THE FREEHOLDER

Celebrating 40 Years of Preserving Our Town's History

FALL 2000 THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDED 1960

THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

It is always nice to receive compliments for a job well done. But when people stop you on the street and tell you that the Society's activities and profile seem to have grown exponentially, you know you're on the right track!

What a year this has been! The Gala Dinner at the DeSeversky Center along with the 40th Anniversary Journal, the Benefit Brunch at the Graces', and the Fall schedule of Tiffany events and the related exhibition at the museum, which drew scholars and Tiffany affi-cionados in their hundreds to Oyster Bay, were just some of the the high-lights of a most fruitful year. Thanks to all who made it such a success.

As we enter the new year we hope to build on those successes and offer even more benefits to you, our mem-bers.

THE FREEHOLDER
of the
Oyster Bay Historical Society
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The Freeholder of the Oyster Bay Historical Society is published quarterly with the generous assistance of private individuals. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Oyster Bay Historical Society, but of the individual authors.

Purpose: The Oyster Bay Historical Society was founded in 1960 with the express purpose of preserving the history of the Town of Oyster Bay. The Society maintains a muse-um and research library in the Town-owned c. 1720 Earle-Wightman House, 20 Summit Street, Oyster Bay Call (516) 922-5032 for more information.

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ABOUT OUR FRONT COVER

Taken from the collections of the Historical Society, this image shows the base of Mill Hill, along with one of the McCoun houses on the left. One can only imagine the difficulty encountered by our forbears in attempting to navigate that hill under the conditions shown in the photograph. Even in this day of four-wheel drive vehicles the road is closed to traffic at the first sign of snow!

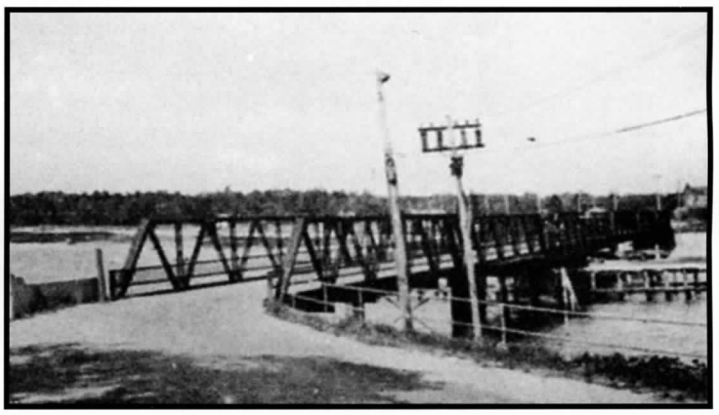
THE POST RIDER

Ed. Note:

The articles in our last issue elicited much response from our members and friends. We received several calls from readers who were able to fill in the blank in the identity of the young lady pho-tographed at Tiffany's Laurelton Hall estate. Her full married name was Mrs. Louis de ***Babian*** *Moore. "De Babian" was illegible on the photograph.*

Sam Berliner sent us the following excerpt from an essay written by Mrs. Silas Peavey, a former Bayville resident, which appeared in the newsletter of the Muttontown Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

The biggest key I ever knew was the one that opened the old wooden bridge at Bayville. It was about four feet tall. When a boat with a mast blew for admission to the Creek, Ike Ellison would fit the key to the socket and walk around until the central portion of the bridge moved sideways, leaving a gap. *continued on p. 24*



The old Bayville Bridge, c. 1900.

GODDESS OF VICTORY: THE BROOKVILLE NIKE MISSILE SITE, 1955-1963

by Donald E. Bender

Through the end of the Second World War, seacoast fortifications defended both Long Island and the approaches to New York City. Shortly following the end of that conflict in 1945, however, the big guns deployed at Montauk's Camp Hero, and at similar sites throughout the region were removed forever. Their demise was occasioned by the development of two revolutionary military technologies which rendered them obsolete for future warfare: high-flying aircraft of intercontinental range, and the atomic bomb.

In the years immediately following World War II, the United States was the world's only nuclear superpower. This may have provided some sense of comfort for American military planners as the global rivalry with the Soviet Union, soon dubbed the Cold War, grew ever more intense and confrontational. However, the American nuclear monopoly lasted only a few short years. During August 1949, the Soviet Union detonated its first nuclear device. It would not be long before the Soviet Union would possess both nuclear weapons as well as the means to deliver them to targets within the continental United States.

At the same time that work on the Soviet atomic bomb was proceeding, and to hasten the development of a long-range strategic bomber, the Soviet Union's famed Tupolev design bureau carefully "reverse-engineered" the American B-29 bomber of World War II. Several examples of this type had made emergency landings in eastern Siberia following raids on Japan near the end of the war. The Soviet Union's version of the American aircraft was known as the Tupolev Tu-4.

The Tu-4 was the Soviet Union's first reliable, modern strategic bomber. It had sufficient carrying capacity to deliver a heavy payload (such as a large and unwieldy early-design atomic bomb) over a relatively long distance. Launched from bases in northern Siberia, the new aircraft was capable of reaching targets in portions of the United States on one-way missions. New long range bomber designs would be developed in the 1950s which offered greater performance and longer range.

An Ajax missile being launched at the White Sands Missile Range, NM. The missile went from ground level to 35,000 feet in 2.5 seconds!

In the United States, a new series of air defenses designed to counter this potential new threat began being deployed in earnest by the late 1940s. The new air defenses included early warning radar sites designed to detect the approach of hostile aircraft, in order to avoid a "nuclear Pearl Harbor." The Air Force deployed long range interceptor aircraft at key locations while the Army was responsible for the close-in defense of cities, select military installations and other potential targets.

The Army's antiaircraft battalions were initially equipped with automatic weapons for low altitude defense and with 90- and 120-mm artillery capable of reaching substantial altitudes. The big guns were largely of World War II design. Even though they were bolstered by radar systems which enhanced their capabilities, it was clear that something better would be needed in an era of atomic bombs and high-flying aircraft.

That "something better" arrived during 1954 in the form of a new guided missile known as the Nike "Ajax". Named for Nike, the mythical goddess of victory of the ancient Greeks, the new missiles represented a major advance in air defense technology. Unlike the shells fired by conventional antiaircraft guns which followed a simple ballistic trajectory, the Nike Ajax was guided to intercept its target despite any evasive

actions taken by the pilot. Although the notion of a "guided missile" is taken for granted today, during the mid 1950s it was revolutionary.

Most major American cities would eventually be defended by the Army's new Nike missiles. The New York metropolitan area, considered to be one of the primary targets in a possible Soviet air attack, received no fewer than twenty-five Nike missile batteries located at nineteen sites in New York and New Jersey.

Five Nike missile sites were constructed on Long Island. The bases were located in the following locations: Lloyd Harbor and Huntington (site NY-20); Hicksville and Oyster Bay (site NY-23); Amityville and Farmingdale (site NY-24); Rocky Point (site NY-25); and Lido Beach (site NY-29/30). The first sites in this group were activated during 1955.

Nike missile battery NY-23, the "Hicksville-Oyster Bay" site, was also known as the Brookville Nike installation. It was one of the first Nike missile batteries to be declared operational within the Army's New York Defense Area during 1955.

The Brookville missile site was an archetypal Nike missile installation. As constructed, the site consisted of two separate but related facilities: a Launcher Area and a Control Area.

The Launcher Area was constructed at a site on Brookville Road a short distance to the west of Route 106. The fenced and guarded compound contained all of the facilities necessary to assemble, to test and, if required, to fire missiles. Each of the site's three large underground missile storage magazines contained as many as ten of the Army's new supersonic, radar guided Nike Ajax missiles. With a range of over twenty-five miles, and equipped with high explosive warheads, the missiles provided a greatly enhanced defensive capability for the area.

Unlike the contemporary notion of a missile "silo" in which a missile is stored in a vertical, ready to launch condition, the Nikes were stored horizontally atop storage racks within the underground missile facilities. In order to fire a missile, it first had to be brought to the surface of the site atop a large elevator. At the surface of the magazine the missile could either be fired from a launcher mounted atop the elevator itself, or from one of several "satellite" launchers located on either side of the elevator opening.

Once a missile was placed upon its launcher, both missile and launcher were raised to a near-vertical position of about eighty-five degrees for firing. The missiles were all fired in the same near-vertical attitude regardless of the direction of the target aircraft. After separating from its rocket booster, the missile immediately turned in the direction of the aircraft it would intercept.

What happened to the expended rocket boosters was a challenge which affected the design and geographical orientation of all Nike missile installations, including the site at Brookville. Having propelled or "boosted" a Nike missile to an altitude of about six miles above the earth, the booster section became, in essence, a giant steel dart which followed a ballistic trajectory back to the ground.

The firing angle of the missile ensured that the booster section would not crash directly back onto the site which had launched it, but would instead

A 1959 image shows the Brookville Launcher Area. The three missile magazines, each consisting of four launchers, are at center of photograph.

land somewhere outside of the base. Because the Nike sites were typically located within populated areas, the booster impact areas were carefully plotted by the Army in order to avoid areas with full time habitation. At the Brookville site, the booster impact area was a large wooded tract located a short distance from the Launcher Area.

Although the missiles were located at the Launcher Area, the firing of the missiles was directed from a second, separate facility known as the Control Area. The Control Area (also known as the Integrated Fire Control or "IFC" Area) was located a short distance to the south on Cedar Swamp Road. This facility contained three radars for detecting and tracking aircraft, and for tracking and guiding the missiles to intercept a would be attacker. Radar display screens, plotting boards, and an analog missile guidance computer were located within this facility.

The Control Area was the "nerve center" of the base. The commanding officer of the Nike battery was located here and it was from this facility that the command to fire a missile would have been issued. Communications between the Control Area and the nearby Launcher Area could be made by several methods including a special, buried underground cable which linked the two sites.

Although frequent practice alerts were held, no missiles were ever fired from the Brookville installation. Live missile firings were instead conducted during annual practices held at missile ranges in New Mexico. The radar personnel, however, could practice their skills year round by tracking aircraft flying to and from airports in the New York metropolitan area.

Nike missile battery NY-23 was initially operated by the Army's 66th Missile Battalion. This unit was redesignated as the 1st Battalion of the 55th Artillery during 1958. Under a plan to split the Army's air defense mission between regular and reserve units, the New York Army National Guard's 1st Battalion of the 245th Artillery commenced air defense operations at the base during June 1960.

The United States Army's Air Defense Command (ARADCOM), itself a major component of the joint U.S.-Canadian North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) was in charge of the nationwide Nike missile program.

Beginning in 1958, a second generation Nike missile, known as the Nike Hercules, was introduced to select Nike sites within the New York metropolitan area. The new missile offered enhanced performance and greatly increased range (nearly ninety miles). More significantly, it could be armed with a powerful nuclear warhead capable of destroying a formation of several New York bound Soviet bombers.

The vastly improved capabilities of the Nike Hercules missile meant that fewer missile sites were needed to defend the region. By the early 1960s, all of the Nike sites not converted to the new missile system were inactivated. The Brookville site remained a Nike Ajax installation and was one of the sites destined for this first round of inactivations.

In 1963, the New York Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 245th Artillery ceased air defense operations at the Brookville base. Final inactivation ceremonies were held shortly thereafter and a brief although significant chapter in Long Island's Cold War history came to an end.

Portions of the former Nike missile installation on Brookville Road can still be seen today. One of the Army's original buildings is now used as a garage for township vehicles. The hatches to the three underground missile magazines have been welded shut and are covered with concrete. They serve as poignant reminders of a time when fears of a nuclear war were rampant, backyard and basement bomb shelters were in vogue, air raid drills were held in local schools and Nike, Goddess of Victory, watched over the region day and night for signs of an attack which thankfully would never come.

Donald E. Bender is the principal of Cold War Research, a historic preservation consulting firm specializing in former Cold War era military sites. His work involving former Cold War sites on Long Island has been featured in the New York Times and Newsday, as well as on WNBC-TV. He is also the founder of the Montauk Radar Preservation Group which seeks to restore a massive early warning radar abandoned by the Air Force at its Montauk base and to develop historical materials promoting greater knowledge of its once important role. Don can be reached at bender@alpha.fdu.edu.

THE KEW GARDENS TRAGEDY

by Walter Karppi

It's possible that many readers are too young or perhaps weren't even born during the time that the following tragic events occurred. Perhaps some that were alive at that time recall the events that took place on that long ago holiday eve. A few may have had friends or relatives who were involved. This writer personally knew two individuals involved in one of the following incidents, more of which later.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was, until the twentieth century, one of a handful of companies regularly listed in "Forbes" magazine as having paid dividends on its stock for the past hundred years. Known as the "Standard Railroad of the World" its realm stretched from New York City to the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River city of St. Louis.

After the end of World War II the line was hit with a triple blow causing it, and other American railroads, to go into a precipitous decline. First, wartime had brought a welcome increase in traffic but, due to the shortage of labor and materials, necessary maintenance had been deferred. Second, as automobiles became once again available the public forsook rail transport in preference to driving. Finally, the government's policy of funneling billions of tax dollars into highway and airport construction further encouraged the abandonment of rail travel in preference to automobile and air transport.

As a wholly owned subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Long Island Rail Road had always been treated as a poor stepchild and the bleak postwar economic climate for the parent road was reflected in the lack of investment in it. In March 1949, the Long Island went into bankruptcy and the Pennsylvania announced that it would no longer be responsible for any further debts incurred by its subsidiary.

Still, the LIRR was depended upon by thousands of daily commuters who, like lemmings, flocked into New York City in the morning only to return each night. The post-war building boom was well under way in the suburbs, further increasing the number of daily riders. With the exception of urban rapid transit lines the Long Island was the only railroad to derive more than fifty percent of its operating revenue from passenger operations.

In spite of these problems the daily operation of the trains was in the hands of seasoned, capable, skilled professionals who, then as today, were dedicated to the calling of transporting their passengers safely and on schedule. They were aided in this task by a system of signals which expedited the safe and rapid movement of traffic.

On the Long Island, as on most other railroads, each track is divided into sections called "blocks." As a general rule only one train may occupy a block at any time. The state of the block is indicated by a signal, appropriately called a block signal, whose function is to indicate whether a block is clear (proceed) or occupied (stop). As trains became heavier and speeds increased a third, intermediate indication was added. Named "approach" it warned that the block it protected was clear but the block following was occupied and its signal would be to stop.

The Long Island's signaling was based upon that used by the Pennsylvania Railroad. Known as a position light system, it consisted of three lunar white lights

The LIRR wreck at Rockville Centre, February 19, 1950.
From Ron Ziel Collection

arranged to show them in a horizontal plane for stop, a forty-five degree angle for approach, or three vertical lights for a clear block, corresponding to the more familiar red, yellow and green used on other lines.

Many lines, including the Long Island, Pennsylvania and others, reinforced these signals by also displaying them to the motormen/engineers in a visual/audible display in the operating cabs. These displays were most useful when inclement weather conditions prevented the observation of the lineside signals. Conditions permitting, however, almost all enginemen preferred direct observation through their cab windows rather than relying on the interior signals.

On today's Long Island the stop and approach indications are enforced electronically, ensuring that the speed of the train complies with the limits. Should a train exceed these limits its speed is automatically reduced or it is brought to a stop. Electronic codes, corresponding to the signal given, are generated by the signal and read by a receiver on the train. Should the speed reduction of the train not comply with that indicated by the code control, the train is taken out of the engineer's hands.

Although an early form of this technology was available fifty years ago, neither the Long Island nor its parent the Pennsylvania had the resources to implement its installation on the hundreds of track miles that should have had it. The railroads felt, and justifiably so, that well trained personnel, periodically tested both as to their knowledge of the rulebook and physical condition, and well maintained track and signals precluded the necessity for automatic control.

Fifty years ago, the Long Island Rail Road had an enviable twenty-four year safety record during which time the line had carried well over one billion passengers without a single fatality. That record was broken on February 19th when thirty-five passengers were killed at Rockville Centre in a head on collision. Due to a grade crossing elimination project, it was necessary for trains to operate over tracks which were gantleted. Used where there is insufficient clearance for two separate tracks, this is an arrangement where one pair of rails overlaps another. Of course this restricted operation to only one train at a time.

On that night a New York bound train neared this section at the same time a Babylon train was approaching it. The signalman controlling this section cleared the signals, giving the right of way to the New York train and halting the Babylon train. The motorman of the Babylon train later claimed a momentary blackout caused him to miss the signals. He had just entered the section when the collision occurred. The effects of this collision were somewhat mitigated as the impact was not directly head on, but rather obliquely on each car's left corner. This was due to the fact that the tracks were offset in relation to each other.

Six months later, on August 6th, a brakeman mistakenly left a switch open at Huntington Station, causing a passenger train to ram into a freight train waiting on the passing siding. Fifty injuries resulted but fortunately no lives were lost. This was to be the last wreck that involved two steam locomotive-hauled trains.

As serious as the Rockville Centre accident was, it was overshadowed by another at Kew Gardens only nine months later which claimed over twice as many lives and totaled nearly five hundred casualties. Thanksgiving Eve, the night of November 22, 1950, began as a normal homeward bound trek for thousands of Long Island Rail Road commuters, supplemented by many holiday travelers. For seventy-eight unfortunate souls the trip would forever remain uncompleted and some 360 would suffer injuries ranging from minor to critical.

Train number 780, a heavily loaded twelve car train, left Pennsylvania Station at 6:09 PM bound for Hempstead. In charge of Motorman William Murphy, the train encountered two caution signals west of Jamaica station. After making an air brake application to reduce his speed, Murphy had difficulty releasing them and stopped his train. The rear brakeman, Bertrand Biggham, left the last car with a red lantern to signal any following traffic and began walking down the tracks, away from the rear of the train. After proceeding several yards he heard the motors being arced, a sound familiar to veteran commuters of that era.

Arcing was a sound caused by the motorman setting his brakes, applying power momentarily and then cutting it off, resulting in a

flash and a characteristic, loud "splock." Repeated twice this was a signal for the flagman to return to his train. Once the flagman was back on board, he signaled his return by two short pulls on the communication cord, sounding a whistle in the motorman's cab indicating that it was alright to proceed.

Biggham had no way of knowing that these arcs were not a recall signal but were the result of the frozen brakes and, assuming his train was about to proceed, he climbed back on board. When the train did not start he again was about to debark to flag his train when, to his horror, he saw a following train approaching at a considerable speed. Attempting to signal the train at this short distance was futile and a tremendous crash ensued.

That train, number 174, also twelve cars, had left Penn Station four minutes later at 6:13 PM and was a New York to Babylon express with Motorman Benjamin Pokorney at the controls. Pokorney, aged fifty-five, had been with the railroad for thirty-one years and had been an engineer for the last twenty-three. He had a clean record for the prior eight years since his last reprimand for a minor infraction of the rules. When he arrived at signal "C," located about two miles west of Jamaica and 3500 feet behind train 780, it displayed three horizontal lights - its most restrictive indication - "stop and proceed cautiously at a reduced speed." He stopped at the signal, then in accordance with regulations, started forward at a slow speed.

After passing signal "C" at the appropriate speed in compliance with the rules, he suddenly accelerated to a speed of approximately thirty-five to forty miles per hour. A short distance from Murphy's train, estimated at less than five hundred feet, he put his brakes into emergency, but they had little effect in slowing his train down prior to the collision. Although Pokorney's train was traveling at a relatively low speed, estimated at between thirty and thirty-five miles per hour at the moment of impact, the result was horrendous. While this may not seem to be an excessive speed, the weight of the train was several hundred tons and the kinetic energy of this great mass at that speed was enormous.

The lead car of Pokorney's train actually passed through the rear car of Murphy's with such force that the two cars occupied the space of one, like a letter inserted in an envelope. The violence of the crash sounded like an enormous explosion and panic stricken residents in the surrounding neighborhood thought that a gas main had blown up or a bomb had been detonated.

The unanswered question that remains to this day is how an engineer of Pokorney's experience could have made such a fatal error. One theory, set forth in *Down Brakes*, is that he had seen signal 114R's, in front of Murphy's train, indication change from a "Stop and Proceed" aspect (three white lights on a horizontal plane) to an "Approach" aspect (three white lights at a forty-five degree angle) and mistakenly thought that it applied to his train.

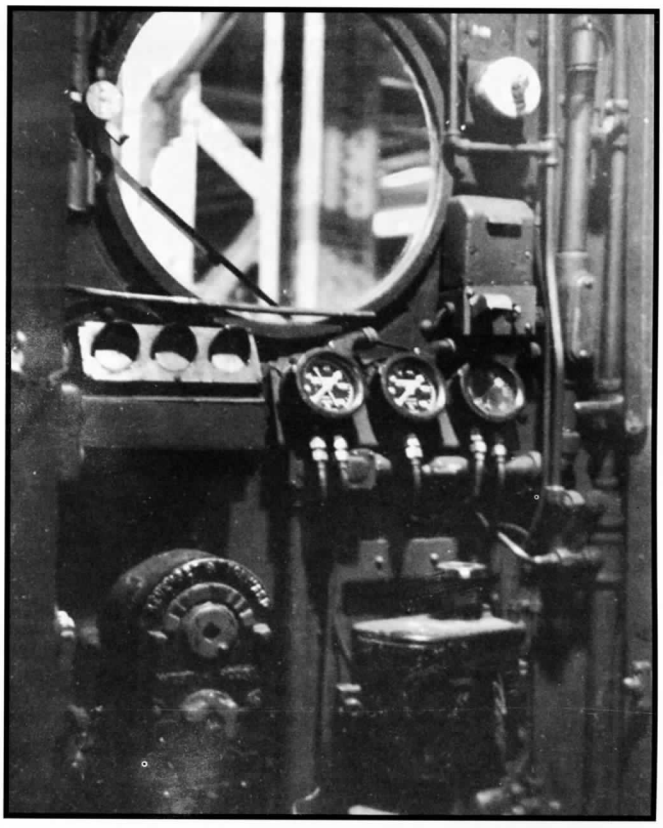
Another possibility is that he was fully aware of the train preceding his own but, from years of experience on this line, "knew" that it would begin moving once

Kew Gardens, November 22, 1950: The first car of the Babylon express is almost completely under the last car of the Hempstead local. From Ron Ziel Collection.

signal 114R changed. In this theory his eyes would have been focused on 114R watching for it to change from approach to stop, indicating that Murphy's train had passed under it. These signals were mounted on bridges at a height from twenty to thirty-five feet above the tracks and were of a much brighter intensity than the red marker lamps at the rear of Murphy's train. His last minute emergency brake application shows that he did become aware of Murphy's train, but far too late. It has been suggested that he may have been distracted by lights from the many apartment houses in the area. This hardly seems likely since he had often traveled the same route previously without incident.

Although the controls of an electric train were more basic and simpler than those of a steam locomotive, the responsibilities were the same and, in many respects, greater. A steam engine requires, at least, a two man crew - the engineer and his fireman. This meant two pairs of eyes watching the tracks ahead. Generally, as a safety measure, one would call out the aspect of an observed signal and the other would confirm it. Also, should one of them become incapacitated the other would be able to temporarily assume the duties of both until arriving at a point from which help could be summoned.

The chances of Pokorney's passing out, or somehow becoming unable to control his train, can be ruled out as all electric trains, then as now, were equipped with the aptly, if somewhat grimly, named "deadman's" control. This feature required a positive action on the part of the operator such as keeping pressure on a controller handle or depressing a foot pedal. Failure to perform either of these functions would cause an immediate cutting of power to the motors with a simultaneous emergency brake application.



Motorman's cab of a typical Long Island electric train of the 1950s. Ron Ziel Photo.

Americans in general, and New Yorkers in particular, show their greatness in times of crisis. The Kew Gardens disaster once again proved this axiom. Unscathed passengers risked injury from falling debris as they climbed into the telescoped cars to help their stricken fellow commuters. Conductor John J. Nuttal, collecting tickets in the third car of the Babylon bound train, found himself knocked to the floor , with the other standees, when the crash occurred. Suffering from shock and a cut nose, Nuttal struggled to his feet and shouted to the passengers, "I'm in charge, listen to me, please! Get back in your seats; you're safe in here but there's danger outside." Other men took up his cry and quelled the mounting hysteria. After order had been restored, Nuttal proceeded to the second car where there were many injured. Struggling through the broken glass of a jammed door he found mounting panic and hysteria. Again yelling for order Nuttal was able to restore and maintain control until rescue workers managed to hack their way into the car.

A high school student, fifteen year old Lawrence DeLarue and his friend Robert Seta, age sixteen, were visiting DeLarue's sister, less than a block away, when the crash occurred. Hearing what first seemed to be a clap of thunder, the two boys ran to the source of the noise and were the first to see the wreckage. Finding an old ladder the boys chipped

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ASK UNCLE PELEG

Dear Uncle Peleg:

In my class in school we were assigned to familiarize ourselves with a book called *The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1777-1799.* It's a bunch of advertisements from old newspapers. One of them listed twelve coffee biggins for sale. "Biggin" is not in my computer's dictionary. I asked my father. He said there wasn't any such word. I said there must be. He said to ask you. So I'm asking.

Karen S.

Invented by a man named Biggin or Biggins late in the 18th century, the article was a coffee pot, probably the forerunner of the drip coffee pots sold today. It incorporated a strainer that prevented the grounds from getting into the liquid coffee.

Dear Uncle Peleg:

I am in the same class as Karen S. who just sent you a letter about biggins. Everybody in our class had the same assignment to write a description about *The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1777-1799.* I skipped through it. Dull! But I found something nobody could explain. A man named Sause was selling a lot of weird things but the weirdest was "sand and pepper boxes." I don't think a sand box that kids play in is what he is talking about and I don't think you put sand on your food the way you do pepper. When I told Karen she told me to write you. What do you think?

Peppy

A pepper box, as the term is used here, is what we would call a pepper shaker. It's a small, usually cylindrical container with holes in its lid through which you can sprinkle powdered pepper on your food.

At the time of the advertisement people still wrote with liquid ink and quill pens. This resulted in easily smeared writing requiring a blotting agent. Often used was sand sprinkled out of a box with a perforated top like a pepper box, hence the similar name.

(This letter was also written by a classmate of Karen. We seem to be attracting attention from the Middle School crowd!)

Dear Uncle Peleg:

In Shakespeare's *Henry IV,* Falstaff says "fillip me with a three - man beetle." There is plenty more unusual language but I thought I'd ask what these strange words mean.

B.B.

A beetle is a large, heavy mallet or pounder. This one was probably used for thumping the surface of a road to harden it. It was made from a section of tree trunk four or five feet long and had three U-shaped handles evenly spaced around the circumference of the log so three men could lift its great weight for pounding. In this context "fillip" means strike.

Flemish road builders (the pair at left center) stamping paving stones with a two-man beetle.

CURRENTS OF THE BAY

This section focuses on the doings of local historical societies, museums, and communities in the Town of Oyster Bay and its neighbors. Upcoming special events, exhibits, lectures and tours are featured, so send your submissions to the Editor if you would like to see your events covered in ***The Freeholder.***

OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BENEFIT BRUNCH A SMASHING SUCCESS!

All the elements were in place for a truly memorable afternoon on Sunday, September 17th. Perfect weather, great food, old friends, and a gorgeous setting at The Evergreens, the historic home of John and Lola Grace, added up to an unprecedented success on the part of the Oyster Bay Historical Society.

A hard-working committee, headed by trustees Doris Amos and Adelaide Beatty, raised over $12,000, earmarked for the Society's Building Fund. Well over a hundred friends of the Society turned out in its support and enjoyed food, drink, and conversation as they strolled through the rooms and on the grounds of the Cove Neck estate.

The Society would like to thank all who attended, the sponsors, and the committee members who made it possible. A special thanks must of course go to our hosts, the Graces, who not only offered the use of their lovely home, but were unstinting in their efforts to make the benefit such a success.

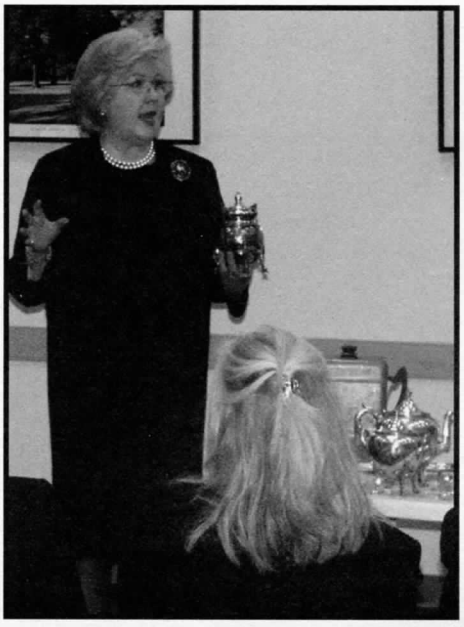
Benefit Committee heads Adelaide Beatty and Doris Amos at the entrance to The Evergreens.

TIFFANY EVENTS A REAL CROWD-PLEASER!

The Society had a program to please every palate this Fall! Hundreds of Tiffany devotees have enjoyed the many programs the Society has presented as part of its Fall schedule of events. Co-curators Maureen Monck and Tom Kuehhas worked ceaselessly to present a variety of quality academic lectures and programs on various facets of Louis Comfort Tiffany's life and art in support of the Society's current exhibit "Louis C. Tiffany: His Life in Oyster Bay," which focuses on Tiffany's family life at his two Oyster Bay estates, The Briars and Laurelton Hall.

Tiffany scholars and experts were specifically commissioned to speak on different aspects of "LCT" and his work in order to give

Tour leader Maureen Monck explains a point during the Society's walking tour of the Laurelton Hall site on November 1. Thirty-five participants thrilled to stories of Gold Coast grandeur.



Professor Jennifer Goldsborough conveys the finer points of a silver tea service to a fascinated audience.

as author Michael Burlingham presented a comprehensive view of the Tiffany family, which was full of insights into Tiffany, the man. The crowd then moved over to the Earle-Wightman House Museum for a champagne reception and a chance to view the exhibition.

A guided walking tour of the ruins of Laurelton Hall, led by Monck and Kuehhas was next. Thirty-five participants were given a chance to view Cold Spring Harbor from Tiffany's vantage point and learn about life as it was lived on the grounds of Laurelton Hall.

Visit the Oyster Bay Historical Society's website! http://members.aol.com/OBHistory

Succeeding events rapidly unfolded for a voracious audience. Cynthia Williams of the Smithsonian lectured on examples of Tiffany's Glass Art as well as providing something of an armchair tour of Laurelton Hall.

On November 16, Professor Jennifer Goldsborough , a most engaging speaker, engrossed her audience in the history and various silver services used in hosting a "Proper Tea." Several participants brought pieces of their own tea equipment for illumination by Professor Goldsborough, to the delight of the audience. The lecture was followed by a proper tea, the perfect complement to a scintillating program!

as complete a picture of the man as possible.

Society members and friends had an opportunity to meet and converse with Tiffany family members and collectors of his art at the cocktail party which inaugurated the Tiffany series, held at the Bryant and Cooper Steak House on October 22nd.

The following Sunday, October 29, the exhibition opened to a standing room only crowd at the Oyster Bay Community Center

The Smithsonian's Cynthia Williams, who spoke on Laurelton Hall on November 12, tours the "Louis C. Tiffany in Oyster Bay" exhibition with co-curator Maureen Monck

OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Michael Burlingham, great grandson of Louis C. Tiffany and author of The Last Tiffany, lectures to a standing room only crowd on the day of the exhibition's opening, October 29.

Participants in the next program received a rare treat. Professor Ira Prilik, the owner of Prilik Galleries in Garden City allowed them to view actual Tiffany objects while he discussed their construction. He then pointed out the differences between Tiffany and his contemporaries and told how to identify copies or fabrications.

The event schedule concluded on Friday, December 8, with a lecture and reception at St. John's Episcopal Church in Cold Spring Harbor by Tiffany scholars Judith and Raymond Spinzia, who presented a slide lecture of significant Long Island examples of Tiffany ecclesiastical windows, as well as some fine examples of those which graced Laurelton Hall.

The response to these events was so great that many people have requested that certain of these events be repeated so that they might have a chance to participate. Be sure to check the next issue of ***The Freeholder*** and the local papers for news of these additional programs.

SOCIETY SCHEDULES TIFFANY BUS TOUR

The Oyster Bay Historical Society has scheduled a very special tour on Sunday, January 21, 2001. A motor coach will leave the Earle-Wightman House promptly at 9 AM for a private guided tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection of Tiffany windows. After lunch at the Museum Cafe the group will visit the rarely seen Middle Collegiate Church windows and dome. To cap off this special tour, participants will be invited to a behind the scenes look at ongoing restoration of Tiffany windows via a visit to Venturella Studios in Union Square. Don't miss your chance to be a part of this special tour! Space is limited. Call (516) 922-5032 for more information.

CENTRAL PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society is at work on a Central Park Historical Society Encyclopedia in an effort to document the history of the area. They are asking residents to write down their reminiscences about people, places, and events that were notable in Central Park/Bethpage. Speaking of Bethpage, the Bethpage-Calverton Flyer, a 16-gauge miniature railroad train that ran at the Grumman picnic grounds, has been relocated to the Railroad Museum in Riverhead. It originally ran at the LIRR exhibit during the 1964-65 World's Fair at Flushing Meadows Park.

FARMINGDALE-BETHPAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society has sponsored the Tricentennial Tree Lighting in the community since its inception in 1989. On Dec. 6th, 2000, our president, Dr. Benjamin J. Giminaro, spoke at the annual program, and the lighting at holiday time restores a tradition dating back to the early part of the twentieth century, when an evergreen tree was illuminated on the front lawn of Main Street School each December.

The Society is now "on-line" with a computer webpage which provides information on the organization. It may be accessed at www. fdale.com/History. Please take a look!

Many thanks to Harry L. Dickran of Levon Graphics Corp., Route 109, East Farmingdale, for printing The Freeholder for the Society.

His generosity allows the magazine to reach a much wider audience than was heretofore possible. Please patronize our sponsors!

OUR WARMEST WELCOME TO THESE NEW MEMBERS

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MASSAPEQUAS

The beloved Old Grace church now has a restored roof and trim paint, thanks to a New York State grant. Heat has been installed in the cottage, which will enable the Society to work in the building and conduct tours later in the fall and earlier in the spring. The 70th Anniversary of the Village of Massapequa Park was celebrated on Sunday, Oct. 22, 2000, and included a parade and the unveiling of a marker donated by the Society to designate the former site of the Woodcastle Hotel, which stood on the present site of the Massapequa Fire House on Front Street.

The De Lancey Floyd-Jones Library, with its varied research collection, remains open to the public, Saturdays and Wednesdays from 10-2, 516-799-6722. The church and cottage are open most Sundays, June to September, 2:00-4:00. For further information 516-799-2023, tours 516-798-8047.

SEA CLIFF VILLAGE MUSEUM

The museum opened its fall season in mid-October with an exhibit titled: "Gaslight and Gingerbread, Revisited." The display is based on an earlier book of text and photographs that the Society is hoping to reprint. They are located at 95 10th Avenue in Sea Cliff. Please contact Helen Davis at (516) 671-0090 for more information.

The Society now has available a "1900 View of Oyster Bay," which shows every building in existence at that time and includes a list of businesses and prominent residences. Eminently suitable for framing, this print is a great bargain at $20 plus shipping. Contact the Society at (516) 922-5032 to order yours today!

Also available are an 1833 map of Oyster Bay ($5) and a map of Gold Coast estates c. 1920 ($7.50). Shipping is additional.

YESTERDAY IN OYSTER BAY: IMAGES OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The storefront of Coombs and Oliver Hardware and Housewares decorated for the holidays, c. 1960. Specializing in appliances and located on the south side of Audrey Avenue, they were in business from the mid 1920s to the late 1960s.

The Harbor Road home of Ernie Chamberlin as it appeared at Christmas in 1964. Chamberlin owned the Chevrolet dealership in Oyster Bay from the mid 1940s to the early 1970s.

At left is the window of Winward's in December 1947. A women's clothing store located in the Moore Building at 1 East Main Street, it was in business from the early 1940s to about 1960.

Two views of Christmas 1942 as it was celebrated at the Van Velsor residence on Burtis Avenue.

Though contained in the same scrapbook (donated to the Society by Leila Van Velsor) as the two views at right, the home in this photograph was unidentified. Can any of our readers help?

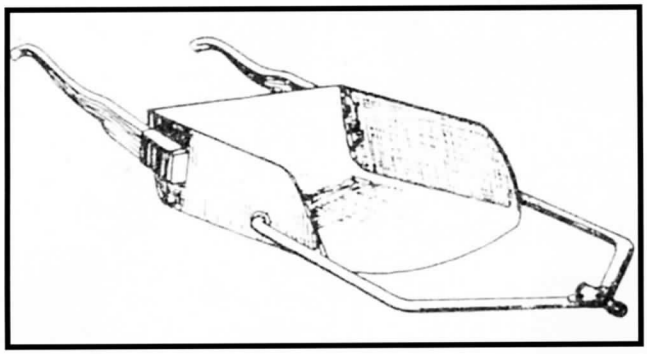
THE GATHERING PLACE

"The Gathering Place" is the department of the magazine housing contributions of an historical slant but of short length that might otherwise be lost among the longer pieces. To our members who are not ready to attempt long or deeply researched articles, this is the place for your notions and comments, however brief.

The Dutch Next Door

by Lee Myles

The Low Countries in the 16th and 17th centuries were home to the finest farmers in Europe. They were not encouraged in their superiority by the extent or arability of their land. Rather their need to extract the greatest possible benefit from a land that was small and subject to flooding and had few natural resources was met by their enormous technological abilities. The meeting resulted in the development of processes and equipment employed by their farmers in a productive and profitable agriculture. They were thus able to feed an ever-growing populace and even to export their food stuffs to their English and European neighbors.



A nineteenth century animal-drawn earth scoop

The pieces of agricultural equipment developed by the Netherlanders were many. Most of them have either become outmoded with the passing of the years or have been altered and improved out of all recognition. In their day, however, they permitted more and better work to be done and often conserved energy. One of these was the "mollebart" or "mouldbaert." Both of these are probably English corruptions of a Dutch or Flemish name.

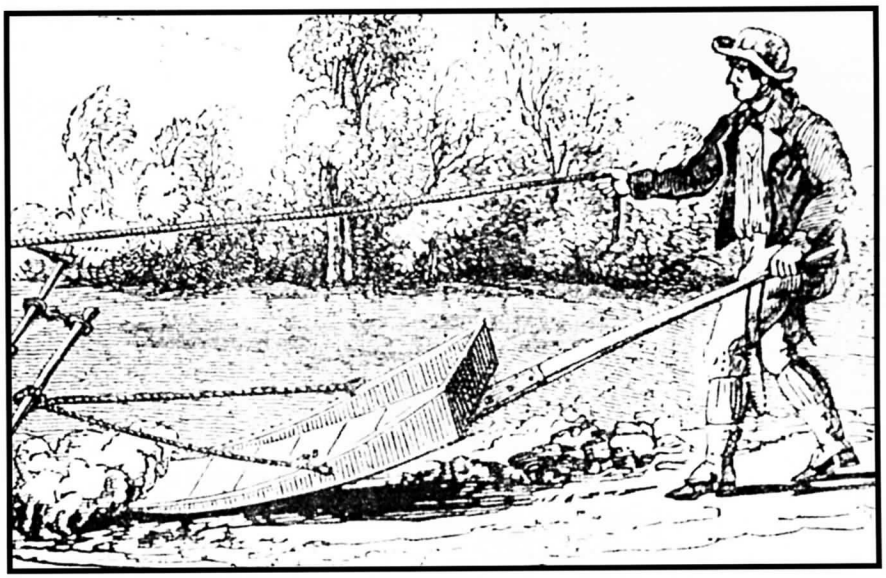
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Over the years since Oyster Bay was settled its households have possessed many objects devoted to the domestic economy. Among these objects are a large number that are unlikely to be seen in the homes of today. Of these we have selected the names of a dozen for your consideration. All you have to do to take this issue's test is to consider each item as to what it was used for and then match it against the appropriate item in our second list. Then check your answers against the list on page 23.

1. a charger
2. a drip pan
3. a coal hod
4. a tunnel
5. a trammel
6. a porringer
7. a steelyard
8. a posnet
9. a clock jack
10. a jagging iron
11. a bed wrench
12. a keeler

a. a container with a scoop-shaped pouring lip in which fuel was brought to the stove
b. a shallow wooden tub chiefly for household purposes.
c. a kitchen tool used for ornamenting pastry.
d. a large flat meat platter.
e. a tool used to tighten the bed cords of a rope bed.
f. a long narrow pan placed below the spit while roasting meat in order to catch the melting fat.
g. a device with a saw tooth adjustment for height used to hang a pot or kettle over a fire
h. a balance used for weighing.
i. another name for a funnel.
j. a small three legged handled metal pot used for boiling
k. a mechanical device for turning a spit while roasting, employing clockwork and a drive chain.
l. a small flat, usually one handled, metal or ceramic cup or bowl chiefly used for children.

Michael Partridge, who wrote the authoritative *Farm Tools,* said that the mouldbaert was "used in Holland for a century or more before British implement manufacturers brought out their own particular versions in the early nineteenth century." I suspect that a good deal more than a hundred years passed before the adoption of this useful implement by the British tool makers, but that there were Dutchmen on English soil using mouldbaerts in the seventeenth century or earlier.



A Flemish "Mollebart"

In England and America the mouldbaert had a number of local names. One heard in this country was "earth scoop." The earth scoop was a horse-drawn shovel that probably was the ancestor of America's snow plow and bulldozer. It was used here, as it was in England and the Netherlands, to level new planting fields for easy plowing. The scoop sliced off the hillocks and at the will of the operator deposited them in the hollows.

In this country the earth scoop was also used for digging cellar holes, for grading building lots, for dam building and in road making. Not wide enough to scrape the width of a whole lane of road its "shovel" was early replaced by a wide plank, sometimes mounted at an angle. The plank, dexterously guided by the operator, pushed the uneven material on the road surface toward the center of the road, raising the crown for effective drainage.

Famous Television Firsts Included Fordham University

by Rick Robinson

With the college and professional football seasons well underway, we tend to take the wonders of television for granted. Electronic perks such as instant replay, stop-action, giant screens and, of course, color are all part of the standard TV package for today's viewers.

It was, however, just over sixty years ago that the first football game was televised in America. On Saturday, Sept. 30, 1939, Fordham University met Waynesburg State, a small college located near Pittsburgh, Pa., in a game played at Triborough Stadium on Randall's Island. The weather was warm and sunny that afternoon, and NBC had assigned its famed radio sportscaster Bill Stern to cover the televised game. Stern was accompanied by a sideline technician who operated a single bulky iconoscope TV camera located at ground level.

The black and white signal was transmitted to the Empire State Building and then relayed to Rockefeller Center, where NBC's experimental TV station, W2XBS, was housed. From there, the football game was broadcast to the less than 200 television sets in New York City, plus the NBC Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in Queens. The Fordham football program was big-time in those days, although the Rams had recently lost their head coach, Vince Lombardi, class of '37, who departed to take an assistant's job with the Green Bay Packers. Lombardi would eventually spend time as an assistant at West Point and with the New York Giants before returning to the Packers in the early 1960s as head coach, where he recorded a remarkable string of championship seasons. Incidentally, two of the Fordham players in the first televised game were later named All-Americans and went on to play in the National Football League.

Located at Rose Hill in the Bronx, Fordham plays a less

The Fordham Rams take part in the first televised football game in 1939.

demanding football schedule nowadays, but in the fall of 1939 the Rams were 6-2 for the season, defeating Waynesburg State, Rice, Indiana, Pitt, NYU and St. Mary's of California (the latter two schools were also "Division I" at the time). Fordham's two losses came against Alabama and Tulane. Two years earlier, Fordham had been ranked third in the nation at the end of the 1937 season, behind Pitt and the University of California. The Rams were also invited to play in the 1942 Sugar Bowl, where they defeated Missouri by the unlikely score of 2-0 on a safety in the first quarter.

The few households in New York City that owned television sets were treated to another TV first in late 1940, when a Fordham basketball game was broadcast. Earlier, in May of 1939, baseball made its television debut when a contest between Columbia and Princeton was transmitted from Morningside Heights in Manhattan. As was the case at the Fordham-Waynesburg game, a single camera was used and newspaper accounts reveal that the blurred image was rather disappointing.

In late August of this year (2000), the Fox Network telecast a major league game, beginning with two cameras transmitting a black and white picture. As the game progressed, various cameras and innovations were added to trace the growth of TV technology to the present day.

Driving on Ice

by Gloria Bayles Tucker

On a cold winter's day early in the 1900s a car driven by Mrs. Grace Duryea Bayles was seen going out toward the lighthouse at the mouth of Oyster Bay Harbor, Cold Spring Harbor and Long Island Sound. It was a Buick Touring car. With her was her friend, Ruth Talmage, whose father was the minister of Christ Church here in Oyster Bay.

After going out and around the lighthouse they turned toward the shore. On their way back they stopped so Mrs. Bayles could snap a picture of Ruth Talmage (who later became Mrs. Herbst), standing on the running board. Much later in the century a Jeep was driven out on the ice at West Harbor by Richard Nobman. We had hoped to have a picture of that event to contrast the cars and the times, but we were unable to locate one as of press time.

Ed. Note: Our local old car maven was able to provide some more clues and information culled from the photograph.

The car is a 1909 Model 10 Buick, which originally came with a "mother-in-law" seat in back, but which has been replaced by a pickup bed. The car cost approximately $1,000 when new, which made it a low to mid-priced automobile. It was known as the "Little White Buick," because most of them were painted white, as this one appears to be. Several clues point to a post 1920 date: the style of the license plate, the metal tool box open on the running board, and what may be a cloche hat on Miss Talmage. Perhaps a look at 1920s almanacs could provide a definite date.

Ruth Talmage in the Buick Touring car, out on the ice of Oyster Bay Harbor. Photo courtesy of Gloria Bayles Tucker.

ARTISANS OF OYSTER BAY: THE COOPER

by Elliot M. Sayward

A long-ago *Book of Trades* first published in England and then in America, had this to say in the first paragraph of its chapter about the cooper. "A cooper manufactures casks, tubs of all sizes, pails, and sundry other articles useful in domestic concerns." Enumeration and description of

An 18th century cooper at work.

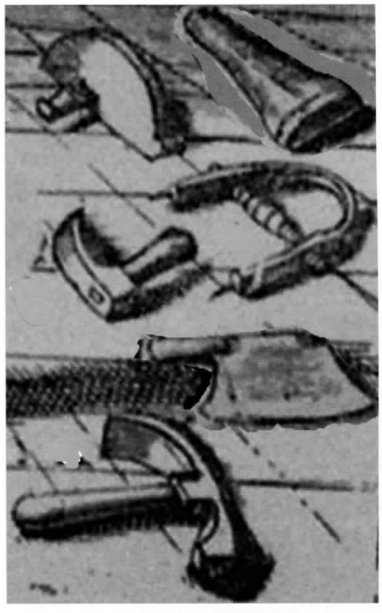
the "sundry other articles" by later commentators have detailed for us the considerable inventory of products made by this important woodworker. We mention this not because we are going to provide a list but to make the point that from its beginning as a settlement to well into this century, cooperage of various sorts would have been necessary to Oyster Bay enterprises, both household and commercial. Of course, in its latter days the town did not necessarily keep a cooper dedicated to its needs within its precincts. Its cooperage might come from afar. It was different in the early days.

The first cooper we have been able to find named in the existing records was Joseph Ludlam, who lived in Oyster Bay from 1669 to at least 1689. We don't know when cooper Ludlam died but he is mentioned in a land record of 1706 as deceased. An inventory of the estate of a Joseph Ludlam, who may be presumed to be his son, was taken on February 13, 1730. Nothing in that inventory suggests that he followed his father's trade except one entry for "Edge Tools" valued at eighteen shillings. As this is the only entry that may be thought of as representing hand tools we must assume that it probably pertains to the ax, wood saw, scythe and so forth that were to be found on a working farm. Ludlam's homestead was doubtless a working farm. There are entries for wheat, green corn (presumably fodder), cattle, swine, a plow and a cart.

Joseph Ludlam I practiced a trade that required great skill. The main product of most coopers was what we would call a barrel, that is a staved container ranging over a large number of sizes. They bore such names as firkin, keg, hogshead and tun. Many of these containers were expected to hold liquids. Try to imagine, if you will, assembling a couple of dozen, give or take, pieces of wood into a container that will not leak a drop. It's no job for a wood butcher. By the 18th century a cooper in a well-settled area would have had a large kit of tools. These would not have eliminated his need for experience and skill at his job but would have made the job a good deal easier. It is to be doubted that Joseph Ludlam owned a great many tools; we can probably guess the contents of his kit with reasonable accuracy.

Ludlam's timber probably came to him in baulks, sections of the tree the length of the barrel stave generously measured. One baulk would provide several staves, so the cooper required a strong wedge-like knife and some sort of mallet with which to split out the rough thickness of the individual staves. The knife was called a froe and had its handle at a right angle to its head so that it could be levered back and forth to open the split the full length of the baulk. Next he needed to trim the staves to their approximate shape, tapering them from their greatest width at the middle to narrower ends. He did this by eye using the special hand ax of his profession that had a wide, flat, rectangular blade. He also used a special form of adz as well as drawknives in different shapes and some tools very like planes to complete the shaping of the staves. One of the most important parts of the shaping process was achieving the proper bevel on each stave edge to permit them to

continued on p. 21



17th century coopers' tools

LIRR Tragedy

continued from page 9

away broken glass from the already smashed windows and assisted trapped passengers in leaving the last car of the Babylon train. Once rescue workers arrived, the boys were ordered away from the rescue operations so they would not get in the way. Not to be discouraged, they kept busy by supplying the weary cops, firemen and medics with steaming hot mugs of coffee from large metal pitchers.

Within minutes of the crash police, fire and medical personnel were on hand to evacuate those passengers who were ambulatory, rescue those who were trapped in the debris of the crushed cars, and offer emergency medical treatment to those requiring it before transporting them to area hospitals. Members of the clergy arrived to minister aid and comfort to the dying. Many, who were veterans of fires, shootings, accidents and other disasters, said that the carnage witnessed that night was far worse than anything that they had seen before.

Thousands of civilians were drawn to the site of the disaster and many offered blood for transfusions on the spot as doctors, interns and nurses from many Queens hospitals arrived on the scene. Other donors, both on their own and in response to appeals, flooded area hospitals and blood banks, to the extent that donations far exceeded requirements. Area residents opened their hearts and homes to both the rescuers and the ambulatory injured. Coffee, sandwiches and comforting words were given to all in need.

Back in the fifties not only did Newsday not have a Sunday edition but they also did not publish a paper on Thanksgiving Day, or several other major holidays. When the magnitude of this catastrophe reached the employees they began calling their superiors. Department heads decided that 150,000 extras would be printed immediately for Thursday delivery, 100,000 of which would be delivered free to home subscribers. They started calling key personnel, some of whom had just arrived home. With this hastily assembled crew the organization was brought back to life and wheels began turning to produce a special Thanksgiving Day edition.

At 9:30 PM it was decided that a sixteen page extra, without advertising, carrying only wreck pictures, related stories and editorials would be published. Some reporters and photographers had reported in without being summoned. Newsmen and photographers were dispatched to the wreck scene. Others were sent to Queens and Nassau hospitals where four hundred had volunteered to give blood. Gradually reports trickled in to be edited, assembled and printed. Printers, pressmen, secretaries, circulation managers and others had been summoned from home. Professionalism, skill and dedication carried the day, or in this case night, and the impossible was accomplished.

Inspection of the brakes on Murphy's train found them to be functioning correctly. Of course, the impact of the collision could have jarred them loose, but there was no answer as to why they would not release prior to the accident. Regardless of this, the responsibility ultimately lies with Pokorney, as he was bound by the trackside block signals, which were found to be operating flawlessly. Outside of educated guesses there never was an accounting for his actions that fateful Thanksgiving Eve.

Everyone, it seems, had a solution to the problems suffered by the railroad. Most were impractical and/or unaffordable. A New York City takeover of lines operating within city limits, an imposition of a twenty-five mile per hour speed limit, installation of subway style "trippers" to halt trains passing a stop signal, and requiring a second motorman on all trains were some of the ideas suggested but not adopted. Operation by New York State and the installation of automatic speed control equipment were ideas initially rejected but ultimately adopted.

This writer's oldest brother was a passenger in the first car of the Hempstead train. He, and other passengers, felt a strong jolt but none realized the severity of its cause. After a while they were evacuated from the train, directed to the nearby subway and proceeded to Jamaica where they continued via bus, cab or taxi to their homes. Until then they had no idea of what had occurred - the majority assuming it had been a derailment or some other not unusual mishap that they were accustomed to.

A former colleague, living in Levittown at the time, was not so

fortunate. An ex-Navy veteran, he had survived World War II without injury. He had the misfortune of being in the next to the last car of that same train. He suffered from rather severe injuries requiring a lengthy hospitalization and several operations. Given all that he considered himself lucky. "After all," he once told me, "I could have been killed if I was sitting in the last car."

For quite some time after the disaster the front and rear cars of the Long Island's trains remained relatively empty. While the intervening cars were standing room only it was always possible to obtain a seat at either end car. As time, the great healer, passed and the memory of the wreck faded the public began once more filling those cars as before.

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New York Times Nov. 23 through Nov. 26, 1950

Newsday Nov. 23 through Nov. 28, 1950

The Cooper

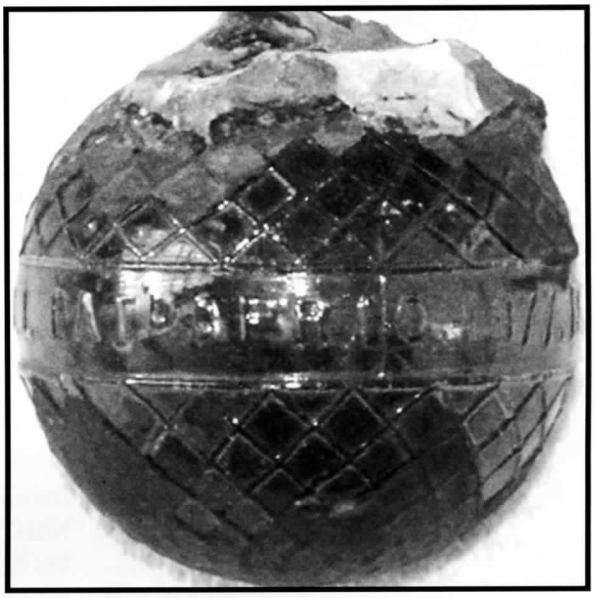
continued from p. 19

stand tightly together when they were assembled in a circle. Final finish of this bevel was accomplished with an enormous wooden plane. It was used upside down and the wood was passed over its sole instead of vice versa, as in normal planing. The two barrel heads were made from squares of boards doweled together on which circles of appropriate size were laid out with a large pair of compasses. Ludlam would also have owned boring tools of some sort for making his dowel holes, bung holes and tap holes. For the assembly of his barrel he used a number of temporary hoops called truss hoops.

Barrel-like vessels of many sizes carried a large part of the goods that traveled in the commerce of earlier times. Beside that, everyone needed containers for storage. Without the product of the cooper, life would have been even more difficult than it was in those hardscrabble early times. Perhaps we should murmur a word of thanks to Joseph Ludlam for helping our late 17th century, Oyster Bay predecessors enjoy the benefits of the barrel in their rather difficult lives.

DID YOU KNOW?

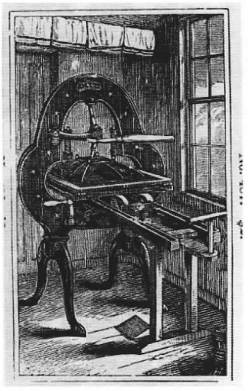
Although there were individual occurrences of electric tree lights as early as 1882, the first commercial lights for Christmas tree decoration, in the form of pointed light bulbs, seem to have appeared in the 1890s. Before the bulbs could be used, however, the tree had to be wired by an electrician, just as houses were then being wired for electricity. In 1903 strings of lights rather similar to those in use today were developed and offered to the public by the Ever-Ready Company. Colored lights, though just over the horizon, were still to come.



DO YOU KNOW?

Can any of our readers help us to identify what this small (2 ½ inches in diameter) yellow glass ball was? It was found in between the walls of Congressman Leonard Hall's house on Anstice Street. The raised letters which encircle the ball at its equator read, "BOGARDUS GLASS BALL PAT'D APR 10 1877." The rest of the ball's surface is covered with cross-hatching and it appears to have been colored with gold paint at one time. Was it a Christmas tree ornament or did it have some other use? If you have an idea, let us know!

Blocklyn's Books



Book Reviews by Philip Blocklyn

(This issue's review was submitted by George Kirchmann, a frequent contributor to these pages.)

A. Scott Berg, *Lindbergh* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1999) and Carroll V. Glines, *Bernt Balchen, Polar Aviator* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999).

Two recent biographies illuminate the history of aviation and the enormous impact this uniquely 20th century development has had on our lives. They also validate Long Island's claim to be the "Cradle of Aviation." One book details the life and works of Charles Lindbergh, one of America's best known personalities. The other reviews a much lesser known aviator, Bernt Balchen, whose impact on aviation was nonetheless eminently worthy of a biography.

Lindbergh is best known as the first flyer to cross the Atlantic alone, but his restless and inquisitive mind led him into areas that have left their own striking impact. He was involved in research and testing of blood pumping and purifying devices that allowed surgeons to prolong operations without compromising patients' blood. While living at the Guggenheim estate in Port Washington, he developed procedures later used in heart transplants as well as a device later modified into the artificial heart. He showed American pilots in World War II how to fly their planes faster and farther than they thought possible, allowing them to island hop up the Pacific and beat back Japanese forces. He led efforts to ban whale hunting in the 60s and to protect rain forests in the 70s.

Lindbergh by A. Scott Berg details these positive and altruistic feats in his long and masterful biography, which earned the Pulitzer Prize in 1998. He also examines the darker side of Lindbergh's personality: his leadership of the anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi "America First" movement, his belief in white Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, and his coldness and aloofness, which rendered him an enigma even to his children. Berg uses psychoanalytic techniques to explain Lindbergh's drives, and thereby provides many valuable insights into this maddeningly elusive personality.

Berg's work relies heavily on previously unavailable material from Lindbergh's voluminous papers, made available to him by his widow Anne, and therein lies a criticism of the book. It spends far too much space on topics that do not deserve so much detail, occasionally losing sight of the narrative path that the reader wants to tread.

The other book, *Bernt Balchen, Polar Aviator* by Carroll V. Glines suffers from too little investigation of its subject's psyche. The reader would like to know what motivated the Norwegian-born Balchen to risk his life many times in Arctic and Antarctic expeditions, whether to rescue James Fitzmaurice and his crew members who had crash landed in Labrador at the conclusion of their historic first crossing of the Atlantic from east to west in 1928, or his efforts with Admiral Richard Byrd to fly across the South Pole, or his work with Norwegian and Swedish anti-Nazi forces in Northern Europe during World War II.

Balchen had an enormous impact on polar aviation, laying out and testing routes that are followed to this day, but often was content to work behind the scenes, letting his actions and their effects speak for him. The author documents these actions without shining the light of psychoanalysis on them. We learn precious little, also, of Balchen's relations with his three wives or his two sons. What explains his prolonged absences from his family? A sense of obligation to the United States, of which he became a citizen in 1931? What can we make of his eagerness to fly into and over forbidding polar regions? His Scandinavian heritage? A death wish, perhaps? A drive to show other men that he was strong and hardy enough to succeed in terrain where so many others had failed? These are intriguing questions that deserve answers. They could have enlivened Glines' book and given

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AUNT EEEK

Olde Things:Advice on the Care & Feeding of Antiques

Aunt Eeek has lived long enough to watch the winds of change quietly blow away that which seemed immovable. We recognize that the only constant is indeed change. The realization that we have very little real choice in our lives is harsh reality. This is a column focused on the things around us that we are connected to in some semi-spiritual way. Things of beauty and things of rarity. Most of these things are important to us as silent witnesses of a past both familiar and unknown to us. The community in which we live is a real thing. It has a familiar identity. A visual, sensual, cultural, spiritual and familial identity.

When we speak of the restoration and conservation of things we are especially careful to preserve those elements which make these things special and give them a familiar character or importance.

The picket fence at the edge of our lawn is nothing but a stack of sticks nailed to form a frame for our home. But it is familiar, and when we approach our home we recognize the gate and feel comfortable with its homemade latch. We lift the worn hinges to clear the ground into which it is sinking. Passers-by know the fence and use it as a landmark for directing strangers who might be lost. The old fashioned tintype in the old-fashioned frame on our mantel has a faded image of our home surrounded and protected by this very same assemblage of sticks. We played those sticks with a fallen branch as we ran by as children. We paint and nail it back together because it is familiar and because our grandfather sawed and nailed it before we were born. On some level this fence is a disgrace, crooked and out of symmetry with the square world encroaching from all sides, not really anything but a half-painted, worn out vestige of time blown past.

But we recognize another element of its existence. The cultural and the spiritual unseen fence. Culture exists on many levels. Locality, people, time are all relative. Some cultures span thousands of years, others but a few American generations, but they are relative to each and the other.

Our homes, our churches, our eateries, our schools, our empty lots all join forces and form a sense of safety over the unknown future by anchoring us to our familiar past. The empty refrigerator box is, to the busy sanitation department, fuel for the fires at the dump. To the fires of the imagination of the young, it is a universe full of stars or a cave full of treasure.

It should be said that for some, the modern is the harbinger of hope. The new and fresh remove the pall of the oppressive past and make the future bright. For these of us there is plenty of new on all sides, and more than enough on the local easel to satisfy their appetite.

To remove is not necessarily to improve. We who love the old must yield to the inevitable future ...but not too much.

Answers to Test Your Knowledge, p.16

1 - d
2 - f
3 - a
4 - i
5 - g
6 - l
7 - h
8 - j
9 - k
10 - c
11 - e
12 - b

Blocklyn's Books

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it a more contemporary flair.

Balchen had much less of a connection with Long Island than did Lindbergh, but he was, ironically, at Roosevelt Field in May 1927, preparing Admiral Byrd's plane for the flight across the Atlantic that Byrd, Lindbergh and many other pilots wanted desperately to make. He watched with other mechanics and aviation personalities as Lindbergh took off in weather Byrd deemed unsuitable for flying. He subsequently became the third pilot to fly from Long Island to France, missing the limelight but establishing his role as a major figure

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MARK YOUR CALENDER FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

DECEMBER

Sat., Dec. 9, 4 - 6:30 p.m.

Annual Holiday Party

Be part of an old-fashioned candlelit, holiday celebration at the Earle-Wightman House, which will be decorated in period fashion. Refreshments and music, provided by Board member Fritz Coudert, will provide just the right mood to ring in the holidays. See old friends and make new ones at this annual party for the Society's members.

JANUARY

Sun., Jan. 21, 2001. 9 a.m. (SHARP!)

Bus Tour

A private guided tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection of Tiffany windows will be followed by lunch at the Museum Cafe, a tour of the rarely seen Middle Collegiate Church windows and dome, and a visit to Venturella Studios to see ongoing restoration of Tiffany windows. Call (516) 922-5032 for more information.

FEBRUARY

Museum hours.

Exhibit

Don't miss your last chance to view the exhibition entitled "Louis C. Tiffany: His Life in Oyster Bay" at the Earle-Wightman House museum, which closes at the end of the month. Enjoy rare views of Tiffany's Laurel Hollow estates of The Briars and Laurelton Hall, as well as private Tiffany family photographs.

Blocklyn's Books

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in aviation's pantheon of heroes.

Both books are recommended for the insights they provide about two fascinating personalities and about the wealth of information they convey about aviation's early years. They also provide starkly contrasting blueprints for anybody interested in writing biography. Finally, they demonstrate once again Long Island's central role in the development of aviation. Read both and enjoy.

The Post Rider

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In our last issue we had reported that a positive identification had been made on one of the members of the Bicentennial Quilt Committee, but that one person in the photograph still remained unidentified. Well I have good news and bad news. First the good news. William Evans, a member from East Norwich, was able to identify the woman seated second from right as Mary Hauley, who at that time lived on Cove Neck Road. Unfortunately, at the same time he negated the identification of the woman standing at far right, which had been given to us as Ann Evans. He said, and I quote, "That's not my wife!" Can anyone help us settle this matter once and for all?!!

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