

STATEN ISLAND.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND DETAILS.

Staten Island, or as it was called by Hendrik Hudson in July, 1609, Staaten Eylant (the Island of the States), and by the aborigines, Aquehonga Manacknong (the place of bad woods), is situated in the Bay of New York, about five and one-half miles southwesterly from the city at St. George, the nearest point. In form the island is an irregular triangle, its greatest length being a trifle over thirteen and a half miles, while its extreme breadth is about seven and three-fourths miles. The superficial area is twenty-seven square miles or 17,347 acres, about two-thirds of which are improved or under cultivation, the other third being composed of salt meadows, on which there is only produced a kind of grass that is dried into what is known as salt hay, a nutritious and pleasant food for cattle.

In its surface the island presents all the pleasing diversities of formation that are to be found in other favored localities. The richly bearing valleys are backed by stately forest-crowned hills that rise almost to the dignity of mountains, and from whose summits there is an extended view.

Hill and valley, forest and lawn, palace and cottage, town and country, farm and nursery, industry and thrift, the old and the new, business and pleasure, meet one at every turn, and form a combination at once pleasing and surprising.

The population of Staten Island closely approximates 45,000 souls, a majority of whom are "native and to the manor born."

This work does not pretend to be a directory of the entire island, but only of those portions of the northern and smaller end which are thickly populated. By applying a familiar test, it will be found that the names printed represent a total population of about 34,000 people,

leaving the other 11,000 scattered over the large area not embraced.

The division of the island into towns and villages, and its government, are matters that are sometimes puzzling to the stranger, and, for their enlightenment, a brief account will be given. The island is a county (Richmond) in itself, and forms with Suffolk and Queens counties a congressional district. In the State senate it is represented by a senator elected jointly with a portion of the First ward of New York city, and in the assembly by one assemblyman elected entirely within the county. The county officers consist of five supervisors, one from each town; a sheriff, a county clerk, a county treasurer, a district attorney, and four coroners. The judiciary is represented by the county judge, who is also surrogate, elected by the people at large, and twenty justices of the peace, elected in the different towns, each town being allowed four. These Justices have jurisdiction, in their own towns, in petty civil cases and criminal misdemeanors. They also sit as committing magistrates.

This island or county is divided into five towns, which are mentioned in the order of their population and wealth as follows: Castleton, Middletown, Southfield, Northfield and Westfield. In these towns are the villages of New Brighton, Edgewater and Port Richmond. The first name embraces the town of Castleton, and is co-extensive therewith. It is governed under a special charter, there being no town government and no town officers, save four justices of the peace, three assessors, three excise commissioners, the collector of taxes, and four constables. Edgewater takes in all the town of Middletown, and the thickly populated portion of the town of Southfield, the remainder of the town being governed by the usual town officers. Port Richmond covers a portion of the town of Northfield, the remainder of which is under the town government. No portion of the town of Westfield, which embraces in area about one-third of the island, and in population less than one-seventh of the whole, is attached to either of the villages, and the government is identical in character with other towns in the State. Each town, with the exception of Castleton, elects, in addition to a supervisor, a board of three assessors, a tax collector, a town clerk, three auditors, four justices of the peace, three excise commissioners, four constables, a sealer of weights and

measures, and, where there are separate road districts, highway commissioners. [For list of officers see appendix.] The superintendents of the poor, of which there is one from each town, are elected by the people of the county at large, and serve for a term of five years, an election for one member taking place each year.

The governments of the villages of New Brighton, Edgewater and Port Richmond are administered by boards of trustees. In New Brighton the board consists of one member from each ward. The term of service is two years, the trustees from the even and odd numbered wards being elected in alternate years. The board elects one of their number as president of the village and chairman of the board, a village treasurer, engineer and clerk. They also appoint a board of health, consisting of three members, who serve without pay, and who in turn appoint a health officer.

In Edgewater each ward sends a trustee in alternate years. There is also elected, once in two years, a trustee-at-large, chosen by the people, who is President of the village and Chairman of the board, by virtue of such election. This board also appoints a treasurer, engineer and clerk. There is no village board of health, the duties of such a board being performed by the justices of the peace and the supervisors of the towns wholly or in part embraced within the limits of the village.

The village of Port Richmond has trustees, and the manner of election and term of service are the same that prevail in New Brighton. This Board elects one of its number as president, and appoints a treasurer, clerk, collector and street commissioner. There is also in this village a board of three assessors. The duties of the board of health devolve on the Northfield board, which consists of the supervisor and the justices of the peace.

One of the most pleasant features of life on the island, and one which is doubtless largely due to its educational advantages, is the large number of social and literary societies. Every town, village and hamlet has one or more such organizations, the meetings of which are conducive, not only to the improvement of the mind, but productive of much good in other ways, notably in the polish of manner so universal among the resident youth.

It may be well to offer a brief explanation as to the signification of the capital letters used in the body of

this work to designate localities, and also to explain the uninformed why there are so many different names for places. The directory of names and residences, as well as the business directory, were made up without regard to village lines, but solely in reference to their contiguity to the stations of the Rapid Transit Railroad, which are designated by the proper initial, as T. for Tompkinsville, P. R. for Port Richmond, etc. In making up the directory of streets, it was thought better to affix the initial of the village in which the street or avenue is located or has its starting point; hence the letter E. for Edgewater, N. B. for New Brighton, and P. R. for Port Richmond. It may be further explained that the local names applied to stations and the adjacent territory have, in most cases, no geographical value, but are simply the result of a continuation of the titles bestowed by force of circumstances, although in the cases of Stapleton, Tompkinsville, West New Brighton, and Mariner's Harbor, the names are recognized by the postal authorities and the respective post offices are so entitled.

The completion of the Staten Island Rapid Transit Railroad to Clifton, on the south, and Mariner's Harbor on the north shore, has given new impetus to business upon the island. Fine boats run every twenty-five minutes from foot of Whitehall street, connecting at St. George with trains of the Rapid Transit Railroad for all points on the island, and the large number of residences erected and the influx of new residents since the completion of the road, give promise of speedily transforming the villages of this beautiful island into one large and thriving city.

A new departure has been made by the Staten Island Amusement Company, whose handsome buildings and grounds at St. George and Ernestina, with a varied and unsurpassed programme for pleasure seekers, not only enables residents of the island to pleasantly pass their leisure time, but furnishes to the metropolitan visitor a resort which bids fair to become the most popular, as it already is the most accessible to the metropolis.

Possessing an area larger than that of N. Y. city, with the prospect of becoming the terminus of one of the largest railroads in the country, who knows but that Staten Island, with its great water front, and undulating surface may not become the greatest city in the western world.