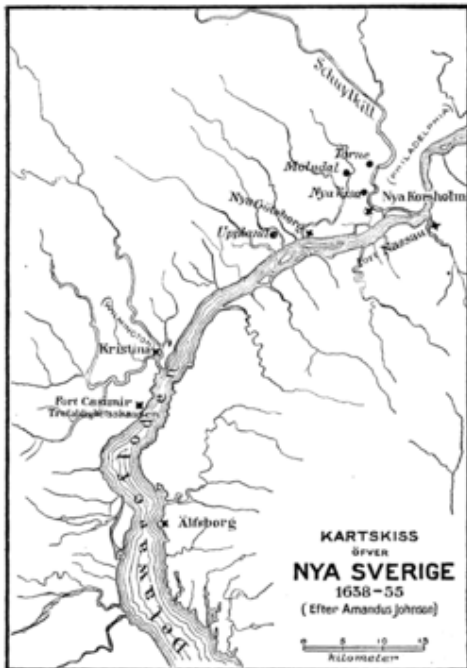


1638

New Sweden

On March 29, 1638 a Swedish colonizing expedition on two ships, the *Kalmar Nyckel* and *Fogel Grip*, and backed by a commercial venture known as the Swedish South Company sailed up the Delaware River, past Dutch-claimed territory, and landed at what is known today as Swedes' Landing in Wilmington, Delaware. The expedition was the first American colonization effort by the Swedish Empire, which was then at the height of its powers. Sweden at the time included Finland and Estonia, as well as parts of Norway, Poland, Russia, Germany and Latvia.



Map of New Sweden, c. 1650 by Amandus Johnson

The colony's governor, Peter Minuit, met with the sachems of the indigenous Leni Lenape and Susquehannocks, and purchased land on both sides of the Delaware River from the mouth of the Schuylkill River to the mouth of the Delaware. This included parts of what is today Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. The Indians later claimed that they had sold them a much more limited mandate. The deeds were in part designed to ward off any Dutch claims to the land. Minuit and his expedition, which included a number of Finns as well as Swedes, constructed a fort at the junction of Christina River and Brandywine Creek (in present-day Wilmington), which they named Fort Christina after the Queen of Sweden.

In the ensuing years approximately 600 Swedish and Finnish emigrants settled in the area, concentrated mainly in what is now Delaware. They built the first log cabins in America. However, life was difficult, as the colonists suffered high rates of illness and mortality because of hard working conditions, limited nutrition and mosquito-borne infections due to the marshy terrain. Relations with the Dutch in New Amsterdam to the north were fractious, and in 1655 the Dutch seized Fort Christina and incorporated New Sweden into New Netherland, only to lose both colonies to the British in 1664. Although New Sweden lasted as a Swedish colony only 17 years, traces of New Sweden can be found

today in Delaware and throughout the region in place names, churches and architecture, and many of today's population of this area claim descent from the first Swedish settlers.