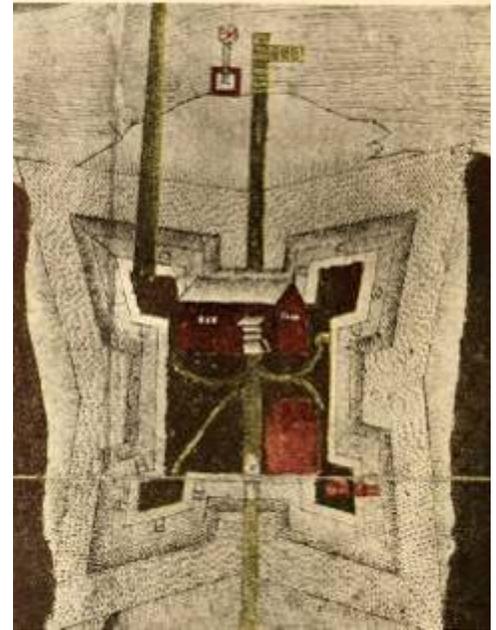


## A brief history of Fort Christina

- In 1638, Swedish and Finnish colonists from the ships Kalmar Nyckel and Fogel Grip established a timber and earth fort along the Christina River on what is today's Seventh Street Peninsula in Wilmington, Del. Named Fort Christina after the then 12-year-old queen of Sweden, it was the first Swedish settlement in America and the first permanent non-native settlement in Delaware.
- What is believed to be the location where the Swedes and Finns first stepped ashore is a natural wharf of stone known as "The Rocks." The site, located within the boundaries of the Fort Christina National Historic Landmark, is marked today by a bulkhead and rock outcropping extending along the northern bank of the Christina River near its confluence with Brandywine Creek, over a mile upstream from where the Christina empties into the Delaware River.
- Between 1638 and 1655, the profitable fur trade helped increase the settlement's population to 300. In 1655, however, the Dutch, looking to strengthen their control of the fur trade from the Delaware River to the Susquehanna Valley in Pennsylvania, attacked and quickly captured Fort Christina. Despite the Dutch invasion, the population of the settlement remained predominantly Swedish. When Delaware fell to the English in 1664, the king's soldiers garrisoned the fort, but it was the Swedish settlement which remained the heart of the village that spread along the banks of the Christina and became, in the next century, Wilmington.
- The settlement's location was not only advantageous for the fur trade, it was also strategic militarily. During the War of the Austrian Succession of the mid 1700s, the American Revolution and the War of 1812, the surrounding area became the location of several defensive outposts providing security against naval and land invasions.
- On June 27, 1938, Delaware celebrated the tercentenary of the landing of the Swedes and Finns with the dedication of the newly constructed Fort Christina State Park near the site of the original settlement. In attendance were such distinguished guests as Crown Princess Louise of Sweden; Prince Gustaf Bertil, Duke of Halland; U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Delaware Governor Richard C. McMullen. Since the park's completion in 1938, it has been visited by a number of distinguished guests including King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden (1976) and U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963).



*Detail from a map of Fort Christina by Per Lindeström, 1654.*



*View of Fort Christina State Park in 1939.*

- Within the park stands the Swedish Tercentenary Monument depicting the Swedish colonial vessel, the Kalmar Nyckel, surmounting a granite column. The monument, a gift from the people of Sweden to the people of the United States, was crafted in 1938 by Carl Milles, a Swedish sculptor.
- Fort Christina State Park, originally administered by the State Highway Department, was transferred to the Public Archives Commission in 1961 before being transferred to the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs which administers it today as the Fort Christina National Historic Landmark.
- Fort Christina was designated a national historic landmark in 1961.
- A replica of the [Kalmar Nyckel](#), one of the ships that brought the Swedes and Finns to America, is docked downstream from Fort Christina National Historic Landmark and is available for visitation.
- [Old Swedes Church](#), located one block from the landmark, was completed in 1699 by the descendents of the original Fort Christina settlers. The building is one of the oldest structures in the United States still in use as a house of worship.



*Fort Christina National Historic Landmark. In the foreground is the Swedish Tercentenary Monument.*

For more information on Fort Christina, go to its [national historic landmark nomination](#).