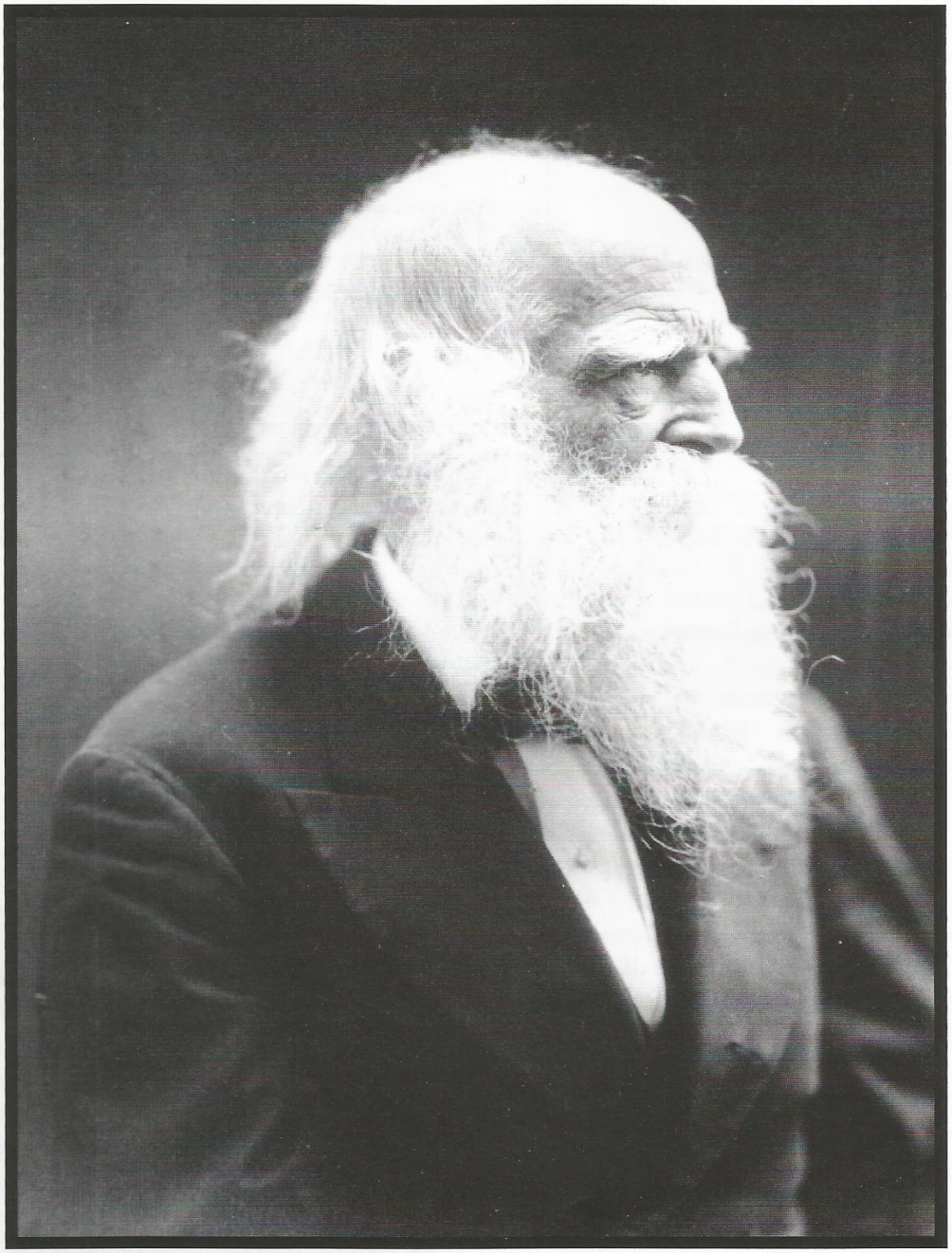
THE FREEHOLDER

WINTER 2008 THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDED 1960



☞ DO THE DUTCH DESERVE CREDIT FOR AMERICA'S RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE?

☞ THE STORY BEHIND A RECENTLY-OPENED REVOLUTIONARY WAR SITE

☞ LONG ISLAND'S DEAD POET SOCIETY, PART IV

☞ SOCIETY OPENS NEW EXHIBIT ON THE REVOLUTION IN OYSTER BAY

THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

There should be something for everyone in this issue of ***The Freeholder***! Think America's legacy of religious tolerance stems from the Pilgrims? "Think again!" says new contributor Joep de Koning, in the first installment of his treatise on the Dutch settlement of New Netherlands.

It was a timely submission on the part of Contributing Editor Arlene Goodenough as her article on the new State Historic Site at Fort Montgomery coincides neatly with the opening of the Society's "Oyster Bay in the Revolution" exhibit.

Finally, Bob Harrison gives William Cullen Bryant his due in this installment of his series on our Island's poets.

Let me know if I missed the mark!

THE FREEHOLDER
of the
Oyster Bay Historical Society
Vol. 12 No. 3 Winter 2008

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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 museum 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

This striking photograph of William Cullen Bryant, taken in 1870 by an unknown photographer, truly captures the spirit of the man whom Walt Whitman placed at the head of American poets. For more on Bryant, see Robert Harrison's article on p. 19. Courtesy of Kathryn Abbe.

THE POST RIDER

To the Editor:

I received the two issues of the ***Freeholder*** containing information about George Baldwin (Spring 2005 & Summer 2006) which you were kind enough to send me. Thank you. I have been researching the Baldwin family for many years and I have written to Mr. Sheedy regarding some of the contents in this article.

I was impressed by the quality of the *Freeholder* magazine and would join the Oyster Bay Historical Society if it were more convenient. At 85 (!) I do not travel that much!

In 2000, I published the second edition of *The Verity Family of Long Island, New York* and have enclosed a copy of pp. 22-23, containing a Verity family branch from the Oyster Bay Area. If you have a genealogy vertical file folder in your library, I would appreciate it if you would put these (enclosed) pages in the folder. Do you have anyone in the Society who might further identify Andrew Wright, the father of Jane?

I have been on your website and, once the weather becomes milder, my wife and I will visit.

Very truly yours,
Richard P. Baldwin
<baldwinrp@verizon.net>

Dear Mr. Baldwin:

Thanks for your kind letter and your compliments regarding ***The Freeholder****. I'm glad that we were able to help in some small way with your research. I do hope however that you will reconsider and join the Society, your age notwithstanding! We have members of all ages and receiving* ***The Freeholder*** *quarterly is just one of the many benefits of membership in the Oyster Bay Historical Society.*

(See membership information on p.12)

GOVERNORS ISLAND: LIFEBLOOD OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

by Joep de Koning

Joep de Koning is the founder and CEO of the Foundation for Historic New Amsterdam, whose goal it is to establish on the southernmost 50 acres of Governors Island a nonprofit living museum park commemorating the introduction there of what is a fundamental American value: tolerance. Those interested are invited to visit the Foundation's website, www.NationalHeritageTriangle.com

In order "to gain a deeper understanding of U.S. history" all applicants for U.S. citizenship are required to take a civics test. One question is: "Why did the Pilgrims come to America?" The required answer is: "To gain religious freedom."[1] Then, is this answer an example of reprehensible bureaucratic ignorance of U.S. history or is it a conscious falsification of history in order to reinforce a propagandistic myth?

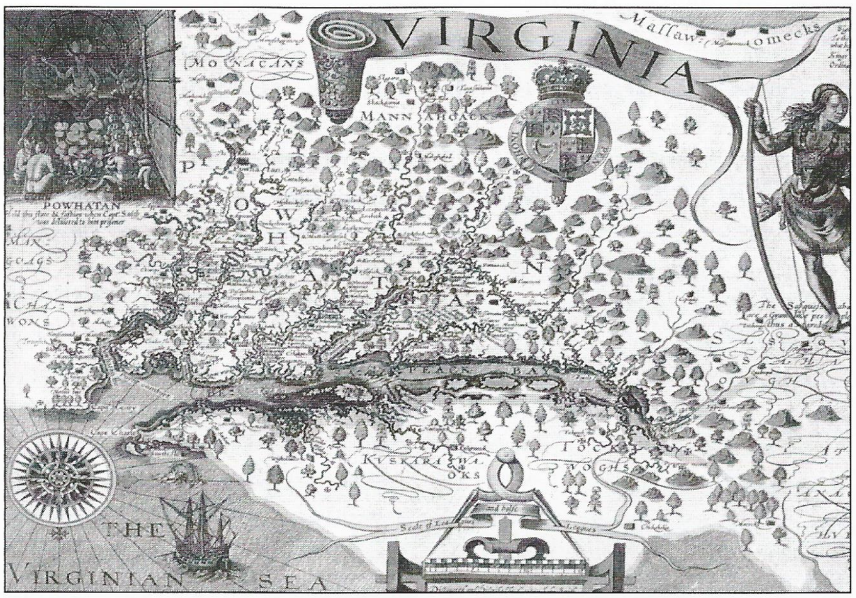
In 1608 the Pilgrims lived in Leiden, Holland, prior to their haphazard departure to America in 1620. The Dutch Republic was a magnet for religious diversity where the legal-cultural tradition of toleration – as promulgated in the Republic's 1579 founding document – provided a unique measure of enlightened living conditions for all, including the Pilgrims, to worship as they saw fit. Their belief was rooted in the Geneva Bible thus sharing their convictions with many like-minded inhabitants of that city. In 1622, sixty-seven percent of Leiden's population had come from outside the Dutch Republic in search of religious tolerance.[2] There, they found a haven from intolerant or despotic regimes. Because the city was a kaleidoscope of religious variety, the Pilgrims were fully embraced.

How, then, could the Pilgrims' motivation have been to sail, via England, for America in search of religious freedom? There was no legal-cultural tradition of religious tolerance in America which afforded them protection from religious intolerance. Or were they the God-chosen ones who would bestow such protection on assorted newcomers, thus divinely delivering religious diversity for all in New England?

The primary answer to that U.S. history question, therefore, doesn't lie in the Pilgrims' religious conviction as Separatists from the Church of England or in issues of religious liberty in Holland or, for that matter, in impious America. To the contrary, religious plurality was viewed by the Pilgrims as anathema to their orthodox belief and made separation from any authority, whether civil or religious, desirous. By insulating themselves from the forces of tolerance they sought to evade the impending corrupting influences of a pluralist society on their self-imposed, restrictive lifestyle and to avoid assimilation in Dutch society.

More importantly however, given the geo-political conditions during the Twelve-Year Truce between Spain and the Dutch Republic (1609-1621), the Pilgrims' hidden motivation must have been to circumvent looming civil war among various religious-political factions who were at each others throats during the

A late 17th century painting of the Pilgrims sailing for England on the ***Speedwell****.*



A map of Virginia drawn by John Smith, published in 1624.

armistice. By 1619, orthodox Calvinist Protestants had been successful at seizing political power and were ready to resume war with Spain in 1621 in an attempt to remove Spain's authority over the southern Netherlands. Alarmed by the reality of imminent war with Spain wherein the Dutch Republic would have to face Spain's overpowering economic and military might, the Pilgrims decided to flee. That they asked God's help to do so is understandable. However, their arrival in America was certainly not the panacea of religious freedom that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service would have new citizens believe.

We, therefore, need to revisit the development and meaning of religious freedom in modern-day American liberty and look elsewhere in American cultural history for the origins of religious toleration and liberty as the basis for religious and ethnic diversity. With certainty, neither a legal-political condition of toleration nor religious plurality as an enduring cultural tradition was delivered with the first settlers at fictitious Plymouth Rock in New England in 1620, or at the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. In fact, these notions started on Noten Eylant, now Governors Island in New York harbor, at the founding of the province of New Netherland, now the New York Tri-State region, in 1624.

Historical facts prove definitively that above 41 degrees latitude the concept of religious freedom in any form didn't exist. Below 38 degrees latitude, at Jamestown, Virginia, the precept of religious tolerance was also absent as church and state were intertwined. The historian R. R. Howison stated in his *Settlement of Virginia,* that the first charter to the Jamestown settlers in 1607 "embraces the most destructive elements of despotism and dissension..." and that "the Church of England was at once established." The leading objective of the preamble to the charter of King James to the Colony of Virginia was to disseminate Christianity among "such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God and might in time be brought to human civility and to a settled and quiet government." The charter called for using every means possible to bring the natives to

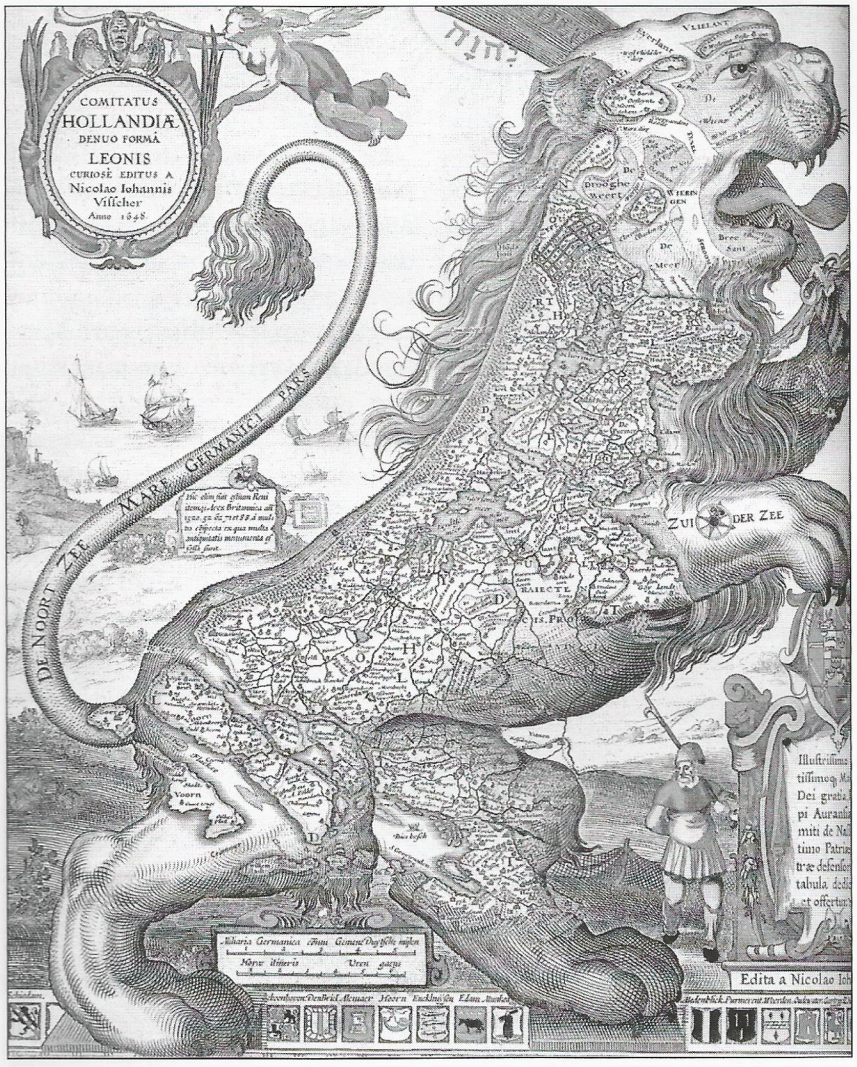
> the knowledge of God and the obedience of the King, his heirs and successors, under such severe pains and punishments as should be inflicted by the respective presidents and councils of the several colonies.[3]

Such a statement would prove to be unthinkable when the first settlers from the Netherlands landed on Governors Island. Their arrival was a vital turning point for North America because they took with them most specific directives which would have a lasting, meaningful influence on their new community and for generations to come. The settlers had received instructions which incorporated the laws and ordinances of the states of Holland.[4] It meant the end of the law of the ship in the territory of New Netherland and the beginning of the Republic's only overseas province ever.

The Governors Island settlement completed the Dutch Republic's claim on the territory and transformed it from a place for private, commercial activities under patents from the States General to a North American province of the Dutch Republic under the auspices of the Dutch

West India Company: (1) Discovery in 1609; (2) Surveying and Charting from 1611-1614; and (3) taking Possession through Settlement. Some of the Governors Island settlers were geographically dispersed to the Delaware River, the Connecticut River and at the top of the Hudson River (now Albany) in order to legally delineate the claim to the Province of New Netherland according to the Law of Nations. The Governors Island settlement constituted the best-planned first landing ever by any nation on the North American continent.

The island embodies a message of historic substance to America and carries great symbolic meaning because of the settlers' first instructions that only "through attitude and by example" could they attract the natives and non-believers to God's word "without, on the other hand, to persecute someone by reason of his religion and to leave everyone the freedom of his conscience."[5] That instruction, in turn, was based on the 1579 Union of Utrecht – the treaty that united the Netherlands' northern provinces, previously under Spanish authority – which stated that "everyone shall remain free in religion and that no one may be persecuted or investigated because of religion."[6]



Holland is portrayed as a lion rampant in this 1648 map by Nicholas Vissher.

The meaning of those first instructions for New York's inheritance to the nation can better be understood when knowing that, in the 1630s, a Manhattan farm was owned by a Moroccan Muslim. Visiting Father Isaac Jogues reported that in 1643 more than 18 languages were spoken and that beside Calvinists there were "Catholics, English Puritans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, etc."[7] But does that prove the efficacy of a legal-cultural extrapolation from patria onto the North-American continent or was, perhaps, non- Christian, ethnic diversity a historical accident?

Examining and understanding the role of the Jewish nation in the Dutch Republic could possibly help shed some more light on how the Dutch Republic can be viewed as New York's true birthfather. This birthfather was Leo Belgicus or Netherlands Lion. It was his DNA and precepts, implanted on Governors Island in the year 1624, that were the building blocks of America's earliest childhood. He was also responsible for the traits that subsequently helped shape America's flourishing, compatible personality of liberty and freedom.

Namely, after 13 years of war, in 1581, the seven northern states of the Netherlands declared independence from Spanish sovereignty based on the Right-of-Man doctrine. It stated that when a "ruler of the people (King Philip II of Spain) does not

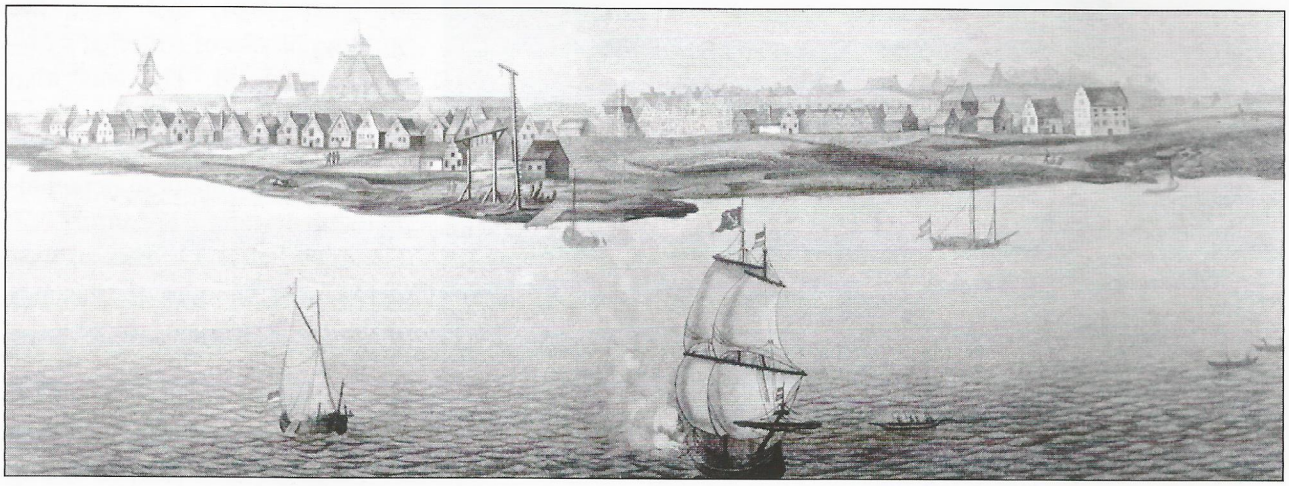
behave thus, but on the contrary oppresses them...they may not only disallow his authority, but legally proceed to the choice of another ruler for their defense."[8]

This fundamental precept of freedom and liberty was to become the crucial underpinning of the American Republic in 1776. The adoption of the Right-of-Man doctrine formed the basis for the statement that "the United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States..." It declared that "whenever any form of government (the English Crown) becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government."[9] This doctrine stands central to the development of constitutional and republican government and forms a momentous historical link between the founding elements of the two republics as unambiguously acknowledged by John Adams in 1781, when he wrote that "the originals of the two republics are so much alike that the history of one seems but a transcript from that of the other; ...the great characters the Dutch Republic exhibits...have been particularly studied, admired, and imitated in every American state."[10]

The planting of the Dutch Republic's legal-cultural code with the first settlers on Governors Island lie at the root of the New York Tri-State traditions and, ultimately, successful American pluralism (diversity) and liberty through the active notion of tolerance. The proof of its importance to American culture lies in the fact that it became finally philosophically justified and constitutionally articulated in 1791. Therefore, Leo Belgicus, New York's historical birthfather, exemplifies religious and ethnic tolerance as well as the historic doctrine of the right of a people to throw off a tyrant and establish government by its own authority. He bridges time and distance and tells us that in a nation with liberty-for-all, tolerance is its lifeblood – that tolerance and liberty are interdependent and inseparable in a truly free, pluralistic society.

By just glancing at the companion etching of New Amsterdam of 1650, one walks away with the fleeting impression that the picture is devoid of humanity. One will likely underestimate the number of persons etched on it. However, careful perusal and thoughtful attention allow you to discern the bustle of 72 persons etched in this serene townscape. Similarly, by just glancing at New Netherland's 60 year history (1614-1674), one is likely to make too little of the precedents etched in especially New Amsterdam and may underestimate their significance on America after 300-plus years. But in the way that an adult's character bears the genetic and learned traits of one's childhood, modern-day American pluralism carries these traits of seventeenth-century New Netherland.

In spite of the disappearance of New Netherland's visual culture and the ongoing irreverent destruction of most of its textual testimony – with the remaining records for the most part scattered, locked up, not translated and politically neglected – the province's thematic meaning to American culture surpasses the extant material cultures or national historical significance of the remaining individual colonies



New Amsterdam as it appeared c. 1650.

of the Original Thirteen. Scrutinizing contemporary cartographic works of that period point to intense knowledge of and deep interest in the ideals and success of the province, both from within the province and in patria, and imparts the concealed cultural impact New Netherland had on America's heritage. Even though early American history continues to be viewed habitually through mythical Anglo-centric glasses, New Netherland's contribution to America can't be easily dismissed or viewed as an unwarranted conceptual leap by earnest historians.

Conceivably, then, we can use the 350th anniversary, in 2005, of continuous non-Christian residency in North America to illustrate and understand how the forces of religious tolerance arrived in North America by drawing attention to an event of crucial significance to the development of fundamental American values, whose consequences — the achievements, hopes and expectations it helped engender, as well as the frustrations — continue to reverberate to this day.

In September 1654, Petrus Stuyvesant, director-general of New Netherland, attempted to deny a sizable contingent of Sephardim, Jews of Iberian or North African origin, permanent residency in New Amsterdam. He had not objected to the earlier arrival, in August 1654, of a few Ashkenazim, High German or East European Jews, traveling with Dutch West India Company passports from Amsterdam via London on the *Peereboom (Peartree)*. The large Sephardic group, however, sailing without passports on the Dutch vessel *Sint Catrina* from South America via the Caribbean, was made to feel decidedly unwelcome.[11]

Stuyvesant, certainly intolerant by today's standards, was a pillar of the Dutch Reformed Church who viewed religious heterodoxy as a potentially divisive factor that would militate against the organic unity of New Netherland. However, as the West India Company's agent, he was answerable to a higher authority. Stuyvesant's personal idealistic ecclesiastical vision for the province clashed with the secular commercial interests of the Company's directors in Amsterdam, as well as with the more enlightened cultural and legal traditions of the mother country and, particularly, the city of Amsterdam.

Notes:

1. *Civic Flash Cards*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Stock # 027-002-00515-3

2. Dr. J. Briels, *De Zuid-Nederlandse Immigratie 1572-1630*, Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 21.

3. *The Great Events By Famous Historians,* Volume A.D.1558-1608, The National Alumni, 1905 R.R Howison, *Settlement of Virginia,* 353-356.

4. Dr. F. C. Wieder, *De Stichting van [de stad] New York*, Juli 1625, Linschoten Vereeniging, XXXVI, "De Oorspronkelijke Regeeringsvorm van New York", 17-35.

5. Van Rappard Documents, Document A, Provisionele Ordere, 2nd paragraph, 30 March 1624, Huntington Library, California.

6. Article 13 of the 1579 Union of Utrecht; "dat een yder particulier in sijn religie vrij sal moegen blijven ende dat men nyemant ter cause van de religie sal moegen achterhaelen ofte ondersoucken."

7. J. Franklin Jameson, *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664,* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York), Jogues, *Novum Belgium*, 260.

8. Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. V: 9th to 16th Centuries, 1581 Act of Abjuration, 189-197.

9. Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

10. John Adams, Memorial to the States General, Leyden, April 9, 1781.

11. The arrival of the Ashkenazim (with passports) and the Sephardim (without passports) took place in 1654. Official residency was granted to the Sephardim in 1655. The granting of citizenship for any New Netherland resident became possible only upon the introduction of the burgherrecht in 1657. That privilege of citizenship to the first Jew, was conferred upon the Ashkenazi Asser Levy (originally from Vilna in Poland) in that same year, 1657, three years after his arrival in August 1654. George L. Smith, *Religion and Trade in New Netherland*, Cornell University Press, 1973, 212, 216. Leo Hershkowitz, "By Chance of Choice: Jews in New Amsterdam 1654, "de Halve Maen", 77 (Summer 2004), 23-30.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE FREEHOLDER

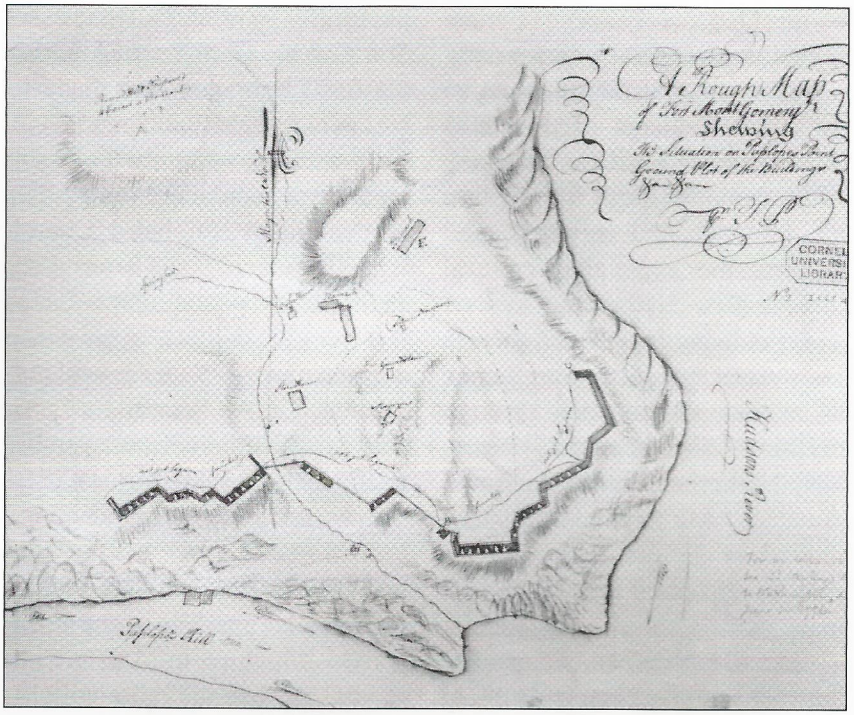
REVOLUTIONARY WAR SITE OPENS TO PUBLIC

by Arlene Goodenough

Lovers of Revolutionary War history, rejoice! After well over 200 years, the site of the Battle of Fort Montgomery, which took place in 1777, is open for your inspection. All of the encroaching greenery has been carefully pulled away, dug out, or chopped down. The site consists of what the British Army left when they burned the fort to the ground. Fortunately for us, much can still be identified. The view to the east of the Hudson River and Anthony's Nose on the far shore is remarkably the same, (if you just ignore the Bear Mountain Bridge which cuts across the river not a half mile away). There's just enough left of the grand battery, where 36 cannons once stood, to walk around on and appreciate what an excellent spot it was for viewing any enemy ships coming up the river from New York.

You can see traces of fourteen buildings and redoubts, etc., all very well described on easy to read signs. The connecting paths are well maintained, but the site is very hilly. This makes it very attractive and a paradise for little kids, but not so easy for the grandmas. The wild Popolopen Creek forms the south side of the property. New York State has built a fine suspension bridge over the creek, but the path down to it is really rocky. It is not suitable for baby strollers and the like, and will be a challenge for the average person.

The path down to the bridge and Popolopen Creek was deliberately not improved. This would have been the condition the trail was in during the 1770s, just another hardship for the military to deal with. Anyone walking toward the Hudson will be able to see the remains of two 19th century schooners, reminders of the days when such ships were a very important means of transportation up and down the Hudson.



Plan of Fort Montgomery. Cornell University Library.

The bridge is at the approximate location of a pontoon bridge that was built during the Revolution. The trails have been designed to give you some idea of what it was like to be stationed there as a soldier in the army or as a militiaman.

Parking is very convenient nowadays. There is room for forty cars in the parking lot just outside of the visitor center, with one space designated for the handicapped.

As of this writing, there are no benches but there will be some installed by spring 2008. By all means, bring folding chairs. You are allowed to picnic, but the policy is "Carry in, carry out!"

Traveling north, you'll come to convenience stores, delis, a McDonalds, etc. The US Military Academy at West Point is only five miles from Fort Montgomery as well.

The brand new Visitor's Center is a great place to have any questions regarding the fort answered. It is open five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday, year round. It is of course, a very good idea to call before starting out to visit, just to make sure. The phone number is 845-446-2134. The grounds themselves are open for exploring every day from dawn to dusk.

Admission to the Visitors Center is $3.00 for adults, $2.00 for seniors and students, and children under 12 get in for free. There is a small gift shop, but the main attraction is the large sunny and airy central room featuring a fine map model of the fort and also

Fort Clinton just prior to the battle.

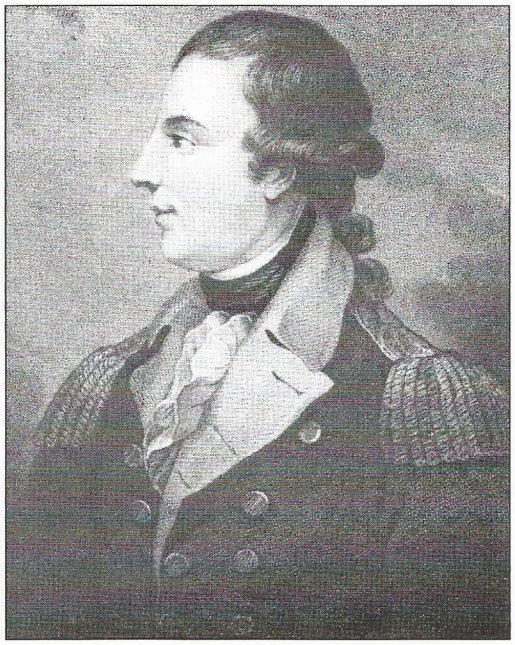
Four mannequins are displayed wearing British military uniforms of the 52nd Regiment of Foot (red coat). The first one is shown with a fusil, a type of musket used by sergeants. Another is a militiaman from Ulster County, NY. He is carrying a British musket, and is wearing breeches, a hunting frock, and a coat of natural linen, his own clothes. He is a private, as is a member of the 5th NY Regiment, in a brown uniform with blue facing. He has a French musket, dating back to the 1750s.

The fourth mannequin shows a private in the Loyal American Regiment, which was made up of Tories who fought against the Patriots during the battle. The color of the uniform is a green jacket with white facings.

Sergeant, 52nd Regiment of Foot

Adjoining display cases show items found in archeological digs, including many pieces of broken dishes. The enlisted men had spoons and bowls for the soups and stews they frequently ate. The officers needed plates and knives to cut meat. The bowls of the former were made of earthenware, those of the latter were of creamware, porcelain and stoneware. Officers often brought servants with them, as they usually came from the upper classes. They could afford fine uniforms with elaborate trim and buttons. An exciting archeological find was a cufflink stamped with the word "Liberty." Another major artifact on display is an actual link of the huge iron chain that Washington had placed across the river from Anthony's Nose to Popolopen Creek. Unfortunately, it was not effective in keeping Sir Henry Clinton's ships from passing up the river.

Regardless of rank, everyone drank lots of tea, wine and rum. They all suffered from the soldiers' occupational hazard, boredom. Gambling, drinking and fighting were not uncommon. The fort was a busy place. Coming and going were laborers, sutlers, relatives, messengers, visitors, servants and slaves. People coming from boats on the Hudson could dock and disembark at Popolopen Creek.



General Richard Montgomery

The building of the fort commenced in late 1775. In June 1776, George Clinton was named Brigadier General of militia and commander of Fort Montgomery, named in honor of Richard Montgomery, who died at the Battle of Quebec on December 30, 1775. Montgomery was a great hero at the time of his death. His attempt to capture the city of Quebec was brave and daring, but the odds were against him. He was the highest-ranking American general to be killed in action, and his name was revered throughout the thirteen states. He had married Janet Livingston, whose family was very prominent in New York. Well after the war was over, in 1804, she constructed a beautiful estate which she named Montgomery Place, after her late husband. Located in Annandale on Hudson, north of Rhinebeck on the eastern shore of the Hudson, it may be visited today.

continued on p.16

ASK UNCLE PELEG

Dear Uncle Peleg:

I was visiting a friend the other day and I noticed an object that seemed familiar, but I couldn't quite place it. I asked my friend what it was used for, but he said that he only kept it around for sentimental reasons, having inherited it from his father, and therefore had no idea what it was supposed to be used for.

As you can see in the enclosed photograph, it has two long threaded wooden rods holding together two shaped blocks of wood. What was it used for?

Puzzled

Dear Puzzled:

Your question illustrates a sad fact: with each passing year we seem to get so involved in modern gadgetry and electronics that we lose touch with the reality of our ancestors' lives of only a couple of generations ago!

The object in question is a carpenter's or cabinetmaker's clamp, used to hold material he was working on together, after he had glued them.

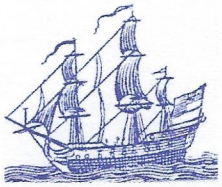
Henry Mercer, in his ***Ancient Carpenters' Tools,*** *explains how the clamp worked thus:*

Two wooden arms, tightened by two wooden hand-screws, hold fast the carpenter's or cabinet maker's material for various purposes, but chiefly for glueing. The threads of one screw, i.e. that in the middle of the apparatus turn loosely in an enlarged, smooth hole in the arm nearest its handle, and only engage the opposite arm. Hence this screw pulls the arms together at their jaws. The other screw only engages the arm next its handle, and loosely meets a shallow socket in the opposite arm; hence it pushes the arms apart, at their rear end where it works, but since the centre screw acts as a fulcrum, this end screw, by leverage, forces them still tighter together at their other jaw end.

Both screws, therefore, help to tighten the clutch, and in working them they should be turned together, keeping the arms reasonably parallel to prevent binding.

The clamp in question...

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.***

SOCIETY OPENS NEW EXHIBITION ON REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The Oyster Bay Historical Society has been greatly honored by the designation of its headquarters – the Earle-Wightman House – to New York State's "Revolutionary War Heritage Trail" due to its role in quartering troops during the war. Society Director Thomas Kuehhas and Curator Yvonne Noonan-Cifarelli have pooled their considerable talents to provide a fascinating look at 18th Century Oyster Bay during the war "Oyster Bay in the Revolution: An Examination of our Town's Role, 1776-1783," which in addition to the numerous artifacts relating to Long Island's role during the Revolution, also comes alive with a "hands-on" area where visitors can try on a uniform or heft a musket.

To commemorate the State designation and to mark the opening of the exhibit, Thomas Kuehhas, MA, American History, Director of the Historical Society and a noted Revolutionary War scholar spoke about the Revolutionary War soldier's plight on Long Island and in Oyster Bay in particular. The audience participated fully in both the hands-on examination of authentic reproductions of a period soldiers' equipment and uniform as well as questions about the presentation.

Some of the artifacts from the exhibit include period documents, an engraved powderhorn carried by an Oyster Bay militiaman, and an actual period uniform, one of only about a dozen still in existence.

The exhibit will run through August 31st, so don't miss it!

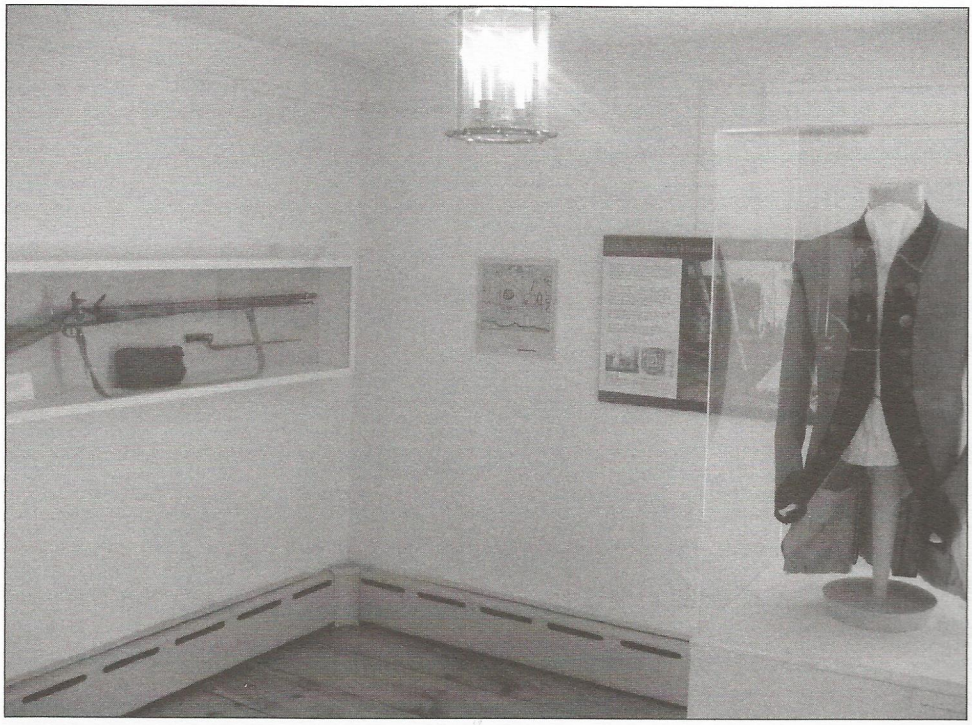
THE ARCHIVIST'S ANGLE

In *Double Fold*, Nicolson Baker accused several large American libraries of what he felt was the wanton and irresponsible destruction of important newspaper collections. Baker's book was overwrought, appealing, and deeply flawed, but he had a point: newspapers in their original form have a value as artifact and research tool that microfilm and digital surrogates can't entirely replace.

Director Tom Kuehhas helps young Willet Meyer dress in a reproduction uniform and equipment as part of his opening lecture on March 30th. Courtesy Oyster Bay Enterprise-Pilot.

The Oyster Bay Historical Society has a small but carefully preserved collection of nineteenth and twentieth century newspapers and periodicals, and a quick inventory of the holdings reveals a few items of some historical weight and heft. The *New York Herald* for Saturday 15 April, under its EXTRA, 8:10 A.M. column, announces the death of Abraham Lincoln, along with Edwin M Stanton's terse press release as Secretary of War: "Abraham Lincoln died this morning at twenty-two minutes past 7 o'clock."

That's nice, but we already knew that. But just scan over a mere two columns to the right of



Part of the new exhibition "Oyster Bay in the Revolution" features a period Loyalist uniform coat, a reproduction of a British "Brown Bess" musket and bayonet, and a period Long Island cartridge box, as well as new explanatory panels. The exhibit will be in place through August 31st.

Stanton's solemn announcement, and you will learn that the shad market is completely flooded (this is mid-April after all). Below that follows all the news of the *Herald*'s "City Intelligencer" columns: upcoming concerts, a Croton Aqueduct contract, a lecture series ("Politics in the Pulpit" – you can see how much has changed), and the drowning of an unnamed journeyman housepainter. The point is that in the midst of civil war and political assassination, common life is going on its not so merry way, separated from the great affairs of the day by a couple of inches of agate type. It's a juxtaposition never more clear and striking than on the actual page of an original unprocessed, reformatted, analog newspaper—just one more reason why such artifacts are worth preservation.

So it's the little things that can give newspapers their ultimate attraction, as a look at the Society's collection easily reveals. Predictions, for instance. The lead story of the 29 September 1899 *Oyster Bay Guardian* announce that "Chicago is doomed" to be engulfed by Lake Michigan in about 1500 years (today we should be so lucky). Meanwhile, the *Oyster Bay Advocate* ("A Republican Newspaper") of 26 November 1909 goes so far as to claim that "though the North Pole has been discovered, it will hardly be overrun with visitors."

But perhaps the most entertaining features of newspapers remains its ads and short features, which after a hundred years or so give pleasure beyond their original intentions, as these entries in the pages of various Oyster Bay and Brooklyn papers will attest: The following come from late nineteenth century editions of the *Oyster Bay Guardian*, *Pilot*, and *Advocate*, and the *Brooklyn Tablet*:

"Groceries to be good must be fresh" – James Moore, corner grocer

"Munyon's Vitalizer Tablets: There is Hope"

"Octagon Hotel: Meals served at all hours"

"Dr. Hair's Asthma Cure"

Visit the Oyster Bay Historical Society's NEW website! www.oysterbayhistory.org

"Oyster Bay Man Was First To Wage War on Pesty Mosquito" (it was Henry Clay Weeks, not a man to compromise)
"Blind Man Reads Bible Through Fifteen Times"
"Something New About The Eskimos"
"Oscar the Musical Rat"

Finally, there is a brief notice in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* regarding the equestrian lanes of Long Island. Why is this important? Because it relates directly to a map of such lanes in the Society map collection—our subject for the next issue of "Currents of the Bay."

SAGAMORE HILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Tom Ross, a native of New Bedford, Massachusetts, recently assumed his duties as the new superintendent of Sagamore Hill. Having earned a Master's Degree in Urban Planning, he joined the National Park Service in 2000. Tom's wife, Kerrie Bellisario, teaches graduate arts and science at Lesley University in Lesley, MA. They are the proud parents of sons Cameron, age four and Nathaniel aged two. Prior to his appointment at Sagamore Hill Tom was Deputy Director of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. We welcome Tom to Oyster Bay and look forward to working with him.

The John A. Gable Lecture Series will take place at the Matinecock Masonic Lodge, 14 West Main St, Oyster Bay. Doors open at 7:00PM and programs begin at 7:30. Admission is free and refreshments will be served. The schedule is as follows:

Thurs. March 27; Natalie Naylor, Ph.D., spoke on "Managing a Country Estate – Theodore Roosevelt, Country Squire and Edith Roosevelt CEO."

Thurs. April 24; Amy Verone will present "The Fourth Estate Visits Sagamore Hill – Putting Theodore Roosevelt in His Place."

Thurs. May 15; John Staudt, Ph.D., will speak on "We Are All Going Up or Down Together: Theodore Roosevelt's Stance on Race in America."

For more information please call (516) 364-1869.

REPLICA OF EARLY LOCOMOTIVE TO BE DEDICATED

On Saturday, May 17, at 10 am at Hicksville's Kennedy Memorial Park there will be a public ceremony dedicating the replica of the historic *John Bull* locomotive built by Chamber of Commerce President James Pavone. [*Ed. Note: See the Fall 2007 issue of* ***The Freeholder*** *for David Morrison's story on the* ***John Bull*** *and Mr. Pavone's replica.]* This full-sized, non-operating model took Mr. Pavone over two years to build and is a copy of the 1831 original, which was imported from England and ran on the Camden & Amboy Railroad in New Jersey. It inspired Matthias W. Baldwin to build engines in this country, one of which was the Long Island Rail Road's first locomotive, the *Ariel*. The *John Bull* will remain in the park under the auspices of the Town of Oyster Bay.

NASSAU COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On Sunday, February 17, at the Community Church of East Williston, Architect Gary Lawrance presented an illustrated talk on summer homes in the Hamptons. Mr. Lawrance's program was based on his recently published book *Houses of the Hamptons, 1880-1930*, which was co-authored with Anne Surchin. Designed by America's leading architects for artists and the rich, the area soon claimed the title of the "American Riviera."

UNDERHILL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Society has moved from its old headquarters on East Main Street to the basement of the Masonic Hall on West Main Street in downtown Oyster Bay. With the hiring of a new archivist, the Society's collection is now once again available to researchers, by appointment only. All those interested are encouraged to check the Society's website at http://UnderhillSociety.org. Please

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!

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 $25 plus shipping. Contact the Society at (516) 922-5032 to order yours today!

Also available are an 1833 map of Oyster Bay ($10) and a map of Gold Coast estates c. 1920 ($17). Shipping is additional.

address queries to the Society archivist at 516-833-6724.

FARMINGDALE-BETHPAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On January 20, Oyster Bay Town Historian, John Hammond, introduced noted author and rail historian David Morrison, who gave a pictorial presentation of "Theodore Roosevelt and His Love of Trains." The year 2008 is the 150th anniversary of our 26th President's birth and the Town of Oyster Bay is coordinating a year-long series of events to commemorate the occasion, of which this was the first. Mr. Morrison has been instrumental in the preservation and development of the Oyster Bay Long Island Rail Road station as the Oyster Bay Railroad Museum. This is the station that TR used during the latter part of his life.

"The World Turned Upside Down"
by Mort Kunstler

The Oyster Bay Historical Society is honored to offer signed and numbered giclee's on canvas by one of America's leading historical artists, Mort Kunstler. Mr. Kunstler explained that..."'The World Turned Upside Down' places the Continental troops on the left with their artillery in the foreground. This is the way the scene would have looked to the British soldiers standing in the road, waiting to march between the line of American troops and the French troops seen in the right background. It's a different perspective from earlier art works on the topic and one that I think gives us a fresh view of this pivotal historical event."

*Please visit the Revolutionary War exhibit now on view at the Earle-Wightman House. "The World Turned Upside Down" is available for purchase (**$575.00**, plus $30 for shipping and handling) and the proceeds will benefit the Society's Building Fund. There are approximately 60 signed and numbered giclees available of a limited edition of 100. Each giclee comes with a signed certificate of authenticity.*

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.

Did Sally Townsend Save West Point?

by Thomas A. Kuehhas

Quite frequently, the Historical Society receives requests for information on Sally Townsend and her role in the capture of Major John Andre during the American Revolution.

"Sally" (Sarah) Townsend, 1760-1842, grew up in the Townsend home (now known as Raynham Hall) in Oyster Bay. The house functioned as the headquarters of a Loyalist garrison occupying Oyster Bay, with the officers requisitioning several rooms for their sleeping quarters. John Graves Simcoe, lieutenant-colonel commanding the Queens Rangers (a Loyalist regiment) was visited several times by his friend John Andre, Adjutant-General of the British Army.

According to the legend that has grown up around Sally, she overheard British officers mention the American fort at West Point and saw a mysterious man drop a letter off in a cupboard addressed to a "James Anderson." She forwarded this information to her brother Robert in New York, known as "Culper, Jr." in the Patriot spy ring that operated in New York and Long Island, who then forwarded the information to Washington's spymaster, Major Benjamin Tallmadge. Utilizing the information Sally provided, Andre was captured and West Point and the Patriot cause were saved!

Idealized "portrait" of Sally Townsend, c. 1930. Collection of Raynham Hall Museum.

One would think, if the legend had any truth to it at all, that the Townsend family would have been justly proud of the accomplishments of these two Patriots and passed their story down to succeeding generations. No such family history of the legend exists. In fact, no mention of the story is made in the family genealogy, known as *The Townsend Memorial*, published in 1865, which is otherwise chock full of anecdotes about family members.

The story's history only reaches back to earlier last century, and can be traced to Long Island historian Morton Pennypacker. Pennypacker was responsible for the discovery, through handwriting analysis, that Robert Townsend was indeed "Culper, Jr.," Washington's spy. In his book, *The Two Spies*, published in 1930, he puts forth the story about Sally's involvement related above, without any supporting documentation or even mention of where the story came from.

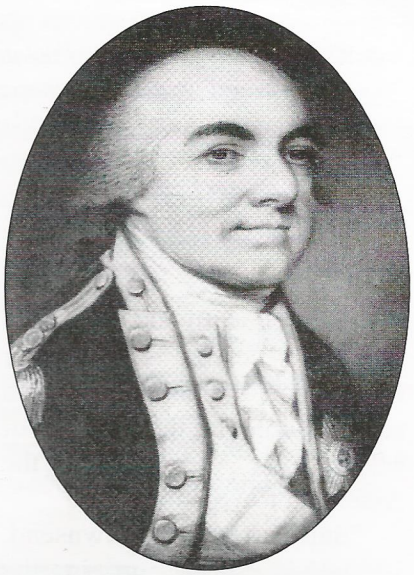
If one looks at the facts of Andre's capture, little credence can be given to Sally's involvement. Andre sailed up the Hud-

son River in a British ship, the *Vulture*, and was rowed ashore to meet with Arnold. Their meeting was supposed to end well before daylight so that Andre could return to the ship under the cover of darkness, with the plans to West Point that Arnold had given him. Unbeknownst to Andre, American artillery fired on the ship, forcing her captain to retreat downriver. When, near daybreak, Andre tried to return to the ship, he found it had sailed without him.

Arnold left Andre in the care of a local man, Joshua Hett Smith, suspected by the Americans of being a Tory. Smith was supposed to guide Andre back to the British lines by land. Of course, in full daylight, Andre's uniform would have been noticed immediately, so Andre was forced to borrow a suit of civilian clothes from Smith. The two proceeded on horseback to a point a mile or two from the British outposts, where Smith left Andre.

Shortly thereafter, almost in sight of the British lines, Andre was accosted by three American militiamen, who he at first mistook for Loyalists, to his chagrin and ultimate demise. The three, with their muskets trained on him, ordered Andre to dismount and proceeded to search him, some say for whatever loot they could take from him. Andre showed them the pass he had from Arnold, which identified him as James Anderson. The militiamen, suspicious that someone who had hoped they were Loyalists should have a pass through the lines from the American general commanding the area, searched Andre's person and thereupon found the plans to West Point. They escorted him to the nearest American officer, and Andre's fate was sealed. The officer sent word to Arnold of "Anderson's" capture, which gave Arnold time to flee to the *Vulture*, which had returned to the area. Andre was hung as a spy, though the Americans would much rather have placed the noose around Arnold's neck!

So we are left wondering, if she did indeed send word of the plot to her brother and it reached Washington, how could Sally's intervention have caused Andre's capture?



Sir Henry Clinton

Revolutionary War Site

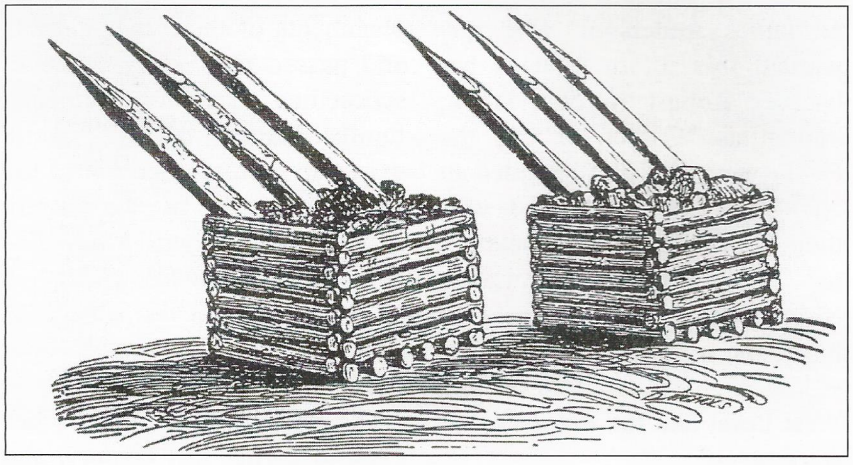
continued from p. 9

Another fort, Fort Clinton, was built just to the south of Popolopen Creek. All that remains of it today is one well-preserved redoubt, named in honor of George Clinton.

In the spring of 1777, chevaux-de-frise were built. This was a primitive device designed to damage the bottoms of enemy ships. A wooden box was filled with rocks and logs with sharpened ends were inserted in an X pattern. Presumably the sharpened ends would rip out the bottom of any ships that attempted to pass over them. Unfortunately, neither the chevaux-de-frise nor the chain were able to hold the British back during the battle.

Incidentally, chevaux-de-frise were first used in 1594 by the Prince of Orange in a siege against Spain in Friesland, a province of the Netherlands. Just recently, Columbia University conducted a survey of the river bottom in the vicinity of the fort. The remains of some of the boxes are still there.

The Hudson Highlands were so



Chevaux-de-frise

important to a successful outcome of the Revolutionary War that Washington worried about them constantly. The British had occupied New York City quite early in the war and in October 1777, the harbor was full of His Majesty's ships. All summer they had remained idle. On September 25th, three thousand troops sailed into New York Harbor. Word of their arrival reached the Americans and General Israel Putnam, in command of the Highlands from his headquarters in Peekskill, ordered General George Clinton to call out the militia. Unfortunately the militia had been called out on August 5th and had only recently been allowed to go home to harvest their crops. Not everyone responded to the call to return to duty again.

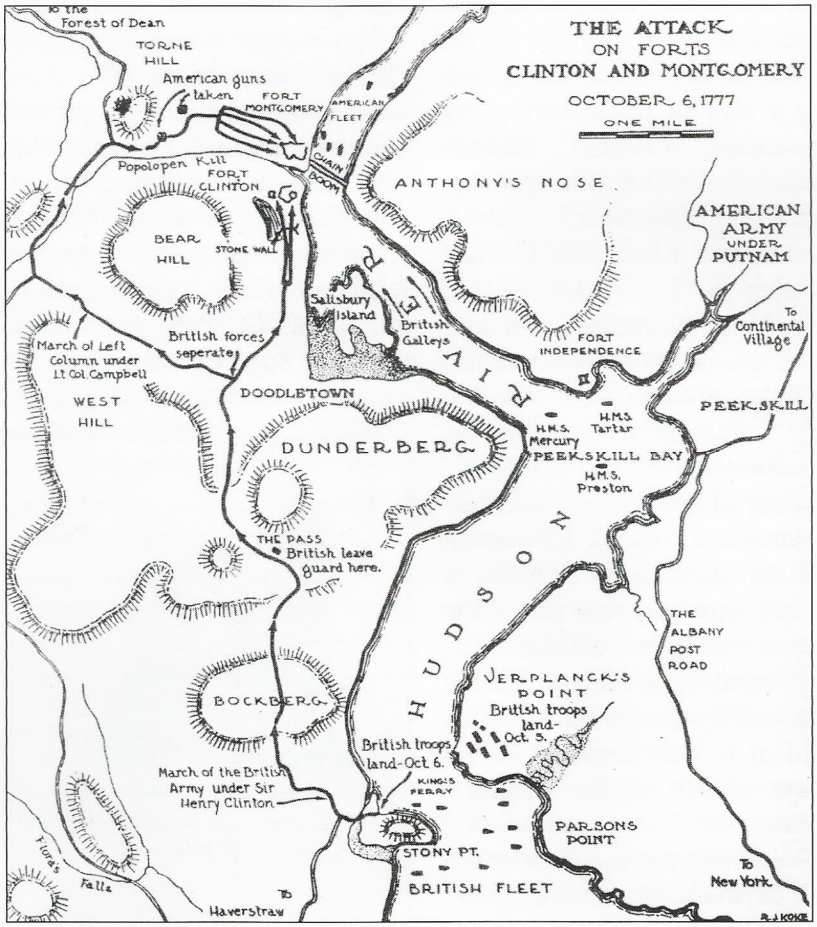
On October 4th, the British finally made a move up the Hudson River to try to take some pressure off of General John Burgoyne and his army pushing down from Canada. The latter had been brought to a halt by American forces north of Albany.

The American General George Clinton had been elected Governor of the new state of New York.

George Clinton

He was up in Kingston, which was the capital. On his way down to defend Fort Montgomery, he received a message from his brother James, a Brigadier General at the fort, informing him that enemy troops had landed at Tarrytown and were moving north. He hastened to join his brother. There were only about seven hundred militiamen and soldiers available to garrison the two forts. They bravely faced 2,100 British and Loyalist troops. Tragically, General Putnam expected Peekskill and Continental Village to be attacked and so reinforcements weren't sent until too late. Clinton's three desperate pleas for aid went unanswered.

The morning of October 6th was so foggy that Putnam could not be sure of what was happening. Four hundred of the enemy landed at Verplanck's Point, on the east side of the river, fooling Putnam into thinking he was in danger when in actuality, the bulk



A map showing movements of the British forces under Sir Henry Clinton in the campaign in the Highlands, October 1777.

Sergeant, 5th New York Regiment

of the British force landed across the Hudson. They were made up of British regulars plus a corps of Tories, the Loyal American Regiment, led by Colonel Beverly Robinson. Robinson's home was in Garrison. (On September 20th, 1780, in Robinson's house, Washington first realized that he had been betrayed by Benedict Arnold.) William Tryon, former Royal Governor of the colony of New York, and now a British major general, led the attack on Fort Clinton.

In the river itself was the frigate *Montgomery* and a few smaller boats, just above the chain. Another frigate, *Congress*, was anchored upstream about two miles.

The British landed at King's Ferry, opposite Verplanck's and marched to Doodletown, two miles below the fort. There the army divided. Half attacked Fort Clinton, while the rest marched west and then north, behind Bear Mountain, emerging behind Fort Montgomery. Soon both forts and the three redoubts were fiercely attacked by overwhelming numbers of enemy soldiers. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy was at the walls of both forts, George Clinton at Fort Montgomery, James Clinton at Fort Clinton. At 3 o'clock, the British ships joined the attack. They fired their cannons at both forts, unimpeded by the Great Chain. At 5 o'clock, the British sent a flag of truce, carried by Lieutenant Colonel Mungo Campbell, to Fort Montgomery, demanding surrender. George Clinton sent Lieutenant Colonel William S. Livingston out to meet him. Campbell told him that if the Americans would cease all fighting within five minutes, they would be well treated as prisoners of war.

In one of those proud moments in American history, Livingston said that they would fight on to the last extremity, but that if the British would care to surrender, they certainly would be treated very well by the Americans. This incident is well depicted in the movie shown at the Visitor's Center.

Soon after, the enemy attacked with bayonets. Again, the Americans fiercely resisted. But as night approached, they were overwhelmed. Some still on their feet escaped in the confusion and returned to their homes.

George Clinton's men urged him to flee. As the Governor of New York State and head of the militia, he would have been a valuable prize if the British could capture him alive. Finally he heeded their pleas and reached the bank of the Hudson just as a heavily overloaded boat was pulling away. Clinton would have had to swim, but the men in the boat pulled him in and they all reached the far shore safely.

And where was James Clinton? James Clinton was making a last ditch stand. In his breast pocket was a thick bundle of important papers he had hoped to keep from falling into enemy hands. An enemy soldier aimed his bayonet right at James' heart. The blade glanced off the wad of papers and slid down to his thigh, saving his life. Despite his wound, he was able to scramble down the steep slope to the rocky Popolopen and eventually made his way back to his home in New Britain, in Orange County.

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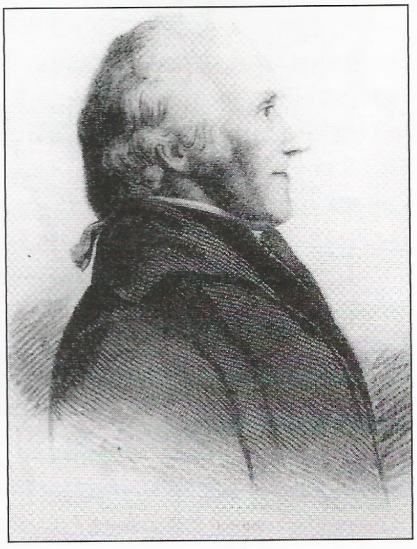
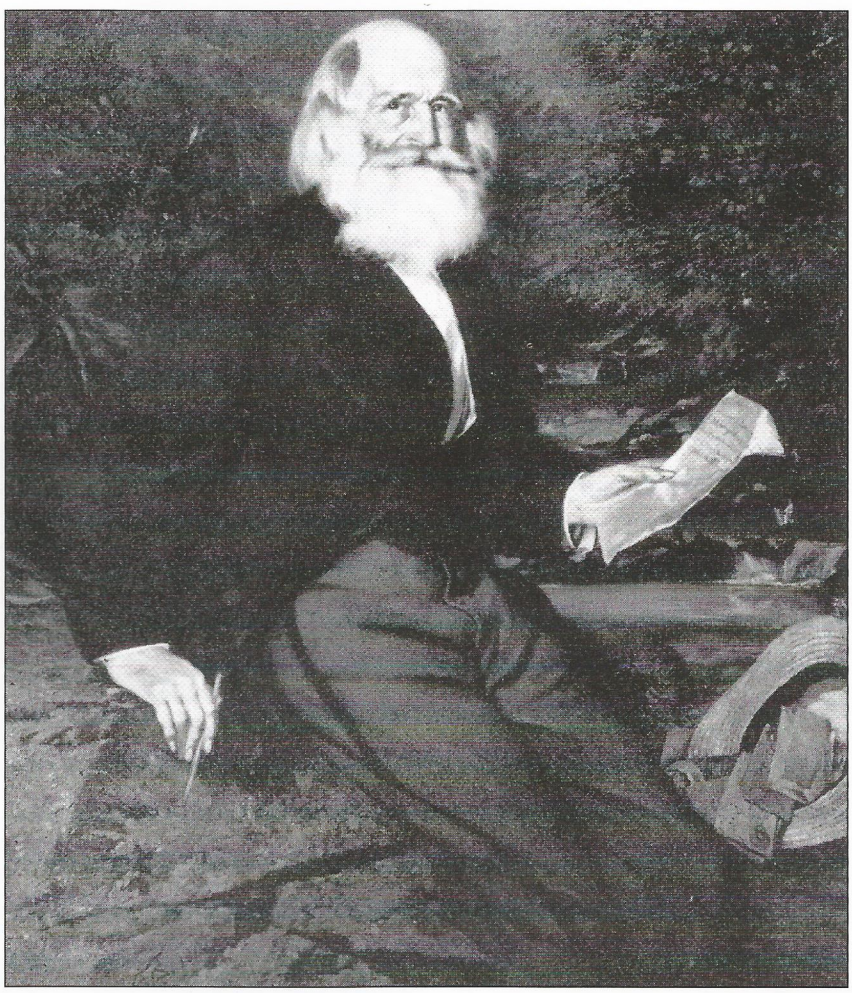


James Clinton

THE LONG ISLAND DEAD POETS' SOCIETY
Part IV
by Robert L. Harrison

The Age of Bryant

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), was a lawyer, editor, publisher, author, owner of the New York Post, co-founder of the Republican Party, friend of Lincoln, Central Park proponent, champion of the American arts and most of all the first truly world recognized American poet.[1] The age of Bryant began in the rural countryside of western Massachusetts, where on November 3,1794, in the small town of Cummington, he was born to Dr. Peter and Sarah Snell Bryant. Both parents' families had roots stretching back to the beginning of the colonies. Dr. Bryant was a country doctor, dabbled in verse himself, and believed in forwarding the education of his children, especially young Cullen.[2]



Portrait of Bryant (c. 1868) by Swiss artist Frank Buchser

Bryant was considered a bright but sickly youth who knew the alphabet when he was just sixteen months old.[3] His father had a fine library where Bryant immersed himself in books, in both Greek and Latin. His studies included the European poets Alexander Pope and Robert Burns as well as mathematics. It was his grandfather Ebenezer Snell who educated him while Dr. Bryant was practicing medicine or attending the state legislature in Boston. Squire Snell passed down his strong religious beliefs and puritan principals to the Bryant children. Besides learning, Bryant's love of nature was fostered in him at this young age. The nearby forests, streams and mountains were just as much a part of Bryant's upbringing as the reading of poetry. Bryant's love of walking and observing nature was kindled in these years in the Berkshires and would forever be imprinted in his poetry and in his lifestyle.[4]

By the age of nine Bryant started his first attempts at writing poetry. A year later Bryant received his first public acclaim as a poet with a fifty-four-line poem he wrote in school which was later published.[5] During these early years, Bryant was nurtured by his father and he learned to re-write and smooth out the rough edges of his poems. As with most beginning poets, Bryant imitated the structure and themes of the poets whom he read. Bryant's political poem "Embargo" (1807), which his father helped get published, reflected these insights. It was as a teenager that Bryant started assuming his own poetic voice. His observations on nature, death and American themes were revealed in his poetry.

At age 16, Bryant entered nearby Williams College but left after a few semesters.[6] Bryant's breakout poem "Thanatopsis" was written (and revised) during this period. When Thanatopsis was published in 1817,[7] it truly reflected the beginning of the age of Bryant (1817-1878) in American poetry. The poem had an

original American theme to it but few believed it to have been written by an American. Even his future lifelong friend, the poet, Richard Henry Dana, exclaimed that, "It was never written this side of the water." [8]

The following year brought Bryant's second triumph with his poem "To a Waterfowl." The breakaway from a European thought process in the arts had now begun and America was finding its own voice in the written word. The last lines of this now famous poem stand out in their maturity of thought-

> He, who, from zone to zone,
> Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
> In the long way that I must tread alone,
> Will lead my steps aright.

By this time Bryant was making his living as an attorney and in the winter of 1821 he married Frances Fairchild, the woman who would be his wife for the next forty-five years.[9] Poets write verse on what they see and feel and Bryant was no exception when he wrote "Hymn to Death" upon learning of his father's passing. These last lines try to give back what Dr. Peter Bryant gave to him-

> For he in his grave who taught my youth,
> The art of verse, and in the bud of life
> Offered me to the muses.

When Bryant's favorite sister Sarah died he expressed his grief in one of his most beautiful poems, "The Death of the Flowers," which ended with-

> And then I think of one who in her youthful beauty died,
> The fair meek blossom that grew up and faded by my side.
> In the cold moist earth we laid her, when forests cast the leaf,
> And we wept that one so lovely should have a life so brief:
> Yet not unmeet it was that one, like that young friend of ours,
> So gentle and so beautiful, should perish with the flowers.

Bryant soon gave up practicing law and pursued editing as a career in New York City. His poems had made him well-known in the literary circles of the day[10] and he soon became the editor of the New York Post and later its owner. Bryant never stopped educating himself; he was fluent in several foreign languages and passed this thirst for knowledge onto his two daughters Frances (Fanny) and Julia. Besides being an advocate of American poetry, Bryant connected himself with the growing group of artists, The Hudson River School, and thus was at the forefront of the American arts movement.

By the 1830s Bryant had made his first trip to Europe and published two books.[11] His second book "Poems" was even printed on the continent, thus making Bryant an international celebrity and poet. Reportedly when young Charles Dickens came down the gangplank in New York harbor in 1842 his first words were "Where's Bryant?"[12] The next year Bryant cemented his relationship with Long Island by purchasing a house overlooking Hempstead Harbor, which he later called Cedarmere.

Bryant's Roslyn years at Cedarmere were well spent with family and the coming and going of his artistic friends. Bryant penned forty-five more poems there, many of which were based on nature or thoughts that occurred to him at Cedarmere. The following is an overview of his Long Island poems by people connected to preserving his memory as one of our greatest wordsmiths.

Harrison Hunt is the site director of Cedarmere and he did not hesitate in saying that the poem

View of Hempstead Harbor from Cedarmere. Courtesy of the author.

"Twenty-Seventh of March," written in 1854, was one his favorite Bryant poems. Here are some middle lines as the gray poet sees the coming of spring-

Sweet flowers, that nestle in the humblest nooks,
And yet within whose smallest bud is wrapped
A world of promise! Still the north wind breathes
His frost and still the sky sheds snow and sleet;
Yet ever, when the sun looks forth again,
The flowers smile up to him from their low seats.

Iris Levin, a docent at Cedarmere, thought Bryant's poem, "An Invitation to the Country," was one that revealed the human side of him. The poem was written by Bryant to his daughter Julia, asking her to visit him at Cedarmere.

The last lines brings out his feelings on seeing her again-

There is no glory in star or blossom
Till looked upon by a loving eye;
There is no fragrance in April breezes
Till breathed with joy as they wander by.

Come, Julia dear, for the spouting willows,
The opening flowers, and gleaming brooks,
And hollows, green in the sun, are waiting
Their dower of beauty from thy glad looks.

Myrna Sloan, the archivist at the Bryant Library in Roslyn liked his poem, "The Planting of the Apple Tree," where Bryant is at his best in the details of not only the planting but the tying together of all the elements about the tree. Here is the poem's famous first lines-

Come, let us plant the apple-tree.
Cleave the tough greensward with the spade;
Wide let its hollow bed be made;
There gently lay the roots, and there
Sift the dark mould with kindly care,
And press it o'er them tenderly,
As, round the sleeping infant's feet,
We softly fold the cradle sheet;
So we plant the apple tree.

Bryant's brother, John Howard Bryant (1807-1902), was also a poet. John had written two poetry books during his lifetime and signed his poems to the Illinois newspapers as the "Prairie Bard." In his correspondence with Bryant, John noted he enjoyed the poem "Day Dream," which Bryant wrote at Cedarmere in 1858.

The last lines show a different perspective on his poetry-

Dimmer and dimmer, through the deep
I saw the white arms gleam and play-
Fainter and fainter, on mine ear,
Fell the soft accents of their speech,
Till I, last, could only hear,
The waves run murmuring up the beach.

Bryant's Roslyn years are well documented.[13] The poet's next three decades were spent commuting between Cedarmere and the city. Subsequently he spent more time by the shores of Hempstead/Roslyn Harbor tending to his flowers, horticulture, and writing. During this time Bryant also reached out to other poets, advising them and giving lectures. To one aspiring poet Bryant wrote back, "The vocation of a poet is not a lucrative one, there is no literary labor which is so badly paid." [14] Through these interactions with his follow poets, Bryant earned the title of "Nestor of the American Poets."

Bryant in his Long Island years not only looked like a poet with his gray beard; he acted like one.[15] His ability to communicate as a speaker and his knowledge of several foreign languages furthered the reach of his voice way beyond that of poets before him. As the editor/part-owner of the New York Post, Bryant projected his views on the young democracy that made him a well-known name. Thus, the Age of Bryant on Long Island made the Island a place where greatness flowed instead just a resting spot.[16]

Of all the past Long Island poets, only Walt Whitman and Bryant left so many traces of their poetic genius here. Bryant's home Cedarmere is now a historic site run by Nassau County on Bryant Avenue in Roslyn. There a visitor can see his study and the very desk where he wrote in the morning light, surrounded by his books. One can wander around seven acres filled with flowers, ancient trees and a spring-fed pond that still bubbles over with inspiration. Here time has stood still and Long Island looks and feels like the nineteenth century again. His legacy also spills over into the Bryant Library in Roslyn. Their history room contains many of his written artifacts and the staff there can answer questions about him.[17]

William Cullen Bryant died from a fall in June 1878, after again donating his time and talent

to a dedication in New York City. But the shadow of the Age of Bryant lived on well into the 1950s, when his most famous poems were still taught and memorized by American school children as part of their heritage.

NOTES:

1.The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* proclaimed in 1892 that only four Long Island poets have had their poems read throughout the English speaking world. Besides Bryant they were Walt Whitman (Huntington), Isaac McLellan (Greenport) and John G. Saxe. (Brooklyn). *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* "A Poet and A Sportsman," 01/03/1892

2. "Cullen" was how he was known to his family and closest friends. He was named after Dr. William Cullen (1710-1790), a Scottish physician whom Dr. Peter Bryant admired.

3. "The Centennial of Bryant," *New York Times*, 08/12/1894, p21 It is also said Bryant's brother Austin could read the Bible by age three.

4. Walking and calisthenics were a way of life with Bryant. His years at Cedarmere in Roslyn were spent writing poetry, walking up to three miles a day and exercising every morning

5. *William Cullen Bryant*, Charles H. Brown, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1971, p.19

6. This was due to a financial strain on his parents and Bryant's wish to join his friends at Yale, which never transpired.

7. Again with the assistance of Dr. Peter Bryant. Additional information can be found in most biographies of William Cullen Bryant.

View of the Nassau County-owned Bryant estate, Cedarmere, in Roslyn. Courtesy of the author.

8. Most Americans at this time believed that European poets were far superior in their craft to their American counterparts. Later the British poet Matthew Arnold would say that Bryant's poem, "To a Waterfowl," was one of the best poems written in the English language.

9. The wedding took place on January 11, and was announced in the *Boston Daily Advertiser,* 01/29/1821. p. 2 copyright by *Newsbank.*

10. Bryant's acquaintances during his lifetime consist of a "Who's Who" of American artists, writers and poets. With such luminaries as Thomas Cole, James Fenimore Cooper, Richard Henry Dana, Asher Durand, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and William Wordsworth among many others. The poets Dana, Halleck and Longfellow looked up to Bryant as a master; Whitman placed Bryant as the head of American poets. *History of New York State*, Dr. James Sullivan, Book 12, Chapter 22, part 2. www.usgennet.org/usa/ny/state/his

11. His 1821 poetry book *Poems* was enlarged with selected poems by Bryant. When it was published in England some words to the poem "Marion's Men" were changed by the editor so it would not offend his British readers.

12. *Lives of the Poets*, Michael Schmidt, Alfred A. Knopf 1998. p. 411. Charles Dickens needed Bryant's help to secure an international copyright law for English writers.

13. For more on his relationship with Roslyn read-
W.C. Bryant in Roslyn, Diane Bennett Tarleton and Linda Tarleton, Roslyn Library, NY, 1978.

14. More than six hundred of his letters can be found in *The Letters of William Cullen Bryant,* edited by William Cullen Bryant II and Thomas G. Voss,

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Blocklyn's Books

Book Reviews by Philip Blocklyn

North Shore Long Island Country Houses 1890-1950. By Paul J. Mateyunas. New York, Acanthus Press, 2007. 368 pp. B&W photography. appendices, bibliography, and index. $80.

North Shore Long Island Country Houses is hardly a surprise entry in the Acanthus Press series on urban and suburban domestic architecture, which has heretofore focused on the grand homes of Boston, Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia's Main Line, with projected studies on Los Angeles and Missouri. Those unfamiliar with the series can't do better than starting out with Paul Mateyunas's treatment of the big and showy estates of the Gold Coast.

Readers accustomed to the scope and density of SPLIA's *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940* or Raymond and Judith Spinzia's *Long Island's Prominent North Shore Families* will still find Mateyunas a welcome and useful complement to those works. Entries are arranged chronologically, each entry headed by estate name, original owner, location, and dates of construction. Appendices include a snapshot portfolio of lesser homes, biographies of architects, and a bibliography fortunately extending to periodicals, auction and exhibition catalogs, and archives. The text is concise and informative, particularly in the introduction, where Mateyunas makes the point, too often overlooked, that the Gold Coast was in its later days a creature of the automobile, which provided rich folk with "privacy, comfort, and growing ease of travel."

Illustration, however, remains the book's real strength, providing photographs of exteriors, landscapes, and interior design, many full-page, as well as floor plans and renderings. Mateyunas includes several illustrations from his own collection, including an engaging map of Nassau County's northeast comer, in which a chugging locomotive, whirling barnstormer, and Jazz-Age roadsters all head merrily toward the Jericho Club without a thought toward signal problems, air congestion delays, or traffic tie-ups. Notable too is a photograph from the Bryant Library's Local History Collection captioned "Musical entertainment at Harbor Hill." Here, a black-tailed pianist perches staidly before his upright, assisted by his mittel-european page turner squinting sourly into a late-afternoon sun. To their right stands the star tenor, apparently in full voice before an unseen audience just off-camera. It is an image, among all the book's images of splendor and luxury, that speaks of this disconsolate era's inescapable loneliness.

Pell of Oyster Bay. By J.B. Hayes. Bloomington (IN), AuthorHouse, 2006. 162 pp.

If Mateyunas's world of Gold Coast country houses has largely disappeared, so surely has Pell's world of 1940s Oyster Bay. This childhood memoir staged as novel recounts the life of nine-year old James Cosgrove (aka Pell) during the summer of 1943. It's a plain-faced story, and readers serve themselves best by acceding to the author's own intentions for his work:

> Pell is one of my many stories that I think young people will enjoy. It's not magical or fancy; just the life of a young boy of modest means. PCs and iPods hadn't come along yet, and his family probably couldn't afford them if they had. It's a different time, but I wonder if the feelings of boys and girls growing up have changed all that much. Pell proves that you can have an interesting and adventurous life using your own imagination and abilities without all the gadgetry. You'll follow him, through his eyes, as new experiences and challenges present themselves.

Hayes provides a very vivid picture of childhood living on Capitol Heights and its immediate environs but is much less successful evoking a sense of Oyster Bay as a whole during the World War II era. But perhaps something of this sort is to follow in the novel's sequel, indirectly promised at the book's close.

Dead Poets

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Fordham University Press, New York, 1975.

15. Bryant's famous looks were easy to spot while in New York City or in Roslyn. He was one America's first celebrities, looking like the image of a poet as did Longfellow, McLellan and Walt Whitman.

16. Bryant's legacy as a poet includes his books "The Fountain and other Poems" (1842) and "The White-Footed Deer and other Poems (1846). While at Cedarmere Bryant wrote "Thirty Poems," (1864) at the age of seventy-two and later Translated "The Iliad" (1870) and the "Odyssey" (1871).

17. A visit to the Roslyn Cemetery off of Northern Boulevard would also be recommended. William Cullen Bryant is buried in this rural looking cemetery along with the Long Island writer/poet Christopher Morley (1890-1957) and authoress Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924).

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

MAY
Daily, except Monday.
Exhibition

The Society's current exhibition on Oyster Bay's role in the Revolutionary War includes rare artifacts and documents as well as an opportunity to try on a reproduction uniform and equipment. Now through August 31st.

Please call the Society at 922-5032 for more information.

JUNE
Friday, June 20, 7 pm
Annual Meeting/Lecture

The Society's annual meeting will be held at the Doubleday-Babcock Senior Center, East Main St., Oyster Bay, followed by a lecture on local history.

All are welcome to attend. Admission is free and refreshments will be served following the lecture. Call 922-5032 for more information.

Revolutionary War Site

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Soon the Hudson was red with firelight as the crew of the *Montgomery* set her afire to keep her from falling into enemy hands. The *Congress,* further north, had gone aground and was also set afire, as were two galleys and a sloop.

So the battle ended. The American defenders had stood toe to toe with well-trained, well-armed professional soldiers until British numbers won out. Although the forts fell to the British, their push up the Hudson was a case of "too little, too late." Burgoyne and his army were forced to surrender on October 17th to Horatio Gates' army at Saratoga.

To quote George Washington: "The unparalleled perseverance of the armies of the United States through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of years was little short of a standing miracle."

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