem's will, dated February 1, 1685/6 and proved April 24, 1686, gave his married daughter Ingeborg, one steer and one cow. His other three daughters and five sons were to share his plantation equally. His children were: Lulof (born c. 1654), Lucas (c.1656), Erasmus (c. 1658), Adam (c.1660), Benedict (c. 1662), Ingeborg (c. 1664), married to Peter Jaquet by 1686), Elisabeth (c. 1666), Maria (c.1668, married to Mårten Knutsson), and Magdalena (c. 1671, who was unmarried in 1693, but would soon marry Peter Andersson). The sons' surnames evolved from Stiddem to Stedham, with Stidham becoming preferred in later generations. Source: The 1693 Census of the Swedes on the Delaware by Dr. Peter Stebbins Craig, p. 92-93.

Tymen Stidham Research

Delaware's First "Doctor": Tymen Stidham and the Tools He Used. Barbara Benson. Delaware History Journal, Volume 2, Number 1, 1985.

Delaware Medical Journal, October 1986, Vol. 58, No. 10

- Stidham was Delaware's first permanent "doctor"

Delaware Historical Society

- Only resources were basic barber-surgeon tools and a collection of printed botanical and medical books (in the collections of DHS)
 - Provide a fascinating glimpse of the types of ailments suffered by colonists of New Sweden and the primitive methods available for treatment
- According to Stidham's will, he was born about 1617 in a town named Hammel (possibly Denmark or Sweden)
 - Family tradition that his parents migrated from England to Denmark (where Tymen was born) then on to Sweden – may explain why he owned books printed in English
- Journey to the New World
 - 1st trip in 1640 (1638?) and remained for 4 years
 - Returned to Sweden for 5 years
 - Embarked with wife and 5 children on the *Katt*
 - Shipwrecked in the Caribbean
 - Took 2 years to make their way back to Sweden
 - 3rd and final trip back to New Sweden in 1654
- Stayed in New Sweden after the colony capitulated to the Dutch in 1655
- Sought an official position with the new Dutch government
 - Although the colony desperately needed medical assistance, the new governor, Alexander d'Hinoyossa rejected his application
 - Stidham was close friends with William Beekman (d'Hinoyossa's rival for control of the colony)
- Stidham continued to practice his trade
 - 1st at Upland (present day Delaware County, PA)
 - Then on the Brandywine near the old Fort Christina
- Died in 1686 – had lived along the Delaware River for over 30 years
 - Survived by nine children
 - Some descendants still live in the area

As a barber-surgeon, Stidham would have had a rudimentary knowledge of medicine. He could provide basic dental and surgical care, as well as cut hair and trim beards. Treatments available to him and his patients were extremely limited as the scientific study of medicine had only just begun. The care Stidham could provide his patients was as rudimentary as that available five centuries ago.

Stidham would not have understood the causes of diseases that afflicted his patients – fevers, consumption, typhoid, smallpox, yellow fever, etc. He could only treat the symptoms with a limited arsenal of remedies. He could set bones, apply setons (bristles) to clean wounds, and pull teeth. He could also draw blood through cupping and prescribe folk and natural medicines. Stidham would have found recipes for treatment of various medicinal problems in his medical books.

We don't know how large his library was. The only surviving volume at DHS contains portions of four books, bound between rough, handmade covers (3 5/8" by 5 3/8") hinged with leather strips. The paper is

course and the printing is often poor. There are no beautiful illustrations and the art work is limited to a woodcut on the title page or the last page and rare instances of ornamental/illuminated capitals (unlike other great herbals of that time period). The inside cover is inscribed "1552/Augt. 12th/Richard Page"

- Stidham was using the books almost 100 years after they were published
- Shows that medical science was moving so slowly at the time that he could use secondhand or used books, possibly handed down in the family
- All four appear to have been printed in London between 1530 and 1552

First Book

A booke of the properties of herbes called an herball, whereunto is added the tyme ye herbes, flours and sedes should be gathered to be kept the whole yere, with the venture of ye Herbes who they are stylled. Also a generall rule of al manner of Herbes drawn out of an auncient booke of Physycke by M.C.

- Inscription on the last page shows the book is as "imprinted at London by Wyllyam Copland"
- Wood cut on the title page shows that it is the first of two editions, published in 1550
- Begins with an alphabetical list of plants and a description of their use
 - Many still found in flower and herb gardens today (iris and rosemary)
- According to the author
 - Rosemary is good for "all evylles in the bodye"
 - Boiled in a linen cloth and drink the liquid
 - Boiled with white wine to make a potion to remove blemishes from the face
 - Sprinkle the flowers among clothes in a chest or books to prevent moth attacks
 - Garden Mint as a liquid is good for gums, teeth, and bad breath
 - dried can be used for stomach ailments
 - mixed with other plants, honey, or wine – can be used as a salve or ingested

Second Book

- Incomplete and missing its title page
- inscription at the end reads "Imprinted at London on Fleetestreate, beneath the Conduite, at the sign of S. John Evangelist, by Hugh Jackson"
- Identified as a "pestilence treatise"
- Appears to date from 1550
- Author assures the reader there is a medicine for every sickness (surely a comfort for doctors such as Stidham)
- Begins with a section on how to avoid pestilence by temperance in food and drink
- Also makes astrological pronouncements
 - Those born under the sign Gemini are kind, wise, and true
 - Taurus – melancholy, unstable, untrue, "white lyvered and scarce of...purse"
 - Medical treatments are geared toward astrological signs

Delaware Historical Society

- Some of the remedies seem outlandish or even disgusting by today's standards, but some are designed to provide relief from ailments still common today
 - Headache
 - Apply hot plasters of steeped hemlock to the area of pain – 2 or 3 applications are guaranteed to make a person “whole” again
 - Swollen Knees
 - Wrap the inflamed joint with woolen cloth and then cover it with the beaten whites of 2 or 3 hen's eggs
 - Yolks of the eggs were then added to black soap and beaten to make a salve which was also added to the knee wrapping
 - Let sit for 3 days and the inflammation would be gone

Third Book

- Lacks a title page as well as many other pages
- Inscription reads – “ Here endeth the Book of Seynge of Waters. Imprinted at London at fletestrete at the Sygne of the Rose Garland, by me Wyllyam Copland for Richard Kele. In the Yere of our Lord M. DCII (1552) the xii day of August.”*

Fourth Book

- Identified as *The treasure of pore men*, the book had seven editions between 1539 and 1560**
- Marginal handwritten note reads “Master Richard Sugden of hull vintner” – possible owner?
- Stidham's portion provides treatments for all kinds of problems from bad breath to sleeplessness to heart disease and tumors
- Headache cure – if the previously listed treatment didn't work someone might want to try a salve of rue and apple smeared on the head

Stidham's books provide a tangible link with Delaware's past and help foster an appreciation of the difficult life of Delaware's earliest colonial settlers.

*Wyllyam Copland – early London printer, printed at the sign of the Rose Garden from 1548-1559 (Kele for whom the book was printed, died in 1552) - Catalogue of manuscripts and rare books, Issue 251; Issue 257; Issue 260 By Myers & co., booksellers, London

**published in 1552 – according to *Typographical Antiquities: Or An Historical Account of the Origin and Progress of Printing in Great Britain and Ireland...* Volume 1, By Joseph Ames

“ The goode book of medicines, called the treasure of poor men: The 1552.
mirror, or glasse of health, needful for all those, that will keep their bodies
from the sicknesse of the pestilence: and it sheweth how the planetts do
raygne every day and night: remedies for divers infirmities, that hurteth
the body of manne. London, for Tho. Petyt.”* This is a collection of
physical tracts, which were often sold separate. Octavo.

“ The book of the properties of herbes, called an herball, &c. drawn out 1552.
of an ancient book of phisyck by W. C. (probably himself,) and with it, a
book of the feing of vrynes, of all the colours that vrynes be of, with the
medycynes annexed to euery vryne, and euery vryne hys vrynall: much
profytable for every man to knowe. For R. Kele, 12 August.”* Octavo.

“ ¶ Here beginneth the feinge of Vrynes of all colours that Vrynes be of, 1552.
wyth the medecynes annexed to euery Vryne, and to euery Vryne hys Vrynall
muche profytable for euery mā to knowe” Then three urinals, and underneath
is a small neat cut, representing a consultation of phyicians. It begins at the
back of the title, and contains F, in octaves, half sheets. Colophon, “ Here
endeth the Booke of the feynge of Waters. Jmprynted— in Fletefetre

at the fyngne of the Rose Garland, by me Wyllyā Copland for Abraham
Vele. ¶ In the yere of our Lord, M. D. L. II. The. xii. day of August.”
This seems to be the same edition as the foregoing article, for R. Kele, only
the proprietors names changed after a certain number were worked off. W.H.
Twelves.

Early Wilmington Settler Arrives On the Kalmar Nyckel in 1638

Mark Dixon, October 27, 2014

<https://delawaretoday.com/life-style/early-wilmington-settler-arrives-on-the-kalmar-nyckel-in-1638/>

Think you have a bad commute? Consider Timen Stiddem, a physician and early Wilmington settler who crossed the Atlantic four times between 1638 and 1654. The 1649 trip was a doozy. Stiddem’s ship, Kattan, with 70 settlers and 30 crew, hit a reef and sank in the Caribbean. Imprisoned, tortured and robbed by Spanish and French authorities, most died there, including Stiddem’s wife and three young

Delaware Historical Society

children. "In all, only 19 of the colonists, besides some officers and soldiers, returned to Sweden, 45 or 50 finding their graves on the islands," wrote historian Amandus Johnson in 1911.

Struggling back to Sweden in 1651, Stiddem sailed again for Delaware three years later. That trip was his last. Considered by Delaware physicians the first of their profession in the state, he remained, remarried and eventually became a wealthy man. At his death, he owned the northern third of what is now downtown Wilmington. Which, all things considered, seems fair.

Stiddem was born in Denmark. Or the Netherlands. Or, possibly, Sweden. No one really knows. But in the 1630s, he lived in Gothenburg, Sweden, where his father, Luloff Stiddem, was sheriff and, later, the city's construction manager—positions that likely allowed him to help his children become established. When Timen Stiddem made his first voyage aboard the *Kalmar Nyckel* in 1638, he was one of two barber surgeons. Barbers cut hair. So did barber surgeons. But they also performed surgery, something physicians considered beneath them. Stiddem probably learned his profession as an apprentice.

Sweden in the mid-17th century was one of the great powers of Europe. And like the others, it wanted a chunk of the New World. The purpose of the 1638 voyage was to transport enough settlers to establish such a colony, which would grow tobacco and trade for furs. The mission was led by Peter Minuit, who had been fired seven years earlier from his job as director of the Dutch colony at New Amsterdam. "Minuit was still disgruntled over his 1631 recall to Holland and was willing to retaliate against the Dutch by working for the advantage of the Swedes," according to Penn State University historian Elizabeth Covart.

The Swedes' presence sufficiently annoyed the Dutch that, in 1655, they swooped in and took over New Sweden. The English, in turn, booted the Dutch in 1664. In March 1638, *Kalmar Nyckel* and a companion ship anchored in the Christina River. Minuit built a fort at the site of Wilmington, then cut a deal with the natives for all the land fronting the Delaware from there to present-day Trenton, N.J. Stiddem's activities do not seem to have been recorded. But, with dozens of men building and planting, there were plenty of minor and major hurts to tend. Before the Dutch took over, Sweden would send out nine more expeditions with supplies and settlers.

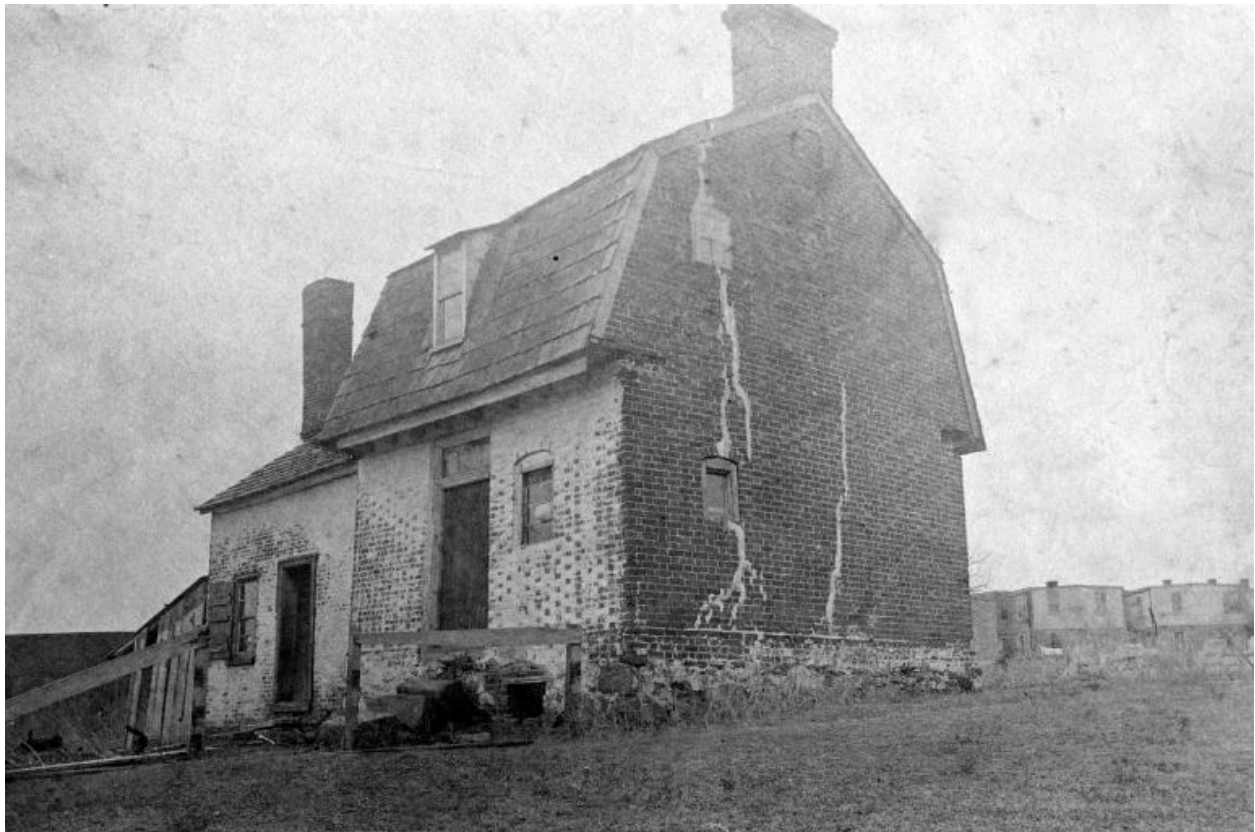
In 1640, Stiddem remained as resident doctor, but returned to Gothenburg in 1644. By 1649, now with a family, he likely looked at New Sweden as a place to build a future rather than to have another adventure. Sailing ships didn't travel in a straight line. Depending on the season, prevailing winds and currents often required ships bound for North America to sail south to Africa, west to the Caribbean, then north. In late August, *Kattan* left Antiqua after picking up water. On Aug. 27, about 2 a.m., the ship bumped a reef. "(Colonist Hans) Amundsson and the other officers anxiously requested the captain to lower the sails and bring the ship to a standstill," wrote Johnson, "but he simply answered, 'It will all pass over.'" Then, the ship struck again, and again. On the third impact, a rock penetrated the hull and *Kattan* was pinned to the reef like a butterfly to a board. Efforts to free it failed, and passengers were rowed to a nearby uninhabited island about 80 miles off the east coast of Puerto Rico.

They had their provisions, but no water. "We had to lick the stones with our tongues," said colonist Johan Rudberus, "but could not secure so much wet for eight days that we could quench our thirst." After a week, a Spanish ship found them and confiscated the Swedes' cargo. "Not being content with this, they

pulled the clothes off their victims, men and women alike, to seek for money and other valuables,” wrote Johnson. Taken to San Juan, the Swedes were marched to the marketplace “with drums and pipes and great noise.” There, a bonfire was lit and all their books—mostly Protestant religious texts—burned.

Various opportunities for leaving were frustrated by official action, or inaction. “Perhaps religious motives also influenced the council to detain the Swedes,” wrote Johnson. “There was some hope of converting them to Catholicism if they remained on the island.” In April 1650, 25 surviving Swedes bought a small ship, but near St. Croix were waylaid by a French vessel, whose crew “fought like dogs” over their meager property. According to an account by Rudberus, the French governor staged a mock execution of several Swedes for amusement, then bound four men and hung them from hooks for two days and two nights until “their bodies were blue and the blood pressed out of the fingers.” Stiddem does not seem to have been among those tortured. “Our women and boys had concealed some money and pearls down in the ground,” said Rudberus, “which became known to the French, wherefore they tortured and tormented us fearfully, screwed off our fingers with pistol locks, burnt the feet of the women on red-hot iron plates.” One woman was raped by the governor, then killed.

In 1651, a Dutch ship rescued Rudberus, two women and two children. How Stiddem escaped was not recorded, only that—alone—he reached Amsterdam “in most miserable circumstances” and begged his way to Gothenburg from there. And then, amazingly, he sailed again. It’s what commuters do.



Stiddem's Wilmington home stood at 14th and Poplar streets until it was demolished in 1888.