



THE FREE-HOLDER

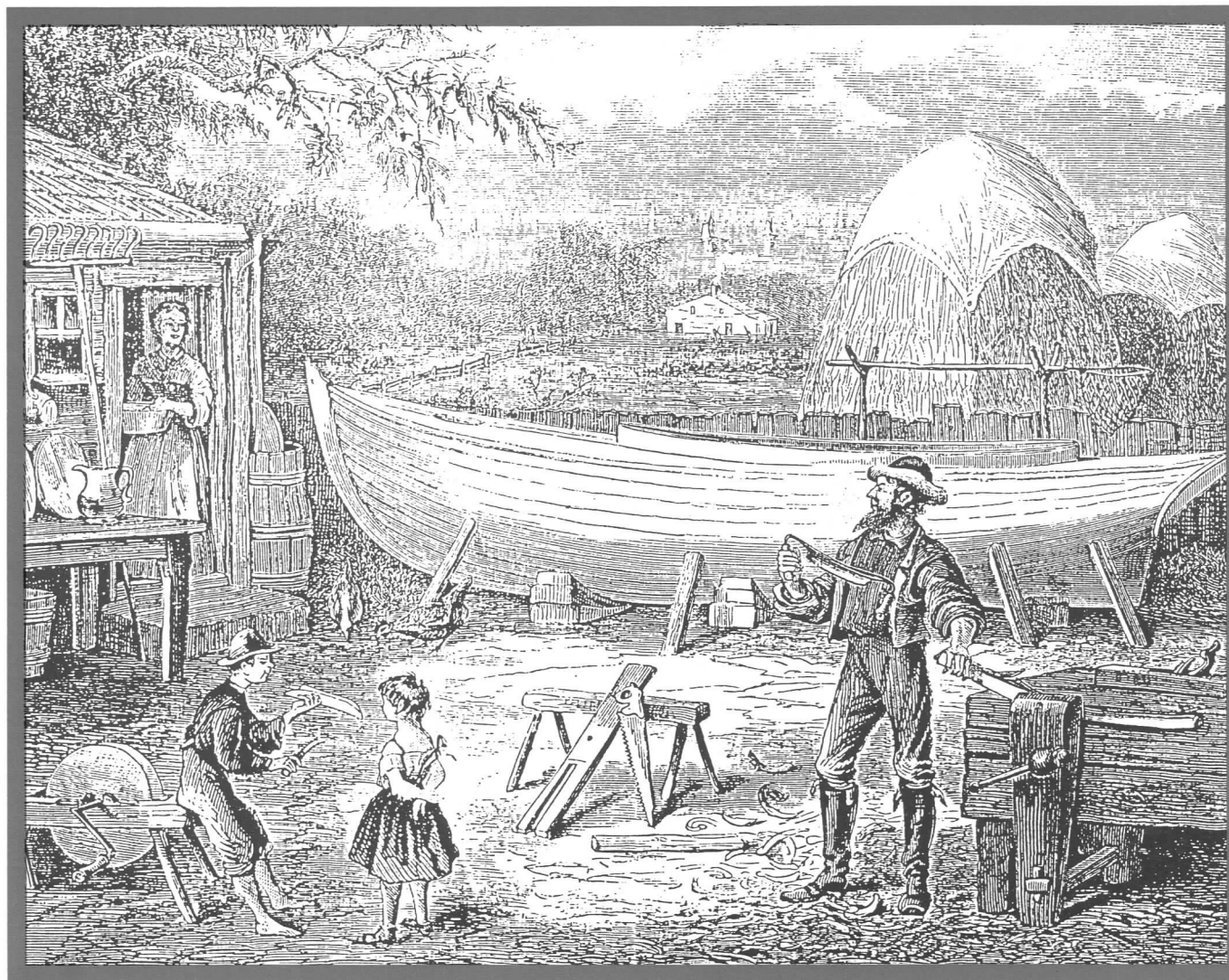
SUMMER 1998 THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDED 1960

♦ COMMUTE
TO WORK BY
PLANE?

♦ LETTER
FROM THE
GREAT WAR

♦ MARITIME
HERITAGE
FAIR

♦ OYSTER
BAY'S OWN
TOM JONES



THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

This issue was a little late getting to press due to all the activity of the past few months (see the "Currents of the Bay" section of the magazine for in-depth articles on the goings-on here at the Society), but I hope it will prove to have been worth the wait!

Thanks go to several new contributors in this issue. A reminder to all our readers: we do not need only lengthy, thoroughly-researched articles. If you have a few paragraphs regarding your reminiscences about life as it was in Oyster Bay, or some other topic, send it in!

Officers and Trustees of the Oyster Bay Historical Society

Mrs. Robert E Pittis.....President
Mrs. William Floyd-Jones.....1st Vice President
Denis J. O'Kane2nd Vice President
John Karabatos.....Treasurer
Mrs. John E. Schwartzberg....Recording Secretary
Mrs. Samuel D. Parkinson....Corresponding Sec'y

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mrs. M. Farrag Ahmed
Mrs. Albert E. Amos
Mrs. David C. Clark
Michael J. Hambrook
John E. Hammond
Ms. Linda D. Heslin

Richard F. Kappeler
Mrs. Robert P. Koenig
Mrs. John R. Lenoir
Frank J. Olt, Jr.
Susan Peterson, Ph.D
Warrick C. Robinson
Edward B. Ryder IV
Mrs. John H. G. Stuurman
Charles D. W. Thompson
James B. Townsend
Stephen V. Walker
Mrs. F. William Wall

HONORARY TRUSTEES

Edward F. L. Bruen, Esq.
*Dr. Howard E. Imhof
Miss Dorothy H. McGee

Thomas A. Kuehhas..... Director
*deceased

CONTENTS

Fitzmaurice Flying Field.....3	Currents of the Bay.....11
George Kirchmann	Yesterday in Oyster Bay.....15
An Oyster Bay Soldier's Letter.....6	Bob Smith
From the Great War	Test Your Knowledge.....16
Michael J. Hanophy, Ph.D.	The Gathering Place.....16
The Roosevelt Legacy8	Major Thomas Jones, An20
in Oyster Bay	18th Century American Success Story
Patrick Megaro	Arlene Goodenough
Ask Uncle Peleg.....10	Blocklyn's Books.....22
	Aunt Eek.....23



THE POST RIDER

To the Editor:

Illustrating the last issue's announcement of the special exhibit on ship building at the Earle-Wightman House is a picture of three men working on a gigantic wooden structure apparently reinforced with metal bands. What is the structure and what

are the men doing?

Harold Kelly

The structure is the rudder of an early 19th century ship of the largest class. We append a picture of a rudder for a smaller ship under construction. The two men who are seen full length are dressing the rough timber of the rudder with adzes, a process called dubbing.

THE FREEHOLDER

of the

Oyster Bay Historical Society
Vol. 3 No.1 Summer 1998

Editorial Staff

Editor: Thomas A. Kuehhas
Contributing Editors: Elliot M. Sayward
Richard Kappeler
Rick Robinson
John Hammond
Arlene Goodenough

Assistant to the Editor: Ruth Ashby
Address Editorial Communications to:

Editor, The Freeholder
P.O. Box 297

Oyster Bay, NY 11771

Email us at OBHistory@aol.com

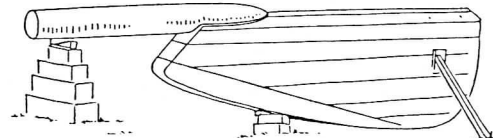
The Freeholder of the Oyster Bay Historical Society is published quarterly with the generous assistance of private individuals. The views expressed herein are not those of the Oyster Bay Historical Society, but of the individual authors.

Purpose: The Oyster Bay Historical Society was founded in 1960 with the express purpose of preserving the history of the Town of Oyster Bay. The Society maintains a 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.
Copyright 1998 by the
Oyster Bay Historical Society

ABOUT OUR FRONT COVER

This illustration, from the *American Agriculturist* of June 1872, shows a farmer/boatbuilder and his dwelling. Note the oyster rake leaning against the front of the house. Could this drawing have portrayed an Oyster Bay resident? Come see our current exhibit, *At the Water's Edge* and find out!

The third man appears to be pounding something, perhaps the fastening of the several timbers that make up the rudder.



continued on p. 19

FITZMAURICE FLYING FIELD

By George Kirchmann

Nassau County today is filled with homes, dotted with parks and crisscrossed with highways. In the first half of this century, however, airfields were the prominent landmarks. Curtis Field, Mitchel Field and Roosevelt Field were the best known, but there were several smaller airfields, laid out for developmental and/or recreational purposes. One of these was the Fitzmaurice Flying Field, in the middle of present-day Massapequa Park. Its history reflects the history of aviation on Long Island, as well as the inexorable suburbanizing of the area.

In the late 1920s, the Manhattan real estate firm of Brady, Cryan and Colleran began advertising the virtues of living in the Massapequas, and specifically in the area that was incorporated as the Village of Massapequa Park in 1931. The firm's partners had purchased most of the land in the sparsely settled area, and were interested in developing it. They cited low property and construction costs, clean air, an abundant supply of fresh water, proximity to New York City via the Long Island Railroad and even closer proximity to beaches, citing construction of a road (Wantagh Parkway) to what became Jones Beach. They had sold several hundred parcels of land by 1929 and some property owners had contracted to build houses.

The firm then unveiled a new ploy to attract buyers: a neighborhood airfield, that residents could use for recreational and business purposes, and that also could be

used for airmail service, trimming the time for receipt of mail from days to hours. The field was depicted as a place where residents could store, maintain and use their private planes, almost as one would use a private car today. The field was deemed a unique status symbol for residents of Massapequa Park.

Brady, Cryan and Colleran donated the land for the flying field and supervised its clearing and marking. They built a hangar at the northern end (at what is today Spruce Street), marked a bullseye target in the center, and established boundaries: Spruce

Street on the north, Second Avenue on the east, Smith Street (reportedly named after aviatrix Elinor Smith) on the south, and Roosevelt Avenue on the west. The firm secured the services of Colonel James Fitzmaurice to attract fellow aviators and the general public, both to the airfield and the area projected for development. Colonel Fitzmaurice, Commander of the Irish Air Service, had been one of the three man crew that had flown the *Bremen* from Ireland to Nova Scotia in April 1928, completing the first westward transatlantic plane crossing.



Colonel Fitzmaurice with the *Bremen* in the background.

Fitzmaurice Field was dedicated May 12, 1929 amid great fanfare. BCC's advertising claimed 50,000 people attended the dedication, a number that seems very high in view of the population of the area and contemporary photos, which would suggest a figure closer to 10,000. Two hundred planes were displayed at the dedication, and many aviators attended, among them Clarence Chamberlin, Bert Acosta, Elinor Smith and Thea Rasche. Soon after its opening, the Irish Aero Club established its headquarters at the field and offered flying lessons to the public. Parachute jumps were held regularly and even Santa Claus glided to earth at Christmas that year (a practice that continued annually until the field's closing).

Brady, Cryan and Colleran used the interest in the field to attract potential homebuyers, offering to construct English cottage-style three bedroom homes on 60 by 100-foot lots for between \$7950-\$8950. Several homes were constructed and still stand today on streets close to the Massapequa Park train station. The enthusiastic developers planned many others, but the October 1929 stock market crash effectively and abruptly ended the anticipated building boom. It also defined the subsequent life of Fitzmaurice Field.

The market crash and subsequent depression prevented people from investing in new homes and moving to an area deemed then to be "in the country." It also made the possibility of purchasing and flying planes, almost as one

would today buy a car, remote indeed. The field did, however, attract aviators who used it to hone their flying skills and experiment with new equipment. A demonstration of a self-releasing device, hooked to an automobile, for use by gliders, was held in May 1930 before a crowd estimated at 10,000. Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, as well as Smith, Rasche, Chamberlain and many other well-known aviation pioneers flew out of the field, using their own planes or testing equipment provided by builders.

By 1931 the original owners of the property were unable to afford it and sold it to Thomas Murphy, another aviator, known for his flying skills and love of aircraft. Murphy operated the field until its demise, using it for flight experimentation and instruction before World War II, effectively severing the link between aviation and land development that Brady, Cryan and Colleran had trumpeted in their advertisements a few short years ago.

The war restricted activities at Fitzmaurice and the other small airfields that dotted Long Island, as the government pressed into military service whatever pilots and planes it could find and restricted the sale of fuel to fly private planes and material to build and/or repair them. The war's end did not revive interest in the field, however, because larger airfields, such as LaGuardia, Republic and Idlewild (later Kennedy) were attracting larger aircraft than could safely use the 1800-foot runways at Fitzmaurice, which

were the shortest in Nassau County. Tom Murphy operated the field for skywriting, cropdusting, sightseeing and recreation, keeping about twenty planes in the hangar at any one time. The few private citizens who could afford a plane and had an interest in flying owned most of these aircraft.

The war's end brought release of material for construction and fuel for private cars; developments that sealed the fate of the field. Plans to build 1200 homes in the area between Sunrise Highway and Southern State Parkway in Massapequa Park placed the airfield square in the middle of a rapidly developing community. New residents expressed concern about safety, as their houses stood directly under the flight paths of planes using Fitzmaurice, and wondered if the area could be used more productively.

Members of the Massapequa School District's Board of Trustees, who had become acutely aware by the early 1950s of the need to provide for the growing school age population, expressed similar concerns. School enrollment had exploded from 934 in September 1951 to 3548 in September 1952. The Board had incorporated the area north of Fillmore Street in 1952 and saw the pressing need to provide educational services to the region. Fitzmaurice Field was a perfect target: large, undeveloped, minimally used and identified as a problem by more and more residents. The Board opened negotiations with Murphy in late 1952, and concluded the

continued on p. 19

AN OYSTER BAY SOLDIER'S LETTER FROM THE GREAT WAR

by Michael J. Hanophy Ph.D.

In its May 18, 1918 edition, the Oyster Bay Guardian listed the names of the 166 local men and women serving in the armed forces. While the editor admitted that his list was far from complete, he had no way of knowing just how many more would be called to the colors in the closing months of World War I. With another million names added to the draft rolls in June of 1918, men continued to be trained at the military base in Yaphank and shipped off to Europe throughout that summer. My great uncle, Thomas A. Hanophy, was one of those men drafted during the summer before the Armistice.

Tom arrived at Camp Upton on Monday, June 24th. His family came out to visit him the following Sunday, bringing with them his fiancée, Oyster Bay schoolteacher Kathleen McCarthy. Tom and Kathleen were married at the camp that day. After two months of training in the States, Tom was sent to the SOS base camp in Gievres, France, located on the rail line between Tours and Bourges.

In the years following World War I, Tom rarely spoke of his time in Europe to his children or grandchildren. He did, however, provide his father, James R. Hanophy, with a detailed account of army life in a letter written at Thanksgiving, 1918. Tom's younger brother Frank saved the letter.

[Ed. note: All punctuation was left as it was in the original letter.]

Nov 24th 1918
Sunday 11 o'clock AM.

My Dear Dad and all

This is supposed to be Dad's Xmas letter day from the boys at the A.E.F. but I intended to write to you today regardless of that rule.

Five months ago today the 24th of June I had the pleasure of making my first trip to Camp Upton to become a soldier and although it isn't a very long time it seems like at least a year to me. I've done quite some traveling since. I'm going to give you a little idea of our trip over and also the work I've done since landing. We left Camp Dix Aug 24th at 1 A.M. and the train pulled out about 2.30 o'clock headed for Philly where we arrived about six o'clock. There the good red cross (the best organization of them all) met us and served hot coffee and rolls. We marched down to the old dock and the steamer "The City of Calcutta" was already and waiting for us to go aboard. It was an old time vessel an East India freighter, for the past eighteen years owned by England. She's a good size ship about 500 ft long, and besides being loaded heavily with a cargo of iron and wheat we had between twelve and fourteen hundred men aboard. The hole my bunk was in housed 425 men, and boy we hadn't any room to spare. That part of the trip I'll tell you about when I get home. We left the pier about 2 P.M. and sailed down the Delaware river. but only for a short distance as we soon met

with a mishap. We banged into a barge that was being towed by a tug and ran high and dry on a sand bar, where we stayed for more than twenty four hours. Fifteen tugs tried twice to pull us off, but it was not until high tide the following aft., after they had emptied 800 tons of water out of the old ship that they succeeded in getting us clear. Then we had to go back to Philly for water which took another day, and in the meantime missed the convoy that we were supposed to leave with. It was then Monday P.M. when we sailed again and Tuesday morning when we woke up we were anchored in New York harbor where we stayed for seven long days. We were right in sight of Coney Island and all those places. Could also see the tower of the Woolworth building clearly. Just imagine putting in ten days on that ship before starting across. It was pretty tough.

The voyage over was O.K. though, at least that's the way we considered it after arriving safely. There were twenty-three ships in the convoy, which was escorted by destroyers. and also subchasers until we were about 500 hundred miles out. The water was rough all the way, and seasickness was plentiful although it didn't bother me in the least. We had one heavy rain storm and two very heavy fogs. In fact we came all through the war zone in a dense fog. It was so thick we couldn't see half way across the ship. We were heavily escorted all through the war zone, and it really didn't look as though a sub had a chance. We were not bothered, and I don't think many

other convoys were either. It's simply suicide for a sub to come to the surface around those destroyers and very few of them took the chance.

We landed in Manchester England and took a train (an all night ride) to Southampton where we had a four mile hike to a rest camp. We got there about 7 A.M. and left the place at 12.30 P.M. the same day. It happened to be a rest camp without rest. We got back to the docks about 3 o' c P.M. and that night sailed across the English channel. again in a heavy rain storm and gale. The following morning we landed at Le Havre where we stayed twenty four hours, and our next move was to Gievres where the company has been since. That was a funny trip from Le Havre to Gievres. It took two days and two nights and we rode in small freight cars, just piled in like animals. Forty men to a car, with no seats. straw, or anything of that sort, just the bear car. That

will give you an idea of the trip and now I'll tell you what I've done since landing.

We finished putting up our tent the day we landed (it was Sunday) in Gievres about 4 P.M. and the next morning (Monday) we started to work at 7:15 so you see we lost no time. Since then I've put in all my time at construction work. Building barracks, warehouses, railroads, pumping stations, and laying water lines with plenty of pick and shovel mixed in. The working hours here are from daylight 'til dark, everyday rain or shine, except Sunday, and loafing is not allowed. I worked on one job in Gievres that was 2 1/4 miles from the Barrack we lived in and we walked it four times a day. We stepped the distance in about thirty-five minutes which was some clip, and I think was the means of killing a corporal who died with pneumonia as a result of getting overheated and cooling off quickly. Lots a

sickness came through such work. I might tell you now we received bad news this A.M. Three weeks ago seven men of the pioneer platoon were sent to a hospital at Tours, five with pneumonia and two with influenza, and today we were notified that the five pneumonia cases proved fatal. Everyone of them died. The other two are back with the company. One man was out of my squad the biggest fellow in the platoon. He lived in Buffalo and was married. So much for the sad news. We build pump houses and lay water pipes when on jobs like this but, all, labor of the kind mentioned has ceased. All jobs that were not 75% finished at the time of the signing of the Armistice were stopped. Yesterday A.M. just after we got on the job here at Argentous we got instructions to close the thing up and restore things as near as possible to the original condition. Tomorrow (Monday) we go back to the



RECRUITS BEING MUSTERED IN, CAMP UPTON. L. I. N. Y.

A postcard sent to his family by Tom Hanophy from Camp Upton.

company, and I haven't any idea as to what we'll do next. Rumors have it that we'll go to Germany for guard duty, and all such things, but it's hard to say. A trip to U.S.A would suit the boys better, but we're ready to do anything that comes along. A little over a year ago that Camp at Gievres (the largest supply camp in the work) was a wilderness and it was built entirely by the boys of the A.E.F. When you consider the fighting force we have here and also the amount of work done in such a short time you can see the Sammy's haven't lost much time in France.

I thought many times last month of your birthday and also Mary's this month Nov 5th, but forgot to speak of them ahead of time when writing. Suppose you had a family party celebrating your 52nd year. God grant that you'll see many more, and that I'll be around on each occasion.

You did well with the purchase of liberty bonds I should say. That's the kind of stuff that made Germany sit up and take notice. The sudden wind up of the war must have surprised you, as you had an idea it was due to last a long while yet. They went to pieces quickly when they started, sure enough, and I guess by the look of things they are well whipped.

I forgot to tell you that orders were in to assemble the 87th division for rigid training prior to going

to the front, only two weeks before the war ended, but I guess Germany got wise to what was up and quit. Had the thing lasted six weeks more we would have been up there. No one that I know of is kicking about it so its O.K. as it stands.

Aunt Sue shouldn't worry about not hearing from Russell, because he's up there where there's no time for writing. Let's hope he's alright any how. I don't think they had any gamer soldier over here than him. Give my love to the Devoe's. That is have Mary remember me to them.

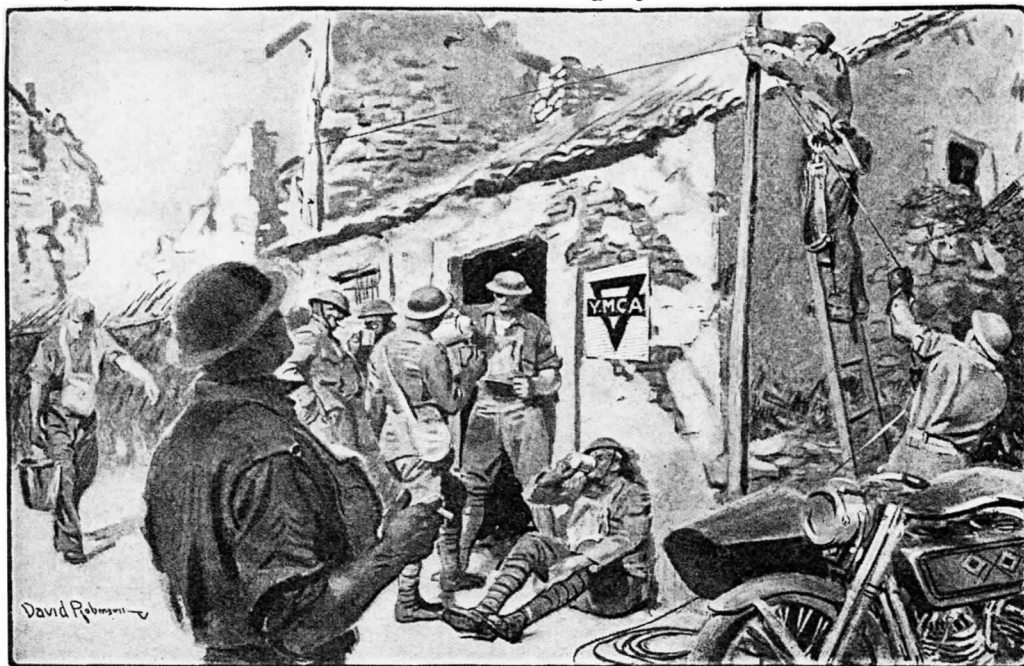
Thanksgiving this week so you'll be busy with poultry. Suppose the turks will be high. Our cook bought three geese yesterday so I killed them and we had a real fancy dinner today. Our Captain came down this A.M. so he got in on it also. Hope the holiday business will be good this year.

This is the last sheet of paper in the stack so I'll close for this time.

I'm sending you all Xmas cards but may as well wish all hands a Merry, Merry Xmas and happy New Year again.

Your loving Son, Pvt.
Tom Hanophy c/o Headquarters
Co. 347 Inf. VIA NY.

Tom Hanophy arrived home from Europe on the Queen Mary and was given an honorable discharge on January 16, 1919. He had been right when he suggested to his aunt Susan Hanophy Devoe and his sister Mary that they neednot worry - his cousin Russell Devoe arrived home safely in May. Tom came home to run the family store, Hanophy's Meat Market, and to raise three children with his Camp Upton bride. He never left US shores again, and continued to worry about the high price of the "turks" each and every Thanksgiving until his death in January of 1977 at the age of 85.



THE ROOSEVELT LEGACY IN OYSTER BAY

By Patrick Megaro

Patrick Megaro is our intern from Hofstra University, where he is pursuing degrees in both History and Secondary Education. A native of central New Jersey, Patrick is new to the history of Long Island, and has been focusing his summer research on Theodore Roosevelt, in particular, TR's home life in Oyster Bay and his foreign policies.

Theodore Roosevelt. A name that strikes a cord of familiarity in the minds of almost all residents of Oyster Bay. On any given day in Oyster Bay, you can ask someone on the street if they know who Theodore Roosevelt was. You would probably get an answer something like, "TR? Sure, he was President of this country back in the early 1900s. You know, he lived here in Oyster Bay most of his life, right up on Sagamore Hill. You should go check it out." Many residents would tell you that he was the man who put Oyster Bay on the map, so to speak. Inevitably, the village and Roosevelt share a certain kinship together. But how deep does this kinship run? This is a question I raised and set out to answer.

"My grandfather had made his summer home in Oyster Bay a number of years before, and my father had now made Oyster Bay the summer home of his family also." -Theodore Roosevelt, Autobiography

The story of Theodore Roosevelt begins in a brownstone house at 28 East 20th Street in the Gramercy Park section of Manhattan, where TR was born in 1858. The son of a rich glass importer, Theodore Roosevelt

Sr., and grandson of one of the five richest men of New York City, Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt, TR was born into a privileged life, although this was a fact he would deny throughout his adulthood. Unfortunately, young "Teedie" (as he was called by his family), was born with less-than-perfect health. He suffered from asthma and other illnesses throughout his childhood, so severe that his parents weren't sure whether he would live to adulthood. According to legend, his father basically told him one day that he needed to improve his physical strength if he wanted to live through his next birthday, so he urged the frail and sickly boy to take up exercise. He even built his son a sort of gymnasium on the outdoor deck of their home, where young TR tirelessly worked out for hours on end.

Another way TR Sr. sought to improve his son's health was to take him out to the country, where he believed the air was fresher and pure. This would relieve his son of the asthmatic attacks that left him so fatigued. The country where he often took his son was Oyster Bay.

Oyster Bay and the Roosevelts had already formed a bond. The first families of Roosevelts began spending their summers there in the early 1850s¹. TR Sr. had been beckoned by relatives to join them in their happy summers on Long Island, and he later told his wife that he was tired of spending summers in random houses in New Jersey and other places in New York. He would find a house to rent year after year in Oyster Bay.²

Young TR could find nothing more enjoyable. Due to his sickly childhood he was often left behind when other children went out to play, so he derived almost all of his pleasure from reading, mainly books on natural history, his first true love. Out in Oyster Bay, he found countless specimens to study. In the great outdoors of Long Island, TR and two cousins began collecting specimens for what they ambitiously called the "Roosevelt Museum of Natural History," which was actually a corner of Teddy's bedroom which contained the preserved remains of small animals. A childhood notebook full of sketches of the birds of Oyster Bay and notes on all types of subjects on natural history still exists, on display at the TR Birthplace in Manhattan. Years later, the naturalist John Burroughs considered TR to be his intellectual equal in ornithology. Now that his health was improving as he grew older, TR looked forward to trips out to the country with relatives where he could embark on many boyhood adventures.

Young Teddy, along with an entire troop of cousins and siblings (the Roosevelt family was never known to be small), ran wild during the summers, swimming, rowboating, horseback riding, and climbing up Cooper's Bluff. He built up his physique in Oyster Bay, and this now rugged build served to carry him through many wild adventures for the remainder of his extraordinary life. The house that served as their headquarters was named "Tranquillity" by his grandfather, though it was

generally known around town as "The Irving Place." It was located on Cove Road only a short distance from the center of the village.³

In his book *The Roosevelt Family of Sagamore Hill* Hermann Hagerdorn describes the name of the house as "... ironical. Countless cousins, assembling there with their friends, had fairly rocked the old walls." Frances Irving, in her book *Oyster Bay in History*, also finds it humorous that the Roosevelt family named their summer home "Tranquillity" '...although anything less tranquil than that happy home could hardly be imagined." With TR and company on the loose, how could Tranquillity live up to its name?

The story of "Tranquillity" starts in 1835. John T. Irving of New York City bought the property, which was then several separate lots, from Jacob and Zipporah Colwell.⁴ Gabriel Irving, nephew of the renowned

author Washington Irving, built the house on the property some time after the purchase for use as a summer home, just in time for the Roosevelt family to rent the house in 1874. In her book *My Brother Theodore Roosevelt*, Corinne Roosevelt Robinson describes the summer of 1874 (which the entire extended family spent at Tranquillity) as "...the forerunner of the happiest summer of our lives."

The Roosevelts enjoyed several summers at Tranquillity. It was here that TR received a part of his informal education through private tutors, which prepared him for Harvard. He left for Harvard from Tranquillity in 1876, his father driving him to the Syosset train station in a carriage.⁵ Here it was that Theodore Roosevelt Sr. died in 1877, shortly after TR had left. And it was to Tranquillity that Roosevelt brought his new bride Alice Lee for an informal honeymoon on October 28, 1880.⁶ TR had always called

Oyster Bay home, and it was here that he decided to build his permanent home, Sagamore Hill.

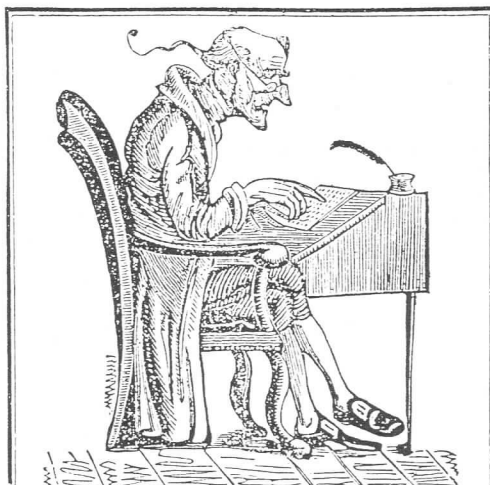
Tranquillity ceased to be the Roosevelt summer headquarters shortly thereafter. The property changed hands several times over the next two decades, finally ending up in the possession of the John A. Weekes estate in 1899.⁷ The Weekes family continued to live in the house until the 1940s, when interest in the house waned. The Weekes' sold the property in 1946 in a tax sale to Mr. & Mrs. Louis D. Friedman, who subdivided the property and sold it off in parcels.⁸ Tranquillity, or the Irving place, was razed as a result. So ended a vestige of the Roosevelt legacy in Oyster Bay.

Or did it? Tranquillity might yet live, or at least a part of it. The *Oyster Bay Guardian* ran a short bit in 1905 that reported that, "The east wing or kitchen part of the John A. Weekes house has been moved to a site on Burtis Hill."⁹ This was reportedly

the room where young TR was tutored. If this is true, it is likely that this wing is attached to some house in Oyster Bay. Perhaps the owners of this house, if it does in fact still exist, have no idea that their living room or bedroom (or whatever it might be) serves as a testament to an era gone by.

continued on p.22





ASK UNCLE PELEG

Dear Uncle Peleg,

I found the following unusual list of 8 items used as a page marker in a library book. I knew what one of them was and I was able to learn six others by consulting various reference works, but "Scotch hands" eludes me. Can you fill it in for me?

The list:

French polish
Irish blackguard
Irish moss
German clock
Danish pastry
Cornish hug
Italian hand
Scotch hands

Ethel Rhines

I suspect you are trying to sabotage old Uncle Peleg. If I give you the answer to your question and don't deal with the other seven items, I'm sure there will be angry letters asking why

readers are being left in the dark about any item(s) they don't happen to know. Here's eight for the price of one: French polish - a finish for furniture and fine woodwork using shellac oil and alcohol rubbed in sequence; Irish blackguard - a kind of snuff; Irish moss - an edible seaweed, also called carrageen; German clock - a clock featuring elaborate construction and automatic roving figures; Danish pastry - it would be un-American to claim ignorance of this comestible, I won't insult your intelligence; Cornish hug - a wrestling hold; Italian hand - a form of handwriting developed in Italy and adapted by many countries in preference to the old German Gothic; Scotch hands - this one is given the plural because two are necessary, they were corrugated butter paddles used to roll butter balls.

Dear Uncle Peleg:

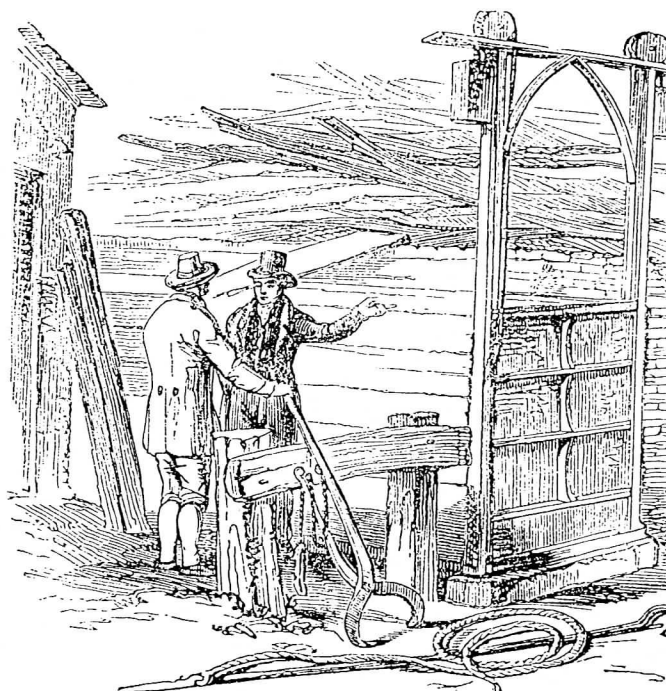
What is a steambox?

This is a very important question. I've got to borrow one for inclusion in "At the Water's Edge", the exhibit about the tools and practices of shipbuilding.

Thomas Kuehhas

There's nothing you museum folk won't stoop to. I believe that you're trying to get me to tout your exhibit. Well I walked through it and I learned quite a bit about building ships. Now if only some readers will ask me the right questions.

Here's a picture of your steambox. In it, a plank can be made as supple as a strand of spaghetti.





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**.*



WHY WAS JOHNNY SO LONG AT THE FAIR?

"I brought my kids for a quick look at the Fair because we had errands to do but it was hours before I could drag them away!" So said one parent leaving the

Society's Maritime Heritage Family Fair, late on Saturday afternoon, Sept. 26th. Her smile however belied any hint of irritation at having her plans disrupted. She went on to list the activities - virtually all that were offered - that had exerted a Pied

Be sure to stop in and see the current exhibit at the Earle-Wightman House. *At the Water's Edge: Shipbuilding and Related Trades* will be on view until the beginning of November!

Piper influence upon her brood. Every volunteer we were able to talk to at day's end had similar complimentary comments to repeat - which was as it should be for it was the volunteers who made the difference - although we had a couple of fair professionals who brought us fascinating entertainments. It was the volunteers' wholehearted efforts that made the event a continuous round of new and different experiences for wide-eyed children, to whom the day was dedicated.

From the moment Director Tom Kuehhas opened the fair with musket fire there was something doing every minute. Most of our visitors stopped first at the compound of Dick Kappeler, Carleton Hughes ably assisted by Vincent Santonicola on the crosscut saw and Ada & Frank Flower at the caulking trim. In the compound the various tasks of old fashioned shipbuilding were experienced using real tools setting up a wholesome rat-a-tat-tat of caulking mallets and spike drivers. The junior element also wielded augers, wrenches, bit braces and the big saw with enthusiasm and not a

little skill. On the theory that novices would produce a leaking vessel they were next introduced to the gushing of water at the operation of an old-fashioned bilge pump. Almost as leaky as the vessel it was intended to empty, the pump threw a fine cooling spray over the proceedings.

Parading the grounds a Marine in the costume of the early 1800s stopped to show off his weaponry to every interested youngster, while a candy peddler of the same era extracted coin of the realm from parents' pockets to supply wholesome, old fashioned sweets to the whole family. Youngsters also clamored for the toys popular a hundred or more years ago displayed on our gift shop table. Sack races and spoon races were eagerly engaged in by youthful participants.

Scattered around the grounds were a costumed fiddler of folk tunes, a "Marble-Man" with entertaining games and bits of marble history, a magician with costume tricks and spiel right out of great-grandfather's day, a clever and creative blacksmith, a hot-dog man complete with a push-cart crammed with "foot-longs", sauerkraut and a marvelous onion relish, a table of rare viands and thirst-quenching nectars presided over by a group of charming ladies, a Gypsy Queen in her own tent whose crystal ball provided fabulous fortunes, and perhaps the most delightful surprise of the day, another group of charming ladies demonstrating the making of old-fashioned freezer-cranked ice cream.

We should not forget that the flag-festooned premises were embellished with beautiful antique cars and two interesting small boats, as well as other maritime paraphernalia. Sea chanteys sung and played by a talented duet were of special delight to the ear and helped set the mood. Lectures about one of the boats and the special tools of the shipwright were given in shady spots. David Relyea of Frank M. Flower and Son Oyster Company and David Short of the Christeen Preservation Group had a tent with photographs and materials on their efforts.

"Gosh," said another parent carrying one tired daughter and shepherding one still-active son, "It was really great. I hope you do this again."

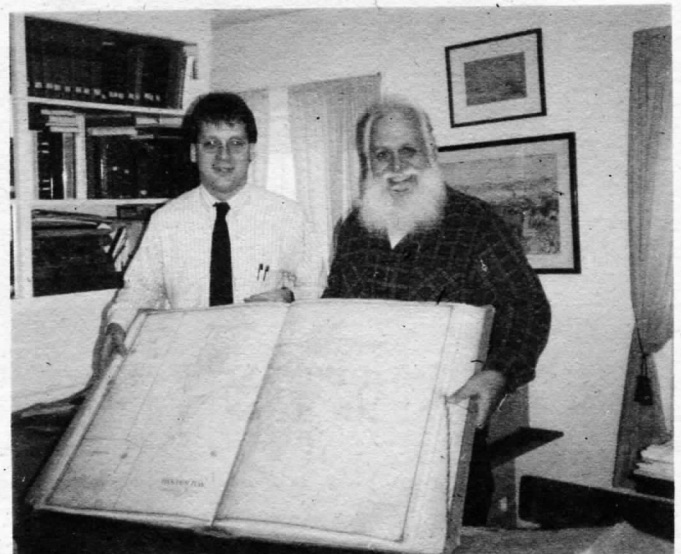
LOCAL MERCHANT DONATES HISTORIC ATLASES TO SOCIETY

Les Marbles, owner of Pine Island Etch & Sign has donated three atlases of Queens and Nassau Counties to the Oyster Bay Historical Society. The atlases, dating from the years 1897, 1906, and 1932 show in great detail the communities comprising modern day Nassau County.

Mr. Marbles related a story of how he acquired the atlases which was almost as fascinating as perusing the maps themselves. "My father got a call one

day, years ago, from a friend of his that his company was throwing out these old atlases. So my father, who loved old things, went and rescued them from the dumpster, and that's how they survived. When Tom [Kuehhas] told me of the need on the part of researchers at the Society for the names of landowners in this area, I had the solution: donate the atlases my father had saved to a place that could put them to good use."

The two earlier atlases name almost every property owner in the Town, while the 1932 atlas shows a Nassau County just before the post-war building boom. The 1891 atlas includes all of Queens County, the eastern part of which shortly after became Nassau County. The 1906 atlas is fascinating to many researchers because it shows who lived where during the time that Theodore Roosevelt was President and traveled frequently to Oyster Bay to spend time at Sagamore Hill.



Director Tom Kuehhas and merchant Les Marbles with one of the atlases Les donated to the Society.

SENATOR MARCELLINO SPONSORS SOCIETY GRANT

Acting on a request made by Director Thomas Kuehhas, New York State Senator Carl Marcellino has arranged for the awarding of a \$7500 grant to the Oyster Bay Historical Society. Citing the need for exhibit expansion at the Earle-Wightman House and other locales and the need to computerize the Society's holdings, as outlined in Kuehhas' letter, Senator Marcellino submitted a line item grant on behalf of the Society which will be administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Hopefully only the first in a series of financial benefits presently being planned, this generous award is a compliment to your Society and a much-needed shot in our financial arm. Programs anticipating the grant are already in the works. One such program is the shipbuilding exhibit, which makes use of almost all the exhibit space available in the Earle-Wightman House. Another is the database of our holdings that Librarian Kate Riley is currently working on.

Generous as it is, and as grateful as we are for it, this grant does not by any means meet all our needs. An active money-raising campaign is on our agenda and importantly we are looking for additional space into which to move our storage and perhaps some of our operations. Any suggestions from members will be very welcome. The flood of gifts of artifacts and



AHRC members pose in front of some of their handiwork.

documents has greatly increased and much more is promised if we can only find housing for these artifacts.

AHRC TEAMS WITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At Director Tom Kuehhas' urging, the Association for the Help of Retarded Children has sent a team of their clients on several occasions to assist the Society with yard work and

fence-painting. "It was a perfect symbiotic relationship: their people love to work and we had plenty of work that needed doing!" said Kuehhas.

**Visit the Oyster Bay
Historical Society's
website!**

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

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.

SOCIETY TO HOLD JOINT MEETING WITH NASSAU COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Oyster Bay Historical Society will hold a joint meeting with the Nassau County Historical Society on Sunday, December 6. Theodore Roosevelt Association Executive Director Dr. John Gable will be the featured speaker. Time and location will be announced shortly.

L. I. STUDIES INSTITUTE UPDATES HISTORICAL MARKERS SURVEY

The Long Island Studies Institute, Nassau County Museum Services, is currently updating the Nassau County Historical Markers Survey. The list, compiled originally in 1989, includes markers erected by state, county, towns, cities, villages and organizations. There were sixty-eight in-place markers included in the original survey. The survey describes city or town and village where the marker is located, the jurisdiction under which erected, design medium, material composition, colors, lettering, size and current

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!

condition. The Institute is also assembling a collection of photographs of the markers and their historic sites.

Within the Town of Oyster Bay, there are thirteen markers listed in the 1989 survey. They are at the following locations:

1. Entrance to Sagamore Hill in Cove Neck
2. The island at the intersection of Quaker Meeting House Road and Central Avenue in Farmingdale, marking point laid out in first highway survey of Bethpage made in 1732.
3. 33 Merritts Road in Farmingdale, marking Thomas Powell home built in 1700.
4. Quaker Meeting House Road near the meeting house in Farmingdale, meeting house built in 1698.
5. Factory Road and Bayville Road in Lattintown, location of Killingworth, the home of Captain John Underhill.
6. Entrance to Jones Cemetery in Massapequa, on Merrick Road.
7. Duck Pond Road at entrance to Messenger Lane, in front of Messenger Hill home in Matinecock, where Messenger, England's greatest thoroughbred, from whom most American thoroughbreds descend, was buried in 1808.
8. Lake Avenue in Mill Neck, site of Quaker gathering in 1672.
9. Factory Pond Road in Mill Neck, near Feeks Lane, at Underhill Burying Ground, founded by Captain John Underhill.
10. Corner of Orchard Street and Prospect Street in Oyster

Bay, at the site of fortified hill of the Revolutionary War.

11. Front of Raynham Hall, on West Main Street, in Oyster Bay, built 1740.

12. Intersection of Glen Avenue and Prospect Avenue in Sea Cliff, states founding of Sea Cliff in 1871 and its incorporation in 1883.

13. Cove Road in Oyster Bay Cove, across from Young's cemetery, stating President Washington stayed at Young's residence during his Long Island tour in 1790.

If you have any information regarding other markers, including any erected since 1989, please contact the Long Island Studies Institute. at 463-6417.

Tenaya Parchment, currently interning at the Long Island Studies Institute, attends C.W. Post. She is pursuing a degree in history and expects to graduate in January 1999.

**The Society wishes to thank the following
sponsors for their support of our Maritime
Heritage Family Fair on September 26:**

Arcotoys, Inc.
Bernstein's Home Center
Blocklyn Books
Elisabeth Christ
Fanny L. Corsentino
Francis P. De Vine Funeral Home
Mill-Max Manufacturing Corp.
Oyster Babies
Oyster Bay Manor
Pine Island Etch & Sign
St. Dominic R. C. Church
John Specce State Farm Agency
State Bank of Long Island
Travelsavers
Harry Whaley & Son
Wonderland Tree Care

DID YOU KNOW?

By Bob Smith

Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president, at age 42 was the youngest serving president our country has had to date. Also he was the first president to leave the continental limits of the U.S. while in office, when he went to see how the construction of the Panama Canal was progressing.

The Panama Canal was a "pet project" of Roosevelt. Ever since he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, under William McKinley, he was determined to find a faster route for ships to travel from San Francisco to New York without having to go around South America. Although not completed until Roosevelt was out of office, it did reduce the trip from San Francisco to New York by almost 10,000 sea miles. This was a great bonus to the maritime industry as well as a strengthening of our national defense.

There were many "firsts" in T.R.'s life: he was the first American to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his effectiveness in settling the Russo-Japanese War, treaty talks for which took place both on *Mayflower*, the presidential yacht in Oyster Bay, and in the library of Sagamore Hill. He was also the first President to submerge in a submarine when he went down on *Plunger* in Long Island Sound. He was also the first president to fly in a plane and the first to drive an automobile.

Is it just a co-incidence that our 26th president has 26 steps leading up to his grave at Youngs

Cemetery in Oyster Bay Cove? I don't think so and I counted them to make sure. Also, upon being offered a second cup of coffee, he refused by saying no thank you but "It's good to the last drop." Maxwell House Coffee used the line as a slogan, not by co-incidence.

Did you know that Roosevelt did not believe a woman should be required to assume her husband's name upon marriage? His two daughters, however, did: Alice and Ethel became Mrs. Longworth and Derby, respectively. Although T.R. was supportive of women's suffrage if "they wanted it," it was not number one on his list.

As a young child Roosevelt suffered terribly with asthma, incurable at that time. As a youngster he was unable to attend school and had to have a private tutor for most of his young life, until he went to Harvard. Any physical exertion such as simple children's games would cause periods of shortness of breath to such an extent that they didn't think he would survive childhood. His father was determined to cure his son and built a gymnasium on the second floor of the East 20th St. house in Manhattan, where young T.R. exercised daily and by the time he entered Harvard he was mostly free of this debilitating disease. Because of his childhood sickness and inability to go to school, young T.R. had no childhood friends. This, allied with the fact that he cured himself of his asthmatic condition with little if any medical treatment made him somewhat intolerant of others' weaknesses and, at the same

time, not having boyhood friends contributed to his overwhelming desire to attract people to him.

Upon giving his niece, Eleanor Roosevelt, to his fifth cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt in marriage, he thanked Franklin for keeping the name in the family and departed the room with the majority of the guests in tow. T.R.'s wife, Edith, said that her husband would like to be the "bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral."

Although the initial story of the Teddy Bear may have different interpretations, the most accepted one resulted from a political cartoon by Clifford Berryman that appeared in the Washington Post in 1903. The cartoon depicted Roosevelt turning his back upon a small bear tied to a tree while he was bear hunting in Mississippi. Seeing the cartoon, a man named Morris Michton wrote the president a letter asking permission to make and sell stuffed bears which he would sell under the name of Teddy's Bear. The president granted his permission, the name was shortened to Teddy Bear, and Morris Michton later went on to found the Ideal Toy Corporation in Brooklyn.

Three of T.R.'s sons died in the military: Quentin in World War I and T.R. Jr. and Kermit in World War II. His 4th son, Archibald, served in both wars, entered the investment business and died in 1978.

Theodore Roosevelt passed away on January 6, 1919 from a pulmonary aneurysm. He was only 60 years of age.



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

By Lee Myles

As many of our readers will be already aware, the Society has mounted an exhibition, titled *At The Water's Edge*, that attempts to fill in some aspects of the largely missing history of shipbuilding in Oyster Bay. The how of shipbuilding from the days before settlement here through the 19th century and the onset of machine tools are explored on the premise that the tools and processes were much the same or very similar wherever found over a wide area of geography and several centuries of time. A large number of prints from many parts of the world

showing several centuries of shipyard practices have been brought together. These serve to confirm that more similarities are to found in the craft of Noah than differences.

One thing that the exhibition does not make clear, although there are several Dutch pictures on view, is that the Dutch influence on English culture was especially strong in maritime affairs. One of the proofs of this influence is to be found in the English maritime vocabulary which takes a great many of its words from the Dutch language. Consider these examples which are only a small part of the many that could be offered:

Kinds of Vessels

(English/Dutch)

Scow/Schoow

Yacht/Jackt

Sloop/Sloep

Shallop/Sloep

Yawl/Jol

Jolly Boat/Jol

Smack/Smack

Pram/Praam

Snav/Snauw

Hooker/Hoeker

Howker/Hoeker

Lugger/Logger

Parts of Vessels and Items Found

Aboard Them

(English/Dutch)

Bulwark/Bolewerk

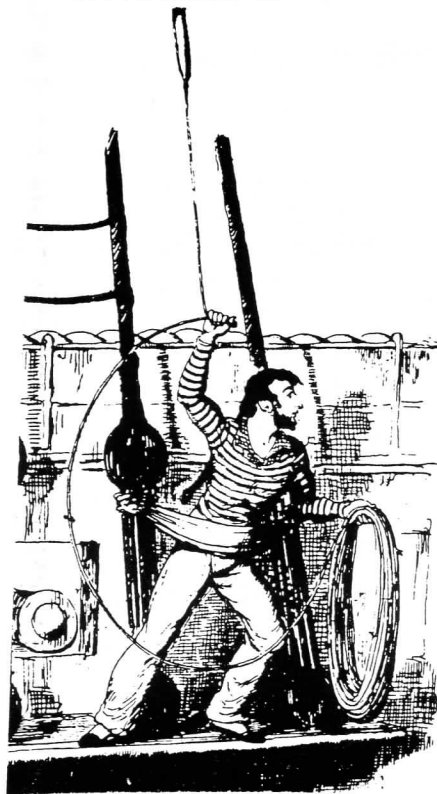
Garboard/Gaarboard

Caboose/Kombuis

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

This quarter's feature is about things nautical.

1. What is the bitter end?
2. What is a brig?
3. Distinguish between carvel and lapstrake.
4. What is a dead eye?
5. What is the ebb?
6. How long is a fathom?
7. What are the triangular points of an old fashioned anchor called?
8. What are the garboard stakes?
9. What is a handspike?
10. What is a holy stone?
11. What is a moon-sail?
12. What is oakum?
13. What are ratlines?
14. What is a sheet anchor?
15. What are slops?



Answers will be found on p. 23

Capstan/Kaapstander
Tackle/Takel
Cuddy/Kajuit
Taffrail/Tafareel
Cable/Kabel
Block/Blok
Log Book/Log Bouk
Lug Sail/Loggerzeil
Swab/Zwabber

The Flemish cousins of the Dutch left their mark on our sea going vocabulary as well. A "Flemish Coil" is a rope coiled flat, starting at the center and coiling to the outside. A "Flemish Horse" is a foot rope at the top sail yard-arms. A "Flemish Eye" is a kind of eyesplice at the end of a rope. "Flemish Fake" demonstrates a method of coiling rope.

If you translate this sentence into Dutch: "The skipper in his pea jacket with a chart under his arm shouts at the steersman 'Luff, you landlubber.'" The translation would contain the words: schipper, pijjekker, kaart, stuurman, loef and land loper. Who gave them to whom? If you think we of the English language were the givers, consider the words of Richard Ollard, a contributor to the University of California edition of Samuel Pepys' Diary: "When [Pepys] was born in 1633 the Dutch were our superiors in every branch of maritime activity."

Sea Shell Sobriquets

By Barbara Hopfe

Waiting in a classroom for a friend to finish an interview with a teacher, I leafed idly through a book left on the writing arm of my not-too-comfortable chair.

The book was called *Collecting Sea Shells* and the reason I mention it was its revelation that a surprising number of shells have names derived from the implements and other useful objects employed in the industries of home and shop.

The names were given to the various shells a long time ago and they stand as a footnote of history perhaps never to be fully expounded. Even so their everyday origin is interesting and worth noting.

There were, for instance, hatchet shells, auger shells, marlin spike shells, wedge shells, drills, file shells, needle shells, spindle shells, pen shells, jack knife shells and screw shells. There were razor shells and comb shells. Containers gave us basket shells and tun shells. To throw further light on an obscure subject, there were lantern shells.

If there is a conchologist among our museum staff, perhaps there is an opportunity for an exhibit contrasting the shells with their early namesakes.

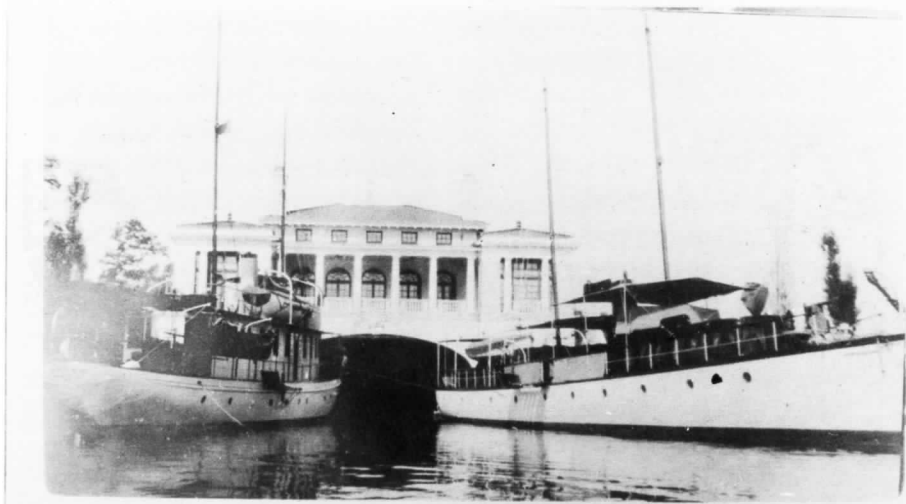
Learning how the words we use today came about not only helps us understand what a wonderful language we speak but also helps us to appreciate how cleverly our ancestors drew on their linguistic resources to name the many new articles and ideas their expanding environments introduced to them.

Recollections of the Legendary Blackton/Leeds Boathouse

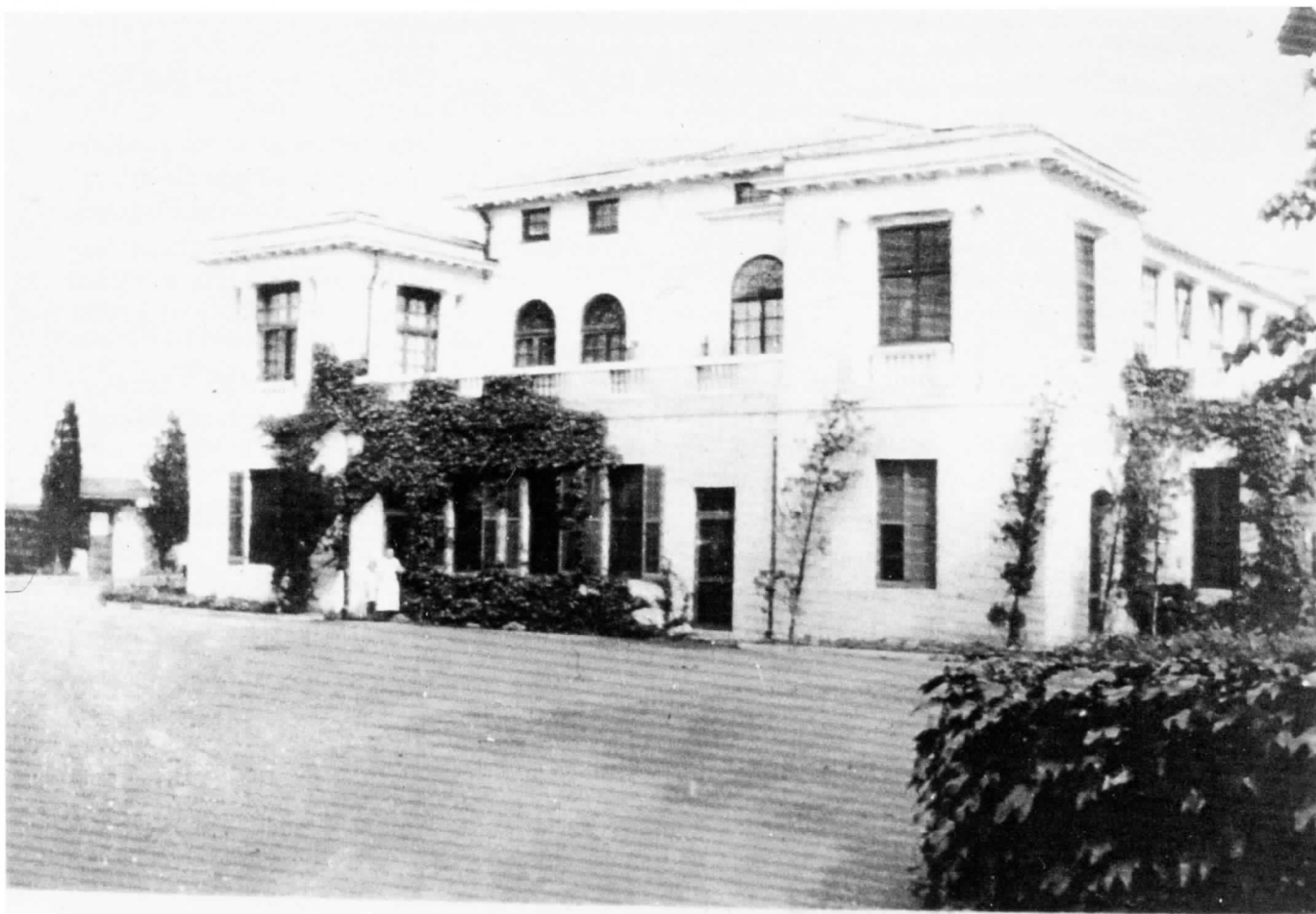
By Rick Robinson

In 1949 my parents purchased what was called the "carpenter's cottage" on the former William B. Leeds Estate in Cove Neck, east of the village of Oyster Bay. Earlier, following World War II, the entire property had been bought by my mother's Sister and brother-in-law. It was gradually sold off in segments and our little house was moved in 1949 from its site in an open field to a wooded plot near the estate's main road.

The ancillary estate buildings, designed by the architectural firm of Hoppin, Koen and Huntington,



The boathouse seen from the water with two sizable yachts at the slip.



The Blackton/Leeds Boathouse seen from the rear.

were built in 1912 for J. Stuart Blackton, an early motion picture mogul (Vitagraph) and speedboat racer. The main residence of "Harbourwood" was to have been constructed overlooking Cold Spring Harbor in 1914, but World War I disrupted the motion picture business and Blackton, nearly broke, moved to California in 1918.

Although his Cove Neck home was never realized, he did leave behind a remarkable waterfront structure on the 54-acre estate in the form of an elegant boathouse on the shore of Cold Spring Harbor. By the time I was in

high school in the early 1950s, the boathouse had cracked and settled on its sandy foundation, and was no longer safe for habitation or the storage of boats. It had, of course been subject to vandalism as well, and I can also recall hurricane-driven high tides that rose at least five feet above the twin piers and the first floor of the building. In its prime, the boathouse provided shelter for J. Stuart Blackton's Harmsworth Trophy racing powerboats and was often the scene of lavish parties in the second floor ballroom, with its broad promenades on three sides. The

boathouse and the waterfront also served as a site for several of Blackton's early Vitagraph silent films.

The speed-boating and partying tradition continued with tinsplate magnate "Billy" Leeds, whose first wife was Princess Xenia of Greece. Her pedigree and tastes complimented Leeds' high-profile lifestyle. Leeds later married the former Olive Hamilton and decided to live aboard his yacht rather than occupy the estate on Cove Neck.

In October of 1938 (according to the *Oyster Bay Guardian* weekly newspaper) the estate was

"closed," and all employees given notice that their various jobs would be terminated. The property was turned over to the Lafayette Bank of Brooklyn, and, in fact, two years earlier the estate had been put up for public auction. At that time, Billy Leeds bought it back for the amount of taxes due upon it! In 1938, however, where was no eleventh hour reprieve, and Archie Andrews the estate's superintendent, was the only employee kept on as a caretaker and watchman. The boathouse, meanwhile, sank (literally and figuratively) into a long period of neglect and disrepair.

I can recall a kitchen on the first floor of the boathouse, and other small rooms for a caretaker's family and/or boat crews. There were additional corner guest rooms on the second floor, but most of the space was taken up by the ballroom with its high ceiling and spectacular view of Cold Spring Harbor.

By the late 1950s, the structure had become severely undermined, with huge open areas gouged out beneath the cement floor by the incessant tides and occasional hurricanes. The twin cement piers that once extended out into the harbor had been washed away, except for the remains of one that we used as a diving platform at high tide.

A subsequent owner (after my aunt and uncle) gradually dismantled the entire upper floor of the boathouse with a jack-hammer, so that only one story remained for many years. The current owner, Carlos Montero, M.D., had the remaining structure demolished in

the early 1980s and the original boat channel or slip was also filled in at that time.

My lasting memory of the Blackton/Leeds boathouse is the sight and sound of water gently lapping within the building's slip at high tide. Exterior sunlight would be reflected against the ceiling and walls, giving a strange fairyland, or more correctly, Gold Coast, quality to the once-proud structure. In its hey day, it was undoubtedly the most conspicuous and most unique building on the shores of Cold Spring Harbor.

Fitzmaurice Flying Field

continued from p. 4

purchase in January 1953 for \$155,000. Pilots who had kept their planes there removed them one by one. The last plane flew out of Fitzmaurice Flying Field on June 25, 1953.

There are two ironic conclusions to this story. Brady, Cryan and Colleran's aim to build homes in Massapequa Park occurred a generation after their original proposal, and was accomplished by other developers. They had long since abandoned their grand plan. Further the field was used to attract homeowners, as Brady,

Cryan and Colleran had hoped but only after it was closed and elementary education replaced flying lessons. Hawthorne School and McKenna School now stand where planes once flew and children play on the site where aviation enthusiasts had gathered. The only visible reminder of the airfield is a historical marker placed at the site of the hangar on Spruce Street by the Historical Society of the Massapequas.

The Post Rider

continued from p. 2

To the Editor:

An old book, bought off a sale table at an auction proved to have several bits and pieces filed among its pages. Two pressed leaves, a recipe for a corn cure, a shopping list which included a gallon of molasses, and a clipping from a newspaper of a three-stanza inspirational poem credited to a man named Frank L. Stanton all fell out of the book when its pages were riffled. My reason for writing is to ask if any of the staff of *The Freeholder* or its readers know who Stanton was and what his dates are.

Edward Damon

I'm thankful for sun and showers;
The Lord makes the winter and May,
And He'd hide all the graves with His flowers

If folks didn't weed 'em away.
So I just keep livin' along,
Still thankful for sunlight and song;

I know when it's snowin'
God's roses are growin'.
So I just keep a-livin' along.

-Frank L. Stanton

We never heard or read the poem before and although the name Frank L. Stanton seems vaguely familiar to several of the staff we don't place him either. We include the third stanza of his poem. Do you recognize it?



MAJOR THOMAS JONES, AN 18TH CENTURY AMERICAN SUCCESS STORY

By Arlene Goodenough

Few Long Islanders could match the success that Major Thomas Jones achieved in the very early days of Long Island's history. Brave, dashing and self assured, he was no stranger to adversity but overcame it every time.

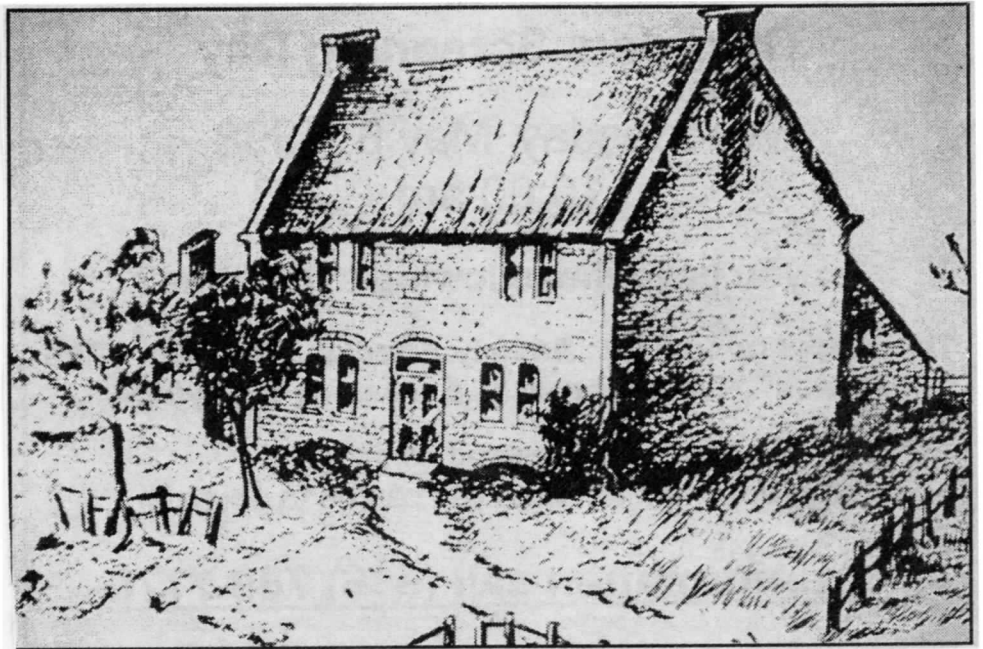
He was born probably around 1665 in Strabane, County Tyrone, Ireland. He was of Welsh stock. Early on, he sought to make his fortune with a military career and fought on the side of King James II of England at the Battle of the Boyne. Unfortunately for our hero, who was about 25 years old, James was defeated by William of Orange and had to flee to France. Jones followed him and proceeded to obtain Letters of Marque which made him a privateer, legally able to plunder ships and keep a percentage of the booty. He outfitted a ship which he named *The Swan* and sailed for the Caribbean Sea, which was swarming with the ships of many nations. You had to be an exceptional man to be a privateer. One had to have the ability to buy and outfit a ship, obtain the necessary seamen (which in itself was no easy task), have a good knowledge of the sea, and last but not least, possess a great deal of courage.

It certainly took a lot of nerve to maneuver one's ship next to the intended victim, scramble aboard while being shot at, overcome the crew and commandeer the vessel. Of course Jones' men would have given him excellent support, since the policy in those days was no prey, no pay.

In 1692 *The Swan* was moored in Port Royal on the island of Jamaica when a tremendous earthquake hit, destroying the town and the ships in the harbor. A lesser man might have been discouraged, but not our Thomas. He took stock of the situation and headed for the land of opportunity, America. He sailed to Rhode Island and was befriended by another privateer, Thomas Townsend. Townsend, a

weds instead.

The land, which consisted of salt hay meadows, stands of thorny hawthorn trees and sandy soil, is now beautiful suburban Massapequa. At that time it was the home of the peace loving Marsapeag Indians. It was the first part of what would one day be Jones' holdings of 6000 acres. There weren't any other neighbors, but Thomas and Freelope had each other and they



Brick House

Quaker, was a wealthy man and had an eighteen year old daughter named Freelope, a popular name among the Friends at that time. Romance entered Thomas' life and soon the two were wed.

Some years before, Townsend had bought land on the south shore of Long Island, and had offered it to his oldest son (also a Thomas!). The son reportedly said, "Father, would you have me go out of this world?" So Townsend gave it to the newly-

were joined by seven children in the space of eleven years.

To provide Freelope with the comfort to which she was accustomed, Jones built her a fine brick house, one of the first such on the south shore of Long Island. It was a good sized house of two stories plus attic. The walls were very thick, wood paneled inside. It was nicely furnished, one of the pieces being what was described as "a curious secretary" which Jones had

captured on one of his privateering excursions. It had been made in Spain and was intended for a Russian nobleman.

Jones must have had good manners, for he was able to make friends easily with men of importance. He saw several Royal Governors come and go. When Jones first came to America, Governor Fletcher gave him a post in the New York militia. In 1698 Lord Bellomont, a staunch supporter of William of Orange in the Glorious Revolution and therefore not inclined to be a friend of Jones, was appointed governor. Bellomont died in 1701 and Lord Cornbury succeeded him. Cornbury, a guest of Jones' at Brick House, appointed him Major of the Queens Militia. Other important posts he held included Warden of the Church, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay, High Sheriff and Ranger General of the Island of Nassau (present day Long Island).

In 1710 Governor Hunter gave Jones the monopoly of the local whaling and fishing industries. Jones established a whaling station on the barrier beach that now bears his name. It has been, of course, greatly expanded by Robert Moses! It is ironic to think that this whaling station, out of all of his holdings of 6,000 acres and all his titles and honors, is what causes his name to be famous today. The Historical Society of the Massapeguas has placed a granite marker at the Beach to acquaint visitors with this fact.

Late in the year 1713, Jones

must have been brought down by some illness, as evidenced by the fact that he wrote his will. He refers to himself as being very weak in body though perfect in mind and memory. He left the largest part of his estate to the oldest son, David, as was the custom. The younger sons, Thomas and William, got equal shares of a smaller portion. The girls received generous sums which could be used for their dowries. Since the children ranged in age from fourteen to five, everything was left in trust to Frelove, until they came of age. An interesting story is told about his death. As he lay dying, a crow hovered over his head. When he drew his last breath, the crow flew out of a window in the gable. Afterward, it was impossible to close the window. Whenever the shutters were closed, they would fly open. Finally, the window was bricked up, and during the night, the mortar crumbled and the bricks fell out. Frelove moved to Oyster Bay.

Many times over the years his

grave was disturbed by grave robbers looking for loot from his privateering days. It wasn't until 1893 that a fine private cemetery was established for members of the Jones and Floyd-Jones families behind Old Grace Episcopal Church in Massapequa. That is where Thomas Jones lies. Frelove is at his side, although she had been remarried to Timothy Bagley.

Jones only lived to the age of forty-eight. What might he have accomplished had he lived another ten years? Would we now be living on Jones Island instead of Long Island? Here are some lines from his epitaph which he wrote himself...

From distant lands to this wild waste he came.

This seat he choose and here he fixed his name.

Long may his sons this peaceful spot injoy,

And no ill will his offspring here annoy.

Today, his offspring are scattered all over America.



The house in Oyster Bay to which Frelove Jones moved after Thomas' death.

Blocklyn's Books



Book Reviews by Philip Blocklyn

We thank local bookstore owner Phil Blocklyn for offering his services to review published works that may be of some interest to our readers.

Margins: A Naturalist Meets Long Island Sound. By Mary Parker Buckles. North Point Press, 1997. 286 pp. B&W photographs by the author. \$23.00.

Writers from inland America can't resist the water. Mary Parker Buckles, a native of midland Mississippi, moves into a shorefront home in Norwalk, Connecticut, to produce an intensely personal meditation on Long Island Sound. Her writing, as she admits, is "intuitive, even idiosyncratic." But too often, it is just flat-out obscure. While shorebirding near Milford Point, she rhapsodizes on the sky, watching as "one cloud begs to be impaled on a needlelike steeple." Say that again?

Elsewhere she is clarity itself, laying poetics aside for the clear and simple facts of wildlife on the shore. The Sound comes alive in the wheel of shorebirds in flight,

the brandished claws of fiddler crabs, the sway of marsh grasses. It is enough just to know that great homed owls, when preying on ospreys, eat the heads only, or that the ospreys of Gardiners Island use, among other things, books as nesting material.

What ultimately makes this book distinctive is the author's refusal to reduce Long Island Sound to a "project," to see it solely in terms of the political, commercial, and environmental crusades raging along its waterfronts. While for us, the Sound has become a mere object of our desires, for her it takes on the aspect of something as simple as love.

Random Harvest. By James Thomas Flexner. Fordham University Press, 1998. 339 pp. \$35.00.

Can't find the time to make even modest headway through James Thomas Flexner's 28-book oeuvre? Then try this selection of short pieces collected from the author's sixty-year career as journalist and popular historian. As with most selections, the quality here is uneven. The two short stories, for instance, are truly awful. But the body of work is excellent, especially those essays dealing with the Hudson River School.

Like James M. McPherson, Flexner believes that popular history can be as serious as serious history can be popular. His essays on Durand, Whistler, and Homer treat these figures as artists of their times rather than *artistes* working in the abstract

ether of High Art. Throughout, he remains an enemy of pedantry and a champion of history's most difficult assignment: "...To survey the achievements of our grandparents to make sure that everything worthy is preserved."

The last essay is also the book's best, "Mother's Important Cousins" deals with teen-aged Flexner's meetings with Bertrand Russell, Logan Pearsall Smith, and Bernard Berenson. The piece is so winning and so different from anything before it that one wishes Flexner had included a few more selections in this personal vein.

Roosevelt Legacy
continued from p. 9

I would like to thank Mr. John Hammond, esteemed historian, Mr. Tom Kuehhas, director of the Oyster Bay Historical Society, and Mr. Wallace Dailey, curator of the Theodore Roosevelt Collection at Harvard University for all of the help and support they have given me with this project.

Footnotes

1. Oyster Bay in History, Frances Irving
2. Mornings on Horseback, David McCullough p. 142
3. McCullough, 142
4. Compilation of the Irving Place, William Peck
5. The Oyster Bay Guardian 10/31/97, John Hammond
6. McCullough, 226
7. Peck
8. Peck
9. Hammond

AUNT EEK



Olde Things: Advice on the Care & Feeding of Antiques

Dear Aunt Eek,

I am interested in collecting antiques but find myself both confused and intimidated. My confusion stems from the sheer volume of collectible material which interest me and I am intimidated by the vast barrage of information available both through the Internet and my library's resources.

My question simply is where do I begin and where should I expect to be in a year? I know that this is a tall order but...?

Johanes Rinaldi

Dear Johanes,

Not to sound facetious but ... you begin at the simple start, which is collecting and you arrive where your appetite and pocketbook deliver you.

The motivation for collecting antiquities can be purely aesthetic, plainly investmental or a little of both. Usually it is a little of both.

Start with the thing that you love the most. If you can't decide, inventory what you

already have and make some hard decisions toward possible disposal of a portion and create a strategy for re-investing with a goal in mind.

An old friend of Aunt Eek's proposed that once you have two of anything you have the beginning of a collection. We agree with this and believe in following a course set by your desires rather than the desires and advice of the experts in the field. This is not to suggest that a beginning collector should ignore the body of information available from such sources as the Internet, but rather that an instinctive approach will bring more pleasure and reward than following the crowd.

P.S. Look at as many things and pictures of things as you can in libraries, museums, antique stores and private collections. When you land somewhere try to find collector societies to join. Good luck!

Answers to Test Your Knowledge, p.16

1. The ship's end of the anchor cable.
2. A square rigged vessel with

only two masts.

3. Carvel plank is laid edge to edge, lapstrake planking is overlapped.

4. A circular block of wood without a sheave and with holes through it through which the lanyards of the standing rigging are rove for maintaining the proper tensions.

5. The outflow of the tide.

6. Six feet.

7. Flukes.

8. The planks on either side of a vessel's keel.

9. A lever of many uses, chief of which is heaving round the windlass.

10. A piece of sandstone used to scrub the deck. It is called holy, it is said, because one kneels before it.

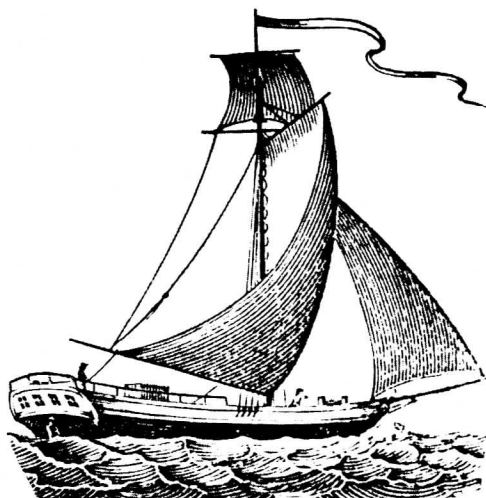
11. One set above the sky-sail.

12. Caulking material made from unraveled old rope and tar.

13. Lines bound across the shrouds that guy a mast that resemble and are used like the rungs in a ladder.

14. The largest anchor on board.

15. A chest of cheap, ready made clothing kept on board for supply (at a price) to those seamen who shipped inadequately outfitted.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

OCTOBER

Exhibit

Visit the Earle-Wightman House for a special exhibit on shipbuilding. See ship models, examples of the tools that built the ships, and artifacts related to them. With Oyster Bay's shipbuilding and maritime heritage so visible in the news today, why not come back in time to see how it all started and how it was done long ago!

NOVEMBER

Sun., Nov. 15, 1-4 p.m.

Revolutionary War Encampment

Enlist at the Society's headquarters, the Earle-Wightman House for an afternoon of 18th century martial music, drills, camp life, and musketry demonstrations. Come observe the 220th Anniversary of the Queens Rangers' occupation of Oyster Bay during the Revolutionary War.

DECEMBER

Sat., Dec. 12, 4-6 p.m.

Candlelight Evening

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 Society members.



Young visitors in action at the Maritime Heritage Family Fair on September 26th.



THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
20 SUMMIT STREET P.O. BOX 297
OYSTER BAY, N.Y. 11771-0297

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OYSTER BAY, NY 11771
PERMIT NO. 14

