



THE FREE-HOLDER

FALL 1997 THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDED 1960



♦ OLD IRONSIDES
IN
OYSTER BAY

♦ "I'D RATHER FACE A
LOOSE WOMAN WITH A
LOADED GUN..."

♦ LIRR LAND
ACQUISITION

♦ SEASONAL
STORIES

THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

We think that sooner or later every member of the Society ought to be represented by a literary effort in *The Freeholder*. Such a submission could be as short as a paragraph or as long as a major article. It need not be about Oyster Bay-only about history. If in your

reading you learn that Abraham Lincoln's favorite breakfast was donuts and coffee, that's a topic for a short "Did You Know" type of passage. The main thing is we can put your name in *The Freeholder*. If you get the bug, the next submission you make might be a three-part article on the town

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THE POST RIDER

To the Editor:

I was very interested in the article in the Spring 1997 issue of *The Freeholder* about Frank Buck's Jungle Camp. When I was very young, in the '30s- my mother's great aunt went to Florida and

sent us back a baby alligator, which apparently was a fad at the time.

My father made a cage with a pool (!) and we had the alligator for many years until it out-grew the large cage. Somehow my parents arranged to take the alligator to Frank Buck's Jungle Camp, and being a little child at the time, I remember very well the monkey

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THE FREEHOLDER

of the

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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

Did you think that the fun-loving aspect of St. Nicholas was introduced to the world by Washington Irving and Clement Moore? Two hundred years and more before those gentlemen provided the specifications by which the portrait of the austere St. Nick-let's call him Santa Claus- was redrawn, Jost Amman in 1588 interpreted the ascetic saint in terms of the manner in which many of his celebrants observed his holiday. Amman showed the Saint, with the physique of a Bacchus, riding to bring to his votaries food and drink for a festival. Wearing bells, a fur hat and what looks rather like a Dutch ruff for a collar piece, he seems to be offering a choice between chastisement and a carouse. Surely the whip and the beer glass represent an either/or. But the sack tied to the donkey's tail seems too small for a "bundle of toys!"

"OLD IRONSIDES" VISITS OYSTER BAY

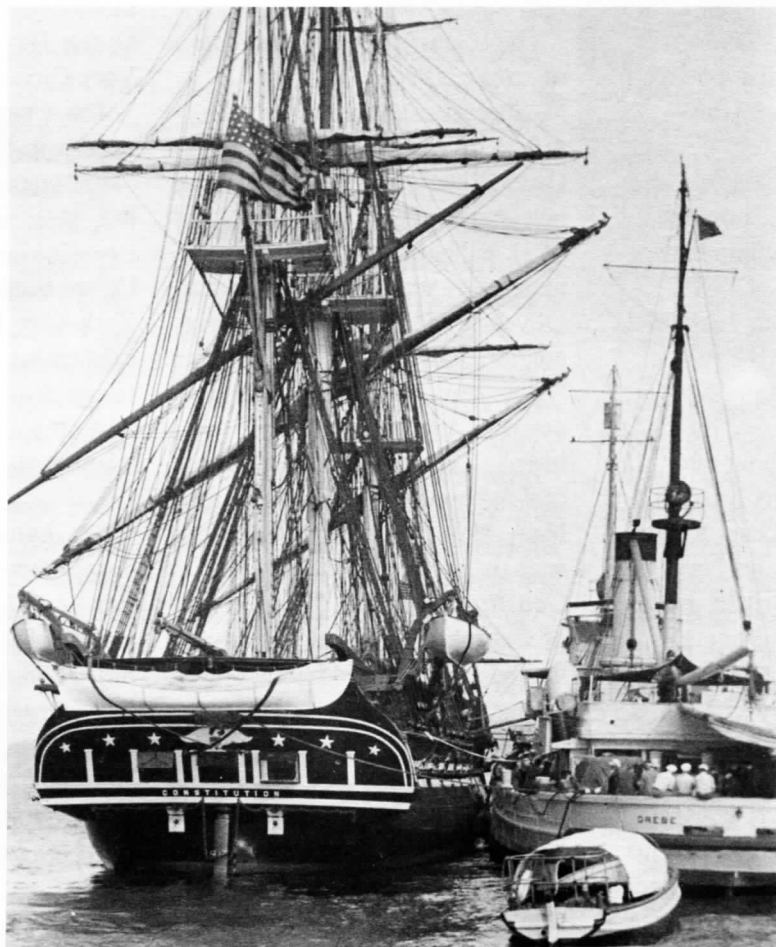
By Edward Magnani

This summer, the USS *Constitution*, "Old Ironsides", set sail and moved under her own power for the first time in over 100 years. For her bicentennial celebration, she made a short trip from her dock in Boston Harbor to Marblehead, Massachusetts. In 1931, however, she visited ports, under tow, along the Atlantic, Gulf, and West coasts. Among the places she visited was Oyster Bay, where she stayed for three days. Many people visited her while here but a large number were left disappointed due to the long distance from shore to the anchorage.

On August 25, 1931, under tow by the minesweeper *Grebe*, the USS *Constitution* came to Oyster Bay. The ship was anchored far out in Oyster Bay Harbor between Lloyd's Neck and Center Island, a 35 minute boat ride from land. It was Captain Gulliver's judgment that water in the harbor was too

shallow to navigate. The ship drew 23 feet of water but at the initially proposed anchorage, close to shore, the bay was only 19 feet deep (at low water). Two launches with a capacity of 25 persons and a few speedboats holding a half dozen persons made runs at half hour intervals. The ship was greeted by a

committee of Town of Oyster Bay officials, headed by C. E. K. Fraser of Quentin Roosevelt Post, American Legion of Oyster Bay. Each of the committee members received a picture* of the vessel autographed by Captain Gulliver. A planned demonstration of 2000 Nassau County Boy Scouts on the decks of the vessel was



USS Constitution in Oyster Bay Harbor

canceled because of the inaccessibility of the frigate. Upon leaving Oyster Bay the *Constitution* proceeded around Montauk Point and sailed along the South Shore to New York City. This longer route was required since the ship's masts could not pass under the East River bridges.

The *Constitution* is almost as old as the famous document which was her namesake. In a response to attacks on American shipping by the Barbary pirates of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, George Washington, on March 27, 1794, signed an act to provide naval armament. This act eventually resulted in the

construction of six frigates including the *Constitution*. Quaker Joshua Humphreys of Philadelphia developed the design for the 44 gun vessel. After two embarrassing attempts, where she stuck on the ways, she was launched at the Hartt Shipyard in Boston on Oct. 21, 1797. The 204 foot long ship, had a 43 1/2 foot beam, and a 220 foot mainmast. The Humphreys design produced frigates that were unusually fast and strong.

Her speed was attained by the steep angle of her hull below the waterline, which enabled the vessel to move smoothly through the water. The ships were strong because their thick sides were stiffened by supporting beams known as "diagonal riders." These diagonal beams transferred loads from the forward and aft

decks downward to the center of bending at the keel. Her internal structural arrangement along with her thick oak sides allowed her to carry more cannon than other vessels of her size.

The Constitution was never defeated and its hull was never holed. She destroyed or captured 32 enemy ships. Commodore Edward Preble commanded the frigate from May 1803 until October 1804 and led a series of successful attacks against the Barbary pirates at Tripoli. Many of the junior officers in his command, "Preble's boys", later became famous commanders during the War of 1812. Included were Isaac Hull and Stephen Decatur. On August 19, 1812, Isaac Hull, by then the ship's captain, defeated the frigate HMS *Guerriere*, about 600 miles east of Boston. This was the first of a series of victories for the fledgling United States Navy over the "invincible" British naval forces. It was during this engagement that the *Constitution* earned her nickname, when a sailor saw a ball hit, make a dent, and fall into the sea. He cried out, "Huzzah! Her sides are made out of iron!" Due to his brother's death, Hull left the *Constitution* to settle his brother's affairs and provide for the widow and her children. He switched duties with Commodore William Bainbridge who was commandant of the Boston Navy Yard. With a crew comprised principally of Hull's men, Bainbridge met and defeated the frigate HMS *Java* on December 29, 1812, off the coast of Brazil. After this second one-on-one frigate fight, Britain ordered her frigates to avoid

engaging their American counterparts when alone. The avoidance problem was solved by American Captain Charles Stewart near Madeira off the African coast on February 20, 1815. In a classic naval battle, the *Constitution* simultaneously defeated two British ships, the light frigate *Cyane* and the corvette *Levant*.

The *Constitution* spent most of the 1820s in the Mediterranean, ensuring the safety of Americans during the Greek Revolution. An unfounded newspaper report in Boston in 1831 indicated that the ship was ready for scrapping. Student Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote a stirring poem of protest. It began "Aye, tear her tattered ensign down, Long has it waved on high." The popular response to this famous poem insured that the Navy should not even consider such a notion. In 1845, the *Constitution*, under the command of Captain "Mad Jack" Percival, visited Vietnam and when in Danang tried to rescue a French missionary without success. With the coming of ironclads in the Civil War the age of the wooden warship was almost over. After use as a school ship for U. S. Naval Academy midshipmen, and a brief ignominious stay at Portsmouth, she returned to Boston for her centennial in 1897. In the 1920s, the *Constitution* was in danger of sinking at her pier. \$600,000 was raised for her restoration by popular

subscription and the rest was added by Congress. Starting in 1931 she then spent three years, under tow, touring the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific coasts. It was during that tour that she visited Long Island. After leaving New London, Connecticut, she traveled to Montauk where she stayed for three days before moving on to Oyster Bay, and then on to New York City.

The *Constitution* permanently resides in Boston as the Navy's oldest commissioned warship. It has been suggested that the *Constitution* will again tour the United States and may visit New York City for the 4th of July celebration of the millennium. Hopefully, this national treasure will stop once again in Long Island waters.

**It is hoped that persons in possession of photographs of this occasion would loan or donate these items to the Oyster Bay Historical Society and/or the Nassau County Museum Collection at the Long Island Studies Institute where copies could be made to preserve this event for future generations.*



A group of Oyster Bay dignitaries on the deck of the Constitution. OBHS Collection.

ALICE ROOSEVELT, "BELLE OF THE WHITE HOUSE"

By Michelle Kleehammer

In 1902 the German Kaiser's yacht, *Meteor*, received a special welcoming in America, and that welcoming was provided by the young woman known locally as the "romp of Oyster Bay." Alice Roosevelt was at this time eighteen, the eldest of five children of the President of the United States and Oyster Bay's most prominent resident, Theodore Roosevelt. The act of christening the Kaiser's yacht was in fact this society girl's first public act as the President's daughter, and served well in launching her deep into Washington society, as well as into Washington gossip circles. It seems that after the christening, Alice was treated to a celebration by the Kaiser's young and handsome brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, and later wrote the Kaiser an informal thank you card, which sent loose tongues flying about her lack of formal protocol. Rumors even spread throughout the press concerning a rejected proposal made by the young prince, but with her characteristic intrigue Alice chose neither to deny nor to affirm these accusations.

During her years as a member of the First Family, Alice Roosevelt carried herself with a mixture of recklessness and maturity, flightiness and poise, and intelligence and whimsy that captured the public's, and press' eye. Her experiences with the German monarchy were not unusual for Alice, demonstrating that she was never one to long withstand proper etiquette and reservedly "feminine" activities. Alice was known to drive recklessly fast, and often

unchaperoned, she also smoked, bet on horse races, and engaged wholeheartedly in boisterous athletic activities, a true product of her father's rugged individualism. She had the rebellious nature of a "New Woman" well before such rebels were made popular in the 1920s by F. Scott Fitzgerald, only a few towns away in Great Neck. Yet while she often elicited many gasps of shock and even horror, she quickly became one of the most popular figures in the United States, and according to biographer Howard Teichmann, for a few years became the most photographed person in America, surpassing even her father.

Alice's independence from the rest of her siblings was set from the start, as she was the only child of Roosevelt's first wife, Alice Lee, who died shortly after her daughter's birth. Despite her first few years in the care of an aunt, Alice was raised by her stepmother and siblings' biological mother, Edith Kermit Carow. Though she lost her mother and then suffered the trials of a very public girlhood and adolescence, Alice became one of the most strong-willed and independent creatures America had yet seen. But this is not to downplay her attractiveness to both men and women from all walks of life. Women all over America began wearing "Alice blue" and yearning for the sweeping hats and plumes she was known to wear. Alice was at once feared and desired by men throughout the world, as she was a beautiful and occasionally domineering woman of 5'7" and an unchecked spirit. At social



events she was known for saying "If you don't have anything nice to say about anyone, then sit right here by me." As one man, many years later, put it, "Maybe her body's frail [now], but her mind is like a computer, and her verbal alacrity.... Well, I'd rather face a loose woman with a loaded gun." Characteristic of Alice's demeanor, she added greatly to the intrigue that surrounded her by egging on the press. She concocted a scheme with the help of her mother and Edith's press secretary who agreed to "design" fashionable outfits and accessories they could never afford given the President's relatively small salary. The secretary would then describe them in enviable detail to the press and other interested callers.

Though her rebellious nature often exasperated her highly disciplined father, he loved and

continued on p. 20

A HOLIDAY SALMAGUNDI

When Governor De Witt Clinton issued a proclamation to the people of the State of New York in 1817 naming a uniform date for celebration of Thanksgiving by the residents of the state, the sturdy farmers of East Hampton and Southampton who already had an established Thanksgiving tradition in which the holiday was celebrated with a "movable feast," demurred. The eastenders, who kept their cattle on Montauk Common during the warm months, set the date for their celebration of Thanksgiving on the Thursday following the advent of weather cold enough to require the cattle to be driven home. Clinton won through and Long Islanders have been in step on the matter ever since.



In New York City in 1844 Lydia Maria Child wrote a poem which began:

"Over the river and through the woods, to grandfather's house we go;"

The occasion of the journey was the celebration of Thanksgiving. The holiday makers were a little family of mother, father and children. Their vehicle, a one horse sleigh. To the children the journey seemed a long one and the wind,

"It stings the toes,
and bites the nose."

But the ringing of the sleigh bells and the good times ahead more than make up for the day's discomfort and before they know it they are passing through the barnyard gate and

"Old Jowler hears our bells"
and with a loud bow-wow alerts grandmother and grandfather to

their arrival. The final lines of Mrs. Child's poem run:

"Hurrah for the fun!
Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!"



A Thanksgiving delicacy often mentioned in 19th century (or earlier) reminiscences and works of fiction was the Marlborough pie or pudding-pie. To at least the casual reader these accounts can be exasperating. Few we have ever seen describe the nature of the dessert. Having sneezed our way through many dusty volumes we are in a position to give you a list of ingredients for a filling. Sorry that we can't provide a recipe. Into the filling go apple sauce, eggs, milk, sugar, the juice and rind of a lemon or lemons, white wine, butter and nutmeg. Pie crust, when used, is also your responsibility. However, if you should be better informed on this item than is the staff of *The Freeholder* why don't you give us a Marlborough piece we can use in a future issue?



The early Dutch inhabitants of Manhattan took their holidays seriously. On December 14, 1654, the aldermen of New Amsterdam proclaimed,

As the winter and the holidays are at hand, there shall be no more ordinary meetings of this Board between this date and three weeks after Christmas.

During the occupation of New York City by British forces during the American Revolution this advertisement appeared in the Royal Gazette of December 27, 1777. According to its date it was a bit late for its purpose but it shows that the exigencies of war did not easily interrupt the expectations of young America.

Christmas presents for the young folks, who have an affection for the art military, consisting of horse, foot and dragoons; cast in metal, in beautiful uniforms.

Price 18s. a dozen.

The price suggests that only wealthy parents "need apply." The toy soldier collector of today, however, would doubtless offer many, many times the 1777 price for examples of these somewhat optimistically offered lead soldiers representing perhaps English regiments already on our shores.



On Christmas Day, 1768 Mary Cooper of Oyster Bay made this entry in her diary:

Christmas. A fine clear day. The sun shines warm. Oh, may the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, Peter Underhill gave out the breade and wine this day to some whose hearts the Lord had touched. Though I sat in the meeten with greate delight, yet I came with a heavy heart. I went to meeten in the slay with Whippo and come home with John Wright and Nicholas and their sister Anne Crooker.

Toys - in stockings and under the Christmas tree - are hardly a small element in memories of childhood Christmases. As time pours away the dates when various toys were introduced into the Christmas scene becomes matters of history. Doubtless many of us could place Beanie Babies in time but here's a toy of some importance locally to test your knowledge on. When was the first Christmas that the Teddy Bear was around for young hopefuls to write to Santa about? Did you say 1906?



"At Christmas play and make good cheere, for Christmas comes but once a yeare." So wrote Thomas Tusser about 1557. He had more to say about the responsibility of him whose barn and storehouses were full, "thy needie poore neighbor to comfort and cheere." Having pointed out that enjoying the good things in life carried with it the need to be concerned about others, he went on to list some of the good things of the Christmas Season.

Good bread and good drinke,
a good fier in the hall,
brawne, pudding and souse,
and good mustard with all.
Beefe, mutton, and porke,
shred pies of the best,
pig, veale, goose and capon,
and turkey well drest;
Cheese, apples and nuts,
Joly carols to heare,
As then in the country is
counted good cheare.

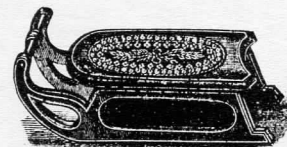


One of the games played at Christmas time in Tom Tusser's day was called "Snapdragon." Into a plate of flaming brandy were sprinkled raisins. The players of the game had to snatch out a raisin at each turn and extinguish it by popping it into the mouth. The raisin could then be eaten, with relish, one hopes, although smarting fingers and singed lips, not to mention fiery beards where worn, might have detracted somewhat from the enjoyment. The game was also called flapdragon, perhaps by confusion, of the flapping jaws of the prop (flap) dragon carried by the Christmas mummers in connection with the playlet they offered in every house where they were entertained. One of the characters in the playlet was, of course, England's St. George, who regularly attacked the dragon with a wooden sword.



We aren't sure what the Pilgrims and their Indian guests ate at that first Thanksgiving dinner. It is very likely they had venison; Massasoit brought them five deer. The Pilgrim hunters went out for two days shooting and brought back enough "fowle" to last almost two weeks. We don't know if "fowle" included turkey, but high protein so far. Doubtless they had maize in several forms. Perhaps one of those forms was succotash, that is corn and beans. The same diet Captain Jinks fed his horse, cooked either with or without meat. Cranberries were around and the Indians understood their use and perhaps the party was the

first to make the cranberry a part of the American Thanksgiving menu. Seafood and seasonal fruits helped fill the groaning board. If you are the kitchen official of 1997's Thanksgiving, give some thought to the Pilgrim women of whom but four and two well grown girls were left after the terrible sickness of the first winter. They had ninety guests and the feast went on for three days.



In a column in the New York Times several years ago, Frank Rich discussed some of the aspects of being Jewish at the period of the year when a more-or-less Christian holiday virtually forced itself on everyone's attention. As a small boy he envied the harvest of presents reaped at Christmas by his Christian friends. He began his column with his mother's telling argument, "Look at it this way. You get presents eight times and they get them only once."



Perhaps it is worthy of note that one of the best loved Christmas songs of this century, White Christmas was written by a Jew, Irving Berlin. We have traveled a long way on the road to an whole-hearted acceptance of each other for what we are by all the people of the world. We may still have a distance to go but surely Berlin's song is a sign that a large part of the path is behind us.



ASK UNCLE PELEG

Dear Uncle Peleg:

When I was growing up, kids often said "Yay!" as a sort of synonym for "Hooray" or "Hurrah," when they were pleased by something such as the school burning down or the hokey-pokey man appearing up the street. Maybe kids still say "Yay" today but I haven't heard it recently. Approval nowadays seems to be expressed by a mildly voiced "Cool!"

I want to ask: is "Yay" related to the ancient affirmative, "Yea", which is still with us in limited contexts like the expression, "Yeas and Nays," or is it a different word altogether? And how about "Yeah" as in Yeah= I agree or Oh yeah= I'm doubtful. Is that the same word?

V. Mancuso

The answer to both your questions may be "Yea" but there is also a theory that at least some of the appearances of "Yeah" represent a clipped form

of "Yes" and do not stem from the same immediate form as "Yay."

Dear Uncle Peleg:

I was reading *The Diary of Mary Cooper* published by the OBHS and I came across a puzzling 1773 entry: "3 barrls of sider sold for halfe jow a barrel ..." I figured out "barrls" and "sider" without difficulty but what does the expression "halfe jow" mean? It's not in my dictionary and no one I've asked has any scoop. I don't wonder Mrs. Cooper was so beat and unhappy most of the time if she had to put up with weird expressions like that.

Dolores Martin

I'm happy to know that you've been reading The Diary which is a great treasure. It provides an enormously interesting view of life in Oyster Bay in the last half of the 18th century even though Mam Cooper, who undoubtedly had a hard life comes through as a hopeless neurotic.

As to your question, you're in a similar position to someone reading your letter two hundred years from now. "Scoop," "beat" and, perhaps, "weird" as you use them, are all contemporary slang expressions, though not particularly up to the minute. "Jow" = "Joe," a slangy way of saying Joannes, an early gold coin of Portugal, which, like much other foreign coinage, was current in 18th century America. A "halfe jow" was half the value of a joe.

Dear Uncle Peleg:

I've come across the expression "a congius of negus." What does it mean?

Linda Barreira

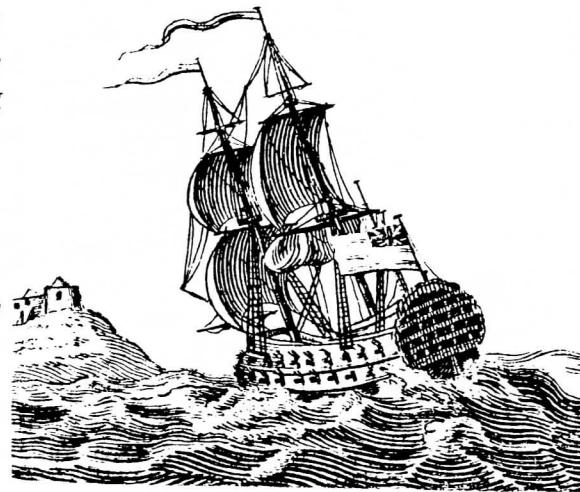
We understand congius may still be used in pharmacy abbreviated to "c" but we doubt it is something most of us will hear very often. It means gallon and was originally a Roman liquid measure. Negus is a drink of wine, hot water, lemon juice, sugar, and nutmeg said to have been invented by an 18th-century British military officer of that name. Doubtless the expression you read was intended to be comic.

Dear Uncle Peleg:

What's a dipsey lead that I came across in a sea story?

Karen Ward

Dipsey is a slurred pronunciation of "deep sea." The lead is a weight sailors use to take a line down to the sea bottom so they can tell the depth of the water. Using a lead is called sounding.





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 by **The Freeholder**.*

REICHMAN EXHIBIT OPENING DRAWS A CROWD!

The Society's lovely period garden was the backdrop for a wonderful program celebrating the opening of the Reichman Collection Exhibition at the Earle-Wightman House on Sunday, September 7. The reception, which featured a lecture on the cooper's trade by Elliot Sayward, an expert on early American trades and technology, was well-attended. Members of Mr. Reichman's immediate family, including his wife Vera, son Henry and daughter Joyce, their spouses and children, as well as dozens of Charlie's friends, traveled from all points of the compass to take part.

In addition to the lecture, Director Tom Kuehhas made presentations to Mrs. Reichman and to each of the Reichmans' children, and a representative from the County Executive's office also made presentations to Mrs. Reichman and to the Historical Society. Then, while refreshments were served, attendees enjoyed guided tours of the exhibit.

We would like to once again thank the Reichmans for their generous gift to the Historical Society. Stop in to see the exhibits at State Bank of L.I., the O.B.-E.N. Public Library, and Town Hall East.



The joiner makes himself at home in Reverend Earle's Parlor, c. 1830; all artifacts shown are from the Reichman Collection.

VOLUNTEERS COME FORWARD, MORE NEEDED

In response to our plea in the last issue for volunteers to assist in the registration and preservation of the artifacts that make up the Reichman Collection, Kenneth Gambone has come forward. Ken, a retired teacher at Oyster Bay High School and editor of the Historical Society's one-time newsletter, *Candlelight*, has long had an interest in antique tools and the trades associated with them. Thanks, Ken for your help.

We also welcome Ellinor Kasuga, another retired teacher, who has volunteered to serve as an education program guide.

With the school year in full swing, we need more volunteers like Ellinor to assist in giving education programs to our ever-growing list of schools clamoring for tours. If you have an interest in history (a loaded question - few people would have read this far into the magazine if they didn't!) and can spare a few hours per week, we need your help! Please contact Director Tom Kuehhas at 922-5032.

SOCIETY TO EXPAND MUSEUM AND COLLECTIONS

The Society is in the process of expanding its operation to the second floor of the Earle-

Wightman House. Additional exhibit rooms, collections storage, and an office/work area are slated for the space.

Already the Town of Oyster Bay has removed sheetrock walls and a door installed in the 1940s, when the building was divided into two separate apartments. The upstairs hallway will be returned to its former floor plan, complete with the original railing and newel post, both recently returned to the museum. Missing spindles from the railing will be reproduced.

As a result of the Reichman Exhibit, the Society has been offered two even more extensive collections of tradesmen's tools and decorative arts. The amazing response of the audience to the introduction of the Reichman exhibit, with non-stop questioning of the speaker that finally had to be interrupted in order to allow the scheduled program to continue, brought home to the Society that people of today are really interested in the nuts and bolts of how people of yesterday lived and worked.

The donations are contingent on the Society's locating additional space in which to store and exhibit the artifacts which comprise these collections. Even with the expansion currently underway, the Society does not have the space available to do so. It is not only desirable, but necessary to find space to utilize these collections in a manner that will allow us to interpret real life in Oyster Bay in many periods and at many social levels. Helping to make this possible is the research library associated with the Reichman Collection on

occupations, artifacts and period life.

So we need to add to our wish list a suitable building to house and exhibit these collections and the monies to fund it. If you have any ideas, please contact Tom Kuehhas at 922-5032.

THIRD ANNUAL CHILDREN'S FAIR THE MOST SUCCESSFUL YET!

Well over a thousand visitors, from all over the metropolitan area, converged on the Earle-Wightman House on Sunday, September 28th for the Historical Society's Third Annual "Old- Fashioned Country Fair for Children." As in years past, the Fair featured craftspeople, hands-on workshops, traditional games, pony rides, a petting zoo, music, and delicious food.

However this year generous support from sponsors allowed the Society to set up a tent in the parking area which lent a festive air to the occasion. More clowns,

a stiltwalker, and a silhouette artist were just some of the additional attractions that enlivened this year's event. The Society would like to thank all those who volunteered their time and efforts in all areas to make this Fair the best yet!

HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO CO-HOST DECEMBER TOUR OF HISTORIC SITES

The Oyster Bay Historical Society, in conjunction with the Friends of Raynham Hall, will be hosting a bus tour of Manhattan's historic sites on Wednesday, December 10.

The trip will begin with a morning tour of the Merchant's House Museum, built in the early 19th century and occupied by the Treadwell family until the 1930s. The next stop will be at Fraunces Tavern for lunch and an opportunity to view their latest exhibit on George Washington. An afternoon visit to the Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace



Potters from Betty Busby's studio oversee children's clay creations.

rounds out the tour. Tickets, which include transportation, all admissions and lunch at Fraunces Tavern, are priced at \$52 per person. Seating is limited, so call 922-5032 to reserve a spot or for further information.

RAYNHAM HALL HIRES NEW DIRECTOR

We would like to welcome a new member of the historic community to Oyster Bay: Vicki Schirado has come all the way from Homer, Alaska, where she was director of the Pratt Museum, to take over the reins at Raynham Hall Museum. Good luck, Vicki!



SHERLOCK HOLMES TALK AVAILABLE

Rick Robinson, trustee of the Oyster Bay Historical Society, is available to present a slide lecture entitled: "The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes." His talk covers the fifty-six short stories and four novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with special attention to the illustrations of Sidney Paget and other artists who helped popularize the series. He also discusses the hundreds of semi-scholarly groups devoted to the study of Sherlock Holmes and his companion, John H. Watson,

M.D. Rick can be contacted at the Society -- 922-5032.

AMITYVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The historical society has received the gift of a Mason Hamlin Organ, circa 1875, from Mr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Guidice. The pump organ was played by the donor during the Society's meeting back in May. St. Martin's of Tours Roman Catholic Church in Amityville is celebrating its 100th year. The parish was established in 1897 as a mission of St. Killian's in Farmingdale. Thirty families comprised the early church, covering an area from Wantagh to Copiague, and early services were held in Liberty Hall on Broadway. A photo and memorabilia exhibit has been on display at the Society's museum this fall and winter.

CENTRAL PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Gary Hammond, Supervisor of Historic Crafts for 24 years at Old Bethpage Village Restoration and former Historian for the

Village of Farmingdale, gave a slide presentation on Long Island pottery back in late October. The Annual Harvest Moon Dinner was held on November 5th at the Bethpage Fire District Hall. The Society looks forward to Christmas Holiday celebrations as well.

FARMINGDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsday columnist Ed Lowe was the guest speaker at the 34th Annual Installation dinner held at the Bethpage State Park Clubhouse on Oct. 22nd. In addition, David Morrison of the LIRR Historical Society was scheduled to speak on "The Eagles of Grand Central and Penn Stations" during the Society's Nov. 23rd meeting at the Farmingdale Public Library. His slide talk covers the life of both original terminals, which no longer exist in their original above-ground grandeur.

HEMPSTEAD VILLAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society is fortunate that Dr. Edwin Webb's family decided

OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Categories of Membership

| | | | |
|--------------|--------|------------------|----------|
| Individual | \$ 20 | Business | \$ 50 |
| Family | \$ 30 | Business Sponsor | \$ 100 |
| Contributing | \$ 50 | Business Friend | \$ 300 |
| Sponsor | \$ 100 | Business Patron | \$ 500+ |
| Sustaining | \$ 250 | Benefactor | \$ 1000+ |
| Patron | \$ 500 | | |

Member Benefits: Quarterly Magazine, Members' Party, Invitations to Exhibition Previews and Special Events, 10% Discount on Publications and Workshops. Call 922-5032 for more information on joining the Society.

to memorialize him by giving the Doctor's record-of-account books to the Hempstead Library. The books date from as early as 1830 and provide a unique insight into the life of a country physician of the 19th century. Born in England in 1804, Dr. Webb practiced in Hempstead for over fifty years and his many duties included that of Village Health Officer.

HICKSVILLE GREGORY MUSEUM

The Museum Gift Shop is stocked for the fall and winter with new selections of minerals, fossils, jewelry and other science-related items. Over the past summer, the museum has received several additions to their research and display materials, including a sea-shell collection, more than fifty color-silde sets on minerals with taped narrations, two microscopes, lapidary equipment and a box of gem "rough."

LOCOMOTIVE NO. 35 RESTORATION GROUP

The proposed move to the village of Oyster Bay promises a new home for Locomotive No. 35 and other railroad equipment. The Restoration Group is hopeful of securing a temporary location in an appropriate building (the former Jakobson's Shipyard is a possibility) as restoration work continues. Eventually No. 35, built in 1926, will be ready for permanent display, along with a museum and other related public facilities.

Visit the Oyster Bay Historical Society's website!

**[http://members.aol.com/
OBHistory](http://members.aol.com/OBHistory)**

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MASSAPEQUAS

Society members are in the process of cataloging old photographs and postcard views. The donation, or loan, of additional pictures that will enhance the collection and enable the Society to better chronicle the history of the area are welcome. The Antique Fair on Nov. 9th was a pleasant stroll down Memory Lane as many vendors displayed their wares from yesteryear. All proceeds went toward the continued work of our organization.

SEA CLIFF VILLAGE MUSEUM

Entitled "Victorian Secrets: Feminine Fashions From An Elegant Era," the new exhibit at the museum, located at 95 Tenth Avenue in Sea Cliff, opened on September 20th. This retrospective features outer- and undergarments from 1870 to 1900, and focuses on the design, materials and construction of garments worn during this formal, spectacular period of women's attire. Also at the museum, a group of figures such as clowns, angels and animals created over the years by

miniaturist Mary Eschwei will be on display. Hours are 2 to 5 P.M. on Saturdays and Sundays. Call 671-0090 for more information.

HUNTINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Huntington Historical Society will host a lecture entitled "For Want of a Pot" on Thursday, November 20th at the Conklin House, at the corner of High St. and New York Ave. The featured speaker, Mark Smith, is a collector of Brown Brothers pottery. He will describe a variety of types and styles of pottery and their uses. He will also discuss how to identify and date local pieces.

Refreshments will be served at 7 p.m. and the lecture will begin at 7:30 p.m. Reservations may be made by calling the Huntington Historical Society office at 427-7045. The lecture costs \$5 for non-members; Society members are admitted free.

Many thanks to Harry L. Dickran of Levon Graphics Corp., 210 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!

YESTERDAY IN OYSTER BAY

KEZIA YOUNGS JONES

By Arlene Goodenough

The familiar story of George Washington kissing the adolescent daughter of Squire Youngs on his visit to Long Island in 1790 was brought to mind recently when Kezia's grave was discovered in the Jones Cemetery in Massapequa.

Washington spent the night of



April 23-24, 1790, at the Youngs Homestead in Cove Neck. Miss Youngs would have been two months past her 17th birthday (she was born on February 12,

1773). Some six months later she was married to William Jones, aged 19, the second son of Samuel Jones, Esquire, Father of the New York State Bar. They were married at Youngs Homestead by the Rev. Andrew Fowler. We can surmise that this was a real love match judging by the couples' ages, but no doubt both families were delighted to see the uniting of two of Long

Island's oldest families. The Youngs' Long Island beginnings date back to 1638 and the Joneses to 1695.

Samuel Jones had a long list of important posts including delegate to the Convention that ratified the Constitution of the United States, at which he was a most influential member. Captain Daniel Youngs, though a Loyalist militia officer, must have been a great help to Washington during the Revolutionary War if our First President saw

fit to stay the night at his house.

After the wedding the newlyweds lived at the home of Samuel Jones on the south shore until 1793, an estate named West

Neck. Then they moved to Cold Spring Harbor where they lived on the west side, opposite the beach. Two children were born at West Neck: Samuel W. Jones, no doubt named for his grandfather, who grew up to be the mayor of Schenectady; and David W. Jones, who lived all his life in Cold Spring Harbor.

Six more children were born over the years. The fifth child, Elbert W. Jones, died at the age of 25 in 1826, and was buried in the family plot at West Neck, not far from his grandfather who had died in 1818.

Kezia was laid to rest there in 1847, age 74, followed by her husband who was buried beside her in 1853.

Two years later Samuel W. Jones joined his parents and brother. Forty-eight years passed before the youngest child of Kezia and William, Daniel Youngs Jones, became the last member of his immediate family buried there.

In 1997, members of the Historical Society of the Massapequas engaged in some research on the Jones family and found that the small cemetery on Hicksville Road contained the remains of the young girl we had all read about in our history books. Upon investigation, it was found that what had to be the gravestone of Kezia was lying face down in the earth. A phone call to Richard Benz, Superintendent of Parks for the Town of Oyster Bay, brought quick action. On a morning in early September, Kezia's stone was raised, taking its rightful place beside the rest of her historic family.



THE GATHERING PLACE



"The Gathering Place" is the department of the magazine housing contributions of an historical slant but 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: The Cutting Box

By Lee Myles

Farmers have been feeding chaff to their livestock since before Greek and Roman times. We aren't talking about the litter of seed coverings left after threshing which are also called chaff but about hay or straw cut into lengths of three quarters of an inch or less for complete

digestion by the beasts of the field. It is believed that until relatively recently making chaff was simple knife work using a hand-held knife and some sort of a block to cut upon. Eventually a very simple machine was developed consisting of a flat-bottomed wooden trough open at one end and mounted on legs like a saw horse. A long, sharp knife was hinged to one of

the legs so it could swing across the open end. In the trough, a bundle of fodder to be cut was pushed forward by a hand-held comb-like device after each slice of the knife. A foot-operated clamp held the bundle while the knife was cutting. The chaff fell into a container below.

John Vince, an English writer and investigator of the daily life of the English past believes the machine was most likely developed in the Georgian period but offers no hint of a date. This leaves us with a time span for its birth stretching from 1727 to 1820. P.L. Ardrey, in his book *American Agricultural Implements* suggested that the first straw cutter was invented by one Hochfield of Saxony toward the end of the 18th century. However, *Agricultural Hand*

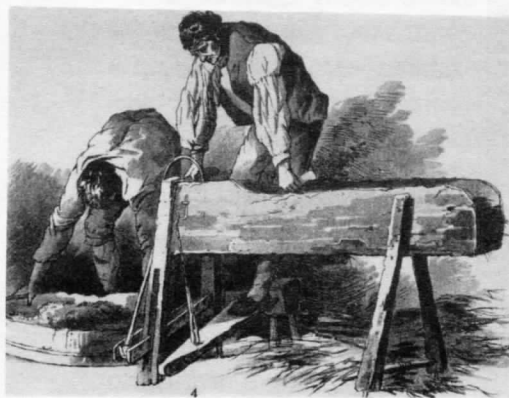
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Occupations of the Past

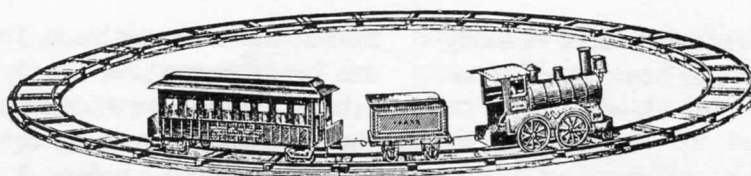
Can you identify the work done by the twenty workers in the list below? Some of the job titles may have described more than one occupation so search your vocabulary well to be sure you remember all the possibilities. Perhaps you can come up with more than we did. Keep your thinking within the date ranges given after each occupation title. You'll find descriptions of the work done by each title holder on p. 20.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Balance maker.... 17th Century | 11. Founder... 15th C. through 19th C. |
| 2. Baxter....16th C. or earlier to 18th C. | 12. Fuller... 11th C. through 19th C. |
| 3. Brazier....15th C. through 19th C. | 13. Horner... 15th C. to 19th C. |
| 4. Brewster.... 14th C. to early 17th C. | 14. Outrider....18th C. to 19th C. |
| 5. Chandler 14th C. to 17th C. | 15. Reed maker...17th C. to 19th C. |
| 6. Collier....14th C. to 18th C. | 16. Swinger....14th C. to 19th C. |
| 7. Currier... 14th C. to 19th C. | 17. Staymaker....17th C. to 19th C. |
| 8. Cutler....14th C. to 18th C. | 18. Whitesmith....14th C. to 19th C. |
| 9. Draper.... 14th C. to 18th C. | 19. Whittawer....13th C. to 18th C. |
| 10. Fellmonger... 16th C. to 19th C. | 20. Webster....14th C. to 19th C. |

Tools by Roy Brigden says the cutting box first appeared around 1760. We march back in time with the Oxford English Dictionary, which found a description of the machine in 1736. Since then there have been a number of improvements but the basic machine, variously called a cutting box, a chaff cutter, a feed or fodder cutter, a straw cutter and other names galore, has changed little.



The Dutch name for the cutting box is "haksel snijder" or "kaf snijder." The second term is interesting because it is literally translated as "chaff cutter," a common English name for the device in America and probably in England. What makes it really interesting is that there is a picture in the Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art showing a man operating a kaf snijder in a barn. The picture was painted by the Dutch artist, Caspar Netscher c. 1662-64. That's at least 72 years before the first recognition of the machine in England. So--where do you suppose the English were introduced to chopping feed by machinery?



Ed.'s Note

What follows is a transcription of an actual letter written in 1903 by the father of OBHS member Mary Jane Sayward (nee Stevens). At the time his family lived in a Brooklyn apartment. The only changes I have made are in brackets. I'm sure many of our readers can relate to his tale of woe!

Dec 22, '03

Dear Santa Claus

I asked mamma if I could have a steam-engine one that you light the wick and it will heat the boiler and then the engine will go. Not very long ago there live[d] upstairs a boy who had one, but I asked mamma and she said it was to[o] dangerous.

So I asked ma if I could have a[n] air-rifle and that was to[o] dangerous, but ma asked me how I would like a drum and I said I would like a drum so I want one for Xmas.

And I want the trains on the tracks and ma said maybe I could have them and I want a show of Robinson Cruiso and ma said I could have them and you [k]now a few other things and I think we are going to have a little Xmas tree and I think that is all for tonight with love to Santa Claus I remane your little boy.

Allan Stevens

[on envelope] Santa Claus
Iceland

SHORT TALES

By John Hammond

Thanksgiving Day usually marked the end of the horse racing season at the Oyster Bay Driving Park Association's track. On the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day hundreds of residents watched the races as some of the largest purses of the season brought out some of the best competition. The Driving Park oval track was located on the land just to the west of the present Vernon School in East Norwich. Races were held there for about a decade until the new track at the Nassau County Fairgrounds in Mineola was built.

Wilbur Johnson's furniture store and undertaking parlor on the corner in East Norwich was also one of the favorite local stops for Christmas shopping. Each year Johnson, who was also the leader of the Sunday School at the Methodist Church, would stock all kinds of dolls, wagons, skates and other toys for the Christmas season. President Theodore Roosevelt recalled that Johnson's store was the only place he was able to find a red wagon that he had been searching for. Of course, some of the squeamish in the community chose to do their shopping elsewhere, even though the undertaking business was in a separate area from the furniture store.

Trades Practiced In Early Oyster Bay: The Sawyer

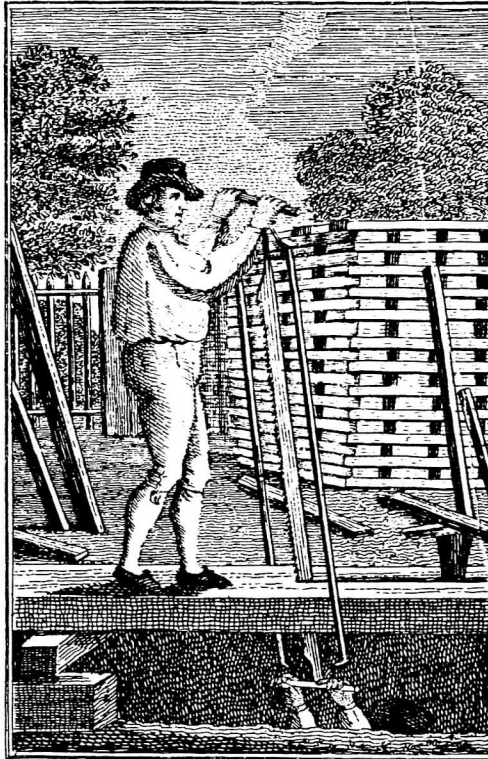
By Elliot Sayward

Before sawmills became common enough in a new settlement that boards, plank and other sawed timber could be conveniently procured, it was customary to make the necessary sizes of lumber by the exertion of two men using a pitsaw. Although a single man could easily reduce plank into smaller dimensions with a handsaw, cutting a log into various useful forms and sizes rapidly and accurately required skill and experience as well as more muscle than a single workman could provide.

The log after being flattened on opposite sides with an ax was suspended over a narrow pit or on two tall trestles. Two workmen, one standing atop the log and the other in the pit below "ripped" it into the desired thickness with a long saw. The "top Sawyer" was generally the man in charge of the team. He was responsible for guiding the saw along the line marked out for it, a necessary and demanding task. His saw handle was called a tiller, perhaps because he steered the saw as a helmsman steers a boat using a tiller to turn the rudder. The pitman's contribution was mostly muscle as it was on the down stroke that the saw actually did its cutting.

Two kinds of saw were used. One had a thin and narrow blade that was stretched in a wooden frame to keep it from buckling. The other had no frame but a

thicker, wider, heavier blade. The thin bladed frame saw, usually called a pitsaw, cut a thinner kerf and may have been easier to work, but removing it from the log when that had to be shifted to avoid cutting the crosswise supports was not the simplest of



tasks. The heavier whipsaw worked harder because its thick blade had to chew a wider kerf. On the plus side, its lower handle, called a box, slid easily off the blade when its retaining wedge was tapped, allowing the blade to be drawn out of its kerf and quickly reinserted when the log was moved. Although the framed blade wasted much less wood in sawdust nobody worried much about that where trees were abundant.

Kerfs were not wide or thin simply because sawblades were thick or thin. In order that the

blade might not be pinched by the walls of its cut, its teeth were "set" by bending, one to the right, the next to the left, all the way down the edge of the blade. A large, heavy whipsaw might therefore be eating up more than a quarter inch breadth of wood.

Ten such kerfs would have turned two and a half inches of a sawlog into waste.

In the days when Oyster Bay was settled sawblades were mostly made of iron with a thin strip of steel at the cutting edge. Iron saws, being much less flexible than all-steel ones, had either to be held taut in a frame or made in thicknesses that would not become misshapen in heavy work. Such preventive measures resulted not only in waste but in extra labor and greater expenditures of time. This did not bother many of the professional sawyers, who preferred their livelihoods to the changes that followed the introduction of saw mills or better tools, changes which

would result in greater production but less work. Fortunately for the die-hards, sawyers continued to be needed in specialized trades for many years after sawmills became common. Shipbuilders, for instance, needed plank longer than the short carriages of the early mills could accommodate. Cart and wagon builders wanted curved logs sawed to the shapes of the curved timbers from which early vehicles were constructed. Even so, the term of the pitsawyer in America was not long and his contribution to the economy of our ancestors has been almost forgotten.

THE OYSTER BAY RAILWAY: THE LAND UNDER THE TRACKS

By Michael J. Hanophy Ph.D.

On June 24, 1889, the first steam locomotive pulled into Oyster Bay. For the previous 20 years trains on what was then called the "Glen Cove" line had ended their runs in Locust Valley. The opposition of landholders and the indifference of the LIRR had halted any construction on the line during that time, but with the incorporation of the Oyster Bay Extension Railway Company, the four miles of track heading through Mill Neck to Oyster Bay could be laid. To accomplish this, about 40 acres had to be purchased from local land holders. My interest in those land acquisitions began when I discovered a deed in the Queens County Clerk's Office transferring an 80' by 100' strip of land from my great-great-grandparents to the railroad on August 4, 1887.

When construction of the Oyster Bay branch was started in 1864, the LIRR believed that the benefits offered by the new road would encourage local landowners to donate much of the land required. The people of Glen Cove hoped that a rail line would give local farmers access to city markets as well as help to increase property values and promote permanent settlement in the area. Ultimately with the support of Stephen Taber of Roslyn and the encouragement of the editor of the *Glen Cove Gazette*, most of the right-of-way between Mineola and Glen Cove was donated. In 1868, when the LIRR decided to finish the branch by extending it through to its logical terminus in Oyster Bay, the press once again encouraged landowners to supply the

property. However, it became clear as work progressed that the property owners in the Oyster Bay area were strongly opposed to the railroad. To avoid long construction delays and even longer court battles, the president of the LIRR, Oliver Charlick, decided to end the line in Locust Valley.

The line's terminus remained there until potential competition from the new Northern Railroad Company and encouragement from a small group of citizens in Oyster Bay spurred the LIRR into action. The Oyster Bay Railway Extension Company was organized on August 31, 1886 and several dozen landowners along the proposed route were contacted. For the next year, railroad officials attempted to come to terms with residents. Some land was donated, some claims were settled, and, since a number of owners could not reach an agreement with the LIRR, they had land damages assessed by a special commission. The parcels of land that were sold ranged from just under 7 acres to a piece of land of only a few dozen square feet. Monetary settlements were just as varied, yet all landowners played a vital role in the history of the Oyster Bay line.

Some local residents did end up donating their land. The records of the Oyster Bay Railway Subscription Committee indicate that, when they were first approached, widow Margaret Francis, John H. Remsen, and the executors of the estates of Smith Underhill and Solomon Townsend were willing to give the right of way through their land to the

railroad. Mrs. Francis ultimately accepted \$1 for her three-quarters of an acre, as did the heirs of Solomon Townsend for two pieces of land totaling 1.546 acres. Mrs. Francis also received "other valuable considerations," including the right to cross the track. The Remsens and Underhills must have reconsidered their financial generosity, as the records of the subscription committee indicate that Underhill's executors, Thomas Underhill and John Clark settled for \$1000 for 7 acres, while a deed in the County office shows that John and Rebecca Remsen received \$75 for 1.9 acres. Others who accepted just \$1 for their land included Townsend and Mary Underhill and Mary and Susan Albertson.

By far the most expensive and arguably the most important acquisition for the railroad was the land of Joseph White of Oyster Bay Village. The five and one-half acre plot bounded by South Street, Bay View Avenue, Bay Avenue, and Oyster Bay Harbor was to serve as the terminus for the completed line. At a cost of \$6000, the sale included "all tenements and appurtenances" and a provision restricting any interference with the right of way on Meadow Road off Bay Avenue. A far more modest piece of property was purchased at the other end of the line. Sarah E. McCoun, wife of William, the first person to reach an agreement with the railroad, sold a small house and two vacant lots at the Locust Valley depot for \$600 on July 19, 1887.

Completion of the rail line did involve a number of large monetary and land transactions. Mrs. Butler Coles, whose four plots of land earned her \$4850, sold by far the largest area at 11.6 acres. Elbert Baylis was awarded \$2200 by the commission and J. D. Cock was awarded \$1750. Subscription Committee records show that John Baylis settled for \$1200, less than half the \$2500 that he had originally requested. Augustus G. Cock and his wife Elizabeth accepted \$1000 for two plots totaling 6 acres, and placed provisions in the deed stopping the railroad from interfering with traffic on Kentuck Lane or excavating beyond the purchased land. Non-resident landowners also received significant sums from the LIRR. William and Mary Green of 118 Livingston Street, Brooklyn earned \$800 for a 0.349 acre plot, while Napoleon Valentine, a commercial fruit and produce merchant from Manhattan, received \$911 for 3 plots totaling one-third acre.

Those with only small amounts of property to sell also played a significant part in bringing the railroad to Oyster Bay. George Washington Appleford and his wife Ann sold 0.016 acre for \$25, while Vernon Robinson received \$235 for a piece approximately the same size. Fred and Sarah Shaddock informed the Subscription Committee that they only required some land on which to relocate their shop. The LIRR gave them \$200 for their 0.048 acre. The tiniest piece of land, listed in the deed as two-thousandths of an acre (or less than 100 square feet) was

purchased from F. Phebe Underhill for \$5.

As for my family, the Hanophys' contribution to the Oyster Bay line was a 1.04 acre plot through Mill Neck which they sold for a modest sum. The records of the Subscription Committee indicate that my great-great-grandmother Ann agreed to sell the land she owned with her husband Michael Hanophy for \$50. A notation later in the records indicate that they settled for \$75, while the deed states that the final sale price was \$40. Whatever the price, clearly the Hanophys saw the benefits that a railroad could bring to a remote 40 acre farm on the banks of Mill Neck Creek. Access to markets in New York and Brooklyn was far more valuable to the family than a 100-foot strip of land.

For about \$20,000 (a mere \$500 per acre), the Oyster Bay Extension Railway Company bought a piece of land that would still be in use 108 years later. This was quite a bargain compared to the LIRR's purchases in Oyster Bay just two years later. In July of 1891, the railroad purchased three-quarters of an acre on Oyster Bay Harbor from Joseph White and Elisha and Andrew Underhill for over \$7500. This property, along with some land under the harbor (leased from the Town), was used to establish a ferry to carry passenger and freight cars across the Sound to Connecticut from where they could continue on to Boston. The project lost money consistently and folded after less than one year. While the Hutchinsons realized a profit of

1300% on land they had purchased only two years earlier, the Oyster Bay-Boston service was a bust for the LIRR. Their money was much better spent on the farms and fields of Oyster Bay and Mill Neck.

The Post Rider

continued from p. 2

mountain. Apparently I was impressed with all those monkeys. I thought there were thousands! That's all I remember except being very sad at losing our pet alligator, Petey.

Muriel Tatum

To the Editor:

The history of the Long Island Railroad forms a large part of the history of Long Island itself. That is one of the reasons I was pleased at your story in the "Currents of the Bay" section about the proposed railroad museum. The acquisition of the Oyster Bay turntable is a major one and a reason for rejoicing. May I suggest that old railroad items are becoming scarcer every day, a reason for the Society to issue a call in *The Freeholder* for gifts of any sort of LIRR memorabilia. Good luck to all concerned.

John Cutler Jones

Good idea Consider this the clarion call!



AUNT EEEK



Olde Things: Advice on the Care & Feeding of Antiques

Dear Akint Eeek,

We have inherited a rifle which has been in our family since we believe it was used by my great grandfather in the Civil War. Is it legal for us to keep this weapon in our home? We also have some ammunition that we believe fits this gun which we feel may be dangerous to touch and possibly illegal to own. If it is legal to keep how should we clean it and how should it be stored or displayed?

My wife has threatened to turn the piece over to the police if I don't do something about it and the questions we have about ownership and safety, I don't want to break the law but I am not anxious to lose this old friend if I don't have to.

The rifle has a curved lever below the trigger, and a tube which can be pulled part way out of the back (we think) for the bullets. It is short (about three and a half feet) and has a ring on the side. It is rusty and dirty but we can still move the hammer and the trigger. From my description I wonder if you can help us

decide whether it is even really from the Civil War?

W.S.

Oyster Bay

Dear W.S.,

The rifle you have described sounds very much like the real thing. If indeed it was carried by your relative it is of more than special interest to you and to local historians who crave objects with documented provenance (a term used to indicate specific history).

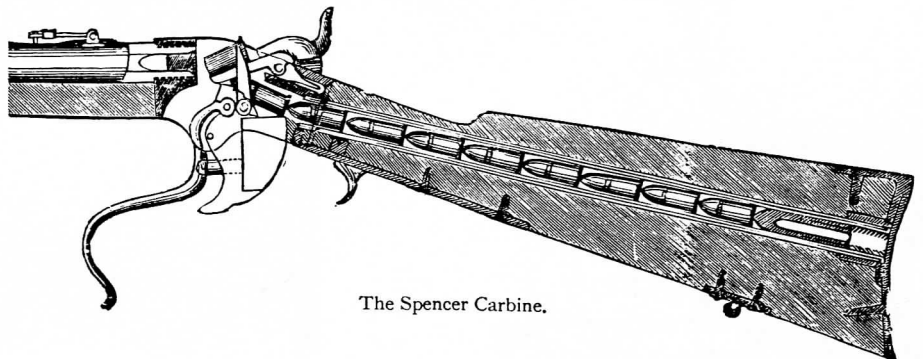
Without actually seeing the piece we can only guess as to its identity. Following your description it sounds very much like you might own a very famous and desirable Civil War-era piece known as the Spencer carbine. It is indeed perfectly LEGAL to own a piece of this vintage and mechanical configuration. It is perfectly insane for you to be pulling on the hammer and trigger. It is unlikely that the piece is loaded but you need only read the local papers to convince yourself that any firearm can be loaded and many a life has been lost to an "unloaded gun."

The ammunition is also legal but, because the ignition primers used in this rimfire cartridge were always unstable they are indeed unsafe for you to handle. They are doubly unsafe for you to have in any proximity to the rifle as the

temptation to load the piece by either the innocent or ignorant always looms.

There is always the possibility that this rifle may have some specific history which may make it illegal to own. If you don't absolutely know where the piece has been for the last generation and in whose keeping it has been it may be prudent for you to call your local police who can and will check the weapon to certify that it is indeed unloaded and will hold the weapon and check its legal history and (assuming it is free of any record) return it to you. In any case the ammunition should be handled carefully if at all, and should be turned over to the police who will send an officer to pick it up and safely dispose of it. Collecting ammunition has become a very large area and there are undoubtedly many who would disagree with us on this last issue. We say better to be safe than sorry.

As to cleaning the piece we urge that you carefully resist any temptation to clean or restore. The Oyster Bay Historical Society will be offering one (or more) lecture(s) on the topic of cleaning, restoring and displaying antiques and collectibles in the Spring (to be announced) and, (once you have complied with our safety precautions as described herein), your piece will be a perfect subject for one of our clinics. Good luck and please do follow our advice.



The Spencer Carbine.

Answers to Test Your Knowledge, p. 14

1. A maker of "balances" for weighing.
2. A baker, originally a woman baker.
3. One who works in brass.
4. One who brews ale, beer or the like, originally a woman.
5. A maker or seller of candles.
6. One who makes or sells charcoal (later, mined coal).
7. One who dresses or colors tanned leather.
8. One who makes or repairs edged tools or instruments.
9. One who makes or markets cloth.
10. A dealer in hides and skins of animals.
11. One who casts metal.
12. One who thickens and cleanses newly woven cloth.
13. A worker in horn who makes spoons, combs, etc. A musical horn maker.
14. A commercial traveler or tradesman's traveling agent.
15. A maker of loom reeds, ie. strips of reed etc. set between two horizontal parallel bars used for beating up the weft. Also a maker of sounding devices for instruments like the hautboy.
16. A workman who cleans the fibers of flax or hemp of the coarse, stalk material by beating it with a wooden "swingling knife."
17. A maker of corsets.
18. A worker who produces goods of shining, polished metal, usually iron. Also one who works with tin-coated plate iron.
19. A tanner who "taws" or makes animal skins into white and pliant "whit leather." Later, a saddler or harness maker.
20. A weaver, originally a woman weaver.

DECEMBER

Sat., Dec. 13, 4-6 p.m.

Annual Candlelight Evening and 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 will provide the right mood to ring in the holidays.

See old friends and make new ones at this annual party for the Society's members. Call 922-5032 for more information.

Alice Roosevelt...

continued from p. 5

admired her greatly. As Alice became a young adult and beyond his domineering hand, he learned to take her attitude with a little humor and much pride. As he once said to a friend disapproving of Alice's shocking ways, "I can be President of the United States or I can control Alice. I cannot possibly do both."

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