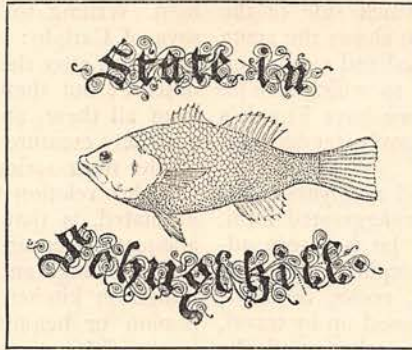


THE OLDEST CLUB IN AMERICA.



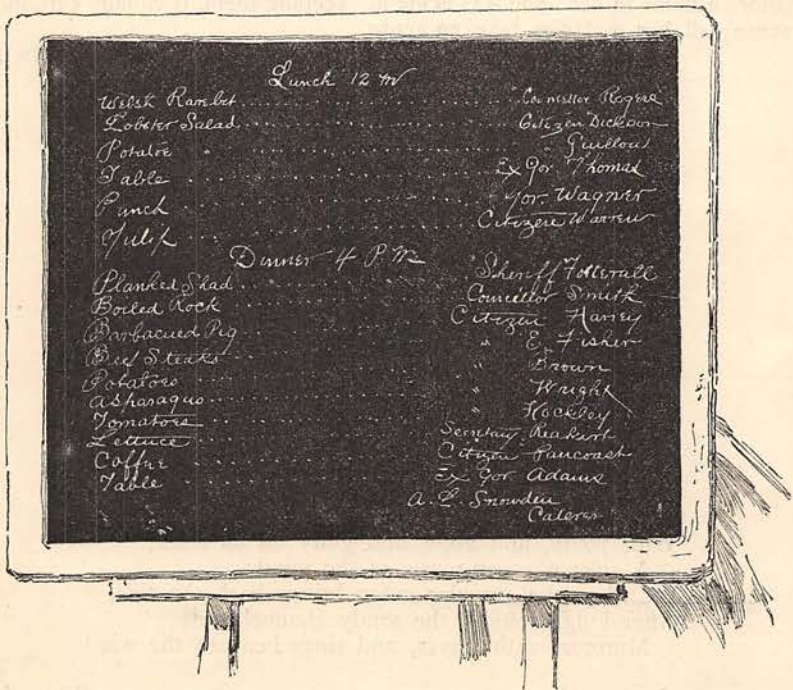
THE CLUB EMBLEM.

In early colonial days, much time and thought were bestowed in Pennsylvania upon recreation and simple and healthful social pleasures. In pursuance of this object, in May, 1732, a few of the original settlers, many of them emigrants with William Penn, met and determined to found a colony on the banks of the beautiful "Manaiung," as the Schuylkill was then called. They sought a patron in the person of William Warner, Esq., and settled on a portion of his well wooded

estate, "Eaglesfield," and proceeded to fence in an acre of ground whereon to carry out their peculiar ideas. To prove that "Baron" Warner enforced his proprietary rights, the following receipt, preserved among the archives of the State, is offered :

"June 1st, 1749, received of the Honorable Thomas Stretch, Esquire, & Co., three sun perch, in full for one year's rent of the court-house lot on Schuylkill, due this present month.

"WILLIAM WARNER."



A BILL OF FARE.



SKETCHES IN CAMP.

This payment of free socage came, in time, to be attended with some ceremony. The Governor appointed a committee of three citizens, who placed the three sun perch on the large pewter dish, heavily stamped with the family coat-of-arms, which was brought to this country by William Penn and presented to the colony. Thus the rent due to the "Manor House" was presented, with great respect, to the "Baron." The colonists then proceeded to organize a form of government and to draw up a code of laws. The first of May was fixed upon as Gala Day, the beginning of the fishing and fowling season, and October 1st as Election Day, to close the official year. At the first enjoyment of their new franchise as free and independent colonists, October, 1732, they chose a governor, five members of Assembly, a sheriff, and a coroner. A secretary of state was appointed by the Governor. On such occasions rounds of beef, barbecued pig, sirloin steaks, and the products of the rod and gun were set forth, the feast closing with the social pipe. Among the early executive acts of the Colonial Governor the following official warrant was issued:

"COLONY OF SCHUYLKILL, SS.
To — and all other Schuyllkillians whom it may concern:

"Whereas, great quantities of rabbits, squirrels, pheasants, partridges, and others of the game kind,

have presumed to infest the coasts and territories of Schuyllkill in a wild, bold, and ungovernable manner: These are therefore to authorize and require you or any of you to make diligent search for the said rabbits, squirrels, pheasants, partridges, and others of the game kind, in all suspected places where they may be found, and bring the respective bodies of so many as you shall find before the Justices, etc., at a General Court to be held Thursday, the fourth day of October next, there to be proceeded against, as by the said Court shall be adjudged; and for your or any of your so doing, this shall be your sufficient Warrant. Witness, myself, the twenty-ninth day of September, in the twelfth year of my Government, and year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty-four.

[L. S.] "THOMAS STRETCH."

Under Governor Stretch the colony prospered in its peaceful pursuits. In the year 1747, for their more convenient accommodation, they resolved to build a court-house for the meetings of the Governor, Assembly and colonists, on the slope facing the river, amid the stately walnut trees, some of which furnished the timber. As early as 1759 the Rev. Andrew Burnaby, A. M., vicar of Greenwich, England, thus writes of this aristocratic colony in his "Travels through the Middle Settlements of North America," published in London the following year:

"There is a society of sixteen ladies and as many gentlemen, called the 'Fishing Company,' which meet once a fortnight upon the Schuyllkill. They have a very pleasant room erected in a romantic situation upon the banks of that river, where they generally



THE CASTLE.



A NEW MEMBER.

dine and drink tea. There are several pretty walks about it, and some wild and rugged rocks which, together with the water and fine groves that adorn the banks, form a most beautiful and picturesque scene. There are boats and fishing-tackle of all sorts, and the company divert themselves with walking, dancing, singing, conversing, going upon the water and fishing, or just as they please. The ladies wear an uniform, and appear with great ease and advantage from the neatness and simplicity of it. The first and most distinguished people of the colony are of this society, and it is very advantageous to a stranger to be introduced to it, as he thereby gets acquainted with the best and most respected company in Philadelphia."

It was found impossible to enjoy and fully protect the "right and privilege to hunt in the woods and fish in the waters of the Schuylkill," granted to the colony by the Lenape tribe, without the power to enforce the same. Accordingly, in 1760, a law was passed, entitled "An act for the support of the navy in Schuylkill."

After a long and prosperous administration of thirty-four years, Governor Stretch laid down his rod never again to command the "fishing fleet." During the Revolution, Samuel Morris, Governor of Schuylkill, became Captain of the "Philadelphia Light-Horse," the muster of which contained the names of many of the citizens of the Schuylkill Colony. This corps served with distinction in the Jersey campaigns, participated in the battles of Trenton and Princeton, was Washington's body-guard, and received his especial commendation on their discharge from service. In 1781, a committee was appointed to repair the long-abandoned court-house, the neglected navy, and dilapidated dock-yard, and put them in a state suitable for the importance of the step

about to be taken by the colonists. On the 11th of October, of the following year, the Governor, Assembly, and citizens, as many as could be gathered, met in the court-house, and unanimously passed a declaration of independence and fourteen enactments providing fully for the government of the colony as a sovereign and independent State, and that the court-house was henceforth to be known as the Castle of the State in Schuylkill.

The citizens of the State quaffed many bowls of punch in toasting and foretelling its prospects; and as their lusty cheers ran through the "Baron's" wood,

"Schuylkill heard the merry strain
Repeated o'er and o'er again,
Her ebbing tide bore on the air
And echoed it to Delaware."

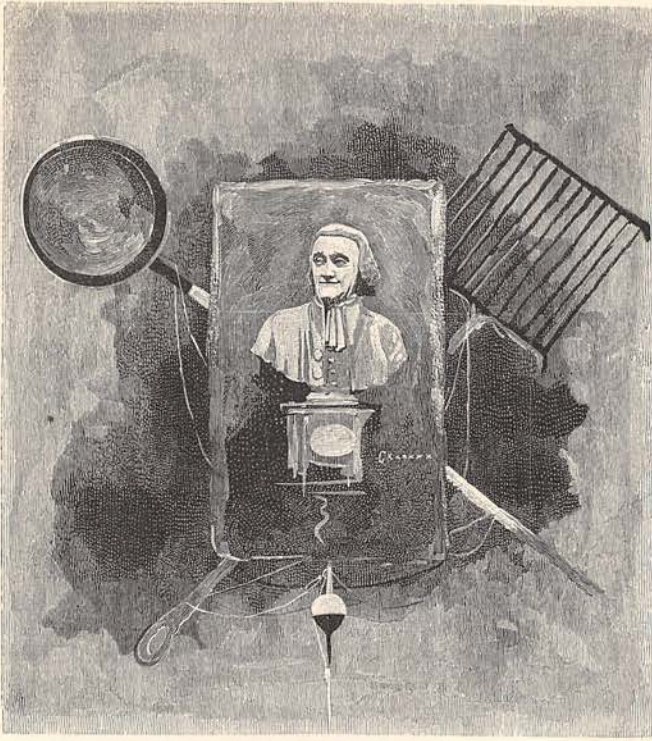
The death of the worthy "Baron" Warner, a few years later, freed the commonwealth of its only vestige of feudal ties. On Thursday, June 14th, 1787, George Washington was entertained at the Castle.

In 1825, "Little Schuylkill" invited General Lafayette and suite to dine in state at the Castle. The citizens, habited in white linen aprons and ample straw hats, formed in open file facing inward, near the north front entrance to the Castle. The three banners were on the right. General Lafayette and



SHELLING PEAS.

suite, and the gentlemen in attendance on him as escort deputed by the city authorities, alighted at the lines of the State. They were conducted between the open files toward the Castle by the Secretary of State; at the threshold of which Councillor Morris, in the absence of his Excellency the Governor, received Lafayette, as the guest of the State,



GOVERNOR SAMUEL MORRIS. (AFTER A BUST BY WILLIAM RUSH.)

with a cordial welcome, and presented him with a certificate of honorary membership as a duly qualified citizen. To the welcome the General promptly replied :

“MY DEAR SIR: I feel sincere pleasure in visiting your ancient institution, so pleasantly situated on the bank of your beautiful river. It is the more grateful to me as it completes my tour to all the States of the Union. About half a century ago, I first crossed your beautiful stream in times of peril; far different now are the sensations I realize in meeting my friends on so pleasant an occasion. I feel honored by your polite invitation and kind reception in your ancient and agreeable State in Schuylkill. May you long continue happy and prosperous.”

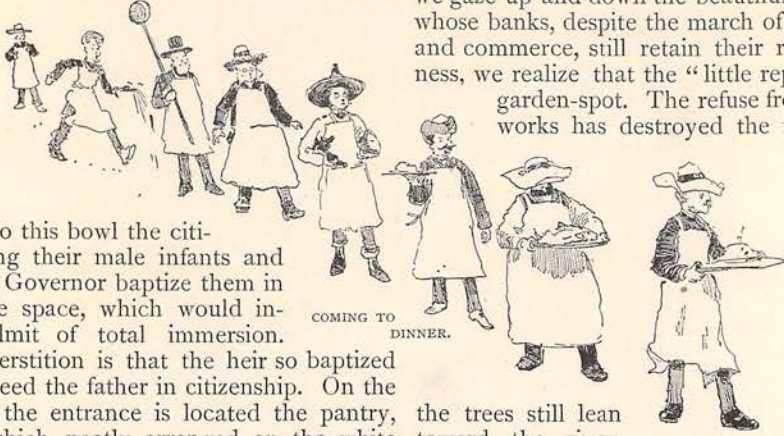
The Marquis, expressing a desire as a member to do his duty, was duly invested by the Councillors with a hat and apron, and introduced to the kitchen, where he was initiated into business by attention to the turning of the beefsteaks on the gridiron. The banquet was served at four o'clock. All fared sumptuously, and the mirth was greatly enhanced by the happy witticisms of Judge Richard Peters, who sang several excellent songs, to the delight of his veteran friend Lafayette.

Since that time there has been little change in the simple manners and quaint customs of the State in Schuylkill. The erection of the dam at Fairmount in 1822 for the Philadel-

phia Water-Works stopped the tide-water and threatened destruction to the fishing. The “Schuylkillians” with sorrow relinquished the land they had occupied for ninety years, trusted their “Castle” to the waters of the Schuylkill, and, floating it five miles down the river, located their settlement at Rambo Rock, below Grey’s Ferry. Here the Castle still stands, surrounded by a wood of lofty forest trees planted by the Freeman of that date, whose descendants alone remain to enjoy the grateful shade.

As we enter the long lane, shaded by buttonwoods, on a gala day, we see at the Castle busy men in long aprons and broad-brimmed hats. In dimensions the building itself is not awe-inspiring. Over the portal you may read the date 1732. The structure is of wood, and the many coats of yellow wash, peeling from its sides, reveal the secret of its preservation. The absence of glass, the board shutters being painted in imitation of windows, tells of a primitive period, while the bare floor and whitewashed walls speak of the ancient simplicity that has been preserved. The citizens are appointed in turn to market for the kitchen and to assign the preparation of the dishes to different members. Economy is the first requisite, and a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of the

cooks the second. The large bowl, out of which we ladle our famous "Fish-House Punch" with the curious wooden "dipper" that never spills, was imported and presented to the State by Captain Charles Ross, in



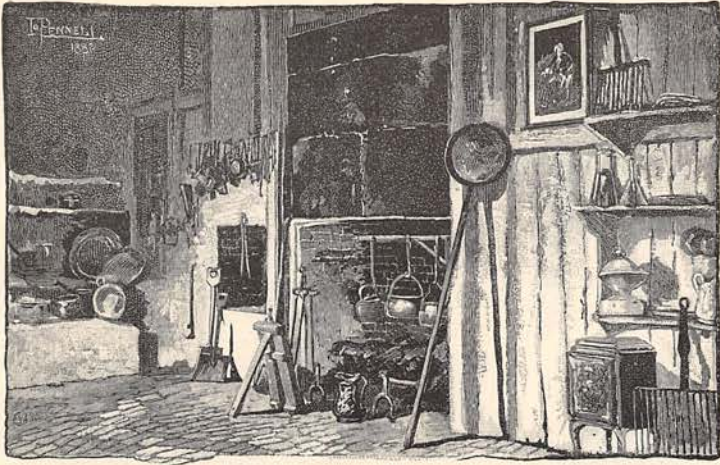
1812. To this bowl the citizens bring their male infants and have the Governor baptize them in its ample space, which would indeed admit of total immersion. The superstition is that the heir so baptized will succeed the father in citizenship. On the right of the entrance is located the pantry, within which, neatly arranged on the white sanded shelves, stands the china, each piece stamped with the company's emblem, a sun perch. On the immediate right, in the main or dining-hall of the Castle, stands the company's chest, in which are kept the ingredients of the punch. On two stout supports rests the "Penn Platter," already referred to in the payment of sojage. To describe the objects of interest suspended on the walls, presented from time to time by visitors, would make an interesting and miscellaneous catalogue. Several of the early State papers bearing dates of the first half of the eighteenth century appear on the walls, neatly framed. Near the door leading to the pi-

azza facing the river stands the bust of Samuel Morris, who was governor of Schuylkill for forty-six years, and to whose urbane manner and rigid simplicity the foundation of the State owes its existence and long-continued prosperity. As we gaze up and down the beautiful Schuylkill, whose banks, despite the march of civilization and commerce, still retain their rural loveliness, we realize that the "little republic" is a garden-spot. The refuse from the gas-works has destroyed the fishing, but

the trees still lean toward the river, seeking the moisture rising from its surface. Lunch is served on the long wooden table, set under the protecting shade of the oaks and maples and underspread by a carpet of violets, daisies, and buttercups. Comfortably placed in the deep-seated, high-backed chairs, the guests are served with lobster salad, cold corn-beef, and Welsh rare-bit. Lunch is hardly over before the Castle bell rings out from the tower, and the Sheriff appears at the door, calling out, "Oyez! Oyez!" making proclamation in the name of the Governor, summoning all citizens to assemble in the hall of the Castle to consider affairs appertaining to the State.



THE KITCHEN.



THE FIRE-PLACE.

To the deliberations of the Assembly none but citizens are admitted. Upon the adjournment of the Assembly, a busy scene presents itself in the kitchen. This building is about forty feet long by fifteen feet deep. The front wooden wall is hung on hinges, which when swung up and supported on props makes a convenient shed. The floor is bricked and shelves run round the room, on which stand every implement of the culinary art. In the center of the back wall is the huge fire-place, eight feet by six, with its roaring fire. Above and around the fire-place hang the old-fashioned gridirons and frying-pans; the latter, which have handles six feet long, are no longer in use. These belong to the "tossing" days. Before the fishing was destroyed, one or two members would sleep at the Castle the night before Gala Day, and would be up at day-break to catch the early tide and return with dozens of white perch for the day's repast. These, being duly inspected and cleaned by the Coroner, would be assigned to some citizen to cook. To insure a successful toss, great care was used in placing the perch in the pan; the largest were placed at the outer rim, the heads meeting where the handle joins the pan. The next in size succeeded, and so on until the pan was full. When the fish were thoroughly cooked on one side, the cook would announce the fact, and everybody would gather around to see the toss. Loosening the fish by a lateral movement of the pan, with a further movement only to be learned by practice, the cook would toss and turn the entire pan of fish, replacing them in the pan with the cooked side up and each

fish relatively in its original position. Owing to the destruction of the fishing, the toss is now nearly a lost art. When a crowd gathers round the old pump, it is a sign that the "Coroner" is cleaning the shad for planking. This is a matter of some ceremony. The senior apprentice claims the right to hold and turn the first shad for the "Coroner," after which one of the juniors is allowed to learn the art of cleaning and splitting a shad properly. Thoroughly washed, they are laid on the draining-board, and during their drying the boards, four feet by



THE LAST TOSSER.

two, are placed before the fire to be heated. The shad are then nailed thereon with their backs to the boards, and having been properly seasoned are stood before the fire and carefully watched till done. The hour for dinner is designated by the "Caterer," and every cook is held strictly accountable if his dish is not ready. Another cook will prepare the roe sauce to accompany the shad—another specialty of this family of cooks, the like of which is never tasted save within the bounds



DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION.

of this commonwealth. On the "altar" at the end of the kitchen, on whose surface the bed of burning coals is constantly kept alive, may be seen the *pièce de résistance*, the pigs split and laid upon the gridiron and being "barbecued." Near by, a member prepares the pig sauce. Neither fork nor knife is allowed ever to penetrate the meats of these epicures; no juice must be allowed to escape; beefsteak tongs, imported from England, alone are used to turn the roasts.

Not a grain of seasoning is allowed on steaks; but cooked over wood coals quickly, constantly turned, and served the instant they are done, the full flavor comes out as the juice flows when they are carved. Outside

the kitchen an equally busy scene presents itself. The lawn is studded with cabooses, over one of which a Councillor may be seen carefully skimming the water covering his twelve-pound salmon, or testing a boiling pot of potatoes, peas or asparagus. Meanwhile, the banquet table has been set in the Castle by the apprentices, critically superintended by the ex-Governor; the distance of a plate and a half for each guest has been rigidly enforced, and the glasses have been arranged with mathematical precision. The Mandarin hats have been decorated in honor of this Gala Day, and, as is the custom, a live perch swims round the suspended glass globe to announce that the fishing season has opened.

At the stroke of four, the Caterer announces to the Governor that dinner is served, all file into the Castle, and, sinking into the spacious high-backed chairs, are prepared to do justice to the novelties placed before them. On the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the State many distinguished guests were present. The Governor of Pennsylvania sat on the right of the Governor of the State in Schuylkill, and, for once, within his own commonwealth acknowledged a higher authority. The famous Beefsteak Club of London, which, since the destruction of the fishing, the State in Schuylkill closely resembles, is its junior by three years, and none other with a continuous history approaches it in antiquity. Composed of the first citizens of Philadelphia, it counts many honored names on its roll. The candidate for membership must serve a trying apprenticeship and receive the unanimous support of the limited membership of twenty-five.

Robert Adams, Jr.

